

**NEGOTIATING THE MEANINGS OF SPACE: LEISURE,
COURTSHIP AND THE YOUNG WORKING CLASS OF YORK,
C.1880-1920**

Laura Harrison

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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ABSTRACT

In the neighbourhoods and public spaces of York, young people walked out together, congregated in the streets, and paraded up and down Coney Street on the ‘monkey run’. This thesis examines these sites of leisure and courtship; the streets, public and neighbourhood spaces of the city, and questions how the young working class of York engaged with their environment through a detailed study in the forty year period between 1880 and 1920. It considers how young working people met and socialised in different parts of the city, what these spaces meant to the young people of York, and how that meaning was conveyed, contested and controlled. While recent historical work has begun to explore how the meanings, experiences and representations of youth and young people have changed over time, highlighting the importance of both leisure and courtship as distinctive features of youth, the ways in which young people have engaged with their environment has received much less attention. Yet, without an understanding of how young people interacted and engaged with their environment we are left with an incomplete picture of working-class youth culture at a time when young people were experiencing increasing opportunities for leisure and sociability. This thesis fills this gap in the literature by examining how young men and women used, experienced and shaped their environment of late nineteenth and early twentieth century York. Studying the young working class of York through the prism of space provides valuable insights into everyday life, and reveals how spaces were both shaped by, and help shape, the social interactions of the young working class of the city. Exploring the relationship between the young working class and urban space, this thesis argues for a sensitive reappraisal of working-class youth at the turn of the twentieth century.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Borthwick	Borthwick Institute for Archives
<i>CWM</i>	Cocoa Works Magazine
Imagine York	Imagine York Photographic Archive
<i>Kelly's Directory</i>	<i>Kelly's Directory of the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire, with the City of York</i>
<i>OED</i>	Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. prepared by J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989)
NAGL	National Anti-Gambling League
NER	North Eastern Railway Company
Rowntree's	Rowntree and Co.
YAT	York Archaeological Trust
YCA	York City Archives
<i>VCH York</i>	<i>The Victoria County History of the Counties of England: A History of Yorkshire, The City of York</i> , ed. by P. M. Tillot (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961)
YOHP	York Oral History Project

INTRODUCTION

Edith Harton met her first boyfriend while delivering letters for work, and together they walked out around York; from Clifton to Fulford, down by the riverside on the New Walk, occasionally stopping to sit down on the grass ‘for about half an hour’ before walking back the way they came. They travelled across the city centre streets to attend the theatre, dance hall and cinema, and visited the Empire music hall every week, often stopping at the King Street fish shop for ‘one of each and peas for two’. Edith paraded up and down Coney Street on the ‘monkey run’ and had ‘some good nights’ with friends at the Martinmas Hiring Fair in Parliament Street.¹ Albert Howard started courting aged sixteen, and from his home in Walmgate walked out with his future wife ‘all over t’place. We walked for miles’.² In their free time, young people navigated the streets, markets and parks of the city, traversing a number of city spaces; domestic, neighbourhood, public and commercial space, and, if they were unlucky, penal space – the prison, penitentiary or workhouse. Young working people led a largely pedestrian existence, and patterns of leisure and sociability meant that in a working week they crossed and re-crossed paths, covering large swathes of the city.

This thesis examines these sites of leisure and courtship; the streets, public and neighbourhood spaces of the city, and questions how the young working class of York both responded to and shaped the meaning of their environment through a detailed study in the forty year period between 1880 and 1920. It will consider how the young working class met and socialised in different parts of the city, what these spaces meant to the people of York, and how that meaning was conveyed, controlled and contested. Where did young people gather and socialise; how did they negotiate spaces of their own; and what factors affected their ability to do so? How did the urban landscape influence the leisure and courtship activities of York’s young working class; and how, in the course of these activities, did they themselves change and influence space? These initial questions provide the momentum for a more sustained critical engagement with a large body of relevant literature and

¹ Interview with Edith Harton, born 1901, York Oral History Project (YOHP).

² Interview with Albert Howard, born 1913, YOHP.

documentary sources, and this thesis aims to present a history of the young working class of York informed by a sense of the social geography of the city.

1. Leisure, courtship and young people

Scholars in history, sociology, criminology and education have shown an increasing interest in competing conceptualisations of youth, and recent work has begun to explore how the meanings of youth, and the experiences and representations of young people, have changed over time.³ A number of historical studies have considered youth as one element of working-class life, demonstrating how age, alongside gender and class, shaped men and women's work, home and leisure experiences.⁴ Studies by Stephen Humphries, David Fowler, Selina Todd and Melanie Tebbutt, along with the edited collection on young women by Mary Jo Maynes, Birgitte Sølund and Christina Benninghaus, focus specifically on young people and offer a detailed analysis of their lifestyles from the mid eighteenth century through to the inter-war years.⁵ In reflecting on the impact of gender, age and class in shaping experiences of leisure, historians have emphasized the significance of both leisure and courtship in the formation of young people's social identities, and courtship has also been the subject of a number of studies, both from historians working more broadly on leisure, and as a focus of research concerned

³ For example, the 2011 Barry Goldson edited collection *Youth in Crisis* brings together scholars from criminology, history, urban studies, sociology and law to addresses the question of youth 'gangs'. *Youth in Crisis: 'Gangs', Territoriality and Violence*, ed. by Barry Goldson (London: Routledge, 2011).

⁴ Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984); Jerry White, *The Worst Street in North London: Campbell Bunk, Islington, Between the Wars* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986); Andrew Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working-Class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900-1939* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992); Claire Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England, 1920-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Catriona M. Parratt, *'More Than Mere Amusement': Working-Class Women's Leisure in England, 1750-1914* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001); Brad Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain 1850-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005) and Oliver Betts, 'Working-Class Homes in Three Urban Communities, 1870-1914', (University of York: PhD Thesis, 2013).

⁵ Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working Class Childhood and Youth, 1889-1939* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981); David Fowler, *The First Teenagers: The Lifestyle of Young Wage-Earners in Interwar Britain* (London: Woburn Press, 1995); Selina Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England, 1918-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Melanie Tebbutt, *Being Boys: Youth, Leisure and Identity in the Inter-War Years* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012) and *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills: Placing Girls in European History, 1750-1960*, ed. by Mary Jo Maynes, Birgitte Sølund, and Christina Benninghaus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

with social rituals, marriage and love.⁶ However, none of these works have considered how through these leisure and courtship activities young working people engaged with their environment and were able to challenge, change and shape its meanings. Historians have written about the transformative impact of young working-class leisure on the creation of increasingly distinct youth cultures,⁷ but have done so as if spatial elements matter little at all, and there has been very little direct consideration of the ways in which young people have engaged with space. One notable exception is the recent work by Simon Sleight on late nineteenth-century Melbourne. Sleight charts the relationship between discourses about youth, youthful experience and the shaping of new urban spaces, examining the way Melbourne grew alongside the young people who populated it, and argues that ‘youth as a category of historical analysis has not been adequately spatialised’.⁸ Questions of space were certainly important to young people in their social lives; for courting couples it could be difficult to find private space to be alone together, young men socialising on street corners could face charges of obstruction, or young women loitering in public space were subject to scrutiny and disapproval, sometimes facing accusations of prostitution (although sometimes, of course, such accusations were well founded).

Young working-class use of the city has attracted some historical attention. Stephen Humphries and Andrew Davies have considered the concept of neighbourhood belonging and spatial boundaries in their studies of teenage gangs, and Seth Koven also considered how ‘street arabs’ became sources of both fascination and pity for reformers.⁹ In analysing the confrontations between rival

⁶ See in particular Claire Langhamer, ‘Love and Courtship in Mid-Twentieth Century England’, *The Historical Journal*, 50:1 (2007), 173–196.

⁷ Fowler, *The First Teenagers*. Todd notes the increasing importance of young women as leisure consumers, arguing they played a pivotal role in the emergence of the affluent ‘teenager’. Todd, *Young Women, Work and Family*, p. 13, pp. 195-224.

⁸ Simon Sleight, *Young People and the Shaping of Public Space in Melbourne, 1870-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), p. 11. Other fields have certainly been much quicker to explore the themes of youth and urban space in a contemporary setting. For example: Catherine Robertson, ‘Creating Space, Creating Self: Street-Frequenting Youth in the City and Suburbs’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 3:4 (2000), 429-443; Joanne Massey, ‘Young People and the ‘Right’ to the City’, *International Journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations*, 7:3 (2007), 241-252 and Jonny Pickering, Keith Kintrea and Jon Bannister, ‘Invisible Walls and Visible Youth: Territoriality among Young People in British Cities’, *Urban Studies*, 49: 5 (2012), 945-960.

⁹ Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels*, pp. 1- 20; Andrew Davies, *The Gangs of Manchester: The Story of the Scuttlers, Britain’s First Youth Cult* (Preston: Milo Books, 2008) and Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 112-123.

gangs in Manchester, Davies places them firmly in their spatial context and emphasises the importance of locality.¹⁰ Humphries explores the tensions between young men and the authorities, and situates an analysis of street gangs within a broader discussion of class and ethnicity, although he shows little concern with gender. While organised gangs of teenagers did fight over spatial boundaries, Humphries stresses that the growing hysteria about gangs and street violence was overblown.¹¹ Davies and Humphries both link place and space with criminality, commenting on the way gang members policed their territory across geographic and spatial boundaries. The struggles between young people and authorities over the use of space is central to understanding youth in the city, but it is also important to consider the ways young people both understood and produced their own space. How were ideas about class, gender and generation incorporated within contested constructions of space, and how did the young working class of York carve out their own spaces?

In urban history, spatial approaches have rarely considered the lives of the young. A special issue of *Social Science History* on the working classes and urban public space invited its readers to ‘explore the spatial dimensions of class, race, and gender analysis’, but there was no mention of age as a category of analysis.¹² Simon Gunn does not include youth in his discussion of the changing histories of space and place.¹³ The use of gender, race and sexuality as analytical tools has resulted in sustained examinations of the role of space and place in past and present societies. Feminist geographers have maintained that space is produced by and productive of gender relations, and a gendered analysis of the historical city reveals locations produced by the powerful and the strategies used to justify male domination of the public sphere, as well as the varied ways women were able to challenge and contest such domination and constructions of space.¹⁴ The sexual topography of the city has been explored by historians of sexuality who have considered the way different groups charted contested terrain and remade the city in the course of their tactical

¹⁰ Davies, *The Gangs of Manchester*.

¹¹ Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels?*

¹² Elizabeth Faue, ‘Introduction’, *Social Science History*, 24:1 (2000), 1-6.

¹³ Simon Gunn, ‘The Spatial Turn: Changing Histories of Space and Place’ in *Identities in Space: Contested Terrains in the Western City since 1850*, ed. by Simon Gunn and Robert J. Morris (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 1-14.

¹⁴ See in particular Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (London: Virago Press, 1991).

transgressions. Matt Cook, for example, considers the relationship between London and male homosexuality between 1885 and 1914, examining the urban map created around acts of same sex desire, a map which overlaid the geography of the West End but remained unknown to the vast majority of Londoners.¹⁵

The idea that it is important to spatialise young people's social lives underpins the analysis here, but historical approaches to the lives of young working people have largely failed to consider how the young both responded to and generated their surroundings, and spatial approaches have rarely utilised age as a category of historical analysis. This thesis seeks to fill this gap in the literature by examining how young working-class men and women used, experienced and shaped their environment; exploring how the young residents of York were both confined and provoked by the spaces in their city. It will further explore the ways in which young people understood and constructed space, and how they contested certain public spaces with their own meanings and spatial requirements. The stirrings of a distinct youth culture can be traced to the late nineteenth century, and without an understanding of how young people interacted and engaged with their environment, we are left with an incomplete picture of working-class youth at a time when young people were experiencing increasing opportunities for leisure and sociability.

2. Space and meaning

The approach to space which underpins this thesis is informed by several theories, while adhering to no one in particular.¹⁶ In relating ideas about the meanings of space to a study of young people in York in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, I have not adopted a fixed theoretical model. York's streets and public spaces are explored from the perspective of those who socialised, courted and spent

¹⁵ Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). See also George Chauncy, *Gay New York*, for a consideration of the way gay men in New York were able to build a sense of community in the face of overt hostility from the authorities and other city users, and Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London*, an exploration of the relationship between queer sexualities and modern urban culture. George Chauncy, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890 – 1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994) and Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

¹⁶ For detailed discussion of relevant spatial literature, see chapter one, pp. 31-38.

money within them, and the study engages in a conversation with relevant theoretical concepts rather than offering a sustained analysis of any one theory itself. It is the streets and public spaces of York, along with the young people who populated them, that drive the analysis. The young people discussed in the following chapters do not sit neatly in abstract theories and constructs; they lived complex and challenging lives, and the study therefore follows no single theoretical position, but instead focuses on thickening empirical data with space.¹⁷

This study is concerned primarily with enriching our understanding of the young working class by narrowing the focus on their spaces and sites of social interaction in order to explore how these spaces shaped, and were shaped by, young people. It is concerned with how the young working class experienced and negotiated their own lives in the city, and sees the city not just as material and lived but also a space of the imagination and representation.¹⁸ The following pages populate the streets and public spaces of York with their historical actors through the use of a range of documentary sources and oral history testimony. They consider a range of leisure spaces, and focus on the actions of individuals and groups within these spaces, linking space with practice, and considering how sites were perceived, lived and made. Perhaps, then, it could be considered a study harnessing the ‘spatial turn’, although I do not aim to do so at the expense of other key categories of analysis, namely, class and gender, but rather to complement and inform these other explorations of the relations between young people and their surroundings. This detailed study of the spaces and places of late nineteenth and early twentieth century York will further develop historical understandings of the ways in which people and settings interact.

¹⁷ Clifford Geertz, ‘Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture’ in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3-32.

¹⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

2.1 *The young working class*

The focus of this thesis is on the young working class of York, and while at times it discusses a broad working-class youth culture, I do not wish to give the impression that the working class, or young people, were monolithic or one-dimensional. B. Seebohm Rowntree's first social survey of the city sought to 'throw some light upon the conditions which govern the life of the wage-earning classes' in York, and in 1899 this comprised 11, 560 families that did not employ domestic servants as 'the keeping or not keeping of domestic servants has in this inquiry been taken as marking the division between the working classes and those of a higher scale'.¹⁹ Yet, as R. J. Morris has noted, 'the working class' is an abstraction, 'summarising the actions and experiences of countless individuals'.²⁰ The use of 'working class' can make it seem as though class was a culturally defining characteristic, and it is 'surprising how few historians of the working class seek to define and measure their subject'.²¹ E. P. Thompson remains a constant presence in studies of the working class in the Victorian and Edwardian period. For Thompson class was not a category, but a social, economic and political relationship:

Class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared) feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different (and usually opposed to) theirs.²²

Andrew August has more recently attempted to synthesize the challenges of feminist and linguistic theory into a new history of the British working class, arguing that class still has its place, as long as those who use it acknowledge 'working-class men and women did not think about their worlds exclusively in terms of class', and this study aims to capture the multiple dimensions of young working-class experience.²³

¹⁹ B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (London: Macmillan, 1901), p. v, p. vii, p. 14.

²⁰ *Class, Power and Social Structure in British Nineteenth-Century Towns*, ed. by R. J. Morris (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1986), p. 3.

²¹ John Benson, *The Working Class in Britain, 1850-1939* (London: Longman, 1989), p. 3.

²² E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1963), p. 9.

²³ Andrew August, *The British Working Class* (Harlow: Longman, 2007), p. 2.

Davies and Todd draw upon Elizabeth Roberts's definition of class, and it is one I also find helpful:

Men and women believed themselves to be working class because they worked with their hands, were employees and not employers, and, in comparison with the latter, were poor and lacked material goods: even the better-paid workers had comparatively few consumer goods and little surplus income.²⁴

Differences in outlook can perhaps be too easily attributed to class, yet Biddy Carrall, the daughter of a York compositor recalled that 'we never thought of ourselves as working class, you didn't really bother about class'.²⁵ The focus on the young working class in this study seeks to affirm the agency and historical importance of 'ordinary' individuals, rather than simply passive recipients of whatever came their way.

Any definition of youth must recognise its transitional nature, representing a stage of life when young men and women journey towards adulthood. What it means to be 'young' has varied enormously across time and place, and between classes. John Springhall's study of adolescence highlights the changing nature of this life stage, itself the result of a unique set of historical circumstances.²⁶ In his study of youthful experience and the shaping of new urban spaces in Melbourne, Simon Sleight is particularly focused on the child's view of the city. He considers youth a flexible category, identified as a transitional phase of growing up, although adolescence is perhaps too easily subsumed under the category of childhood.²⁷ Throughout this study I employ a broad definition of youth, taking examples of single young men and women who have left school. By the closing decades of the nineteenth century most girls and boys attended school at least intermittently until the age of twelve, and the average age of marriage for men and women was twenty

²⁴ Roberts, *A Women's Place*, pp. 3-4.

²⁵ Biddy Carrall cited in Charles W. Masters, *The Respectability of Late Victorian Workers: A Case Study of York 1867-1914* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), pp. 24-25.

²⁶ John Springhall, *Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain 1860-1960* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1986).

²⁷ Sleight, *Young People and the Shaping of Public Space*.

six in 1901, up by a full year from its low point in 1871.²⁸ Rather than a strict focus on age, however, I have defined youth by its formative experiences: leaving school and entering paid employment; earning but not running a home; adopting adult dress; and a period for relatively unrestricted leisure and courtship opportunities.²⁹ Of course, not all of these markers were universal; for young people who did not marry, for example, the end of youth could be less defined, and the young working class were not a homogenous, unified body. However, the period between starting work and getting married was distinctive; bridging childhood and independent adulthood. Young men and women increasingly perceived their youth as a distinctive stage in their life, and they were key historical actors in understanding and engaging with their environment.

2.2 The local context

Visitors to the city of York are today invited to ‘discover’ for themselves the ‘bustling ancient streets’ of the city, and its historic beauty is celebrated through heritage attractions and local history publications.³⁰ In 2012 the York Civic Trust held an exhibition of paintings to coincide with the 800th anniversary of the city’s first charter; ‘Views of York: Portrait of a City, 1610 to present day’, part of a wider scheme to ensure the city’s views are appreciated and protected as a resource against inappropriate development and intrusion. The catalogue’s introduction to the exhibition reflected the paintings on display at Fairfax House, noting that ‘York ... is exceptional in that its physical appearance is so magnetically attractive’.³¹ York has always been known to visitors for its Minster, walls and gates, its quaint medieval streets and its Roman and Viking history. By means of the city’s key museums and cultural attractions, visitors are invited to move with relative ease from the Romans

²⁸ *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills*, p. 3 and G. R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War, 1886-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 69.

²⁹ For a detailed analysis of leisure, courtship and the life-cycle, see chapter three, particularly pp. 118-124.

³⁰ Visit York, <<http://www.visityork.org>> [accessed 12 December 2014].

³¹ Peter B. Brown, *Views of York: Portrait of a City, 1610 to present day* (York: York Civic Trust, 2012), p. 5.

to the Vikings, then forward to the coming of the railways and chocolate industry.³² Despite Rowntree's well known social surveys of the city, surveys which revealed the grim reality of life in its poor districts, many studies of York still present a picturesque view of the city and its medieval heritage. York's historic poverty is rarely commented upon. There were no paintings of Hungate and Walmgate – referred to by Rowntree as 'typical slum' districts – included in the 'Views of York' exhibition.³³ The history of York is often anesthetised, even stories of poverty are often accompanied by notes of benevolence from Quaker employers, or enduring community spirit and resilience.³⁴ There is much more to York than Romans and Vikings, railways and chocolate, and this study will move beyond sanitised historical accounts, considering the street level urban environment, its sights, sounds and smells.³⁵

A wealth of historical studies means we have an extensive knowledge about the history and development of medieval and early modern York; about its government, its economy and its social organisation.³⁶ A number of these studies have attempted to engage with space. In his examination of civic mentality and the environment in Tudor York, D. M. Palliser considers the effect of the squalid and insanitary conditions in which the majority of the inhabitants lived, although in his account the city is little more than a backdrop to civic life.³⁷ Pamela B. Hartshorne's study of nuisance in the wardmote courts of fifteenth and sixteenth century York engages much more explicitly with space, considering how the street was regulated

³² 'Roman York', Yorkshire Museum, <www.yorkshiremuseum.org.uk> [accessed 14 December 2014], Jorvick Viking Centre, <www.jorvik-viking-centre.co.uk> [accessed 12 December 2014], National Railway Museum, <<http://www.nrm.org.uk/>> [accessed 14 December 2014] and York's Chocolate Story, <<http://yorks-chocolate-story.com/>> [accessed 14 December 2014].

³³ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 199.

³⁴ 'York Remembers Rowntree' Oral History Project, <<http://www.rowntreesociety.org.uk/memories-project/>> [accessed 14 December 2014]; Van Wilson, *The Walmgate Story: Humour, Heartache and Hope* (York: Voyager Publications, 2006) and Van Wilson, *Rich in All But Money: Life in Hungate, 1900-1938* (York: York Archaeological Trust, 2007).

³⁵ The York Alternative History group, established in 2012, is one local history organisation that attempts to move beyond the sanitised version of the city's history, exploring York's radical past, and making connection with politics, protest and activism in York today. York's Alternative History, <<https://yorkalternativehistory.wordpress.com/>> [accessed 12 December 2014].

³⁶ *The Government of Medieval York: Essays in Commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter*, ed. by Sarah Rees Jones (York: Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, 1997); D. M. Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Heather Swanson, *Medieval Artisans: An Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), P. J. P. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire, c.1300-1520* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), Pamela Beatrice Hartshorne, 'The Street and the Perception of Public Space in York, 1476-1586' (University of York: PhD Thesis, 2004).

³⁷ Palliser, *Tudor York*.

in later medieval and early modern York, and what people understood about the built environment.³⁸ Patrick Nuttgens noted in 2001 that ‘there is no shortage of studies [of York] published’, yet there are still very few historical accounts of everyday experience in the modern city.³⁹ For Nuttgens, ‘there is no other city in Britain more capable of illustrating the history of the country at large, both in terms of its absorbing past or its promise for the future’, and Rowntree chose York for his poverty surveys because it ‘might be taken as fairly representative’.⁴⁰ This study, however, wishes to tread carefully when discussing the representativeness of York. Experience was not uniform in the city, let alone further afield. However, it is hoped that by examining in detail the case of York, this thesis will make a relevant contribution to debates on working-class youth, and form a starting point for subsequent studies on the relationship between young people and urban space. The limits of a local study are obvious, yet local research is necessary to avoid shakily substantiated generalisations about national patterns of behaviour, and can present a nuanced understanding of young working-class lives. The sharp geographical focus of this research means it is also possible to map in detail the specific places used and provide precise details of movement through the streets.

Dates can similarly be seen as arbitrary to some extent, but in York the stirrings of a distinct youth culture can be traced to the late nineteenth century. Greater employment opportunities for young women in particular materialised with the expansion of the chocolate manufacturing industry, and by the time of the 1901 census, 23 per cent of York’s working population under the age of twenty four was employed in the confectionery industry.⁴¹ York’s young working class could increasingly take advantage of free time and spending money to explore York’s leisure opportunities. Following the outbreak of war in 1914, the military presence in York vastly increased, and high troop concentrations facilitated greater sociability

³⁸ Hartshorne, ‘The Street and the Perception of Public Space’.

³⁹ *The History of York: From Earliest Times to the Year 2000*, ed. by Patrick Nuttgens (Pickering: Blackthorn Press, 2001), p. 1. A notable exception to this is Charles W. Masters’ study of respectability and the working class; Masters, *The Respectability of Late Victorian Workers*.

⁴⁰ *The History of York*, p. 1 and Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. vi.

⁴¹ *Census Return of England and Wales, 1901*.

between young men and women. Concern about moral conduct in the city grew, and working-class use of space was increasingly monitored.⁴²

3. Reconstructing street life

A study of young working people and the city brings a number of methodological challenges. Sources are often patchy, inconsistent and incomplete, and almost all produced by adults; both institutional accounts commenting critically on young people, or adult narrators recalling their experiences of youth at a much later date. Much of the evidence used here is produced by institutional sources, which can certainly help to illuminate concerns about young people and the urban environment, but it would be all too easy to simply produce a history of the ways adults tried to control the behaviour of young people. This thesis attempts to go beyond this, considering how the young working class understood and engaged with their city. The recreation of street life is achieved by combining references from across the different records used, allowing a detailed picture of particular spaces and individuals to emerge. Material related to the operation of local governance, however, can tell us much about the concerns of the city's residents, as well as where young people gathered and socialised. Civic and policing records supply accounts of those occasions when working-class life collided with the law and penal institutions. Police files, particularly the service and character books, raise interesting questions about the surveillance and regulation of everyday life, and the relationship between individual police officers and the community they were policing. Coupled with the often animated accounts reported in local newspapers, such records can provide a picture of the vibrant street life in the city. Descriptions of drunkenness, obstruction and nuisance cases give an insight into the lives of young working people, and newspaper reports of the police court and assizes proceedings appeared daily in the *York Herald* and regularly in the *Yorkshire Gazette*. The local press played an important role in stigmatising certain types of behaviour, and also in explaining the

⁴² In 1917 the Penitentiary Society reported that 'the streets are watched regularly'. York, York City Archives (YCA), York Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Reports, 1917.

city to both visitors and residents. Newspaper reports are not neutral sources, but a ‘highly problematic social phenomenon’; they played a central role in shaping perceptions of the city, and must be read carefully in order to uncover assumptions and prejudices.⁴³ Coverage focused particularly on crime and disorderly behaviour, but can also provide clues about more mundane everyday activities, and close attention to social and cultural contexts can provide one safeguard against the problematic nature of this source.

Evidence from the records of the York ‘Refuge’, or Female Penitentiary Society as it was officially termed, has also been utilised. Opened in 1845, the Refuge was the primary home for ‘fallen women’ in York, despite the existence of a number of other institutions in the city, and is the only long term shelter for which detailed evidence has survived. While the Annual Reports presented images of sincerely repentant young girls who voluntarily placed themselves in the home for two years of industrial training and moral education, to be returned, fully repentant, to their friends and family or placed in service, it is the Ladies’ Committee Books and notes that provide a more detailed and revealing picture. These notes include admission details for the girls who came to the Refuge, although unfortunately comprehensive notes do not survive for the entire period of this study. It is, of course, easier to find documentary evidence of misconduct than it is to establish what was understood as ‘normal’ behaviour. The nature of the records means that inevitably more attention is paid to exceptional events or the transgressions of young people brought before the magistrates, but the records are also about ordinary people living ordinary lives, and misconduct can also tell us about the norms of acceptable behaviour. Due to the nature of the sources consulted for this study, there is at times an unavoidable emphasis on crime, sex and courting relationships that ‘went wrong’, although oral history and autobiography sources have been used to help balance this.

Census information from the 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911 and 1921 *Census of England and Wales* has been consulted. The limitations of this source have been explored in detail by historians, but here it provides additional demographic and occupational data.⁴⁴ Contemporary social surveys have also been utilised, primarily

⁴³ Aled Jones, *Press, Politics and Society: A History of Journalism in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993), p. 178.

⁴⁴ *Nineteenth-century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for the Study of Social Data*, ed. by E. A. Wrigley (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972). Higgs has pointed out ambiguities

the detailed investigation into the lives of York's working class carried out by B. Seebohm Rowntree at the turn of the twentieth century, but later surveys have also been consulted alongside the detailed records kept by Edmund Smith, the York Medical Officer of Health. The historiography of social investigation – which draws upon the work of Rowntree alongside Charles Booth, Arthur Bowley and others, has largely presented an examination of the analytical content of these investigations, but it is also possible to draw upon the mass detail contained within such studies.

As with Paul Thompson's interviews for *The Edwardians*, the majority of first-hand accounts used in this study were written or recorded many years after the fact.⁴⁵ The oral history testimony illuminates the individual experience of those who were themselves young working people in the early years of the twentieth century, and is taken from the York Oral History Project (YOHP), a collection of over 600 interviews gathered by the York Oral History Society, a group of local historians who have carried out interviews with local residents since 1982, and have published selections of these in local history publications.⁴⁶ The small sample of interviews used here are taken from residents who grew up in the city in the very last years of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth, with many talking about their very early memories of the period, and such accounts must contend with the hazy world of early memories, and are informed by the experiences of a twentieth century where much has changed.⁴⁷ The debates around using oral testimony as an historical source have been comprehensively explored by a number of historians.⁴⁸ However, issues relating to memory and distortion, interviewing methods and community history are particularly pertinent in the case of the YOHP. The transcript collection includes interviews conducted in the early 1980s with respondents born in the late nineteenth century. All the interviews took place long after the events many narrators are asked to recollect. Annie Pinder spoke about her teenage years in the Hungate and Walmgate districts, but was 92 at the time of her interview. Fred Milburn was born in 1894, and interviewed in 1983 about events which happened in

in the enumeration of women's work. E. Higgs, 'Women, Occupations and Work in the Nineteenth Century Censuses', *History Workshop Journal*, 23 (1987), p. 23.

⁴⁵ Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁴⁶ 'York Oral History Society', <www.yorkoralhistory.org.uk> [accessed 10 July 2013].

⁴⁷ For example, Mr Allan noted 'I picture his face, but I can't remember his name. That's a fault of getting old you see, you forget things. A lot of things'. Mr Allan, born 1911, YOHP.

⁴⁸ See in particular the journals *Oral History Review* and *Oral History*. A variety of anthologies have been published considering the theory, method and use of oral history, including *The Oral History Reader*, ed. by R. Perks and A. Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998).

the early twentieth century.⁴⁹ Issues of selective memory and reliability have been examined elsewhere, but it is important to consider the distortions memories are subjected to, especially with elderly interviewees.⁵⁰ The passage of time undoubtedly changes a narrator's perspective, and can sometimes distort memories and viewpoints. Many of the former residents of Hungate and Walmgate recall fondly the community spirit that characterised life in these poor districts, but this must be placed into the context of a community that was subsequently split up through slum clearances and often moved to council houses on the outskirts of the city.⁵¹ Memory is not just a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings.⁵² However, it could be argued that these perceptions and distortions are as important as actual events. Interviews are prone to distortion, yet so is any other historical data, and the oral sources – when taken as a group – can reveal much about life from the perspective of those who lived in the poor districts of Hungate and Walmgate, or socialised in the streets and public spaces of York.

Unfortunately, the YOHP has made no attempt to engage with critical perspectives on oral history and rarely offers detailed contextual information about its interviewees. There is very little awareness of the broader socio-economic conditions in Yorkshire, or Britain, and there are few critical questions asked about the broader themes of social life. Interviews are replete with stories about local characters and particular places, but there appears to be little understanding of how these details might add up. The YOHP may 'preserve the memories of the York people', but they do little more than present a lively picture of a time gone by.⁵³ The oral testimony does reveal a great deal about individual subjectivity, although a lack of biographical information makes this more difficult to capitalise upon. These broader contexts need to be drawn out through comparison with other documentary sources in order to actually provide further insights into the lives of those who lived and worked in York in the early years of the twentieth century.

⁴⁹ Interview with Annie Pinder, born 1904 and Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP.

⁵⁰ John A. Neuenschwander, 'Remembrance of Things Past: Oral Historians and Long-Term Memory', *The Oral History Review*, 6 (1978), 45-53 and Neal R. Norrick, 'Talking About Remembering and Forgetfulness in Oral History Interviews', *Oral History Review*, 32:2 (2005) 1-20, both explore the issue of long term memory in oral history interviews.

⁵¹ In particular Nell Fearn, born 1918 and Alice Butterworth, born 1906 spoke about how 'everybody helped everybody else', YOHP.

⁵² Alessandro Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different?' in *The Oral History Reader*, p. 69.

⁵³ York Oral History Society, *York Memories: Nine First-Hand Accounts of Life in York, 1900-1939* (York: York Oral History Project, 1984).

Questions must also be raised about the interview process. The YOHP selects the respondents, shapes the testimony and gives it its final published format and context. In many cases, interviews have not been approached with rigour, and demonstrate little attempt to represent a cross-section of the community. Paul Thompson attempted to ensure his research was broadly representative of early twentieth-century social structure by taking a quota sample of 44 informants based on the census categories of 1911.⁵⁴ The YOHP uses a small selection of interviewees – their sample inevitably limited by the later date of the project – and presents their experiences as typical of all residents of the area. The interview questions are not always included in the transcripts, (and never in the publications), and are often leading.⁵⁵ Interviews are largely structured around the life-history of the individual narrator. The transcripts themselves are often incomplete or inaccurate, with place names repeatedly misspelt. There is no attempt to record the tone, pacing or inflection of the speaker, and when dialects are noted, there is no consistency across the transcripts. Many of these issues no doubt derive from the YOHP being a voluntary project, and interviews are often recorded and transcribed by a broad section of volunteers with varying experience. Often volunteers are drawn from the same local community, and interviewers regularly infuse their vision of the past into the interview; telling respondents about their own experiences and asking if respondents ‘remember x or y?’⁵⁶ There are also cases in which the narrator is clearly trying to tell the interviewer what they believe he or she wants to hear.⁵⁷ The power of the interviewer to manipulate and distort has been well documented, and in this local historians encounter particular problems.⁵⁸ The interviews represent a conversational narrative, and it is important that this is reflected in both the transcripts and publications. The context of each transcript depends very much on the interviewer, their questions, dialogue and aim, and this is not satisfactorily explored in the YOHP collection. However, the oral history material can offer a

⁵⁴ Thompson, *The Edwardians*.

⁵⁵ In one example, the interviewer asks Annie Butler if she thinks women have a better life now, before answering her own question with ‘I think the changes nowadays are that most women work’ and then asking Annie to comment. Interview with Annie Butler, born 1896, YOHP.

⁵⁶ This is evident in the interviews with Annie Pinder, born 1904 and Lousia Aldrich, born 1919, YOHP.

⁵⁷ Nell Fearn, for example, asks ‘Was that alright?’ after describing the area of Hungate in which she grew up. Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918, YOHP.

⁵⁸ William L. Land and Laurie K. Mercier, ‘Getting it Down Right: oral history’s reliability in local history research’, *Oral History Review*, 12 (1984), 81-99.

glimpse into working-class experiences and attitudes, and interviews are used here to inform and enrich rather than as a solid basis for firm conclusions. Information on respondents is provided in the appendix.

It is important to consider the institutional contexts which generated these sources, particularly the records of the Penitentiary, police files, and newspaper and court reports. All too often they present episodic and fragmentary narratives, although by bringing together evidence from the various sources outlined above, it is possible to begin to piece together a detailed picture of young working-class street life. It is young people's perception of the street and public space that this thesis explores, considering their engagement with the environment of late nineteenth and early twentieth century York, and how assumptions about the meanings of space were contested and controlled. Reading the various sources together and against each other allows for a greater understanding of the spatial and behavioural experiences of the young people of the city. While a wide range of source material has been consulted, in no sense can these records be considered to offer a straightforward account of 'how life was'. The sources are in places contradictory and confusing, and throughout filtered through the perceptions of those generating the material. What they can offer, however, is an intriguing commentary on how the residents of York perceived space, and how the young working class used, understood and engaged with the city.

While the account of young working-class life presented here aims to be a comprehensive study, constraints of space and the limitations of the source material mean that omissions remain. The most notable silence in the sources is the voice of those young working men and women who looked to experiment with and exhibit same sex love and desire. Matt Cook has noted that in London homosexual men could increasingly be identified by their presence in particular spaces, and in much the same way that young heterosexual couples could take advantage of public space for sociability and intimacy, the city could provide opportunities for young homosexual men and women.⁵⁹ York's local press reported on notorious national trials and scandalous cases, but the lack of local detail is striking in its absence.⁶⁰ It would appear that those in York who wished to meet partners of the same sex had to

⁵⁹ Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality*, p.8.

⁶⁰ For example, *York Herald*, 2 May 1888, 6 April 1895 and 27 May 1895.

carve out their own opportunities, and operated with discretion, rendering them all but invisible to the historian.

Conclusion

The focus of this thesis, then, is how through their leisure and courtship activities the young working class of York engaged with their environment of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century city. The central theme of the study is how we can understand the interactions between space, youth, leisure, and courtship, considering how the young working class used the city as a resource to meet their own needs, and attempted to impress upon it their own desires. York's young men and women attempted to make some parts of the city their own; defending the streets of Hungate and Walmgate as territory, or claiming Coney Street on Saturday and Sunday evenings, but this thesis does not simply consider these places in isolation. The first chapter will begin with a tour of the city, utilising a broad range of sources to recreate the urban environment of late nineteenth and early twentieth century York, hoping to impart something of a sense of space and place and support the themes considered in subsequent chapters. This chapter will further reflect upon a number of theoretical arguments about space and place and consider how to relate the realities of everyday life to these more abstract ideas about space and social relations.

Chapter two considers the 'typical slum' districts of York – focusing in particular on the squalor, overcrowding, and lack of personal space which witnessed leisure and courtship increasingly move out of the home and neighbourhood. It will further consider the way these areas were represented by newspapers, social surveys, court reports and health inspections, and reflect upon how the young people who lived and socialised in this district interacted with ideas about their neighbourhood and the sense of ownership they could feel over its streets. The following chapter explores how the young working class of York engaged with the leisure opportunities available to them. There were those in the city who believed that leisure activities should promote moral values and teach good character, condemning certain recreations as trivial at best, and at worst, damaging to both individual and society. Chapter three traces the 'wholesome influences' and 'dangerous

amusements' available to young people, and argues that in York leisure activities moved outside the 'social control' and resistance model to become independent working-class leisure. Young people were not passive consumers of leisure; they made active choices and took advantage of a range of opportunities, engaging with both the 'dangerous amusements' and 'wholesome influences' that York had to offer.

The fourth chapter on regulating behaviour in the public spaces of the city explores the notion of public space and how it was perceived in late nineteenth and early twentieth century York. It examines how the street was invested with meanings that both reflected and structured social practices, and is based on a close study on the actions of the police and civic authorities, the groups who largely enforced regulations concerning the social and physical environment of the street. A range of behaviours – gambling, loitering, fighting, drunkenness and swearing – are examined to consider the ways in which the police, magistrates and reform institutions attempted to control the urban space in which young people's social relations played out. Chapter five builds on this analysis to focus on the gendered nature of street surveillance and regulation, considering in particular the role of female reform intuitions like the York Penitentiary Society, as well as the police and magistrates. Expectations and concerns about working-class use of space reflected the prevailing gender ideology, and the public presence of women was persistently identified with disorderly sexuality, particularly in the evenings.

The final chapter considers how the young working class of York challenged and changed the meanings of public space, with a particular focus on the Coney Street 'monkey run' – a popular youth custom that saw young people parade up and down the street on Saturday and Sunday evenings, socialising with friends and showing off in front of the opposite sex. Through their repeated social activities, the young working class of York were able to negotiate a new understanding of this particular public space. Finally, in conclusion, the episodes and experiences examined in the thesis are drawn together to highlight the active role that the young working class of York played in understanding and engaging with their environment, and it is argued that studying the young working class through the prism of space can provide valuable insights into everyday life, and further develop historical understandings of the ways in which people and places interact.

CHAPTER ONE

‘POOR, PROUD AND PRETTY’: YORK IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

Introduction

The young people of York used the streets and public spaces of the city to meet, stroll and socialise, and how the young working class experienced their city is a central concern of this study. What was going on in the streets of York; what did they look like; how accessible were they; how did people behave in them? How did the young working class of York understand and engage with their environment? Space is of central importance to this examination of the leisure and courtship activities of York’s young working class. The key contexts of their lives: home, family, work, leisure, courtship, community, all took place in physical locations, but these were also cultural spaces framing social interaction. The everyday life of the city was constructed around rituals of space, time and season, and it is essential to relate the more abstract ideas about space and social relations with the realities of everyday life. The young working class of York actively used the city as a resource to meet their own needs, and this study reflects on how the public and neighbourhood spaces of the city shaped, and were shaped by, their leisure and courtship activities.

It is important to explore the urban environment of late nineteenth and early twentieth century York before being able to consider what meaning this space had for the residents of the city, and how these meanings were communicated, controlled and contested. Specific spaces and places are discussed below in some depth, aiming to present sufficient detail to provide something of a sense of place, and support subsequent explorations of how the streets and public spaces of York were experienced and understood. As Patrick Joyce states, when attempting to convey some sense of the lived experience of a city, it is perhaps no bad thing to have lived there; and my own explorations of York and its streets, neighbourhoods, buildings,

and parks have been instrumental to this study, opening up the city and at times offering glimpses of York's recent past.¹

1. Space and place

Space is a powerful concept, and it shapes behaviour in profound ways. It is the context for the way people act, think, and feel. The ways in which a particular society assigns meaning to the physical environment has been examined by geographers as dictated by cultural beliefs rather than any intrinsic aspect of space itself.² Space is not neutral, it is a product, created by social relationships which dictate how it is organised and given meaning.³ How was space perceived in late nineteenth and early twentieth century York, and how did the young working class of York produce *their* space?

The term 'space' has been used to refer to things as distinct as the gap between words on a page to the expanse of the unknown universe, as well as being the subject of an abundant literature from varied disciplines.⁴ Entries on space occupy over two full pages in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and it is used to mean different things, and different disciplines 'do space' differently.⁵ As identified in contributions to the forum 'At Home and in the Workplace: Domestic and Occupational Space in Western Europe from the Middle Ages', space has been given so many meanings and qualities that it is hard to know for sure what *would not* be space; it encompasses actions, representation, communication, meaning, distance,

¹ Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London: Verso, 2003), p. 9.

² David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (London: Edward Arnold, 1973); Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976); Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991) and Y-F. Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

³ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

⁴ There is a wealth of literature that questions the notion of space, its definitions and varieties, as well as its importance to human activity and communities, and this chapter engages with just a few key works. The approach to space and place which underpins this study is informed by several spatial theories while adhering to no one in particular, although the principal works of Lefebvre and de Certeau have been particularly influential. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* and Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Rendall (London: University of California Press, 1988).

⁵ Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. prepared by J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989). Hereafter referred to as *OED*.

virtuality, and materiality.⁶ Across all disciplines, the work of French social theorists has inspired an increasing focus on space, and following the translation of Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991), the ways historians have thought about space has changed in a number of ways. Space is not an inert background for actions and products; rather it is the outcome of a complex interplay between the way it is used, the way it is represented and the way it is conceived.⁷ Space – urban space, social space, physical space, experiential space – is not just the staging of reproductive requirements, but ‘part of the cast, and a vital, productive member of the cast at that’.⁸ Geographers such as Doreen Massey, David Harvey, Neil Smith and Edward Soja have all argued that space is a product of social relations and processes rather than a neutral and empty container to be filled.⁹ In *Social Justice and the City* (1973) Harvey proposed that ‘the question “what is space” [must] ... be replaced by the question “how is it that distinctive human practices create and make use of distinctive ... spaces?”’ and it is the significance of space for understanding human interaction and behaviour that is central to this study.¹⁰ Were the spaces and places in which the leisure and courtship activities of York's young working class played out simply a location for these activities, or did the space itself shape the activities – and what does this relationship reveal about the social interactions and experiences of York's young wage earners? Social practices create spaces and these spaces in turn constrain, enable and modify those practices. Space is not inert, but a fundamental and changing part of everyday life, one which is intimately connected to social rituals and activities. ‘Spatiality is socially produced and, like society itself, exists in both substantial forms (concrete spatialities) and a set of relations between individuals and groups, an “embodiment” and medium of social life itself’.¹¹

⁶ Leif Jerram, ‘Space: A Useless Category for Historical Analysis?’, *History and Theory*, 52: 3 (2013), 400-419 and Gerd Schwerhoff, ‘Spaces, Places, and the Historians: A Comment from a German Perspective’, *History and Theory*, 52: 3 (2013), 420-432.

⁷ Peter Arnade, Martha C. Howell and Walter Simons, ‘Fertile Spaces: The Productivity of Urban Space in Northern Europe’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 32:4 (2002), 517-8.

⁸ Andy Merrifield, ‘Henri Lefebvre: A Socialist in Space’, in *Thinking Space*, ed. by M. Crang and N. Thrift (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 167-182.

⁹ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994); Harvey, *Social Justice and the City*; Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984) and Edward Soja, ‘Reassertions: Towards a Spatialised Ontology’ in *Human Geography: An Essential Anthology*, ed. by J. Agnew, D. N. Livingstone and A. Rogers (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), pp. 623-635.

¹⁰ Harvey, *Social Justice and the City*, p. 14.

¹¹ Soja, p. 625.

The use of gender as an analytical tool resulted in a particularly sustained examination of the role of space and place in past and present societies. Anthropologist Henrietta Moore was one of the first to examine the relationship between gender and space, analysing the ways men and women, as well as conventional notions of masculinity and femininity, were defined across both time and space.¹² Feminist geographers such as Doreen Massey and Gillian Rose also maintain that space is produced by and productive of gender relations, and criticised geographers including Harvey and Soja for ignoring how gender transforms space and society. For Massey ‘space and place, spaces and places, and our senses of them ... are gendered through and through’.¹³ Gender relations were constituted by uses of space and played a part in determining spatial practices. In *City of Dreadful Delight* (1992), Judith R. Walkowitz highlights the ways in which urban spaces were classed and gendered, and restates that rather than an empty and neutral background to actions, space was an active element in the constitution of social identities.¹⁴ Gender is embedded in the social and spatial practices of the city.

Space, then, is understood as the context for human interactions, but is much more than simply an empty vessel or backdrop to social relations. Space actively structures the way people behave, while it in turn is shaped by repeated social practices. The idea of space primarily as a setting for urban life is common in historical research, and for many the interest of the townscape lies in what it reflects about social attitudes or economic trends rather than how it acts to structure these attitudes. Andy Croll in his examination of popular culture and public space in Merthyr Tydfil describes how the streets and public spaces were used for social activities, but does not say much about the links between space and society, and nothing about how the nature of particular places may have influenced activities. Colin Pooley also noted the complete absence of maps or photographs in the study, with no attempt to convey any sense of what the urban spaces of Merthyr looked

¹² Henrietta L. Moore, *Feminism and Anthropology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988) and *Space, Text and Gender: An Anthropological Study of the Marakwet of Kenya* (London: Guilford, 1999).

¹³ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p. 3; Gillian Rose and Miles Ogborn, ‘Feminism and Historical Geography’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 14: 4 (1988), 405-409 and Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).

¹⁴ Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago Press, 1992). For further discussion of Walkowitz’s work, and how gender was rooted in the social and spatial practices of late nineteenth and early twentieth century York, see chapter five.

like.¹⁵ Other historians have taken on space more directly; examining its importance in both a range of specific empirical contexts and in a broader theoretical sense.¹⁶

Like space, *place* can range in scale from the favourite comfy old rocking chair by the fireplace to the whole of planet earth, and in the geographical literature, place has been given several meanings.¹⁷ In its most fundamental everyday usage, place has been used synonymously with location, but such a definition belies its conceptual complexity. Place is a changing and contested concept, and there have been considerable debates about its nature.¹⁸ Following Yi-Fu Tuan, humanistic geographers have seen place as space made meaningful; ‘what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value’.¹⁹ Place is experienced, felt and sensed, and ‘space becomes place when it is used and lived’.²⁰ It is also important to recognise, however, that constructions of place are not natural; meanings of place can be used in regressive or reactionary ways, but they can also be transgressed, contested, and resisted.²¹ While space becomes place when invested with meanings, such meanings are not fixed; they are always open to resistance and challenge. This study is concerned with how through their leisure and courtship activities the young working class of York produced their

¹⁵ Andy Croll, *Civilising the Urban: Popular Culture and Public Space in Merthyr, c.1870-1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000) and Colin Pooley, ‘Space, Society and History’, *Journal of Urban History*, 31:5 (2005), 753-761 (p. 759).

¹⁶ For example, William H. Sewell, Jr, presents a systematic theoretical account of the role of space in political contention, arguing that questions of space are crucial in making sense of both relatively limited social movements and larger social upheavals. William H. Sewell, Jr., ‘Space in Contentious Politics’, in *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*, ed. by R. R. Aminzade et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 51–88. Christina Parolin examines the relationship between radical activity and the spaces in which it operated in London from the 1790s to the 1840s, noting how venues were turned into radical spaces by those who populated them, but that the effect clearly worked both ways. Christina Parolin, *Radical Spaces: Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790-1845* (Acton: Australian National University Press, 2010).

¹⁷ Yi-Fu Tuan, ‘Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective’, in *Philosophy in Geography*, ed. by Stephen Gale and Gunnar Orsson (Boston : D. Reidel, 1979), pp. 387-427 (p. 387).

¹⁸ For a summary of some of these debates see Tim Cresswell, ‘Place’ in *International Encyclopaedia of Human Geography*, ed. by Nigel Thrift and Rob Kitchen, vol. 8 (Oxford: Elsevier, 2009), pp. 169-177.

¹⁹ Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, p. 6.

²⁰ Cresswell, p. 172.

²¹ David Harvey, ‘From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity’ in *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, ed. by Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, Tim Putnam, George Robertson and Lisa Tickner (London: Routledge, 1993) pp. 3-29. The home can be used as a key example; for some it is the ideal place – one where they can feel secure, safe and loved, but it can also be the site of patriarchal authority or exclusion for those who don’t fit the ideal, such as the homeless or the nomadic. David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 99.

space; the urban environment of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century city, and how they invested these places with their own meanings.

1.2 Walking in the city

In ‘Walking in the city’ Michel de Certeau, from the vantage of the World Trade Centre in New York, argues that the city is generated by the strategies of governments and institutional bodies who describe it as a unified whole.²² However, it is people walking in the streets who bring a city to life, and pedestrians and those at street level move in tactical ways, never fully determined by the plans of these bodies, taking shortcuts and exploring the city in their own ways. Strategies are used by those within organisational power structures, while tactics are employed by those at street level, and are defensive and opportunistic, and seized momentarily within both physical and psychological spaces.²³ Rational and abstract ‘mapping’ of the city was being undertaken by social investigators and the civic authorities; various groups set about recording the ‘slums’ of Victorian and Edwardian York, trying to bring understanding and order to the city’s ‘mean little streets’, courts and yards.²⁴ The nature of the records means that in recreating the urban environment of late nineteenth and early twentieth century York, attention is inevitably focused on the authoritative view of the city presented by statistical and social surveyors, or on transgressions or exceptional events which were reported in the newspapers or featured in court reports. It is easy to lose sight of the fact that the streets and public spaces of the city were primarily the setting for everyday social interactions. ‘Everyday life consists of the little things one hardly notices in time and space’, and gestures, noises and smells are much harder to trace through the historical record.²⁵

²² de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Fred Milburn, a teenager in the Edwardian years, described the ‘mean little streets’ of the Walmgate district. Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP. For further discussion of how the ‘slum’ districts of York were identified and interpreted, see chapter two, pp. 69-88. Both Foucault and Lefebvre have observed how western cities became subject to new kinds of statistical knowledge from the early nineteenth century. Foucault’s analyses of surveillance and its role in the generation of knowledge is particularly relevant to the discussion here. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* and Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991).

²⁵ Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century: Vol. I. The Structure of Everyday Life*, trans. by Siân Reynold (London: Collins, 1981), p. 29.

A street map may provide a plan of an organised and idealised reality, while Rowntree's *Poverty* map divided the city into distinct zones, separating the poorest districts of the city from those inhabited by 'the servant keeping class', but people walking create a number of different and less ordered patterns.²⁶ Historians have traced the practice of walking in the city, from the trudge of the policeman walking his beat, to the lounge of aristocratic walkers of leisure, the brisk and efficient march of the middle-class commuter, and the activities of specialist streetwalkers; those who plied their trade in the streets and public spaces of the city.²⁷ Much less is known, however, about the walking activities of young people. For the young working class in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, walking was a feature of life. They strolled, promenaded, cruised, loitered, skulked and tramped across the city. They walked through the city as part of their everyday routines, travelling between home and work, visiting friends, or simply meeting up and walking the streets. From the 1890s the young workers at Rowntree's had to walk to the factory on Haxby Road, ready to start work at half past seven, though if they were late 'when you got there they'd slam the door in your face, lock you out', meaning the loss of half a day's wage.²⁸ The young Irish farm labourers who lived in Walmgate but worked as far afield as Tollerton and Wheldrake must have undertaken a daily round trip of up to twenty miles.²⁹ York Oral History Project (YOHP) respondents speak frequently of walking as a leisure activity; Stan and Lily Hall walked from Hungate to Heslington, as well as down Lord Mayor's Walk and around busy central streets of the city.³⁰ Many of the young working class led a largely pedestrian existence, and patterns of work, consumption and leisure meant that they could cover vast sections of the city every week. Of course, the exact routes taken by young people through the city cannot be known, in some cases they must have taken the most direct route from A to B, but in others they may have taken more meandering journeys, taking in particular sites, going through specific streets, and walking past certain places.

²⁶ de Certeau, , pp. 91-110 and Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*. See also figure 14.

²⁷ For example, see Oliver Betts, "'Knowing" South of the River: Familiarising South London before the First World War', *Urban History Group Annual Conference* (University of Wolverhampton, 27 March 2015); Joanna Guldi, 'The History of Walking and the Digital Turn: Stride and Lounge in London, 1808-1851, *The Journal of Modern History*, 84: 1 (2012), 116-144 and Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*.

²⁸ Interview with Ada Cade, born 1893, YOHP.

²⁹ See chapter three, p.p. 123-124.

³⁰ Interview with Stan Hall born 1911 and Lily Hall, born 1912, YOHP.

The movement of people through space and time interacted to shape both individual and group experiences, and the spatiality of the city. As de Certeau argues, the city is created by people's movements through and appropriations of space. Pedestrian movements form 'one of those real systems whose existence in fact makes up the city'.³¹ Actions of walking in the city were central to the production of urban space, and as the young working class of York walked through the city they traversed neighbourhood and public space, the 'main thoroughfares' and 'principal streets' of the city. The interpretation of 'public' is itself the subject of an extensive literature,³² and urban historians have explored how the physical and social dynamics of public space played a vital role in the formation of public culture.³³ Civic spaces, streets, markets, and parks have been examined as expressions of achievement and aspiration, as sites of encounter and of the formation of civic culture, as well as significant spaces of political deliberation and struggle. For Simon Gunn, public space was defined not only by its functional or spatial dimensions, but by its identification with modernity and power. Widened and improved streets and efforts to keep them clean, in good repair and well-ordered gave visual clues to public space, and also served as reminders of authority.³⁴ These public spaces consisted of areas that were open and accessible to all residents, but freedom of the streets did not equate with license to behave as one wished.³⁵ Use of public spaces required compliance with a particular set of behavioural expectations. Appropriate behaviour could be enforced by the police, although conformity was also promoted as part of the civic ideal; 'in this city of free movement, one had to be in control of oneself'.³⁶

What is important about space and place is not only where it is, but also its location in relation to other spaces. In their everyday activity, young people moved through new spaces, and could bring characteristics of one space into another, one of

³¹ de Certeau, p. 97.

³² See for example, *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. by Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) for a range of articles exploring the mutable character of the public/private dichotomy.

³³ Kate Hill, 'Thoroughly Imbued with the spirit of Ancient Greece: Symbolism and Space in Victorian Civic Culture' in *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940*, ed. by Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 99-111; Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) and Richard Dennis, *Cities in Modernity: Representations and Reproductions of Metropolitan Space, 1840 – 1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

³⁴ Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class*, pp. 4-46.

³⁵ Croll, *Civilising the Urban*, pp. 64-69.

³⁶ Joyce, pp. 86-87.

the reasons why the civic authorities were so concerned over working class use of respectable city centre streets. For Colin Pooley it is essential that studies of space and society should consider not only the home, or the street, or the square, but also the relationship between these spaces, and the ways in which characteristics of space and place were moulded by movements through space.³⁷ Domestic space was nested within neighbourhood space, which was often part of a larger district space. Domestic and work spaces could also be leisure space. It is important, then, to also consider how the young working classes of York moved through the spaces of the city in order to understand their experiences of urban life.

2. York

Founded at the junction of the Rivers Ouse and Foss, the fortress of Eboracum became one of the most important cities of Roman Britain. A permanent settlement developed around the fortress, and by the later second century the city had swiftly expanded; with streets being laid out and public buildings and private houses constructed on the slopes above the Ouse. As the provincial capital, and a busy port, Eboracum was a bustling city that became widely regarded as the second city of the kingdom.³⁸ York further prospered during the later medieval era as both an important trading town and the administrative centre of Yorkshire, and this period left its mark on the city with stone and timber; witnessing the completion of the Minster, and a number of churches rebuilt. In his first edition of *Britannia* (1586), William Camden noted that ‘York is the second city of England, the most beautiful in this region and indeed the whole North’.³⁹ While its economic importance began to wane, in the eighteenth century York firmly cemented its place as the social capital of the north of England. Francis Drake considered there to be ‘no place, out of London, so polite and elegant to live in as the city of York’.⁴⁰ While the physical growth of the city was relatively restricted during this period, attempts to create an attractive

³⁷ Pooley, ‘Space, Society and History’, p. 760.

³⁸ John Hutchinson and D. M. Palliser, *York* (Edinburgh: John Bartholomew and Son Ltd, 1980), p. 8 and Patrick Nuttgens, *York: The Continuing City* (London: Faber, 1976), p. 31.

³⁹ William Camden, ‘Britannia’ (1586) in *York As They Saw It: From Alcuin to Lord Esher*, ed. by D. M. and Mary Palliser (York: Sessions Trust, 1979), p. 23.

⁴⁰ Francis Drake, *Eboracum: or, the History and Antiquities of the City of York*, reprinted with a new introduction by K. J. Allison (Wakefield: EP Publishing, 1978 [1736]), p. 241.

environment to appeal to the gentry who increasingly congregated in the city saw York undergo a process of ‘qualitative urbanisation’, as the differences between the wide avenues and public squares frequented by the elite and the dank and overcrowded areas traditionally inhabited by the city’s poor became increasingly marked.⁴¹ Street widening and improvement schemes improved access to the Blake Street Assembly Rooms, erected in 1732, and the tree lined Lord Mayor’s Walk, built in 1718, was quickly followed by New Walk, constructed as a place for the gentry to promenade along the east bank of the River Ouse. The Corporation was spending feely on improvements to the city, and they continued to spend considerable sums for maintenance of the New Walk.⁴² Roads were paved, streets were lit and the Knavesmire was drained at the expense of the Corporation, who promoted the values of, and provided a venue for, politeness; a ‘response to the pressures of urban living’, and the cultivation and display of polite manners took place in the social spaces of the urban locale.⁴³

The spaces and places of polite society restructured the urban built environment of eighteenth century York, but the subtext of this improvement was segregation. The wide avenues of Bootham and the genteel entertainment that took place in the Assembly Rooms could hardly have been more different from the dark and overcrowded streets of the Hungate and Walmgate districts, which for many commentators came to embody vice and poverty. Street widening and lighting schemes had little impact on the poorer districts of the city; in 1878 the *York Herald* reported on ‘loud laughter’ amongst the council members when it was suggested that repaving the streets of the Hungate district was an urgently needed task.⁴⁴ The directors of the Assembly Rooms took steps to prevent the working classes from enjoying the facilities, attempting to limit servants’ access to the main areas of entertainment, and the Corporation attempted to suppress any activities that did not chime with the New Walk’s polite ambience.⁴⁵ Traditionally an area used by many working-class residents for swimming and drying laundry, in 1742 the Corporation

⁴¹ *Eighteenth Century York: Culture, Space and Society*, ed. by Mark Hallett and Jane Rendall (York: University of York Publications, 2003), p. 6.

⁴² YCA, Minutes of Full Council, Y/COU/1/1, House Book 43, 28 February 1739.

⁴³ R. H. Sweet, ‘Topographies of Politeness’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), 355-374 (p. 355).

⁴⁴ *York Herald*, 6 July 1878.

⁴⁵ *Eighteenth Century York*, p. 8.



Figure 2. Museum Street looking towards the Minster c.1880. When the Poor Law Guardians proposed moving their offices here in 1859 they were met with a flurry of protest. Image courtesy of Imagine York Photographic Archive (Imagine York), YCA, <www.exploreyork.org.uk/client/en_GB/yorkimages/> [accessed 12 July 2013].

placed adverts in the local papers prohibiting people exposing themselves in the water ‘within the view of the New Walk’.⁴⁶

The development of increasingly segregated areas continued through the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. When the Poor Law Guardians proposed moving their offices to Museum Street in 1859 they were faced with a flurry of protest. Both the *York Herald* and the *Yorkshire Gazette* received numerous complaints from residents concerned that the offices would be too close to the theatre, the Assembly Rooms, Museum Gardens and, perhaps most importantly, the houses occupied by the more affluent residents of the city. The Lord Mayor also expressed concern that the new location would create ‘closer and more direct communication between the infected districts and the better districts of the city, and thus spread disease’.⁴⁷ One protestor summed up the proceedings: ‘in every town there are localities for the poor and industrious, and localities for the affluent and

⁴⁶ Minutes of Full Council, Y/COU/1/1, House Book 43, 14 July 1742.

⁴⁷ *York Herald*, 10 September 1859.

comparatively idle, and that it is for the comfort of both classes to keep them as distinct as possible'.⁴⁸ It was with this in mind that one correspondent to the *Gazette* noted that 'as many parties receiving relief lived in Walmgate and its neighbourhood, a better site might have been chosen', and the Lord Mayor offered an array of alternative locations; 'the bulk of the poor and industrious classes of York are in the neighbourhoods of Walmgate, Fossgate, Peasholme Green [Hungate] and the Water Lanes'.⁴⁹

During the nineteenth century, York failed to industrialise in the same way as many northern cities, and for much of the century the economy was geared around agriculture and the service industry.⁵⁰ While York may have 'never been submerged by the industrial revolution', the population of the city did grow rapidly.⁵¹ At the time of the first census in 1801 the population was recorded as 16,846, increasing to almost 78,000 a century later, and Table 1 shows population growth in the county borough of York between 1831 and 1921. The city itself also grew in size, incorporating a number of outlying villages and witnessing the development of a number of housing areas outside the city walls. The railway brought jobs and industry, employing approximately 5,500 people by 1900, and they also enabled York's confectioners to develop into national businesses. The Terry, Rowntree and Craven firms independently moved into confectionery, and York became a centre for the production of cocoa and sweets. In the 1870s Rowntree's employed less than a dozen men at its Tanner's Moat premises, but by 1904, after the move to a new 24 acre site off Haxby Road, there were 2,945 employees, many of them young, single women. Rowntree noted the 'large demand for young persons. Practically every capable boy and girl can find employment in the factories'.⁵² By 1911, confectionary and the railways accounted for a quarter of all jobs in the city, and were a feature of life for many of York's families:

⁴⁸ *York Herald*, 10 September 1859.

⁴⁹ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 10 September 1859.

⁵⁰ Alan Armstrong, *Stability and Change in an English County Town: A Social Study of York, 1801-51* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

⁵¹ K. E. T. Wilson, 'What of the future?' *Yorkshire Gazette*, 28 June 1919.

⁵² Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 11.

Table 1

Population Growth in the County Borough of York, 1831 - 1921

	Population within the 1893 boundaries	Inter-censal increase	
		<i>Persons</i>	<i>Per-cent</i>
1831	29, 020		
1841	32, 130	3, 110	10.7
1851	40, 980	8, 850	27.5
1861	46, 225	5, 245	12.8
1871	51, 480	5,255	11.4
1881	62, 598	11, 118	21.6
1891	67, 841	5, 243	8.4
1901	77, 914	10, 073	14.8
1911	82, 282	4, 368	5.6
1921	84, 039	1, 757	2.1

Source: Charles Feinstein, 'Population, Occupations and Economic Development, 1831-1891' in *York 1831-1981: 150 years of scientific endeavour and social change*, ed. by Charles Feinstein (York: William Sessions, 1981), p 113; and *The Victoria County History of the Counties of England: A History of Yorkshire, The City of York*, ed. by P. M. Tillot (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 254. Hereafter referred to as *VCH, York*. During the nineteenth century there were a number of different definitions of 'York', and boundary changes affected how the population was counted. This table considers the growth of the city within a constant boundary, that of 1893.

Most of the girls and boys left school at the age of fourteen and went either to Rowntree's, Terry's or the railway ... many York homes can thank God and the three firms in particular ... especially Rowntree's, for their happy homes, regular employment and good standard of living.⁵³

Confectionery manufacturing and the railways may have dominated the York labour market by the early years of the twentieth century, and they certainly provided the major source of employment for the young men of the city (see Table 2), but domestic service remained a large employer for young women in this period. Table 3

⁵³ Charles Bean, born 1904, cited in Masters, p. 35.

Table 2.

Occupations and Ages in the 1901 Census: Males

Occupation	Ages of Males					Total
	10-14	15-24	25-44	45-64	65+	
Legal, barristers, solicitors			31	19	9	59
Law clerks	6	54	51	11	3	125
Domestic service (hotels, lodgings and eating houses)	3	33	22	11	1	70
Domestic service (other)	8	29		27	13	77
Commercial or business clerks	33	354	252	62	8	709
Conveyance of men, good and messages on railways	10	866	1380	588	52	2896
Iron-founders	1	50	85	41	8	185
Blacksmiths	4	113	252	115	11	495
Erectors, fitters, turners	6	197	321	128	21	673
Carpenters, joiners	13	350	408	292	43	1106
Bricklayers and bricklayers labourers	1	278	384	205	26	894
Printers, lithographers	11	104	162	10	5	322
Food workers	101	666	417	130	16	1130
Food dealers	18	384	482	239	49	1172
Gas, water, electricity	1	30	82	54	13	180
Sanitary service		6	9	12	1	28

Source: A. J. Peacock, *York 1900-1914* (York: York Settlement Trust, 1992), pp. 37-38.

Table 3.

Occupations and Ages in the 1901 Census: Females

Occupation	Ages of Females					Total
	10-14	15-24	25-44	45-64	65+	
Domestic service (hotels and eating houses)	6	1	82	46	9	144
Domestic service (other)	108	1868	895	230	23	3124
Charwomen	-	-	-	-	-	291
Laundry and washing service	8	158	156	124	16	462
Teaching	6	229	195	44	7	481
Food workers	112	910	132	5	-	1159
Milliners, dressmakers	26	516	343	97	21	1003
Midwives	1	57	105	56	10	229

Source: Peacock, *York 1900-1914*, p. 37.

sets out female occupations as listed in the 1901 census, when 47.4 per-cent of women were employed in service, and of these 60.6 per-cent were aged ten to twenty four. On leaving school at fourteen Ruth Redpath had a job at Terry's, but her mother was against it; 'you're not going in no common factory, you're not going – you're going in service'.⁵⁴

One YOHP respondent recalled that in the early twentieth century 'York was known as the three P's – poor, proud and pretty'.⁵⁵ Known to the increasing number of visitors for its Minster, Shambles, walls and bars, many would see next to nothing of the slums of Hungate or the overcrowded yards off the Walmgate thoroughfare. At the turn of the century B. Seebohm Rowntree's social survey *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (1901) revealed the grim reality of life in these poor districts, as throughout the nineteenth century the differences between the poor districts and the

⁵⁴ Interview with Ruth Redpath, born 1914, YOHP.

⁵⁵ Interview with Mrs Raynolds, born 1903, YOHP.

wide avenues and larger houses outside the city walls inhabited by more affluent residents became increasingly pronounced.⁵⁶ As the better-off moved into new districts of working-class housing in areas like Holgate Road, Nunnery Lane and the Groves, social stratification became more firmly based on a geographical basis. Areas like the Water Lanes, demolished in 1881, had earned a reputation for vice and extreme poverty, and it is hard to imagine that respectable residents would choose to visit such places, yet in other parts of the city it was easy to step from the relative respectability of the main Walmgate thoroughfare into the squalor of Hope Street or Malt Shovel Yard. For residents to move safely around the city they would need knowledge of these less reputable areas. Other liminal spaces, however, may have been harder to define, and the boundaries separating such areas may have been more difficult to classify than in larger urban centres. In the 1920s and 30s the urban landscape of York was dramatically changed with the large scale clearance of the Hungate district, and some areas of Walmgate, continuing earlier slum clearance efforts in the Water Lanes and Bedern areas.

3. Space and place: walking in the city

Standing from the vantage point of the York Minster tower, or the city walls, in the nineteenth century streets one could see hints of the original Eboracum. Central thoroughfares of York had been in use since Roman times, with Stonegate starting life as the Praetorian Way, and Walmgate forming part of the Roman road from the fortress through to Lincoln and the South.⁵⁷ Nathaniel Whittock's 1856 watercolour, 'Bird's Eye View of York' – engraved in 1858 by John Storey – offered a panoramic view of the city as seen from a hot air balloon, and rather like de Certeau surveying Manhattan from the 100th floor of the World Trade Centre, observing York from this

⁵⁶ Rowntree's first poverty survey revealed that 28% of the population in York were living in poverty, with almost 10% of these below the poverty line – the amount of income needed for basic physical efficiency. Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, pp. 86-118.

⁵⁷ Palliser, *Tudor York*, p. 8.



Figure 3. View across the city from the tower of the Minster, c.1900. Leetham's Flour Mill and Hungate can be seen in the distance. Image courtesy of Imagine York [accessed 12 July 2013].

perspective might give the impression of the city as relatively static.⁵⁸ The height and bulk of the Minster, embodying a history that goes back generations, and the solid stone of the city walls lent the city a spurious unchanging quality. However, at street level, the city was in a process of continual flux and change. The physical urban environment was evolving, with slum clearances and street improvements changing the fabric of the city, and the meanings of the city and its streets and public spaces were also changing. Buildings and shops were changing uses, and the residents of the city used public spaces according to their own needs.⁵⁹ The sights, smells and sounds of the street were very different from the static view of the city gained from observing at a distance.

Near the Minster, streets such as Aldwark, St Andrewgate, Bedern, Finkle Street, Grape Lane, Swinegate and Goodramgate formed the medieval heart of the city. By the late nineteenth century, the formerly large houses that once surrounded the Bedern court had been converted into miserable tenements. Once the residence of the Vicars Choral, who by the early nineteenth century leased out the buildings, whole families could now be found sharing one small room. A petition was sent to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1844 by residents of neighbouring streets to complain since the Vicars Choral had abandoned the area ‘nearly all the respectable part of the inhabitants have left their residences’, and that ‘their late residences have all been let off in single rooms, many of them filled with whores, thieves, street-walkers, etc., thereby bringing ... great disgrace and scandal upon the Church of England’.⁶⁰

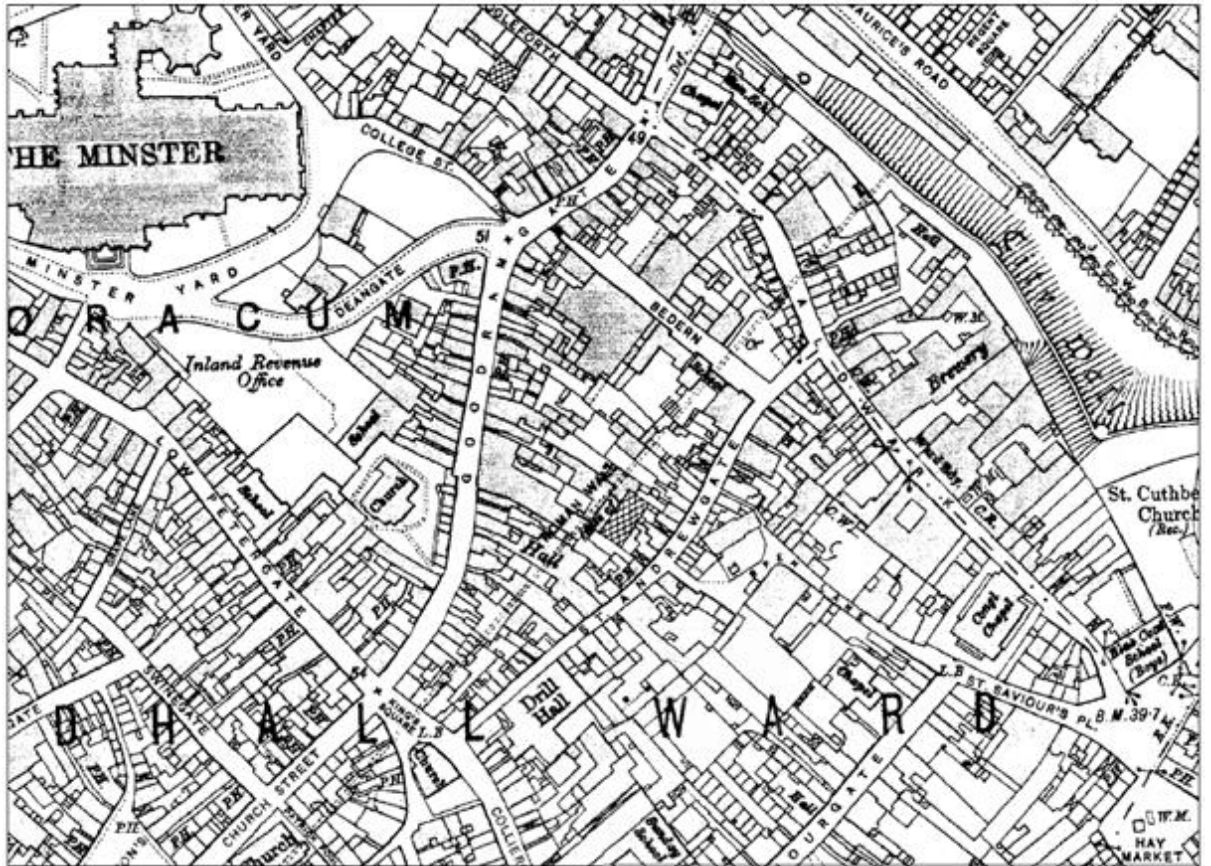
With its reputation for vice and disorder, the Bedern came also to be associated with the Irish immigrant community, which from 1851 onwards came to make up the majority of its inhabitants.⁶¹ While the area was notorious long before the arrival of the Irish, for many contemporaries the insanitary conditions and lawless reputation of the district were indistinguishable from the reputation of the Irish community itself. In 1872 a report was commissioned on the area by the

⁵⁸ Peter B. Brown, *Views of York: Portrait of a City, 1610 to present day* (York: York Civic Trust, 2012), pp. 172-199.

⁵⁹ See chapter six for detailed discussion of how the young working class resisted and challenged the dominant meanings of Coney Street.

⁶⁰ York, York Minster Library Archives, Records of the Vicars’ Choral, Petition to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England and Wales, July 1844.

⁶¹ Frances Finnegan, *Poverty and Prejudice: A Study of Irish Immigrants in York, 1840-1875*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 1982), p. 140.



Scale 1: 2500

Figure 4. The medieval core of the city c.1900. Finkle Street is pictured in the bottom left, leading from St Sampson's Square towards Swinegate. © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited 2014. All rights reserved. 1900.

Corporation, and the residents of nearby Goodramgate petitioned for the complete removal of all the dwellings there.⁶² Conditions in the area did improve over the period of this study, but the tenements continued to be densely populated, and held a particular place in popular imaginings of the city. Many of these streets near the Minster had a long standing association with prostitution. Frances Finnegan traced references to Grape Lane and Finkle Street in association with harlotry, fornication and licensed brothels in texts from the Middle Ages, and they are referred to in Francis Drake's history of York, *Eboracum* (1736).⁶³ First recorded as Grapcunt Lane in 1329, the name Grape Lane itself derives from the old English *grapian* 'to grope' and middle English *cunt*, which D. M. Palliser notes could be a reference to

⁶² Y/COU/1/2, House Book 13, 3 June 1872.

⁶³ Finnegan, *Poverty and Prejudice*, p. 23.

the bawdy reputation of the secluded alley, or perhaps refer to the site of one or more brothels.⁶⁴ Finkle Street, the narrow lane leading from the corner of St Sampson's Square to Swinegate was known as 'Mucky Peg Lane'. Audrey Peace, who was born in Finkle Street, recalled the various origins of the name: 'It was known as Mucky Peg's Lane. Tales differed, one said there was a prostitute that lived down there but somebody said it was called Mucky Pig's Lane because when drovers brought stuff from the cattle market, that's where they drove pigs through into Swinegate'.⁶⁵ In 1880 the Watch Committee received a complaint from the vicar of St Sampson's about the state of Finkle Street, which was a 'demoralising influence in the midst of a respectable district'.⁶⁶

Moving away from the Minster area and towards the river, the principal shopping and commercial districts could be found; Parliament Street and Coney Street. In the early nineteenth century, Thursday Market (later known as St Sampson's Square) and Pavement had become inadequate, and the two market places were connected by the construction of Parliament Street. The Parliament Street market opened in 1836, and the adjoining St Sampson's Square also held a market. The Martinmas Fair and annual statute hirings were held here. The Saturday evening Parliament Street Market often provided a source of free entertainment as well as cheap food. Louisa Aldrich often 'used to go scrounging' around the market on a Saturday evening with friends to 'see if they'd anything to give away'.⁶⁷

Largely comprised of solicitors' offices, banks and tailors' shops, Coney Street's central position made it the connecting link between the northern and central and southern districts of the city, and it had long been established as the main shopping street of York. In the later nineteenth century it was also the site of the 'monkey run'.⁶⁸ As the site of the Mansion House and Guildhall, the *York Herald* offices and numerous banks and solicitors' premises it was obviously frequented by

⁶⁴ Palliser also notes that the state of the redundant St Benedict's Church was a cause for concern in the early and mid-fourteenth century, and perhaps for a time adapted as a brothel. D. M Palliser, 'The Medieval Street-names of York', *York Historian*, 2 (1978), pp. 10-11.

⁶⁵ Interview with Audrey Peace, born 1927, YOHP.

⁶⁶ YCA, Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 5, 20 June 1880.

⁶⁷ Interview with Louisa Aldrich, born 1919, YOHP.

⁶⁸ The 'monkey run' was a popular youth custom that saw young people parade up and down Coney Street, socialising with friends and showing off in front of the opposite sex. See chapter six.



Scale 1:1800

Figure 5. Map showing the central principal shopping districts of Coney Street and Parliament Street, c.1900. © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited 2014. All rights reserved. 1900.

respectable residents on legitimate business. There were also a large number of commercial properties, including tailors, drapers and dress makers.⁶⁹ It was well known as a centre of consumption, and street directories illustrate the variety available, from Winspear's high class perfumery, the large department store Leak and Thorp's, to smaller shops suitable for those with a more modest budget.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ *Kelly's Directory of the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire, with the City of York (Kelly's Directory)*, 1893, <www.historicaldirectories.org> [accessed 7 January 2012].

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*



Figure 6. Parliament Street Market, c.1889. Image courtesy of Imagine York [accessed 12 July 2013].

To the south of Coney Street, past Spurriergate, could be found the newly improved civic space of Clifford Street. This wide avenue was home to a number of new public buildings, constructed following the Castlegate Improvement Scheme which saw the three Water Lanes demolished. Stretching from King's Staithe up to Castlegate, the slum conditions of the three Water Lanes had been thoroughly investigated and well publicised. In 1876 the Medical Officer of Health wrote to the Corporation arguing that residing in the Water Lanes was 'highly injurious to the health and comfort of the inhabitants and most prejudicial to decency and morality ... I am satisfied that nothing short of the entire removal of these premises can effect any sufficient or satisfactory improvement'.⁷¹ The clearance of this area began in 1875, and the construction of Clifford Street in 1881 finally swept away the majority of the remaining slums, including a number of infamous beerhouses and brothels. In their place a number of new public buildings were erected, celebrating municipal achievement and forcing the previous inhabitants to other poor working-class

⁷¹ *York Herald*, 2 June 1876.



Figure 7. The Law Courts on Clifford Street, c.1890s. Clifford Street was constructed over the demolished Water Lanes, and powerful building such as this signified civic power and authority. Image courtesy of Imagine York [accessed 12 July 2013].

districts of the city.⁷² The new Magistrates' Court, Police and Fire Station and the York Institute of Arts, Science and Literature lined the street, commemorating urban renewal and sending a clear civic message to the residents of York. HRH Prince Albert Victor laid the foundation stone of these new public buildings on 16 July 1890, and their opening was marked by a civic procession, the street itself lavishly decorated. The new Law Courts were opened by the Lord Mayor in October 1892.⁷³ Leading on from Clifford Street, Tower Street was home to York Castle, the county gaol of Yorkshire; the prison holding several categories of inmates before later becoming a military prison.⁷⁴

Immediately across the River, Skeldergate was another notorious mixed residential and industrial area of the city. In 1884 the chief constable received a complaint from one resident regarding the disorderly state of the street. Mr Empson referred to the large number of drunkards making the street 'at times impassable for respectable females', especially on a Saturday night.⁷⁵ One particular court in the area, Beedham's, was known locally as 'Hagworm's Nest', and was the site for the first cholera fatality in the outbreak of 1832 which caused 185 deaths.⁷⁶ Several tenements in the yard were closed in 1903 by magistrate's order. North Street – separated from Skeldergate by Micklegate – never acquired the level of criminal reputation acquired by the Water Lanes, but was still the focus of various complaints from the respectable parishioners of St John's Micklegate who wrote to the chief constable regarding disorderly women gathering outside public houses in the area.⁷⁷ Micklegate Bar marked the main entrance of the city from the south. Rowntree singled out a number of streets surrounding Micklegate as being slum areas, although Micklegate itself was not part of this classification, and contained a number of large residential properties and commercial premises.⁷⁸

⁷² See chapter two for further details on the movement of the former inhabitants of the Water Lanes.

⁷³ *York Herald*, 17 July 1890 and *Yorkshire Gazette*, 16 July 1890 and 17 July 1890.

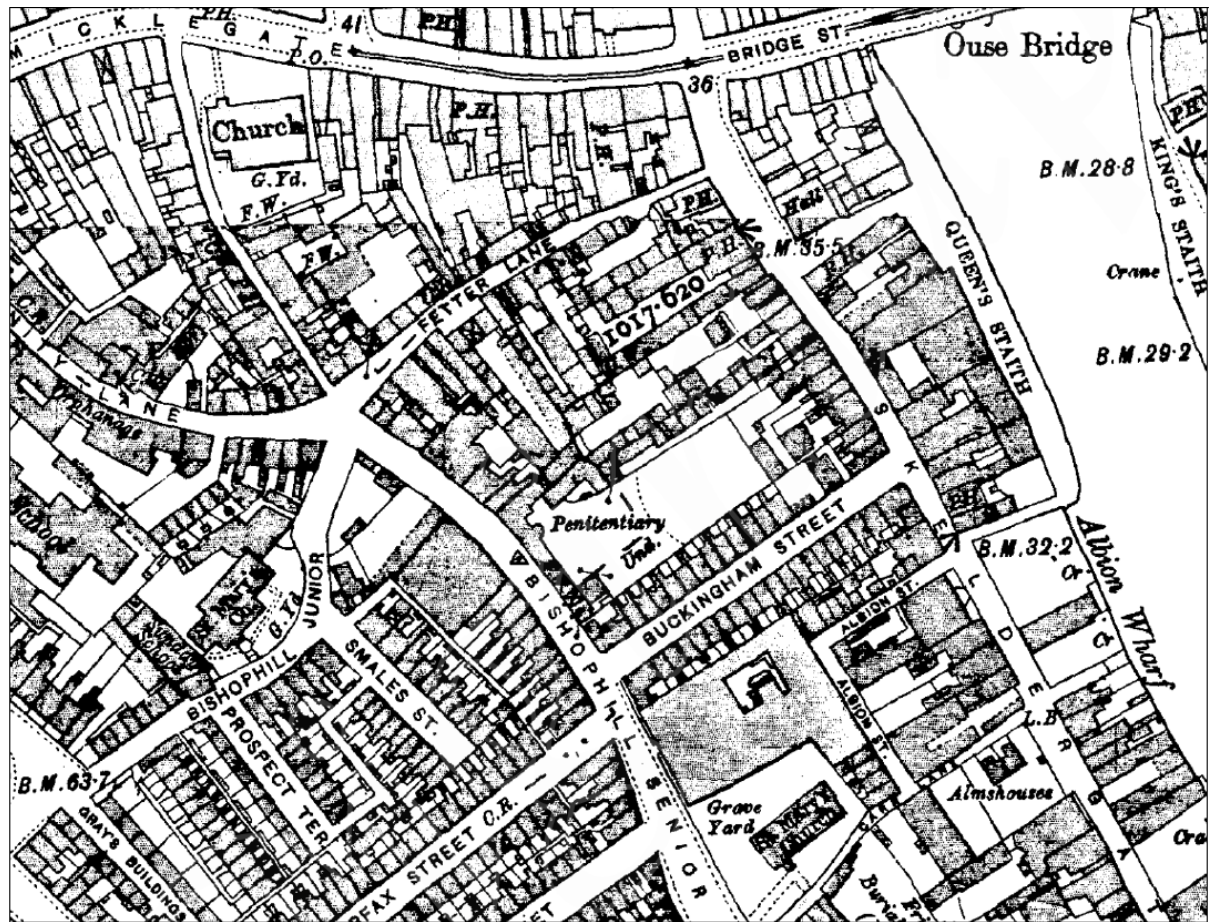
⁷⁴ Marion Eames, *York Castle, the county gaol of Yorkshire 1823-1877*, Borthwick Paper no. 121 (York: University of York, 2013).

⁷⁵ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 5, 24 September 1884.

⁷⁶ Frances Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution: A Study of Victorian Prostitutes in York* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 52 and Edward Royle, 'Nineteenth Century York', in *The History of York from Earliest Times to the Year 2000*, pp. 295-301.

⁷⁷ For example, see Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 8, 17 June 1902.

⁷⁸ *Kelly's Directory*, 1893.



Scale 1:1800

Figure 8. Map showing the Penitentiary on Bishophill, with Skeldergate to the right and Micklegate at the top. The Penitentiary garden was extensive, although shut off from the street by a high wall, c.1900. © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited 2014. All rights reserved. 1900.

The district between Skeldergate and the city walls was known as Bishophill. Primarily a residential area, it was also home to the York Penitentiary.⁷⁹ The York Penitentiary Society was formed in 1822, and opened its sheltering home, the Refuge, in 1845 to provide asylum for women who ‘having followed vicious courses, are desirous of obtaining the means of reformation’.⁸⁰ The Refuge admitted a number of ‘poor, destitute females’, training them in domestic tasks in the hope they would find employment in service, and thus reduce the number of prostitutes in York.⁸¹ For some young women, the Refuge was a dominant presence in the area.

⁷⁹ See chapter five for detailed discussion of the York Penitentiary.

⁸⁰ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Reports, 1845-1919.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1845.

For Ciskey Colley the building itself, and all that it represented, was used as a threat to control her behaviour:

There was a place on Bishophill called “The Penitentiary” where fallen girls would have to be put ... They shoved you in there ... and if I’d been bad me grandma that lived in Victor Street used to take me by the hand and say; ‘That’s going to happen to you, me lass, if anything happens to you’.⁸²

In March 1900 a ‘Lover of Truth and Justice’ wrote to the Penitentiary Committee, noting the ‘disgraceful scene’ in Bishophill as he witnessed ‘one of two girls that had run away [from the Penitentiary] being dragged along the road by three men who lastly lodged her inside the door’.⁸³ Unlike other town houses in the area, the main front of the house at Number 43 Bishophill looked over a secluded garden which helped to isolate the occupants from the outside world, and formed a physical boundary between the respectable women outside and ‘fallen’ women within. The high wall around the garden served to emphasize this boundary, and in 1905 after a number of break-outs, the matron was instructed, on the advice of the chief constable, to have the walls topped with broken glass.⁸⁴

On the same side of the river, the new railway station was built outside the city walls in 1877, replacing the station on Tanner Row which had been constructed in 1841, the lines breaching the city walls to allow trains access to the station. Nearby streets, including Nunnery Lane and Holgate Road, contained newer working class dwellings, housing many of the skilled railway workers. Ada Cade was born in Holgate Road and described it as one ‘of a series of small cul-de-sacs to house the workers and the railway workers’.⁸⁵ The railway wagon and carriage works were situated in Queen Street until the 1880s, when new works were constructed in Holgate between 1880 and 1881. The works were further extended in 1883, 1896, 1897 and 1899, until by 1910 they covered an area of 45 acres.⁸⁶ As the central stop-over point for trains between London and Edinburgh, the railway station would have

⁸² Interview with Ciskey Colley, born 1910, YOHP.

⁸³ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.95.9, Letter from ‘A Lover of Truth and Justice’, 1 March 1900.

⁸⁴ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.6, Minute Books, 30 May 1905.

⁸⁵ Interview with Ada Cade, born 1893, YOHP.

⁸⁶ *VCH, York*, p. 270.

also offered the first view of York for the tourists and visitors that increasingly flocked to the city by train.

In his first social survey, Rowntree described the Walmgate and Hungate areas as ‘the largest poor district in the city’.⁸⁷ The main street of Walmgate contained the most public houses in the city, and Rowntree went on to further characterise the area as:

comprising some typical slum areas. A broad thoroughfare (Walmgate) runs through one portion of it. Some of the houses and shops in this, and in a few of the other streets, are of considerable size and are inhabited by relatively well-to-do people; but a number of narrow and often sunless courts and alleys branch from these larger streets, and it is here that poverty is chiefly found.⁸⁸

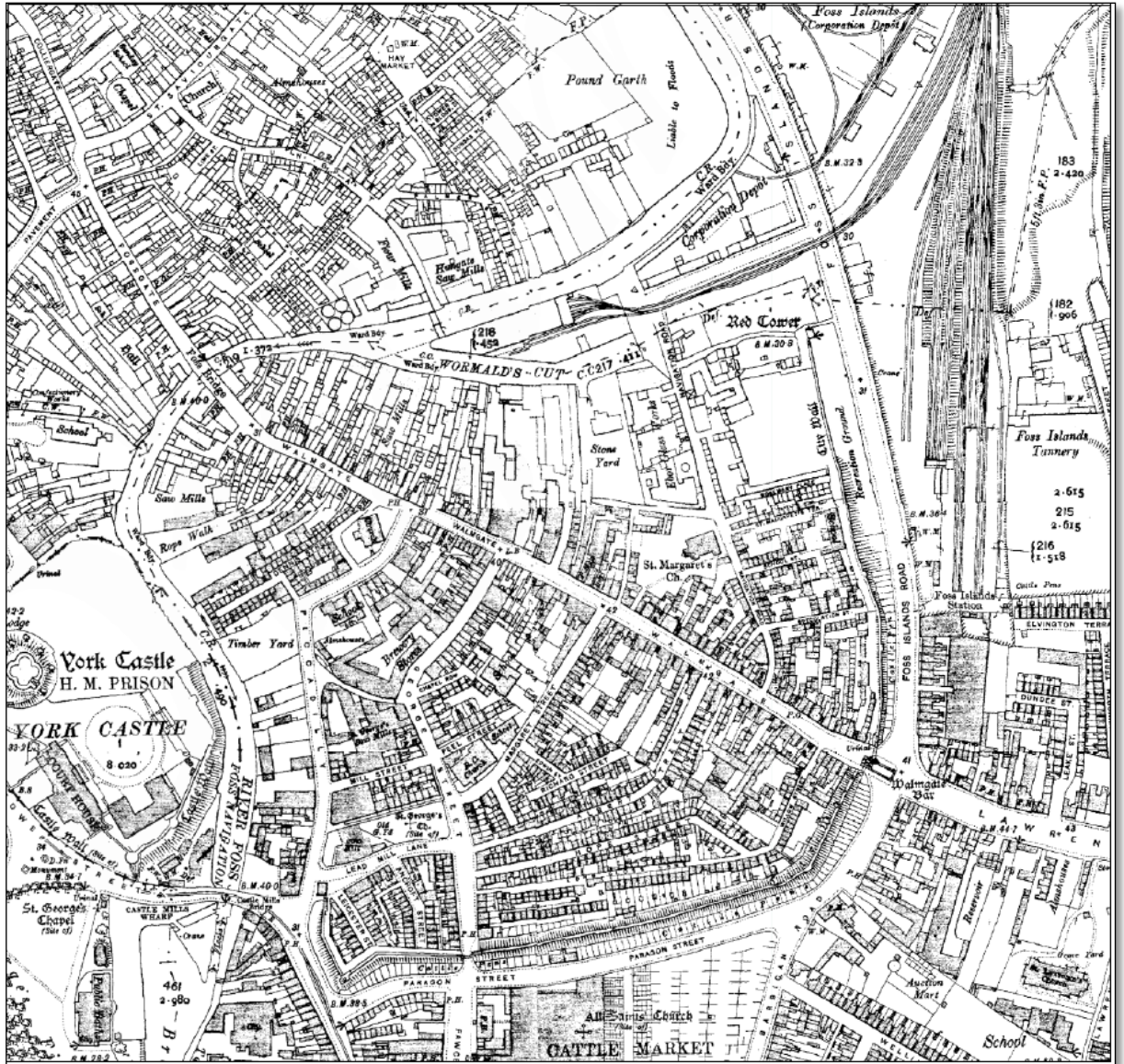
There was a widespread problem of overcrowding in the area, which was exacerbated both by the arrival of a large number of Irish immigrants and the clearance of the Water Lanes, and the insanitary conditions were compounded by an inadequate water supply and lack of private sanitary accommodation. The back-to-back houses and cottages were also in close proximity to slaughterhouses and stables, and tenements often shared yards with offensive trading premises. Rowntree noted there were ‘no less than 94 private slaughterhouses in York. These are too frequently situated in densely populated poor districts, often up narrow passageways. After slaughtering, the blood is allowed to run into the common sewer’.⁸⁹ The Chief Medical Officer condemned many of these yards in his 1914 report on the Walmgate area, writing that ‘the back yards in Hope Street and Albert Street and in some other quarters can only be viewed with repulsion – they are so small and fetid, and so hemmed in by surrounding houses and other buildings ... There are no amenities; it is an absolute slum’.⁹⁰ Walmgate was also the site of York’s fortnightly cattle market, held every alternate Thursday. The market charter was granted in 1590 by Queen Elizabeth, and helps to explain the vast number of public houses and inns in the

⁸⁷ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 199.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁹⁰ YCA, York City Health Department Records, Acc. 157.10.9, Ministry of Health Papers, Chief Medical Officers’ Report, 1914.



Scale 1:50000

Figure 9. Map showing the Hungate and Walmgate districts of York, with the Cattle Market bottom centre and St Saviourgate top left, c.1900. The main Walmgate thoroughfare is running through the centre of the map, and Hungate can be seen sloping almost parallel to Fossgate – leading from St Saviourgate down to the River Foss. © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited 2014. All rights reserved. 1900. A larger reproduction can be found at the back of the thesis.

Walmgate area, many with extensive yards. Temperance supporter Robert Kay recorded details of the public houses from Fossgate to Walmgate Bar noting the ‘low’ character of many establishments.⁹¹ By 1827, the extra filth the market was bringing into the streets was no longer acceptable, and the new cattle market was constructed on the other side of the walls. The major clearances in Walmgate took place between 1933-34, and in October 1955 the York Medical Officer of Health again pronounced many houses unfit, with compulsory purchase orders made on houses in George Street, Margaret Street and Paver Lane.⁹²

Though Rowntree referred to the areas together, Walmgate and Hungate were in fact separated by the River Foss, which was given to recurrent flooding and described in 1850 as ‘a great open cesspool’.⁹³ Domestic sanitation across the city at large was generally poor, with no systematic collection of night soil or refuse until 1889 when the newly formed sanitary authority approved a new sewage disposal scheme.⁹⁴ The sewers themselves discharged their contents directly into the Ouse. Leetham’s Flour Mill dominated the narrow streets off Hungate, and by 1911 around 600 workers were recorded in the census as working in the milling industry.⁹⁵ Branching off the main Hungate thoroughfare were the narrow streets of Garden Place, Haver Lane and Palmer Lane, which contained blocks of small working-class properties, often back-to-backs.

In complete contrast to the dark and overcrowded streets of the Hungate and Walmgate districts, New Walk, a tree-lined walk laid out along the banks of the River Ouse, was conceived as a place for the respectable residents of York to take the air, see and be seen. Along with the Blake Street Assembly Rooms and Theatre Royal, the New Walk was explicitly geared to polite society. Constructed in 1730 by the Corporation, the tree lined walk was re-landscaped over the following years, with

⁹¹ Robert Kay kept a notebook for the purpose of recording ‘what I remember in connection with, and a record of, any noteworthy incident occurring at any of the public houses between Fossgate end and Walmgate Bar’. He addressed the book to ‘my much beloved children’ and signed it ‘drink, debt, dirt and the devil I HATE, Robert Kay’. YCA, Robert Kay, Acc. 974, Grandfather Robert Kay’s Notebook, 1875 – 1900.

⁹² York City Health Department Records, Acc. 157.9.5, Compulsory Purchase Orders under 1936 Housing Act, 1955.

⁹³ James Smith, *Report to the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Enquiry into the Sanitary Condition of York* (London: H. M. S. O., 1850).

⁹⁴ *VCH, York*, p. 285.

⁹⁵ *Census Return of England and Wales, 1911*.



Figure 10. Children standing by a horse and cart in Garden Place, Hungate, c.1900. The silos of Leatham's flour mill can be seen dominating the sky-line. Image courtesy of Imagine York [accessed 12 July 2013].

expenditure justified on the basis that the Walk would be ‘very much to the honour of this city and the entertainment of the gentry resorting thereto’.⁹⁶ It was heralded in the *York Courant*:

This Terrace Walk made on the banks of the River Ouse and nearly a mile long may be justly esteemed as one of the most agreeable publik walks in the kingdom for its great neatness, beautiful town and situation which is so advantageously seen in its prospect to render it not unlike nor inferior to any of the views in Venice.⁹⁷

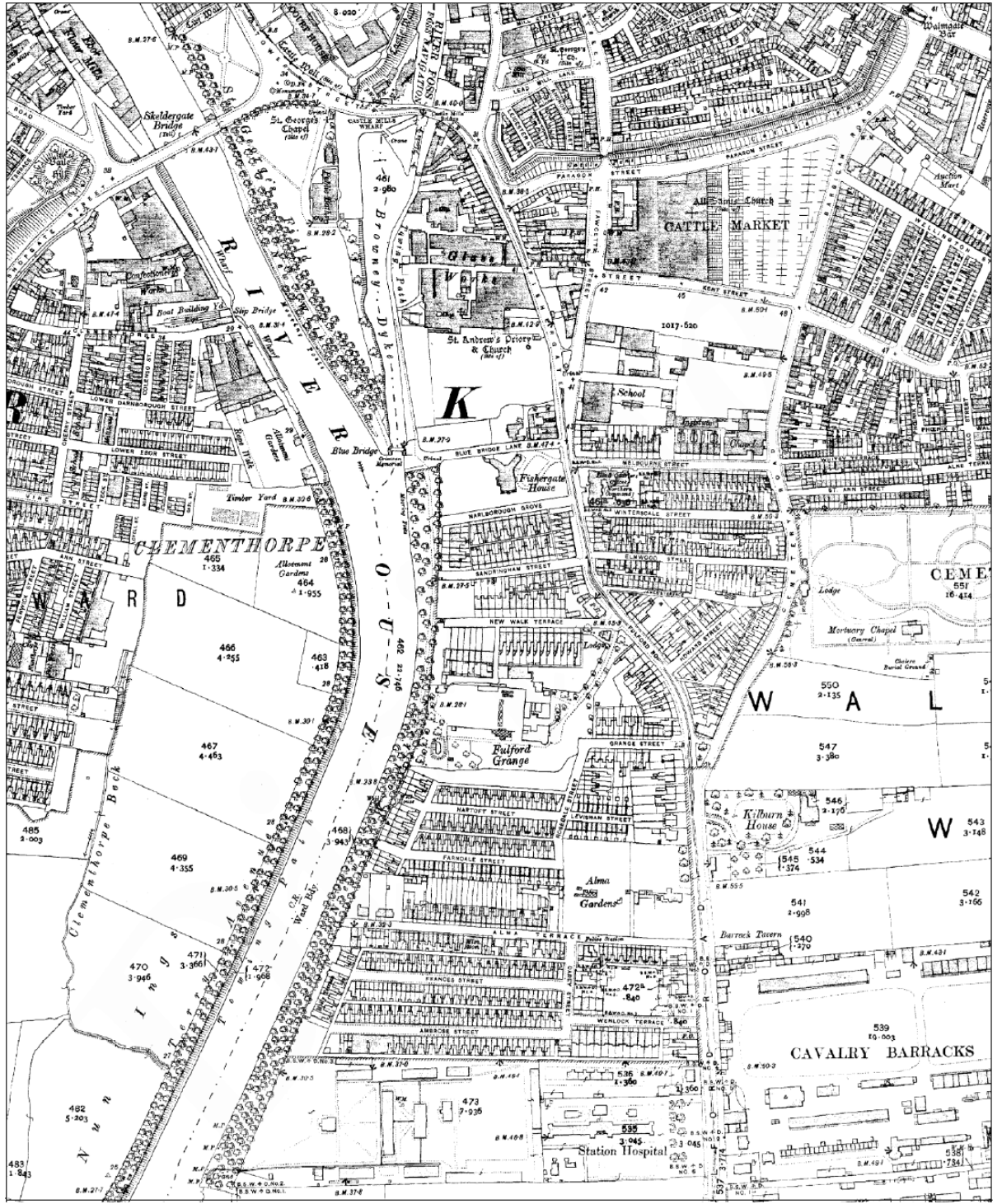
Similar promenades had been created in many other English towns over the previous century, and were considered an important asset for resort towns, spas and provincial centres.⁹⁸ Stretching from Davy Tower to Fulford Fields, New Walk was almost a mile long, and perceived as one of the chief attractions of the city.

The landscape seen from the New Walk was predominantly rural, although from the late eighteenth century onwards the surrounding area was increasingly built up. By 1891 a number of new streets had been constructed. Marlborough Grove, Sandringham Street, Alma Terrace, Francis Street and Ambrose Street were built running down to the walk, and the Army had taken over a considerable amount of land. Fishergate and Fulford Road became increasingly defined by the military presence, and both were frequently the site of parades and processions. In 1795 York became one of the established military stations of the country under the national administration system that was then being put into operation. The Cavalry Barracks were erected on Fulford Road in that year, and were later enlarged, and the Infantry Barracks were built in 1874. By 1878 York was the headquarters of the North-Eastern Military District, and Military Sunday – during which troops marched through the city to attend a service in the Minster – became an annual event. As well as soldiers, many professionals were connected with the barracks, including an army

⁹⁶ Minutes of Full Council, Y/COU/1/1, House Book 43, 28 February 1739.

⁹⁷ *York Courant*, 24 September 1754.

⁹⁸ Mary Thallon, ‘The New Walk: A History’, *York Historian*, 19 (2002), 2-22.



Scale: 1:5000

Figure 11. Map showing the tree lined New Walk, running along the River Ouse from the centre of the city into Fulford, c.1900. The Cavalry Barracks are just seen on the bottom right. © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited 2014. All rights reserved. 1900.



Figure 12. The Cavalry Barracks on Fulford Road, c.1910. Image courtesy of Imagine York [accessed 12 July 2013].

shoemaker and several army musicians, as well as the numerous prostitutes living in the houses of Alma Terrace and its surrounding streets.⁹⁹ Between 1851 and 1911, the military presence in the city increased tenfold, reflecting the capacity of the new barracks. After the outbreak of war in 1914, the military presence in the area was again vastly increased. In September 1914 there were 3,500 members of the West Yorkshire Regiment in the City, and 2,400 men in the Cavalry Barracks. The 5th Cavalry Reserve was on the Knavesmire where the grandstand was equipped with 1,500 beds.¹⁰⁰ By the end of October, the *Herald* reported ‘between 6,000 and 7,000’ were at Strensall to add to these.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ The York Penitentiary records show that a high proportion of the young women admitted to the Refuge had lived or worked in the immediate vicinity of the Cavalry and Infantry Barracks. Penitentiary Society, Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13-17, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 1881-1901, 1902-11, 1911-14, 1914-16, 1917-28.

¹⁰⁰ A. J. Peacock, *York in the Great War, 1914-1918* (York: York Settlement Trust, 1993), p. 300.

¹⁰¹ *York Herald*, 27 October 1914.

Fulford Fields, which was almost adjacent to the two barrack complexes, extended from the southern end of New Walk to Fulford Ings. It was a popular site for strolling out, particularly on Sunday evenings, and at the edge of the fields a small path was known as Lover's Lane. Ethel Atkinson used the Fulford Fields for her sexual liaisons with Private Charles Lambert. Ethel would meet the soldier on Sunday evenings near Fulford and walk through the fields, followed by sex 'always in a field and lying down where it was dark'.¹⁰²

3.1 Walking in the city: the sights, sounds and smells of everyday life

Cities generate their own distinctive smells and sounds, and are full of visual and tactile stimuli, but often sights, sounds and smells are so integrated into daily experience that they are hardly remarked upon.¹⁰³ The visual is perhaps the most easily recoverable, although due to the nature of the records often relies upon the authoritative view of the city presented by statistical and social surveyors or outside observers, and thus based on perceptions of difference. The rational mapping of the city by the civic authorities and social explorers contrasted and co-existed with the lived geographies of the city, and the impressions, sounds and smells that made up everyday street life. Historians have recently begun to explore the urban sensescape, and the 'emotive turn' has sought to address touch, sound and smell in the city.¹⁰⁴ How did people experience the city through their senses, and what was the emotional response of York's young working class to the sensory experiences of place? It is possible to comment upon the sights, smells, sounds and even, to a limited extent, feel of late nineteenth and early twentieth century York, but much more difficult to gauge how they may have been seen, smelt, heard or felt by the residents of the city, and what their responses to them might have been. Visitors to the Jorvick Viking Centre can walk through a reconstruction of a Viking age street, 'as [it] would have been 1, 000 years ago', and see inside a home, experience the heat of a blacksmith's

¹⁰² YCA, York Poor Law Union, Board of Guardians, Acc. 2.10.2, York Police Court, Ethel Atkinson, May 1907.

¹⁰³ Jill Steward and Alexander Cowan, 'Introduction' in *The City and the Senses: Urban Culture since 1500*, ed. by Alexander Cowan and Jill Steward (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 1-22 (p. 1).

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Rykwert, *The Seduction of Place: The City in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2000).

furnace and the smells of a home-cooked stew.¹⁰⁵ ‘Rowntree snicket’ at York Castle Museum features a recreation of a working-class ‘slum’ home, fitted with a mixture of period pieces and replicas inspired by Rowntree’s first social survey of the city.¹⁰⁶ These recreations offer a snapshot into York’s Viking and Victorian past, and enable visitors to feel for a moment that they have travelled back in time, but we cannot truly experience the sensory environment of Jorvick or the nineteenth century city – we see it through twenty-first century eyes, and touch it with twenty-first century hands. While it may be difficult to gauge what the young working class of York felt about their environment, what is apparent is that they were constantly acting and reacting within their particular sensory worlds.

While often sights, smells and sounds were seemingly so ordinary as to escape notice and record, others were commented on by residents and outsiders alike. The smells of the slaughterhouses in Hungate and Walmgate and the noise of Leetham’s mill are noted by oral history respondents, as well as featured in official reports. Living close to the railway station, Ada Cade recalled the noise, dirt and smoke of the trains coming right underneath her windows, but ‘you got used to it’.¹⁰⁷ Social distinctions could be classified in terms of smell; Margaret Phillips, the daughter of the vicar of St Margaret’s recorded in her biography how she ‘recoiled’ from the ‘unwashed bodies’ of the poor she encountered in a chemist’s shop as a child.¹⁰⁸ In the 1840s the *Yorkshire Gazette* ran a dehumanising exposé of the Bedern area of the city and its residents, inviting its middle-class readers to ‘inhale the close and pestilential atmosphere of these abodes of filth and contemplate if they can without horror man in his lowest state displaying brutal unconsciousness of his degradation’.¹⁰⁹ Rowntree reported sixteen families sharing one water tap in a ‘slum’ district of the city, and the grating was used ‘for the disposal of human excreta, and was partially blocked with it when inspected’.¹¹⁰ Smell could signal the meaning of a particular space; some smells would have been fairly uniform across the city, while others were much more particular to a district, neighbourhood, or even street. While

¹⁰⁵ Jorvick Viking Centre, <www.jorvik-viking-centre.co.uk> [accessed 12 December 2014].

¹⁰⁶ ‘Kirkgate: The Victorian Street’, York Castle Museum, <www.yorkcastlemuseum.org.uk> [accessed 3 July 2014].

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Ada Cade, born 1893, YOHP.

¹⁰⁸ Margaret Mann Phillips, *Within the City Wall: A Memoir of Childhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943), p. 48.

¹⁰⁹ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 27 October 1849.

¹¹⁰ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 155. Although Rowntree anonymised his descriptions, it is likely that this was situated in the Hungate district.

offensive smells would clearly have had an effect on an individual's understanding of an area, more pleasant aromas would have also made up the mental map of the city. From the 1880s onwards, the sweet smell of chocolate and sugar could be carried from the large Rowntree's and Terry's factories around the city by prevailing winds, which could also carry less pleasant smells, permeating visual boundaries.¹¹¹

Certain sounds must have been a distinctive feature of the turn of the century city. In the fifteenth century council meetings were regulated by the Minster clock, a sound tolling right through to the present day.¹¹² Like visual clues, sounds were signs which enabled an individual to navigate the spaces of the city effectively; the hubbub of voices indicating a busy commercial street, the sounds of livestock for sale in the markets, hawkers crying their wares, or the distinctive sounds spilling from workshops and factories. The noise of street entertainers performing to the queue outside the Empire music hall signified that this was a space for play, for leisure, for fun, but shouts and raucous laughter could also signify a different type of space as prostitutes 'conducted themselves in a riotous and disorderly manner and committed acts that were disgraceful to human nature'.¹¹³ The control of noise was also one way attempts were made to discipline the urban environment, policing drunk and disorderly behaviour and those using obscene language.¹¹⁴

The sights of the city were also affected by light and darkness, and the narrow passageways, densely packed court dwellings and dominance of Leetham's Flour Mill helped to cut off a significant amount of natural light in Hungate.¹¹⁵ Spaces could also be affected differently by temporality, and while observers contrasted the well lit streets of the city centre with the narrow and twisting passageways of Hungate and Walmgate, even gas lighting could produce shadows as well as light. The city was an altered landscape after dark, and residents could experience the process of day and night differently as 'gradually the urban workings

¹¹¹ Robert Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution: 1862-1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹¹² Hartshorne, p. 197.

¹¹³ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 11 February 1860. Mr and Mrs Allan sometimes had to queue outside the Empire for over an hour, and often 'street buskers' would come and entertain those in line. Interview with Mr Allan, born 1911, and Mrs Allan, born 1912, YOHP. In 1920 PC George Langhamer was reprimanded for neglect of duty as he failed to keep a queue in order outside the Empire. YCA, York City Police, Acc. 264.32, Personal Record Sheets, George Langhamer, October 1920.

¹¹⁴ See chapter four.

¹¹⁵ YCA, Y614, Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District by Edmund M. Smith, Medical Officer of Health, June 1908, *Appendix to Council Reports, etc., 1908-9* (York: York City Council, 1909).

change, submitting little by little to the conditions of the night'.¹¹⁶ The darkness of night could give the young residents of the city a greater sense of freedom and privacy; it could be taken advantage of for courtship and intimacy, but also for nefarious activities. Patrick Cavanagh, a nineteen year old labourer from Walmgate, took advantage of the dark to hide in a passageway and 'molest' passersby.¹¹⁷ Night time could also represent the divide between respectability and sexual possibility. In the case of the Cremorne Pleasure Gardens in London, Lynda Nead examines how during the day they were a place of respectable recreation, but after darkness became a space infamous for sexual revelry and moral degradation.¹¹⁸ In York, the Fulford Fields were a pleasant location for a daylight stroll, but at night time the clientele could change, and with them the function of that space.¹¹⁹

Boundaries of space could be signalled by a change in light, or sound or smell, but also in other subtle ways, such as changes in dress, gesture or behaviour. Boundaries were enforced by architecture, but more understated elements also played a significant role in understanding space. The most striking physical boundary in York was of course the walls, although by the late nineteenth century they had become much less significant as a border than in previous generations. Colin Platt has argued that in the medieval town, while city walls did not serve as a legal boundary, they stood 'as a permanent reminder of an important legal and social distinction, built up over many years and at great cost, between the town and countryside beyond'.¹²⁰ They functioned as a symbolic defence against external threats, and the walls of York still hold a special significance to the residents of the city.

Boundaries helped to signify the point at which one space became another, allowing for the separation of 'us' and 'them', of clean versus dirty, or ordered versus disorderly. Without a boundary, space has no meaning, although clear categorisation between spaces is not always possible. The boundaries of space in late

¹¹⁶ Joachim Schlör, *Nights in the Big City: Paris, Berlin, London 1840-1930* (London: Reaktion, 1998), p. 9.

¹¹⁷ *York Herald*, 22 October 1884.

¹¹⁸ Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 117.

¹¹⁹ See the case of Ethel Atkinson and Charles Lambert, p. 63. In an affiliation order taken out against Stephen Richard Porteous, Eva Alice Smith detailed how the couple 'had connections ... down in Fulford Fields. York Poor Law Union, Board of Guardians, Acc. 2.10.2, York Police Court, Eva Alice Smith, August 1907.

¹²⁰ Colin Platt, *The English Medieval Town* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1976), p. 40.

nineteenth and early twentieth century York were constantly in flux, and they were always, to a greater or lesser extent, permeable. Even the city walls were breached by the railway in the nineteenth century to allow for the greater movement of both people and goods in and out of the city. Prevailing winds could carry the smell of chocolate around the city, but they could also bring the smells of Leetham's mill or the slaughterhouses of Hungate and Walmgate into the 'better' districts of the city.

The streets and public spaces of the city contained visual and non-verbal signals that communicated the meaning of that space, and as a result elicited certain modes of behaviour. Knowing how to move around public space is learnt through repeated use and visible clues, but an understanding of how to act or dress in the same space is equally critical in enabling us to negotiate everyday life. Richard Sennett described a 'bourgeoisie' who were 'preternaturally aware of distinctions of dress, deportment, behaviour and the body'.¹²¹ Appearance, dress, body language, and speech all signed a reputation on the body, but they also signed a reputation on space. Symbolic and social, as well as physical, boundaries saw space defined by who and what it included, with the 'unwanted' pushed to the periphery. Such spatial boundaries were not necessarily geographical, although marginalised groups were often associated with the margins of urban space, such as the young working-class women identified as prostitutes in the Bishophill penitentiary, or the working classes largely concentrated in the Hungate and Walmgate areas.¹²² Disciplinary institutions on the urban fringe both isolated inmates from the rest of the urban population and served as a warning to others of behavioural transgressions.¹²³ Their presence also acted as important symbols of urban authority, and along with the newly constructed municipal buildings of Clifford Street represented the 'Janus face of power'.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Knopf, 1977), pp. 161-174.

¹²² Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 3.

¹²³ See interview with Cisse Colley, p. 55. Gunn, p. 44.

¹²⁴ Tony Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex' in *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, ed. by N. B. Dirks, G. Eley and S. B. Ortner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 123-154.

Conclusion

The streets and neighbourhood spaces of York could be very vibrant, and the young working class could meet and socialise in different parts of the city; from their homes, to walking in the streets, drinking in the pub or attending a church dance. This chapter has attempted to impart something of York as a place and an overlapping matrix of spaces; it is important to relate the realities of everyday life to more abstract ideas about space and social relations. The young working class of York actively used the city to meet their needs, they interpreted space and how they were expected to behave in it by observing how the space was framed, how it was arranged and how others were acting in it. The built environment could elicit different modes of behaviour, and young people could take their understandings of space from various elements. Other groups attempted to control and define the space in which young people's social relations played out. How were these spaces in the city understood, and how did late nineteenth and early twentieth century York produce its space? Some uses of space in the city are lost to historians, and the mundane details of everyday life can be irrecoverable in the past. It is impossible to know everything that went on in the streets and neighbourhoods of late nineteenth and early twentieth century York, and the picture of how young working people engaged with their environment will necessarily remain incomplete. The records, however, do offer a wealth of information about many different aspects of young working class use of space, and some of this information will be explored in detail in the following chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

THE 'TYPICAL SLUM': HOME, NEIGHBOURHOOD AND THE YOUNG WORKING CLASSES

Introduction

In his first social survey of York, Rowntree described the Walmgate and Hungate areas as 'the largest poor district in the city' comprising 'some typical slum areas'.¹ The York Medical Officer of Health condemned the small and fetid yards and alleyways that branched off the main Walmgate thoroughfare in his 1914 report, noting that 'there are no amenities; it is an absolute slum'.² Newspapers regularly denounced the behaviour of the area's residents; reporting on notorious individuals and particular neighbourhoods, with regular headlines such as 'Rowdyism in Walmgate', and 'Hungate Saturday night roughs'.³ In an 1876 court hearing, Chief Constable Haley remarked that Walmgate was 'becoming beyond control' and in his 1892 report to the Watch Committee he put the case for more police constables on the account of Walmgate becoming increasingly 'difficult to manage'.⁴ James Cave recalled when he was a child that the police would only enter Walmgate 'in twos and threes', and Mr Allan noted that 'there were certain areas of York which it really wasn't safe to go through, especially if you were a stranger'.⁵ The Hungate and Walmgate districts were the focus of social surveys and reports, they featured in complaints by sanitary inspectors and the police, and residents were prominent in court and newspaper reports. The area was repeatedly characterised as a slum, and its inhabitants as existing on the edge of acceptable living conditions and behaviour. Condemned as sanitary abominations, observers made explicit connections between the physical condition of these spaces and the moral behaviour of their inhabitants. In his report on the sanitary conditions of Hungate, Edmund Smith – the York

¹ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 199.

² York City Health Department Records, Acc. 157.10.9, Ministry of Health Papers, Chief Medical Officers' Report, 1914.

³ *York Herald*, 7 October 1896 and 18 February 1893.

⁴ *York Herald*, 26 August 1876 and Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 7, July 1892.

⁵ Interview with James Cave, born 1910, and Mr Allan, born 1911, YOHP.

Medical Officer of Health – noted that the ‘dark dilapidated and overcrowded dwellings’ of the area ‘destroy “house pride” and engender the “slum habit of life”, also alcoholism, indifference, indecency, immorality and crime’.⁶ Yet the voice of the slum dwellers was largely silent.

Less well-known than the rookeries of Bethnal Green or Whitechapel, the Walmgate and Hungate districts were nonetheless famous within the context of York and subject to intense local attention, attention which both made assumptions on the basis of place, and negatively characterised the area and its inhabitants. It is for this reason that the districts have been chosen as the focus of this chapter considering how the young working class engaged with neighbourhood space. Poor areas of the city had always existed, yet in the closing decades of the nineteenth century the narrow streets and overcrowded courts of the Hungate and Walmgate districts were thoroughly investigated and well publicised. Their reputation as being ‘the roughest place in York’ had been firmly cemented in the minds of the city’s residents.⁷ Alan Mayne has argued that no ‘slumland’ literature can tell us about the slums or their residents as slums were ‘a myth’ produced by the press and urban reformers,⁸ and this chapter will firstly address the ways in which the local press, social investigators and middle-class commentators constructed an image and reputation for the Walmgate and Hungate area which made it ‘a byword for all that was thought evil among the respectable people’ of the city.⁹ It will consider how this reputation was established and reproduced, and examine the way various groups and individuals began ‘mapping’ the slums of Victorian and Edwardian York. However, doing so is not to ignore the ‘reality’ of the slums, but rather consider how both the social construction and physical attributes of these poor working-class districts operated in a continuous process of negotiation. The ‘slum’ was an imagined construct, but it

⁶ Y614, Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District by Edmund M. Smith, Medical Officer of Health, June 1908, p. 9. Rowntree also noted how those living in slum districts were likely to take on the chief characteristics of slum life; ‘the reckless expenditure of money as soon as obtained, with aggravated want at other times; the rowdy Saturday night, the Monday morning pilgrimage to the pawn shop, and especially that love for the district, and disinclination to move to better surroundings, and urged ‘the necessity of improving the surroundings of the slum dweller ... for it is Nature’s universal law that all living things tend to adapt themselves to their environment.’ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 5.

⁷ Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP.

⁸ Alan Mayne, *The Imagined Slum: Newspaper Representation in Three Cities, 1870-1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993), pp.1-27.

⁹ Graham Davis, ‘Beyond the Georgian Facade: the Avon Street district of Bath’, in *Slums*, ed. by S. M. Gaskell (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1990), pp. 144-185 (p. 157).

was simultaneously a physical manifestation of social inequality and deprivation.¹⁰ The conditions of the Hungate and Walmgate districts materially affected the lives of their residents; they experienced very real problems of poor housing and poverty, and this chapter will also explore how the young working classes that lived in this ‘largest poor district’ of York experienced these problems, and will consider the rhythms of place at the micro-level of a working-class community. It will examine how the young working class experienced and understood their neighbourhood space; how material conditions impacted upon their leisure and courtship opportunities and activities; and how they interacted with both the physical conditions and the imagined construct of their city. How did the young people who lived, worked and socialised in these districts interact with perceptions of their neighbourhood, and how did the ‘slum’ label impact upon their daily lives? What kinds of social opportunities were available in an area that was popularly defined as a ‘typical slum’?

1. The Slums Exposed

The term *slum* became used increasingly throughout the nineteenth century to refer to poor working-class districts in both large metropolitan centres and smaller provincial cities. The origin of the term and its development over time has been examined by H. J. Dyos, who traced its meaning from associations with the activity of thieves, through to its use in the 1840s in reference to areas of bad housing.¹¹ Concerns around concentrations of poverty also led to its adaptation as a verb, *slumming*; ‘to explore poor quarters out of curiosity or charity’.¹² The ‘slum question’ revolved around a number of key issues, including poor sanitation, overcrowding, contagious disease and the policing, control and relief of the poor. The slum became a sensation, and what had actually existed for centuries began to

¹⁰ The historiography of urban poverty has been largely structured by a distinction between the real and the imagined, the empirical and the cultural. For a detailed consideration of this distinction in reference to the governance of common lodging houses in London, see Tom Crook, ‘Accommodating the Outcast: Common Lodging Houses and the Limits of Urban Governance in Victorian and Edwardian London’, *Urban History*, 35: 3 (2008), 414-436.

¹¹ H. J. Dyos, ‘The Slums of Victorian London’, *Victorian Studies* 11:1 (1967), 5-40.

¹² J. S. Farmer and W. E. Henley, *A Dictionary of Slang and Colloquial English: Abridged* (London: Routledge, 1905). See also Jacinta Prunty, *Dublin Slums, 1800-1925: A Study in Urban Geography* (Ballsbridge: Irish Academic Press, 1997) and Koven, *Slumming*.

be written about and widely debated throughout Britain. Anxieties over increasing urbanisation and expansion alongside greater residential segregation reinforced the sense of the slum as ‘unknown England’, and from the moment it was ‘identified’ the slum was isolated and defined as a problem; something to be improved, removed, or destroyed.¹³ The initial exposure of slums was mostly concerned with infectious disease. The arrival of cholera in York in 1832 highlighted areas with unsanitary living conditions, and in his report on the state of York to the Health of Towns Commission – established in 1843 to investigate the poor and insanitary condition of British towns and cities – Thomas Laycock noted the ‘slaughter-houses, dung-heaps, pigsties, etc., which unfortunately subsist in the heart of the town [and] generate contagion.’¹⁴ At the turn of the century the York branch of the Charity Organisation Society spoke of the ‘miserable and unsanitary houses’ in the poorest parts of the city, and worried about the spread of disease to better off areas and higher class residents, demanding that the poor should live in ‘common decency’.¹⁵

The precise definition of a ‘slum’ was continually open to revision; dependent on social values and beliefs as to what constituted acceptable living standards. Middle-class observers created a map of poor areas by watching people in the street, analysing places of amusement, scrutinising living conditions and interpreting behaviour. Certain districts were identified as slums through unfavourable comparison with other areas in the city, and while they were often located next to wealthier areas, slum districts became seen as increasingly separated by their impoverished circumstances and terrible housing, and their residents perceived as a race apart.¹⁶ The registration of births and deaths allowed reliable statistics on mortality rates to be compiled, and the census provided further information on individual households. Increasing concern about poverty and sanitation, coupled with more resources, enabled areas to be more easily quantified, and by the middle of the nineteenth century, a ‘geography of disease and premature death had been established’.¹⁷ A succession of authorities were then able to identify

¹³ S. M. Gaskell, ‘Introduction’ in *Slums*, p. 7.

¹⁴ Thomas Laycock, *Report on the State of the City of York. First Report of the Royal Commission for Enquiring into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts, Parliamentary Papers*, vol xvii, (York, 1844).

¹⁵ ‘Annual Report of the York Branch of the Charity Organisation Society’, *York Herald*, 9 February 1899.

¹⁶ See also Prunty, pp. 60-61.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

the same areas through statistical collection, and certain districts became notorious; the subject of numerous documents and reports.

The government, social surveyors, sanitary inspectors, poor law authorities and newspaper reporters were evidently concerned with the physical conditions of, and moral behaviour in, the poor areas of Britain's industrial cities. The conditions of life in these metropolitan centres were scrutinised and widely disseminated.¹⁸ Historians have explored the geography of urban poverty in large industrial centres, considering the material conditions and representations of poverty in London, Birmingham, New York, Dublin, Manchester, Salford, Glasgow, Sydney and San Francisco, among others.¹⁹ However, much less attention has been paid to smaller provincial towns and cities, where the slum question was also being debated.²⁰ Poorer areas could be found in most parts of the city, but those in the south-east of York and around the medieval core became the focus of increasing attention. In a report to the Health of Towns Commission, James Smith, appointed by Robert Peel to the Commission, highlighted the differences between the main streets of the city, and those areas occupied by the poor – conflating them with all poor areas:

The aspect of York, as seen in the principal streets, is tidy and pleasing, and the streets, though narrow, are well kept. Not so, however, the more retired and densely crowded parts, which have the same damp and filthy character as all other towns.²¹

¹⁸ For example; Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London, 1851) and Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London* (London: Macmillan, 1892).

¹⁹ White, *The Worst Street in North London*; David R. Green and Alan G. Parton, 'Slums and slum life in Victorian England: London and Birmingham at mid-century', in *Slums*, pp.17-91; Rebecca Yamin, *Tales of Five Points: Working-Class Life in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Washington DC: General Services Admin, 2002); Prunty, *Dublin Slums*; Bill Luckin, 'Revisiting the Slums in Manchester and Salford in the 1930s' in *Urban Politics and Space in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Regional Perspectives*, ed. by Barry M. Doyle (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2007), pp. 134-147; Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990); Andreas Gestrich, 'Depicting the "moral dregs of our great population": An 1890 illustrated newspaper series on "The Homes of the Glasgow Poor" in *Being Poor in Modern Europe: Historical Perspectives 1800-1940*, ed. by A. Gestrich, S. King and L. Raphael (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006), pp. 417-440 and Mayne, *The Imagined Slum*.

²⁰ With the notable exception of Graham Davis and his work on Bath. See Davis, 'Beyond the Georgian Facade', pp.144-85 and Graham Davis, *Bath as Spa and Bath as Slum: The Social History of a Victorian City* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004).

²¹ James Smith, cited in *The History of York: From Earliest Times to the Year*, pp. 288-289.

Powerful imagery was used to classify the inhabitants of these areas in an all-embracing image of outcast society, and by 1859 the Lord Mayor could comment that ‘the bulk of the poor and industrious classes of York are in the neighbourhoods of Walmgate, Fossgate, Peasholme Green [Hungate] and in the Water Lanes’.²²

The three Water Lanes in particular drew comment and criticism from all quarters, and in the mid-nineteenth century seemed to dominate slum discourse in York. The three Lanes stretched from Castlegate down to the edge of the river at King’s Staithe. Although the first Water Lane, King Street, was widened in the 1850s, all three were narrow and contained a number of warren-like courts and alleyways. In 1844 Laycock observed that the large number of lodging houses in the Lanes were where ‘the scum of the country come to sleep, and there is no discrimination of the sexes’.²³ Other neighbourhoods in the city were also renowned, but popular coverage was uneven. With associations to poverty, crime and immorality dating back to the fifteenth century, by the 1850s the horrendous conditions in the Lanes had been authoritatively investigated and well publicised.²⁴ In a letter to the York Corporation, published in the *York Herald*, the Medical Officer of Health argued that residing in the Lanes was ‘highly injurious to the health and comfort of the inhabitants and most prejudicial to decency and morality ... I am satisfied that nothing short of the entire removal of these premises can affect any sufficient or satisfactory improvement’.²⁵ Housing inadequacies and a lack of sanitary facilities meant that by 1852 the Corporation had already agreed that the Lanes ought to be demolished. But while questions of disease and slum housing generated minutes and column inches, awareness of the ‘slum problem’ did not translate into action and full-scale clearance of the Lanes did not begin until 1875. This was partly due to the belief that poor conditions were in some respects a consequence of the failings of the inhabitants, who throughout the nineteenth century and beyond were characterised as undisciplined, intemperate, thriftless and criminal. In 1914 the *York Herald* published an obituary for the Reverend Frederick Lawrence, the rector of St Mary’s Castlegate from 1871 to 1881. They noted the

²² *VCH, York*, p. 287. See also p. 41.

²³ Laycock, *Report on the State of the City of York*.

²⁴ Hartshorne’s study of the fifteenth and sixteenth century wardmote courts identified the three Water Lanes as ‘hotspots’ for concerns about dirt and immorality. Hartshorne, ‘The Street and the Perception of Public Space in York’, pp. 245-246.

²⁵ *York Herald*, 2 June 1876.

strains on his health – which had ultimately led to his death – resulting from his tireless missionary work in the Water Lanes area ‘inhabited by many of the criminal classes’ in which ‘a single policeman dared not enter in those days’.²⁶

The Castlegate Improvement Scheme, begun in 1875, saw slum dwellings in the Lanes demolished and replaced with Clifford Street; a wide avenue then filled with a number of public buildings celebrating urban renewal.²⁷ While the existence of working-class areas had long been acknowledged, they were seen increasingly as conflicting with the image of an improving city.²⁸ Municipal policy became greatly motivated by a desire to project a certain image of York. As in Birmingham where Corporation Street, built over an area of ‘slum housing’, became the grand centrepiece of the City Improvement Scheme, honouring municipal achievement took precedence over providing good quality working-class housing for those uprooted.²⁹ As Rowntree highlighted, clearance schemes were often of little benefit to the poorest residents of the city; ‘unless equally cheap as well as more sanitary accommodation can be provided elsewhere, such action will be of doubtful benefit to those displaced’.³⁰ In the case of the three Water Lanes, many former residents were forced to move to already overcrowded areas where their arrival exacerbated conditions, and placed them once more in the sights of sanitary inspectors and middle-class commentators.

2. Walmgate and Hungate: creating the slum

2.1 Housing, public health and sanitation surveys

The influx of a large number of displaced residents from the three Water Lanes particularly aggravated the overcrowded conditions in the Hungate and Walmgate

²⁶ *York Herald*, 13 October 1914.

²⁷ See chapter one for further details of the public buildings on Clifford Street, pp. 51-53.

²⁸ See p. 90, and chapter four, p. 171.

²⁹ For further discussion of the Birmingham City Improvement Scheme see the case study in Mayne, *The Imagined Slum*, p. 8.

³⁰ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 43.

districts. While already invested with a certain notoriety, the focus on both areas began to intensify following the clearance of the Lanes. Walmgate and Hungate were situated on the south-east side of the city, with Walmgate bounded by the River Foss and the city walls, and Hungate by the Foss, Peasholme Green and St Saviourgate.³¹ Separated by the Foss, described by James Smith in 1850 as ‘a great open cesspool into the stagnating waters of which the sewers of half the city sluggishly pass’, both districts featured regularly in sanitary reports and surveys.³² During the eighteenth century Walmgate had been a relatively prosperous area, with the main thoroughfare containing a number of Georgian houses used as town residences by York’s wealthier citizens. Unlike Bootham and Micklegate which both retained their superior status, Walmgate declined, and by the mid-nineteenth century infilling meant these large town houses had become overcrowded tenements. Yards, stables and gardens belonging to the once fashionable houses were built up through the nineteenth century, and the physical deterioration was accompanied by a process of social descent. Deteriorating housing stock and the growing pressures of population following the arrival of large numbers of post-famine Irish immigrants, and later the displaced Water Lanes residents, intensified this process.³³ Some indication of the area’s later notoriety was apparent even in the eighteenth century, and the large number of public houses in the area – many dating from York’s days as a major coaching centre – perhaps explain why Walmgate declined in a way that the other major thoroughfares into the city did not. In 1888 Robert Kay noted in his diary that ‘the magistrates have intimated that they shall not allow any enlargement of public house accommodation in Walmgate there being too much already’.³⁴ Fred Milburn noted that Walmgate had many ‘butchers shops, pork shops [but it was] mainly public houses – and that was one of the reasons, I suppose, it was as rough as it was’.³⁵

Three narrow passages linked Hungate with Walmgate; Straker’s Passage, which led from Fossgate into Wesley Place, as did Black Horse Passage, and Stonebow Lane, a small alley running from Fossgate to St Saviour’s Church on the corner of Hungate. Hungate itself, the principal thoroughfare in the area, sloped

³¹ See figure 13.

³² Smith, *Report to the General Board of Health*.

³³ For further details on Irish immigration to York see Finnegan, *Poverty and Prejudice*.

³⁴ Robert Kay, Acc. 974, Grandfather Robert Kay’s Notebook, 1875-1900.

³⁵ Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP.

almost parallel to Fossgate from St Saviourgate in a wide curve down to the river. In the eighteenth century, Hungate had contained some large properties with gardens and allotments, but became densely populated in the nineteenth century as open spaces became infilled. Maps from the 1820s and 1850s reveal a building explosion as the area was built up quickly to accommodate the growing working-class population. In 1813 John Bigland, a historian who contributed to *The Beauties of England and Wales* (1801-1815) series, commented on the poorly drained area of the south-east of York, which was both ‘disagreeably situated and thinly inhabited’, yet by the 1840s, Hungate had been intensively built over, and along with Walmgate was identified as one of the districts with the worst housing in the city.³⁶

Rowntree estimated that at the time of his social survey of the city there were 1, 398 back-to-back houses in York, and a further 562 houses without through ventilation which were back-to-back with warehouses, stables and waterclosets.³⁷ Off the main Walmgate thoroughfare, a number of courts and alleyways were to be found, and the yards behind the street’s numerous public houses were filled with one-up one-down back-to-back cottages. These yards were often chronically overcrowded and had few amenities, and received particular attention from sanitation inspectors. Slaughterhouses, stables, pigsties and other offensive premises were often mixed with the houses of the poor.³⁸ Rowntree noted:

There are no less than 94 private slaughterhouses in York. These are too frequently situated in densely populated poor districts, often up narrow passages. After slaughtering, the blood is allowed to run into the common sewer, the grates of which are in some cases close to dwelling houses; the occupants of such houses not unnaturally complain of the smells from these open grates ... Not only is it unsatisfactory for the people to have these slaughterhouses in such close proximity to their dwellings, but their number and situation render adequate inspection all but impossible.³⁹

³⁶ John Bigland, *A Topographical and Historical Description of Yorkshire*, (London: Sherwood, Nealy and Jones, 1813) and Laycock, *Report on the State of the City of York*.

³⁷ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, pp. 146-181.

³⁸ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, pp. 146-181. See also, *Kelly’s Directory*, 1893.

³⁹ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 191.

As a child Nell Fearn would sit on the wall outside the slaughterhouse near her parents' house;

We used to go down to the slaughterhouses ... we used to make boats of paper ... and there was this guttering where they used to let out all this blood and everything ran out, and we used to float our paper boats in blood in the guttering. See which would go fastest.⁴⁰

Dick Calpin recalled watching his local butcher slaughter pigs: 'that was our entertainment'.⁴¹ Small manufactories and other offensive trade premises – such as skin and bone merchants, fish bone dealers and gut scrapers – were also clustered amongst the houses, and the gas works and iron foundries off Walmgate also polluted the area.

The Bay Horse, the Duke of York, the Barley Corn and the Old Malt Shovel all had yards which had been packed with small cottage dwellings. Before the major clearances of 1933 to 1934 there were around 53 yards branching off the main Walmgate thoroughfare. A number of them, like Britannia Yard, could only be accessed by covered passage, and contained rows of one-up one-down cottages which were described in 1844 as 'dirty, no drain, bad smells'.⁴²

The Hungate area was also densely populated and the long narrow streets which branched off the main thoroughfare – Palmer Lane, Garden Place and Haver Lane, contained blocks of small working-class houses. The smaller streets such as Upper and Lower Wesley Place and Dundas Street, which split off from these streets, were also made up of two to four roomed back-to-backs. Leetham's Flour Mill dominated the Hungate skyline and was liable to spread dust all over the area.⁴³ As well as a major employer of the area's residents, Leetham's also owned a number of properties in both Hungate and Walmgate. Dick Calpin was born in Rosemary Place, Walmgate, in a house that was owned by Leetham's, and 'they wouldn't do any repairs at all. We was damp and when we used to go out at night-time and then

⁴⁰ Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918, YOHP.

⁴¹ Interview with Dick Calpin, born 1909, YOHP.

⁴² Laycock, *Report on the State of the City of York*.

⁴³ Interview with Andy Wauby, born 1921, YOHP.

we used to put the light on and the beetles used to be running out of all corners'.⁴⁴ Most of the Hungate area was bounded on the south side by the River Foss, and Dundas Street, Wesley Place and Garden Place in particular were liable to flooding. '[The water] used to come up Hungate and Dundas Street, Wesley Place and Pound Garth'.⁴⁵ The location of several major industries, residents of Hungate were subjected to the smells of slaughter houses and chicory works, and the smell and smoke from the flour mill, gas works and saw mill, 'everybody was affected'.⁴⁶

As well as small cottages and back-to-back houses, Hungate also contained a number of tenement buildings. To the north of the district, a small court which had formerly been the residence of the Vicars Choral was home to the Ebor Buildings, and in a small closed court off the main Hungate thoroughfare the Bradley's Building tenements were built above water closets. These buildings were described by the Medical Officer of Health in 1907 as the 'worst' dwellings in the district, the water closets underneath as 'offensive to anyone using them', and were described in detail by Rowntree.⁴⁷ They were also notorious: Francis Porter was robbed by prostitute Mary Ann Maxwell here, for example, after she invited him to follow her back to her dwelling.⁴⁸ Mrs C delivered milk there as a child; 'it was a slum, and it was terrible'.⁴⁹

Both the Hungate and Walmgate districts self-evidently contained the poor-quality housing which signified to contemporaries that it was a slum. Both areas were also subject to extensive sanitation surveys, which helped to further cement this reputation. In 1909 in a letter to the Town Clerk, the Health Department attempted to communicate the importance of carrying out such work:

We recognise how much labour is involved in making a complete sanitation survey of this large district but we believe the existing conditions are such

⁴⁴ Interview with Dick Calpin, born 1909, YOHP.

⁴⁵ Interview with Ted Chittock, born 1922, YOHP.

⁴⁶ Interview with Andy Waudby, born 1921, YOHP.

⁴⁷ York City Health Department Records, Acc. 157.10.10, Hungate, 1907, and Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, pp. 155-157.

⁴⁸ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 22 January 1887.

⁴⁹ Interview with Mrs C, born 1909, YOHP.

that this consideration should not deter the council from undertaking the investigations.⁵⁰

Certain yards and streets in the Walmgate district were a frequent feature of sanitary reports and public health documents. Hope Street, George Street, Long Close Lane and Britannia Yard were particularly prominent, and their large Irish population was often the focus of discussion. The concern on the part of the authorities was centred around the threat this immigrant population posed to public health, and was particularly apparent during the nineteenth century cholera and typhus outbreaks. Following the 1847 outbreak of typhus amongst the Irish in Butcher Yard – aptly named for the slaughter houses which bordered the small cottages and lodging houses – the Yard was taken over by St Margaret’s Parish, renamed St Margaret’s Court, the properties repaired and ‘let to a more respectable class of people’.⁵¹ Smith’s report to the Board of Health in 1850 noted that a fear of a typhus epidemic and a desire to reduce poor law expenditure were the leading motivations in removing the sick Irish, who were then sent to an adjacent parish.⁵² That the Irish had settled in the most impoverished areas of housing, however, made little difference when later apportioning blame for their conditions.

The death rate in Walmgate was consistently higher than the rest of the city. In 1898 the York Medical Officer of Health reported that the ‘special predisposing causes’ of the repeatedly higher mortality rate were ‘its greater density of population, the poverty and want of cleanliness of a large proportion of its population, its old and small houses and tenements, and want of sunlight and fresh air’.⁵³ By 1913 the Medical Officer found that the mortality rate in Walmgate had reached almost double that of the rest of the city. The chief causes of death – tuberculosis, bronchitis, pneumonia and diarrhoea – he related explicitly to the squalid conditions.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ York City Health Department Records, Acc. 157.10.9-10, Hungate, 1909.

⁵¹ YCA, York Board of Guardians and Public Assistance Committee, Acc. 2/1.1.7, Board of Guardians Minute Books, 1847-49.

⁵² Finnegan, *Poverty and Prejudice*, p. 49.

⁵³ City of York, *Annual Report of the York Medical Officer of Health, 1898* (York, 1899).

⁵⁴ York City Health Department Records, Acc. 157.10.9, Ministry of Health Papers, Chief Medical Officers’ Report, 1914.

The full scale sanitation survey that took place between 1906 and 1907 strengthened the reputation of Hungate as a slum, particularly at the local level, and highlighted it as one of the city's problem areas. The extensive house-to-house survey followed Rowntree's classification of the streets in Hungate as 'poor' and 'working-class', and included comments on both the buildings and their tenants. In the years immediately preceding the First World War, Edmund Smith, York's Medical Officer of Health, was especially active in the area, threatening unwilling owners with demolition orders to achieve housing improvements.⁵⁵ The reports of the Medical Officer of Health on Hungate included comments on the general cleanliness of each house visited, alongside amenities, and demonstrated the perceived link between environment and behaviour. In the case of George Jackson's house, No. 5 Church Side, the bedding and bedroom were described as 'filthy' and the inspector also noted that the bedroom was 'defective, dark' and had 'no through ventilation'.⁵⁶ Accepting that many tenants were 'blameworthy', the Medical Officer of Health also criticised house owners for the lack of 'care and cleanliness' in regard to their properties.⁵⁷ Others were far quicker to place the blame firmly at the feet of the slum tenants themselves. When completing his section of the Visitation Returns for York in 1915, Canon G. M. Argles – the rector of St Mary's Bishophill with St Celement's – explicitly stated 'there are a good many wretched homes but in the main the fault lies with the people not the houses'.⁵⁸ In total, the York Health Office identified 201 properties as 'unhealthy' in the 1906-7 surveys.⁵⁹

In 1901 Rowntree identified the districts as belonging to the poorest section of the city. In the accompanying map, Hungate and Walmgate were branded in an unpleasant muddy brown colour that identified them as belonging to the 'poorest districts of the city, comprising the slum areas'.⁶⁰ The other areas of the map were represented in much more visually appealing colours; commercial districts in pink, the working-class areas in yellow and the 'servant keeping class' areas in lime green

⁵⁵ York City Health Department Records, Acc. 157.10.9-10, Hungate Area House Inspection Record Sheets, 1906-1907.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6 March 1907.

⁵⁷ Y614, Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District by Edmund M. Smith, Medical Officer of Health, June 1908, p. 9.

⁵⁸ Borthwick Institute for Archives (Borthwick), Parish of St Mary Bishophill the Elder with St Clement's, Bp.V. 1915/ Ret.

⁵⁹ York City Health Department Records, Acc. 157.10.9-10, Hungate Area House Inspection Record Sheets, 1906-07.

⁶⁰ Rowntree, 'Plan of the city of York', *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*. See also figure 14.

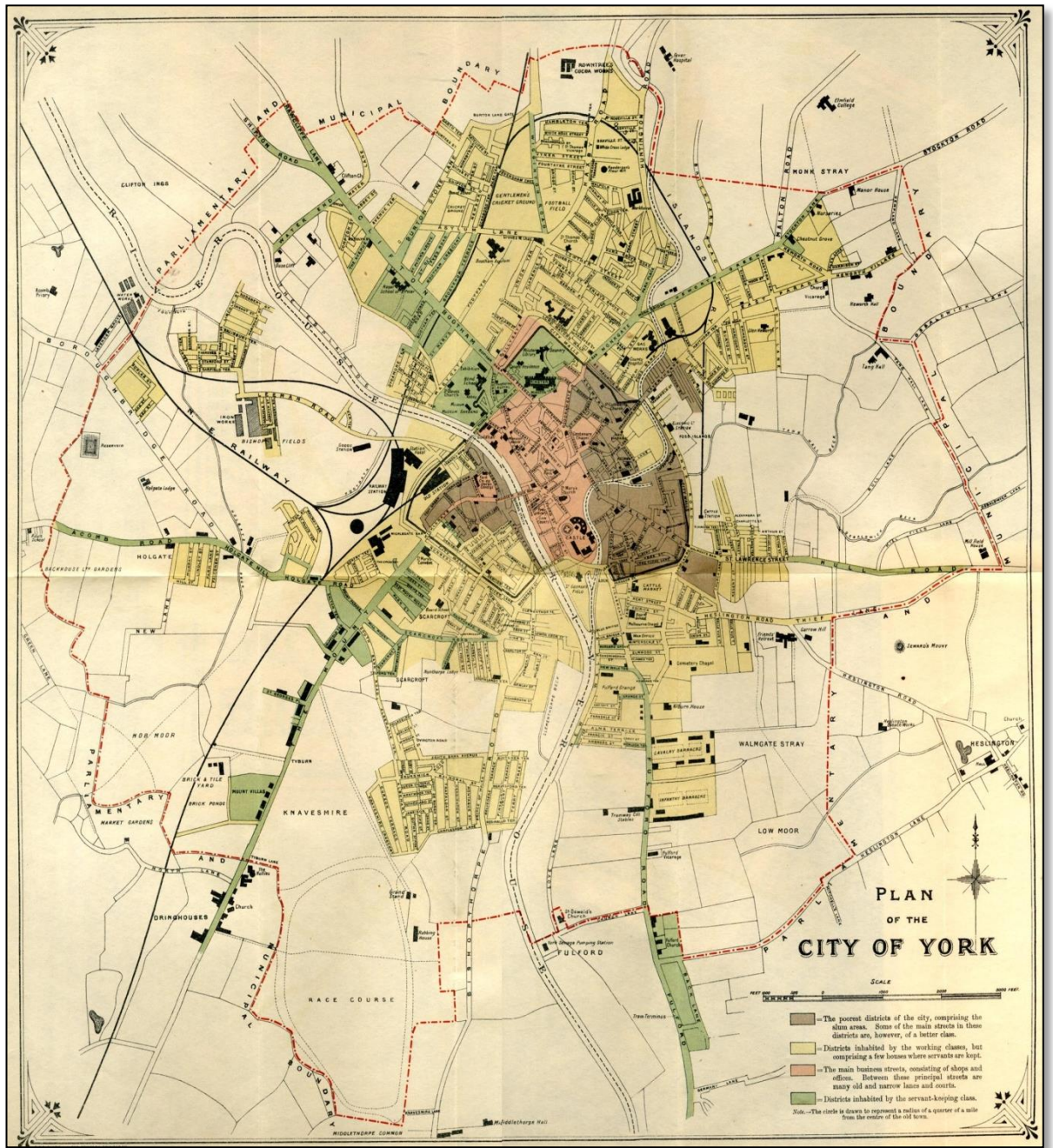


Figure 14. Rowntree's 'Plan of the City of York'. Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*.

– highlighting to readers of his report that Hungate and Walmgate belonged to the most unappealing elements of the city. (see figure 14)

Rowntree also singled out a number of streets surrounding Micklegate as being slum areas, although Micklegate itself was not part of this classification. Skeldergate and North Street were undoubtedly two of the poorest streets in the city, ‘Hagworm’s Nest’ was the site of the first case of cholera in the outbreak of 1832 which caused 185 deaths.⁶¹ However, neither of these streets nor the Micklegate area ever reached the infamy of the Hungate and Walmgate districts on which this chapter focuses. It could be argued that a district only became a slum when it acquired a degree of notoriety, and once established such a reputation then provided a focal point for all considered squalid and immoral.

2.2 Court and Newspaper Reports

It was not only sanitary surveys and poor housing which bolstered the slum image of Hungate and Walmgate. Charles Dickens brought the connection between the slums and crime before a very large audience with his vivid descriptions of parts of the London underworld.⁶² Such sensationalist writings fed a view of the slums as places threatening danger.⁶³ H. J. Dyos noted that lurid descriptions of the London slums turned them into a ‘public spectacle’, but he separated such popular literature from the serious reform discourse of social investigators and sanitary inspectors.⁶⁴ This artificial divide, however, fails to recognise that both ‘factual’ and entertaining literature contributed to the same view of the slums as dangerous and unhealthy places. Slumming united opportunistic journalists and earnest reformers, and for Seth Koven represented the ‘messier mingling of good intentions and blinkered prejudice’; of altruism, idealism, activism and eros.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*, p. 52.

⁶² See in particular *Sketches by "Boz," Illustrative of Every-day Life and Every-day People* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1874 [1836]) and *Oliver Twist* (London: Richard Bentley, 1838).

⁶³ S. Martin Gaskell, ‘Introduction’ in *Slums*, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Dyos, ‘The Slums of Victorian London’, pp. 5-40.

⁶⁵ Koven, *Slumming*, p. 3.

Newspapers reported on court appearances by residents of slum areas and published sensationalised accounts of the horrendous conditions in the poorest districts of the city. In the 1840s the *Yorkshire Gazette* ran a dehumanising exposé of the Bedern area and its residents, which bordered Hungate:

Take Bedern, for instance, and what do you find – filth, misery, drunkenness, disease and crime. Let those who doubt the proof of this assertion examine (if they have the courage) for themselves and they will find that no language can describe the feelings excited by observing the swarms of human beings hoarding together, without the slightest regard for the decencies of life. Let them, for a short time, inhale the close and pestilential atmosphere of these abodes of filth and contemplate if they can without horror man in his lowest state displaying brutal unconsciousness of his degradation.⁶⁶

Such depictions could be found in newspaper accounts across the period. In October 1896 John and Mary Agar of Carmelite Street, Hungate, were summoned by the NSPCC for neglect. The *York Herald* reported that the two room house which the Agars' shared with their eight children was 'shockingly filthy' and Inspector Notton told the court that 'the stench was overpowering' and he could not inspect the house carefully as 'it was too revolting'.⁶⁷

Recognised as one of the most intensive areas of Irish settlement in the city, Britannia Yard, Walmgate, was characterised in the local press by the fights, assaults and theft committed by its residents.⁶⁸ John Gill, a notorious resident, was convicted for the sixteenth time in 1888. His first appearance before the court, in 1875 under the headline 'A Caution to Walmgate Roughts' saw Gill, then aged 19, charged with assaulting a horse dealer. He was subsequently charged with a variety of offences, including assaulting his own father.⁶⁹ In 1896 he was described as 'one of York's worst characters' and had been convicted eight times of assaulting the police.⁷⁰ In one of his court hearings, Chief Constable Haley remarked that Walmgate was 'becoming beyond control. If a policeman took a prisoner out of Walmgate, the

⁶⁶ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 27 October 1849. See also p. 62.

⁶⁷ *York Herald*, 24 October, 1896.

⁶⁸ Finnegan, *Poverty and Prejudice*, p. 48.

⁶⁹ *York Herald*, 14 September 1888, 4 September 1875 and 20 April 1883.

⁷⁰ *York Herald*, 10 October 1896.

prisoner was sure to be rescued'.⁷¹ PC William Atkinson was disciplined in 1901 'for allowing a prisoner to escape custody in Walmgate ... by not using sufficient force to prevent his rescue'.⁷² The exploits of infamous individuals and families, reported in the press, tainted the reputation of particular neighbourhoods and the wider area.

In the press, the Irish in particular were stereotyped as 'uncivilised' and 'wild', and appeared 'only in connection with their alleged crime, disorder, disease, filth and poverty'.⁷³ Annie Pinder commented on the stigma facing the Irish living in Walmgate, recalling how for her mother's generation 'there was no work for Irish in them days. Not women, there wan't like Terry's and Rowntree's [then], there was only domestic and [many] wouldn't have 'em in 'cos they was Irish'.⁷⁴ The 'mean little streets' of Hope Street, Albert Street, Dennis Street and Navigation Road gained particular notoriety throughout the period due to their overcrowded nature and intensive Irish settlement.⁷⁵ Associations with drinking and fighting were popularised through the local press, and Robert Kay recorded a particular incident in his diary where 'an Irishwomen said to me a few days ago [that] the Lord Mayor [also the chief magistrate] ought to be grateful for the Irish in Walmgate, for if it was not for them he could never get a living'.⁷⁶

The pubs, beer-houses, lodging houses and brothels that abounded in area, criticised by newspapers and featured in court reports, also helped to create a particular image of these poor districts. Brothels recorded by the police and named by Penitentiary inmates were overwhelmingly concentrated in these poor districts of the city. Young women working as prostitutes would often meet potential clients while they were walking through the main streets of the city centre, but took them back to houses in Hungate and Walmgate. In one instance, Elizabeth Convin met Private Robert Eastwood in the city centre on a Saturday night and took him back to her house in Hungate, where their exchange took place.⁷⁷ Particular streets in both Hungate and Walmgate became notorious for the numerous brothels they contained,

⁷¹ *York Herald*, 26 August 1876.

⁷² YCA, Police Files, Police Service and Character Books, Acc. 236.23.12.5, William Atkinson, 14 December 1901.

⁷³ Finnegan, *Poverty and Prejudice*, p. 11.

⁷⁴ Interview with Annie Pinder, born 1904, YOHP.

⁷⁵ Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP.

⁷⁶ Robert Kay, Acc. 974, Grandfather Robert Kay's Notebook, 1875-1900.

⁷⁷ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 21 May 1881.

and the large number of prostitutes living and working there. Wesley Place, located in Hungate but also directly connected to Walmgate, had by the late nineteenth century cemented its reputation as a centre of prostitution. Clients picked up in Walmgate and Fossgate could – by means of Strakers or Black Horse Passage – be quickly conveyed to a house of ill fame, and few local residents could fail to be aware of their character. Such notoriety could, however, prove lucrative for business; clients would know where to go and what to expect. Being well-established in a particular area was an important way to attract clients, but could also attract the attentions of the police. It could also have implications for other young women living in such ‘notorious’ areas. In 1893 James McLaren, a soldier, was charged with indecently assaulting fourteen year old Emma Lacey, at her parents’ house in Lower Wesley Place. He was found late at night trying to get into the bed that she shared with her sister. Both girls screamed and he ran off – to be later apprehended by her father. While the jury found the young soldier guilty, in passing a lenient sentence, the Recorder said that there were ‘women of immoral character’ living next door to the Laceys, and living in a bad neighbourhood, the prisoner had evidently ‘made a mistake in the house’.⁷⁸

It is difficult to establish precisely what more ‘respectable’ neighbours thought of prostitutes and brothel keepers. The responses of Mr Lacey and his daughters to James McLaren’s lenient sentence were not recorded in the newspaper reports. Newspapers published letters from middle-class observers complaining about the moral state of an area’s inhabitants, but these often viewed the poor in general with disapproval. Social integration could depend on the character of the local neighbourhood, and in Walmgate and Hungate it would appear that the social and economic profile of prostitutes was not markedly different from the rest of the urban poor. In Preston, when asked about life in the red light district of Manchester Road, the responses of Elizabeth Roberts’ interviewees ranged from outright condemnation of the women who worked there, to tolerance and even a grudging admiration.⁷⁹ In York Harry Thelfall noted disapprovingly that ‘there were a deuce lot of them’ in the city, but Emily Richardson conceded that prostitution was just

⁷⁸ ‘York Quarter Sessions’, *York Herald*, 7 October 1893. See also p. 100.

⁷⁹ See in particular the interview with Mrs H. I. P whose brother, a policeman, thought the Manchester Road prostitutes were ‘the grandest lasses you could wish for’. Roberts, *A Woman’s Place*, p. 19.

‘their way of earning a living’.⁸⁰ Doreen Bolton recalled the prostitutes who frequented her mother’s pub: ‘I used to call ‘em all aunty ... they were all very nice’.⁸¹ One poor community which remained largely removed from prostitution was the Irish population. Moving into areas often associated with prostitution, including some of the yards off Walmgate, Frances Finnegan noted how prostitution offences fell rapidly in areas colonised by the Irish, although she only hints at the peer policing or moral constraints that may have been the reason for this.⁸² It cannot be assumed that different communities shared a common set of ideas about sexuality and social mores.

Soldiers undoubtedly augmented the coffers of pubs in both the Hungate and Walmgate districts, and their presence cemented the reputation of the area in the minds of many outsiders. Stationed at the nearby cavalry and infantry barracks on Fulford Road, soldiers frequented Hungate and Walmgate to visit friends, drink and take advantage of other, more illicit, pleasures. Chief Constable Haley told the Watch Committee that Walmgate was becoming problematic ‘on account of the number of soldiers who nightly assemble there’.⁸³ In 1882 the military authorities had to be called in to help restore order in Walmgate. The incident was widely reported across the city and Robert Kay noted in his diary that the trouble began in the Black Horse public house, where a fight between a military man and residents got out of hand. Chief Constable Haley told the Watch Committee that a soldier had returned to the pub to reclaim his stolen property and confront the thief. After apprehending the man he believed to be responsible, a fight broke out. Other soldiers became involved, along with other local residents, and the street became inaccessible for over an hour. After the event, the soldiers were forbidden from entering Walmgate for the rest of their stay in the city.⁸⁴ The *York Herald* reported that several ‘disgraceful rows’ occurred in Walmgate ‘through the unruly conduct of militia men [who were] quarrelling with mobs of Irish’.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Harry Thelfall, born 1880 and Emily Richardson, cited in Masters, *The Respectability of Late Victorian Workers*, p. 156-157, p. 236.

⁸¹ Interview with Doreen Bolton, born 1910, YOHP.

⁸² Finnegan argues that the Irish contribution to prostitution in York was disproportionately low and muses that this may have been due to different moral codes and the ‘unusually chaste’ nature of Irish immigrant women. Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*, p. 53 and Finnegan, *Poverty and Prejudice*.

⁸³ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 5, 16 March 1881.

⁸⁴ Robert Kay, Acc. 974, Grandfather Robert Kay’s Notebook, 1875-1900 and Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 5, 3 August 1882.

⁸⁵ *York Herald*, 5 August 1882.

Mr Slater also noted the tension between soldiers and the residents of the area; ‘the soldiers and civilians they used to knock hell out a’one another’.⁸⁶ Many in the community did not like soldiers because they had ‘got a name’, and had a reputation for ‘being here today and gone tomorrow’, and ‘if any lass was foolish enough to be left with a bairn, they were bitter against it’.⁸⁷ Young women were often discouraged from openly socialising with soldiers, even within a family setting. Annie Pinder’s mother would not allow her to dance with a young soldier at a family wedding party in Walmgate; “Get yourself sat down there”, she said, “and you young man, get on your way”.⁸⁸

The reputation of Hungate and Walmgate developed through a process of repetition, with different issues being brought to public attention. The emphasis could change, from crime and prostitution to public health and municipal improvement, but all helped to strengthen the slum stereotype. As Graeme Davison noted

The slum stereotype ... portrayed lower class life in essentially negative terms – *disease, distress, disorder, disaffection* – and always from a lofty middle-class point of view. It acted as a shutter closing the minds of contemporaries to the inner life and outlook of the poor.⁸⁹

External signs such as dirt and over-crowdedness became signs of immorality to middle-class observers. Once established, the reputation of both districts became an entity in its own right. Generally these neighbourhoods were socially mixed, with different levels of housing available. Working-class families with very different income levels lived in close proximity, yet for external observers it was easier to deal in blanket assertions and generalisations. Such slum narratives obscured the diversity of the streets and the people who lived there, and the broad brush strokes painted by social investigators and sanitary inspectors could conceal a remarkable range of conditions. Differences could be subtle or the character of different streets could vary enormously. As Margaret Mann Phillips, the daughter of the vicar of St

⁸⁶ Interview with Mr Slater, born 1908, YOHP.

⁸⁷ Interview with Annie Pinder, born 1904, YOHP.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Graeme Davison, ‘Introduction’ in *The Outcasts of Melbourne: Essays in Social History*, ed. by Graeme Davison, David Dunstan and Chris McConville (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986), p. 3.

Margaret's, recalled: '[in some streets] one house would be a filthy hovel and the next a trim, clean cottage'.⁹⁰ Olive Waudby lived in George Street, Walmgate, but as the daughter of a greengrocer she was sent to private school and socialised largely with other shopkeeper's children. She was 'forbidden ever to go up that part of George Street, amongst the barefoot kids'.⁹¹ Mary Alexander's family considered themselves to be quite respectable. As a child she remembered hearing her parents gossiping about the neighbours; those that drank and those who gambled: 'me mother and father thought that it was awful, it was not to be mentioned in front of me, anything like that. But I mean, I has ears and I used them'.⁹²

Greengrocers like Olive Waudby's father, along with the Rowntree's factory workers, manual labourers, publicans, gas workers, and butchers that resided in Hungate and Walmgate were grouped together under the category of 'slum dweller', and their individual circumstances, identities and experiences were lost.⁹³ The press highlighted criminal and disorderly behaviour, with reports of 'unfortunate women', theft, assault, gambling, drunkenness, obscene language and indecent behaviour by the residents of the district.⁹⁴ Newspaper reports, sanitary authority investigations and social surveys offered merely a snapshot of the urban landscape; the tangible conditions of the street mattered less to outsiders than the images of dirt and squalor they were presented with. Poverty, poor housing and the often increased visibility of families and young people on the streets encouraged such negative stereotyping, and those from outside Hungate and Walmgate read about or visited the area with their own preconceptions and apprehensions. The multiplicity of experience and identity was collapsed into a one-dimensional world, perhaps best highlighted by the unpleasant muddy brown colour on Rowntree's *Poverty* map.

For external observers, the streets and courtyards in Hungate and Walmgate were a place of squalor, of immorality and drunkenness, there to be improved or, ideally, removed. Published accounts – including philanthropic reports, sanitary

⁹⁰ Phillips, p. 22.

⁹¹ Interview with Olive Waudby, born 1909, YOHP.

⁹² Interview with Mary Alexander, born 1913, YOHP.

⁹³ As Robert Roberts emphasizes in his first-person account of working class life in the 'classic slum' of Salford, terms granted to the urban poor by Engels or used in fictionalised representations put forward by writers like Dickens do not represent the, at times, complex social hierarchy or range of experience of working class life. Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, pp. 13-17.

⁹⁴ *York Herald*, 31 July 1886, 21 August 1886, 27 May 1899, 11 May 1886, 4 April 1883, 4 August 1884, 17 June 1887.

investigations and newspaper reports – were fundamental in representing a particular view of the lives of the working class of York to outsiders. They played a central part in the social construction of the slum and were designed to provoke certain responses; but their authors were also concerned with investigating, understanding and, in many cases, improving the conditions of these poor districts. Reformers genuinely attempted to improve slum living conditions, but they were unable to do so without stigmatising the poorest. Their descriptions of the Hungate and Walmgate district placed increasingly spatial and experiential distance between the ‘slum’ dwellers, and the ‘respectable’ residents of the city.

The existence of poor working-class areas in the city had long been acknowledged, but Hungate and Walmgate were ‘rediscovered’ at times of social concern.⁹⁵ Their existence was increasingly seen as conflicting with the image of a ‘genteel’ city that marketed itself as a resort for country gentlemen and well-healed tourists; when protesting against the proposed Poor Law Guardian offices in Museum Street, the Lord Mayor declared ‘as they could not make York a manufacturing town, he thought they ought to maintain it as a place of resort for country gentlemen and their families’.⁹⁶ The small overcrowded streets and densely packed houses seemed the very anathema of the clean and orderly city upon which late Victorian society placed increasing value. Known to most of York’s visitors and many of its residents only through reputation, a reputation that was established and reproduced through published accounts that told the same stories of dirt, misery and disorder, accounts of Hungate and Walmgate reflected the concerns of outsiders rather than any of the conditions or experiences they claimed to represent.

3. Reconstructing the ‘typical slum’

On the surface, there is no shortage of information on the lives of the Hungate and Walmgate residents. The sanitary investigations and social surveys presented numerous facts relating to life in the district, and newspaper reports added

⁹⁵ See also Davis, ‘Beyond the Georgian facade’, p. 144 and John Welshman, who has explored the social construction of ‘the poor’ and how the idea of an ‘underclass’ has been successively reinvented. John Welshman, *Underclass: A History of the Excluded since 1880*, 2nd edn (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 4.

⁹⁶ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 10 September 1859. See also chapter four, p. 171.

sensationalism. Yet in each of these cases, the lives of the poor were observed from outside. The young working-class who lived, worked and socialised in the poor districts of the city were the objects of debate and reform, but their voices were rarely heard.

For archaeologists in York, Hungate provided an opportunity to explore beyond slum stereotypes and examine a disadvantaged community. Over seven years archaeologists from the York Archaeological Trust (YAT) excavated several areas of the Hungate district, focusing particularly on Palmer Lane and Dundas Street – which had been demolished by slum clearances in the 1930s – and the former sites of Bellerby’s Saw Mill and Leetham’s Flour Mill.⁹⁷ The archaeological project presented an opportunity to recover information about the people of Hungate, their buildings and their way of life from Roman times through to the twentieth century.⁹⁸ Alan Mayne emphasizes the importance of archaeological work in enhancing rather than simply echoing existing knowledge about the past, and its potential to question prevailing interpretations.⁹⁹ The work undertaken by YAT at Hungate hoped to use material evidence to develop the analysis of a poor community, avoiding stereotypes that homogenise the former residents of the area. Yet the evidence does not live up to these expectations; while the excavations uncovered the walls of buildings, yards and surfaces which match maps, providing information about the local infrastructure and the built environment, these do not further the knowledge that can already be built up from archives and documentary sources. The poor quality pottery and children’s games that the site uncovered do not challenge what is already known about the area.¹⁰⁰

The Hungate excavations were also accompanied by an oral history project that hoped to uncover the lives of the men and women who lived in this ‘typical slum’. The Hungate oral history project is part of a wider collection of interviews

⁹⁷ Detailed information about the Hungate excavations can be found on both the YAT website, <www.yorkarchaeology.co.uk> and the Hungate Dig website, <www.dighungate.com> [accessed 29 August 2013].

⁹⁸ ‘About Hungate’, <www.dighungate.com> [accessed 29 August 2013].

⁹⁹ Alan Mayne, ‘Beyond Metrics: Reappraising York’s Hungate “Slum”’, *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 15: 4 (2011), 554-555.

¹⁰⁰ B. Antoni, ‘Sewer Division Shaft Excavations: Hungate Development, York. A Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief and Excavation’, May 2007, *York Archaeological Trust*, <www.dighungate.com> [accessed 29 August 2013]. For further discussion of the Hungate excavations see ‘Poverty in Depth: New Perspectives’, a special issue of the *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 15: 4 (2011).

conducted by the York Oral History Society and held in storage at the York City Archives. Founded in 1982, the Society has a collection of over 600 interviews with recollections spanning the late nineteenth century to the present day. The Society is a voluntary group of local historians who have carried out interviews with local residents with the aim of ‘preserving the memories of York people’, and have published selections of these in local history publications.¹⁰¹

The YOHP and associated publications are similar to other local history studies which have been criticised for subscribing to an overall trend of nostalgia and displaying a particular pride in regional identities.¹⁰² The Hungate publication, *Rich in All But Money: Life in Hungate 1900-1938*, features a range of interviews with former Hungate residents – many of whom were moved to new council houses after the clearance of the area. The promotional material emphasizes the publication as a ‘unique collection of personal recollections and memories ... celebrating the past’.¹⁰³ This celebratory impulse is also evident in the collection of interviews on Walmgate; *The Walmgate Story: Humour, Heartache and Hope*.¹⁰⁴ Interviewers have looked for evidence of adaptation, endurance and resilience, but in stressing this both publications have a tendency to sentimentalise. Limited means did not necessarily mean squalor or instability, but it is important not to over-emphasise this celebration of the past and thus distort it. Even when probing the difficult aspects of life, the interviewer’s tone is often to celebrate community spirit and an individual’s ability to prevail over difficult circumstances. This is highlighted not only by the titles of both publications, but also within the individual interviews, including some not published. In *Rich in All But Money*, the editor Van Wilson notes that the collection ‘highlights the incredible resilience and spirit of the Hungate community’.¹⁰⁵

The interviews, however, when used critically and in combination with documentary sources, can help further the analysis of life from the view of those who lived in the ‘typical slum’, and challenge slum discourses. They also provide a

¹⁰¹ ‘York Oral History Society’, <www.yorkoralhistory.org.uk> [accessed 10 July 2013].

¹⁰² See Sally Sokaloff, ‘The Home Front in the Second World War and Local History’, *The Local Historian*, 32:1 (2002), 22-40 for similar issues. For detailed discussion of the oral history testimony, see pp. 24-27.

¹⁰³ Van Wilson, *Rich in All But Money: Life in Hungate, 1900-1938* (York: York Archaeological Trust, 2007).

¹⁰⁴ Van Wilson, *The Walmgate Story: Humour, Heartache and Hope* (York: Voyager Publications, 2006).

¹⁰⁵ Wilson, *Rich in All But Money*, p. 1.

perspective on how the young people who lived in Walmgate and Hungate interacted with the 'slum' label. A number of interviewees seemed to support established readings and popular opinions of the area. Louisa Aldrich described the Ebor Buildings opposite Bedern school as 'slums, proper slums', and Albert Howard, who lived in Long Close Lane until his marriage, remembered that 'they call[ed] this the slums, you know'.¹⁰⁶ Other respondents repeated the belief of many outsiders that police would only enter the districts in twos and threes; 'you never saw a policeman on his own in those areas – two or three of them together'.¹⁰⁷ Yet Fred Milburn, a former police constable, noted that the police generally patrolled the Hungate and Walmgate area alone.¹⁰⁸ Nell Fearn noted that 'you saw 'em in one's most of the time' and they would 'try every door'.¹⁰⁹

Louisa Aldrich grew up in St Saviourgate, but even as a young child knew that the street was much more respectable than the neighbouring Hungate, Dundas Steet and Carmelite Street. She spent a lot of time in Hungate, however, and actively rejected the condescending attitude of some of her neighbours regarding the poorer areas; 'there was one or two people very well, la-di-dah ... we sort of didn't get on with them very well'.¹¹⁰ However, when socialising outside of the area some young people were reluctant to admit to where they lived. Nell Fearn recalled talking to boys 'and they'd say "Where do you live?" And we never used to tell them we lived in Hungate ... They'd keep away from us'.¹¹¹ In her testimony, Nell Fearn was particularly frank in her belief that, despite her refusal to tell people she lived in Hungate, the area and its residents were superior to those of neighbouring Walmgate, which she described as being 'like a warren', and 'a very rough spot'. Through her teenage years, Nell Fearn lived in Dundas Street, condemned by the Medical Officer of Health and cleared in the 1930s. She reiterated that she often would not tell outsiders that she lived in Hungate because of its reputation; 'don't go down Hungate ... that's where they play tiggie with hammers, but that was another way of saying it had a rough name'. However, being interviewed many years later she was keen to stress the great community spirit of the Hungate residents. Hungate was

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Louisa Aldrich and Albert Howard, born 1913, YOHP.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with James Cave, born 1910, YOHP.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918, YOHP.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Louisa Aldrich, born 1919, YOHP.

¹¹¹ Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918, YOHP.

‘marvellous. Absolutely marvellous,’ while Walmgate, on the other hand, had a ‘bad name, they used to live in filth and it was horrible down there’. She closed her testimony on the area with the remark that ‘Walmgate more or less seemed a long way from us in Hungate’.¹¹² While external observers often discussed the two areas together, Walmgate and Hungate had two distinct identities, often felt very strongly by those who lived there. For Thomas Abbot ‘in Hungate you were going into foreign territory and you didn’t tread’.¹¹³ Fred Milburn, though, ‘never worried about going through Walmgate. If you minded you own business you were alright – nobody would interfere with you’.¹¹⁴

Some of the oral history respondents, then, seemed to support established readings of their communities, and the reputation of the slum evidently had a direct bearing on their daily lives.¹¹⁵ What kinds of social activities were available for the young people who socialised in these ‘slum’ districts; and what impact did slum discourses have on these? How did the young working class engage with their neighbourhood space?

3.1 Home and neighbourhood: a case study of Lower Wesley Place

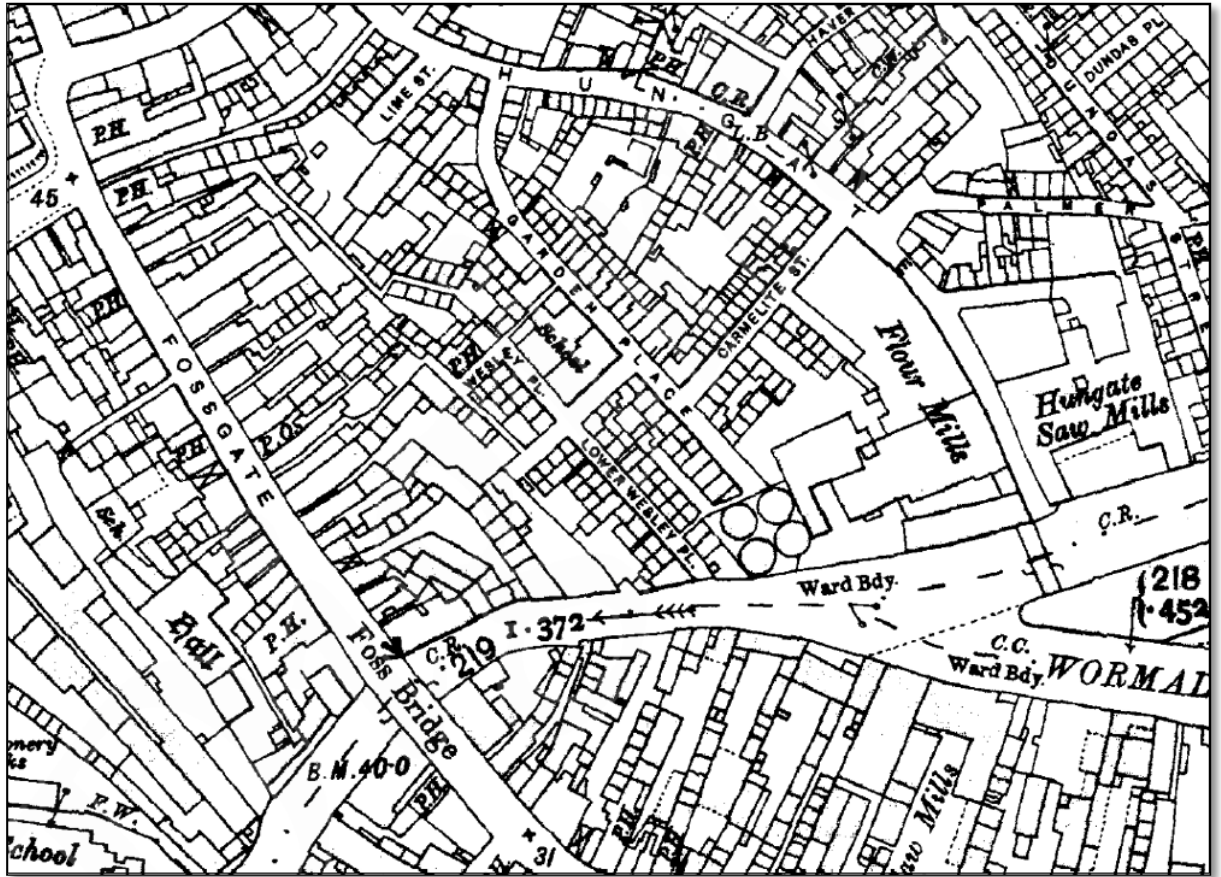
Along with Walmgate, Hungate, as we have seen, was widely regarded as a ‘typical slum’ area, and one of its streets; Lower Wesley Place, is the subject of closer investigation here. Using the Medical Officer of Health files, census data, newspaper reports and Rowntree’s survey information, it is possible to explore the space and place of home and neighbourhood, and consider what such space may have meant to the young working class who resided there. Lower Wesley Place contained largely back-to-back cottages that ran down to the River Foss and, along with neighbouring streets, was subject to frequent flooding. The *York Herald* reported on ‘distressing scenes’ in Hungate in October 1892 when ‘the overflowing of the Foss found the

¹¹² Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918, YOHP.

¹¹³ Interview with Thomas Abbot, born 1919, YOHP.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918, YOHP.



Scale 1:1800

Figure 15. The map shows Lower Wesley Place running down to the River Foss. © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited 2014. All rights reserved. 1900.

people almost wholly unprepared'. A number of houses were submerged in four and a half feet of water, and inhabitants in 'Dundas Street, Carmelite Street, Garden Place and Upper and Lower Wesley Place were the chief sufferers ... in these streets were many cases of real distress'.¹¹⁶ The York Health Department documented further severe flooding in the area in 1933, as shown in figure 16. In addition to structural and decorative damage, the Medical Officer of Health noted properties were often left damp and with dank smells that lingered long after the flood water had receded. Flooding could also have other consequences: James Linley reported

¹¹⁶ *York Herald*, 22 October 1892.



Figure 16. Flooding in Lower Wesley Place pictured in February 1933, York Health Department. Image courtesy of Imagine York [accessed 12 July 2013].

at the police station in October 1892 that his house, 12 Lower Wesley Place, was on fire. The fire had been initially been lit to help dry the house out after flooding, but had quickly got out of control.¹¹⁷

The street contained a number of two and four roomed cottages which backed onto identical properties in the yards behind, with access through narrow passages. Most of the 11ft square houses were condemned by Edmund Smith, the Medical Officer of Health, in 1908, but not vacated until the 1930s.¹¹⁸ As can be seen in figure 15, a number of these houses backed onto Leetham's Flour Mill, which dominated the sky line, was noisy and liable to spread flour dust all over the neighbourhood. The Medical Officer of Health had very few positives to say about

¹¹⁷ *York Herald*, 21 October 1892.

¹¹⁸ York City Health Department Records, Acc. 157.10.10, Hungate Area House Inspection Record Sheets, 1901-1910.

the housing in the street. Of number 2 Lower Wesley Place he noted that while the house was kept moderately clean, the building itself was poor, unhealthy, dark and damp, with no ashbin and a defective floor.¹¹⁹ For the residents who lived there, it must have been difficult to keep the house clean, despite good intentions, although much like Robert Roberts' account of life in the 'classic slum' of Salford where 'most people kept what they possessed clean in spite of squalor and ever-invading dirt', in Hungate Nell Ferns noted 'it was poor ... but by God it was clean'.¹²⁰ Keeping houses warm could also be a difficult task, and broken windows and patchy roofs could only compound this problem. Most of the dwellings had access to a cold water tap, although water closets were shared. Fourteen houses in the street shared five WCs, which were, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, noted as being 'in good condition' by the Medical Officer of Health.¹²¹ Access to these shared spaces could, however, cause neighbourly tensions; Maria Todd of 16 Lower Wesley Place was assaulted by Mary Snee in one of the yards behind Lower Wesley Place in 1883. The *Herald* reported that Snee struck Todd with a coal rake and then threw a bucket of water over her, but after calling witnesses on both sides conflicting evidence was given, and the case dismissed.¹²² The intrusion of sounds, smells and the behaviour of others could be intensified for those compelled to share space and facilities.¹²³

The census returns for Lower Wesley Place in 1901 reveal an incredible variety in household size, ranging from single occupancy to families of twelve. Harriet Crosbie lived with her ten children, ranging in age from two to twenty one, and her baby granddaughter, at number 14. The Medical Officer of Health noted in 1908 that the back-to-back house had just two rooms, which he labelled as the 'kitchen' and 'front bedroom', and that the house was unhealthy, dark and ill-ventilated.¹²⁴ There were a sizable number of extended families on the street, with young couples living with parents, and older members of the family living with

¹¹⁹ York City Health Department Records, Acc. 157.10.10, Hungate Area House Inspection Record Sheets, 19 June 1906.

¹²⁰ Interview with Nell Ferns, born 1918, YOHP.

¹²¹ York City Health Department Records, Acc. 157.10.10, Hungate Area House Inspection Record Sheets, 19 June 1906.

¹²² *York Herald*, 20 November 1883.

¹²³ Emily Cockayne, *Cheek by Jowl: A History of Neighbours* (London: Bodley Head, 2012).

¹²⁴ York City Health Department Records, Acc. 157.10.10, Hungate Area House Inspection Record Sheets, 26 July 1906.



Figure 17. The rear of numbers 1-17 Lower Wesley Place c.1933, York Health Department. Image courtesy of Imagine York [accessed 12 July 2013].

younger relatives. In 1901, 12 Lower Wesley Place was occupied by James Linley, his wife Elizabeth and their four children, as well as Elizabeth's brother and sister. A number of the families also took in lodgers, who often worked at the nearby Leetham's Mill. Local employment activity was mixed, although a number of the residents worked in Leetham's, and of the thirty household heads listed ten were labourers of one kind or another.¹²⁵ The vicar of St Saviour's parish noted in Hungate: 'Men almost entirely casual labourers. Women a considerable number go out to char. Boys confectionery trade and other blind alley occupations. Girls confectionery trade or laundry work', which is certainly applicable to Lower Wesley

¹²⁵ *Census Return of England and Wales, 1901.*

Place.¹²⁶ A number of the street's residents came into contact with the police and magistrates, most regularly charged with petty theft and drunkenness: twenty one year old bricklayers' labourer Frederick Danby was charged with pigeon stealing in March 1900, while William Plows, a lodger living with the Crosbie family at 11 Lower Wesley Place, was charged with being drunk and disorderly in Sampson's Square on a Saturday evening in 1895.¹²⁷

The majority of these sources on working-class domestic and neighbourhood space have been filtered through external observers, who favoured factual accounts over imaginative language; documenting rents, measuring rooms and counting amenities. To such observers, working-class homes could appear chaotic and unclean, the opposite of the comfortable ordered space of the ideal middle-class dwelling. In his chapter on housing, Rowntree included three floor plans; of 'typical' houses occupied by the well-to-do artisans, those occupied by families in receipt of moderate but regular wages, and finally, 'typical slum' dwellings. Rowntree insisted on defining and identifying spaces, clearly labelling each room, and referring to kitchens, pantries and bedrooms, although as Oliver Betts has argued, such room-by-room labelling often reflected middle-class conceptions of home, and can only shed so much light on how residents actually *used* their homes. The spatial components of homes in Lower Wesley Place 'were much more fluid than the structured world of middle-class domesticity'.¹²⁸ The rigid divisions of living, eating and sleeping space found in many middle-class homes were impossible in the majority of two roomed dwellings that housed the residents of Lower Wesley Place. Following the serious flooding in 1892, the *York Herald* reported that in the Hungate district 'several instances occurred where people sleeping on the ground floor were awakened by the rush of water at their side', illustrating that any room could be utilised for sleeping, and that spatial divisions might not have been as rigidly structured as external observers supposed.¹²⁹

Newspapers can offer glimpses into the private homes and lives of the residents of Lower Wesley Place. In the case of assault against soldier James McLaren, Emma Lacey's father James gave evidence that on the night in question,

¹²⁶ Y614, Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District by Edmund M. Smith, Medical Officer of Health, June 1908, p. 9.

¹²⁷ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 6 March 1900 and *York Herald*, 6 July 1895.

¹²⁸ Betts, p. 92.

¹²⁹ *York Herald*, 22 October 1892.

he, his wife and their five children were all sleeping in one bedroom at their home number 2 Lower Wesley Place. Emma, aged fourteen, shared a bed with her older sister Elizabeth, and the entire family were woken by the screams of the girls when McLaren tried to get in the bed with her.¹³⁰ In October 1894, Edward Crane was summoned for keeping an illegal lodging house in Lower Wesley Place. A previous license application had been rejected by the Medical Officer of Health, but when the Inspector of Nuisances, Inspector Atkinson visited, he found five men sleeping in the front bedroom, and another three in the downstairs room. Crane's wife May was found sleeping next door with three other women.¹³¹ Crane had previously been charged under the Lodging Houses Act for allowing people of the opposite sex to occupy the same room at Lodging Houses he owned in the Water Lanes and Walmgate.¹³² Sleeping arrangements could evidently be very compressed, with brothers and sisters expected to bunk together – as much for warmth as lack of space.¹³³ This sharing of beds could bring out dark fears in the minds of external observers, in particular a fear of what bed-fellows of mixed genders and ages might be exposed to. Rowntree noted that homes with boys and girls 'past childhood' with no third bedroom could raise questions 'of decency and morality'.¹³⁴ By the 1901 census Emma Lacey had married James Brown, a flour packer at Leetham's, and the couple lived together in their own house at number 20 Lower Wesley Place. Her older sister Elizabeth had also left the family home, which had now moved to number 17 Lower Wesley Place, where James Lacey and his wife lived with five children and a lodger; twenty-two year old Charles Skelly, who worked in the confectionery industry.

The everyday experience of home for many of York's young working class must have been a considerably cramped one. Finding space for leisure was limited, and considerably more difficult for those with little space and high occupancy such as the Butterworth family, who in the 1891 census lived at number 16 Lower Wesley Place. In 1906 the house was occupied by just two adults who lived in the two

¹³⁰ *York Herald*, 12 August 1893 and 7 November 1893.

¹³¹ *York Herald*, 5 October 1894.

¹³² *York Herald*, 13 April 1878, 31 May 1879, 21 August 1886.

¹³³ Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London, 1870-1914* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996), pp. 49-50.

¹³⁴ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 177.

roomed back-to-back cottage that was described as dirty, damp and defective.¹³⁵ However, in 1891, John Butterworth, his wife Sarah, their married daughter and her husband, five other children and two grandchildren occupied the house.¹³⁶ What experiences of domestic leisure might twenty-five year old labourer George Butterworth and his nineteen and seventeen year old sisters, both working in the confectionery industry, have been able to expect? Of course, the number of occupants per house cannot necessarily reveal how the residents' themselves felt about their home, or what they considered overcrowded. External observers evidently had their own ideas,¹³⁷ but with such little space, is it any wonder much everyday life spilled over onto the street?

'Home' is obviously more than just bricks and mortar, but the physical space of home and its material conditions evidently impacted on young people's experiences of leisure both directly and indirectly. Working-class homes like those discussed did not generally give young people access to privacy and were not conducive to recreation, and for Rowntree, the popularity of the public house was in no small part due to the cramped conditions that abounded in the slum dwellings of York.¹³⁸ External concerns over the working-class 'home' reflected not only upon the physical conditions, but also upon the perceived moral ones. The York City Mission noted that the 'decay of home influence is a matter of deep concern' as 'young life is thrown away on the streets ... habits are formed and practices indulged in which are both morally and spiritually injurious', and the York Penitentiary Society noted of the young girls admitted to the Refuge that 'when the bad home ... of many of these girls come to be known, pity rather than blame must be the uppermost feeling'.¹³⁹ Many young people may have socialised on the streets because of the cramped and squalid conditions at home, and it should also be remembered that for young working-class women in particular, the home could also

¹³⁵ York City Health Department Records, Acc. 157.10.10, Hungate Area House Inspection Record Sheets, 26 July 1906.

¹³⁶ *Census Return of England and Wales, 1891*.

¹³⁷ In his investigation into the dwellings of Hope Street, Walmgate, the Medical Officer of Health noted; 'the bedrooms are usually small, low, ill-lit and ill-ventilated, usually with more than one bedstead, giving *clear evidence of overcrowding*'. [emphasis added] York City Health Department Records, Acc. 157.10.9, Hope Street Improvement Scheme, 1924. Rowntree cited the Registrar General's reports, defining overcrowding as when 'the average number of persons in the room is more than two'. Rowntree, *Poverty: Study of Town Life*, p. 169.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 306-326.

¹³⁹ YCA, York City Mission, Acc. 223, Box 1, Minute Book of Committee Meetings, 1902, pp. 7-8 and Penitentiary Society, Acc 212, Annual Report, 1905.

be a space of work. For others, the boundary between home and neighbourhood may not have been so clear-cut, and connections could be made between home and neighbourhood space. Historians working on Helsinki in the early twentieth century have argued that as working-class children grew up, their boundaries of ‘home’ shifted; as they grew older, they increasingly roamed around districts they identified as their own.¹⁴⁰

4. Leisure and sociability in the ‘typical slum’

As for all the young working class, access to leisure was mediated by physical factors, most notably money and time, but the young people of Walmgate and Hungate often had to construct a life for themselves out of relatively sparse raw material. While reading or knitting could be pleasurable activities undertaken indoors, often housing conditions prevented this. Social life in both districts was largely conducted outside of the home. Rowntree’s investigators noted that many families socialised outside; ‘weather being very warm, men, women and children are sitting on the pavement most of the evening’.¹⁴¹ Dick Calpin recalled that ‘on summer nights especially we used to sit out in the street’.¹⁴² Owen Calpin noted the reason for this; ‘my mum brought up a family of six in a two roomed house, one-up, one-down’, and Dick Calpin remembered that as his siblings got married it ‘relieved us a little bit’.¹⁴³ Annie Pinder lived in Hope Street with ‘thirteen children in one house’.¹⁴⁴ Space, or the lack of it, was not the only issue. Some young people found they had few resources for leisure in the home, ‘there was no radio, nothing’.¹⁴⁵

While the streets could be utilised more easily in the summer months, the cold and darkness could make socialising outside during the winter more challenging. Stan and Lily Hall walked out together even in the winter months, but she remembered it being ‘freezing cold’ as they ‘stood canoodlin’ in ‘that lane’ in

¹⁴⁰ Heikki Paunonen, Jani Vuolteenaho and Terhi Ainiala, ‘Industrial urbanization, working-class lads and slang toponyms in early twentieth-century Helsinki’, *Urban History*, 36:3 (2009), 449-472.

¹⁴¹ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 318.

¹⁴² Interview with Dick Calpin, born 1909, YOHP.

¹⁴³ Interview with Owen Calpin, date of birth not recorded, YOHP and interview with Dick Calpin, born 1909, YOHP.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Annie Pinder, born 1904, YOHP.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Owen Calpin, YOHP.

Heslington.¹⁴⁶ For others, on the dark winter nights there was ‘nothing to do in a place like Walmgate’.¹⁴⁷ Stan Lea remembered differently, arguing that there was lots for the young people of the district to do – if they could spare a shilling; ‘they could go to dances, cos it was only like a shilling’, or attend the music hall, picture house or pub.¹⁴⁸ Mrs Lonsdale, who lived in Hungate, went to the Theatre Royal every Thursday, and also liked to go dancing as a young woman but noted that ‘nights out were limited cos your money was limited’.¹⁴⁹ The Saturday night markets provided a source of free entertainment as well as cheap food. Louisa Aldrich often ‘used to go scrounging’ around the Parliament Street market on a Saturday evening with friends to ‘see if they’d anything to give away’.¹⁵⁰

Material constraints could also make courtship difficult, with visits to a sweetheart’s overcrowded kitchen often impossible. Dance halls and other commercial venues that facilitated courtship were also out of the reach of many, although the music hall and later the cinema did offer cheap seats. Young couples often walked the streets, like Stan and Lily Hall, or paraded up and down on the ‘monkey run’. A Saturday night trip to Parliament Street market could also bring young men and women together. If courting in the local community, neighbours were often responsible for the surveillance of the young couple’s conduct. The relatively small area and largely pedestrian existence meant that young couples moved around neighbourhood space under the regular observation of others. Nell Fearn recalled that within Hungate ‘everyone knew who you were ... you were watched over by every family’. Even when venturing further afield, ‘if you were seen talking to somebody, lads used to know which lads were worth talking to and which weren’t’.¹⁵¹ Stan and Lily Hall walked out together all over the city, but were always careful to be back in Hungate for Lily’s 10 o’clock curfew; ‘if I weren’t in, my dad were at end of t’road, looking out for me’.¹⁵²

Walking out or participating in the ‘monkey run’ provided a free alternative to a night at the cinema or music hall, but even the cheapest seats or parading often

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Lily Hall, born 1912, YOHP.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Owen Calpin, YOHP.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Stan Lea, born 1909, YOHP.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Mrs Lonsdale, born 1907, YOHP.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Louisa Aldrich, born 1919, YOHP.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918, YOHP.

¹⁵² Interview with Lily Hall, born 1912, YOHP.

required 'Sunday Best' clothing. The pawn-shop was evidently a feature of working-class life in these districts, and in 1901 Rowntree commented on 'the Monday morning pilgrimage to the pawn-shop'.¹⁵³ In Hungate, James Cave used to watch the queues outside Sharpe's pawnshop on a Monday as people waited 'with a parcel under their arm, queuing up to exchange the goods'.¹⁵⁴ Mary Evelyn Booker's mother would lend out jewellery to her neighbours to pawn at 'Addie Haythorne's' pawnshop in Walmgate.¹⁵⁵ 'Sunday Best' clothes could often be hard to afford after other necessities had been allowed for.

For external observers, the streets and courtyards in Hungate and Walmgate were a place of licentiousness, of immorality and drunkenness. For the young people who lived and socialised there, they were a place for working, walking, eating, drinking, fighting and courting. It was often on street corners that social relationships were maintained.¹⁵⁶ Young men could have regular spots which became an important leisure venue; a place to gossip and catch up on local news. While they were often male spheres, young women did participate, and sometimes courting couples were introduced in this way. Stan and Lily Hall met on the corner of Lord Mayor's Walk where they 'got talking and then got going out together'.¹⁵⁷ Nell Fearn remembered that 'lads' used to spend their lives on the streets, but that young women also mixed with them. She spoke of young men standing on street corners, or going down to the Assembly Rooms or the De Grey Rooms to pick up butt-ends of cigarettes. Young women would accompany them if there was a big dance on, 'to stand and watch. See what clothes they had on'.¹⁵⁸ Young men could be vulnerable to police harassment when loitering in this way. In many cases, the police on their regular beat were simply avoided; 'as soon as the flat feet were coming, they all knew ... and when the police went away, back they went again'.¹⁵⁹ Others were not always so lucky. Martin Crane, a labourer from Hope Street, lodged a complaint against Sergeant Bain whom he alleged had assaulted him. Crane reported that he and two other young men had been standing outside the Bay Horse Inn, Walmgate, when Sergeant Bain said to

¹⁵³ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with James Cave, born 1910, YOHP.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Mary Evelyn Booker, born 1910, YOHP.

¹⁵⁶ See Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty* and Roberts, *The Classic Slum* for discussion on street corner gatherings in Manchester and Salford.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Stan Hall, born 1911, YOHP.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918, YOHP.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Thomas Rhodes, born 1910, YOHP.

them ‘if you don’t move on I will put you where the likes of you have been before’, and then took him by the back of the neck and threw him on the pavement. Sergeant Bain, in attempting to justify his actions, stated that one of the men, twenty-seven year old James Sweeny, was a well-known bad character and after ordering them to move on he was ‘set at in defiance’ and was forced to take hold of one of the younger men in defence. He simply turned him around, and the young man tripped and fell. The Inspector who received the report noted that Martin Crane was sober when making his statement, and Sergeant Bain was severely cautioned by the chief constable.¹⁶⁰

Fighting appeared to play an important role in entertaining the young people of Walmgate and Hungate. For Mr Slater it was one of the defining aspects of being a young man growing up in the area; ‘talk about fighting. Oh God there was fighting all right’.¹⁶¹ Nell Fearn went out with her friends on a Saturday evening; ‘when you used to come out you’d say, “Where are we going to stand outside tonight? Where do you think t’best fight will be?”’¹⁶² Brawls outside certain pubs were a regular occurrence, and a series of streets and pubs were well known locally for outbreaks of violence. Walmgate was infamous for the large number of public houses that lined its main thoroughfare. In 1901 there were 20 public houses, four off-license shops and one licensed club in the area.¹⁶³ In his diary, Robert Kay noted that in ‘The Moon’ public house in Walmgate, ‘there are more things brewed than beer – in the way of brawls, fights and such’.¹⁶⁴ Fred Milburn recalled that at turning out time fights were ‘a regular occurrence ... I think some of the young lads of 17 or 18 used to make a point of walking through [Walmgate] just to see the fun’.¹⁶⁵ Annie Pinder went into the Angel Inn ‘because every Saturday night everybody got merry and there was always a bit of trouble going on’.¹⁶⁶ Thomas Rhodes used to ‘sit on the kerbs and wait for t’Angel Inn turning out [because] it allus finished up with a scrap, somehow’.¹⁶⁷ Dick Calpin did not go into pubs until he was in his late teens, but he remembered sitting on the streets outside the Lord Nelson Inn, ‘and we used to be

¹⁶⁰ Police Files, Police Service and Character Books, Acc. 236.23.12.9, P.C. Bain, 31 May 1907.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Mr Slater, born 1908, YOHP.

¹⁶² Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918, YOHP.

¹⁶³ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life and Kelly’s Directory*, 1893. See also Figure 19: Rowntree’s ‘Drink Map of York’.

¹⁶⁴ Robert Kay, Acc. 974, Grandfather Robert Kay’s Notebook, 1875-1900, The Moon.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Annie Pinder, born 1904, YOHP.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Thomas Rhodes, born 1910, YOHP.

there ‘til midnight’.¹⁶⁸ The Square and Compass Inn in Wesley Place was also a well-known location for the start of trouble in Hungate. Thomas Furness was charged with being drunk and disorderly in Wesley Place and assaulting PC Gant after drinking in the Square and Compass. John Welsh assaulted PC Ellerbeck after refusing to leave the Inn in 1885.¹⁶⁹

Young men walking alone in the evenings would sometimes need to avoid particular streets with an association with fighting, although as Fred Milburn pointed out others actively sought this out. In Navigation Road two brothers, Jackie and Thomas Harrison, would get drunk every ‘Friday, Saturday and Sunday night’ and ‘take their shirts off in the street [and] challenge anyone’.¹⁷⁰ The *Yorkshire Evening Press* of 1924 reported on one of the brothers on his thirteenth charge for being drunk and disorderly. He apparently retorted ‘Well I’m the boss of this street!’.¹⁷¹ Fights could be a way of proving oneself, but they could also represent a particular sense of ownership that young people felt over their neighbourhood spaces. Brad Beaven has highlighted how social reformers were horrified by the ways that male youths actually appeared to ‘possess’ the streets of working-class neighbourhoods, making outsiders feel distinctly unwelcome.¹⁷² Thomas Rhodes recalled that ‘Hope Street would fight with Navigation Road ... I was a rough neck, all us down Navigation and Walmgate, they was allus scrapping’.¹⁷³ The enclosed nature of the neighbourhoods could encourage young people to view the street as ‘theirs’. Nell Fearn felt safe in the ‘known’ neighbourhood of Hungate where ‘you knew exactly where you were, no matter what alleyway you went in, what doorway you went through’.¹⁷⁴

When fights broke out they quickly drew crowds, yet the majority of street fights took place without police disruption. Thomas Rhodes would often wait for fights after turning out time, and remembered how ‘two policemen’d come down, but they wouldn’t do nowt, they’d just “Oh, let ‘em fight”’.¹⁷⁵ St Denys’s Church complained to the Watch Committee about the state of Walmgate, remarking on the

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Dick Calpin, born 1909, YOHP.

¹⁶⁹ *York Herald*, 18 February 1893 and 5 May 1885.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Dick Calpin, born 1909, YOHP.

¹⁷¹ *Yorkshire Evening Press*, 26 November 1924.

¹⁷² Beaven, p. 114.

¹⁷³ Interview with Thomas Rhodes, born 1910, YOHP.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918, YOHP.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Thomas Rhodes, born 1910, YOHP.

‘laxity of conduct [permitted] by the police which would not be tolerated for one moment in other quarters of the city’.¹⁷⁶ Police conclusions regarding crime and disorder were influenced by knowledge gained on the beat, it was impossible for them to patrol all the public houses in the area at closing time. They often allowed drunkenness and fighting to continue in both Walmgate and Hungate – behaviour they would have immediately suppressed in the central commercial districts of the city – because in small numbers they were unable to control it. Chief Constable Haley recorded that in 1880 the average eight hour night beat was ‘29 miles and 724 yards’, and ‘having an unlimited supply of work to perform with a limited supply of men’ meant that often attention was focused elsewhere.¹⁷⁷ The police managed working-class districts in a very different way to the busy shopping streets at the heart of the city.¹⁷⁸

While individual charge sheets do not survive for York in this period, the police service and character books reveal particular occasions when an officer was disciplined for a breach of regulations, and testimony in the court records as well as assaults on policemen can give an idea of the relationship between the police and the young working-class of the city. In *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844* (1887) Engels described how ‘every week in Manchester policemen are beaten’,¹⁷⁹ and in York the *Herald* and *Gazette* carried weekly accounts of policemen across the city being attacked while carrying out their duties. Chief Constable Haley reported to the Watch Committee in 1883 that in recent cases of assault on the police ‘the punishment awarded by the Justices was inadequate’, which in his opinion both ‘deterred eligible men from joining’ and ‘seriously lessens the interests of the force in maintaining order in the streets’.¹⁸⁰ William Quinn was charged in 1886 for assaulting PC Lowther in Walmgate on a Tuesday evening after the officer attempted to arrest him for being drunk and disorderly. Whilst being escorted to the police station, Quinn struck Lowther, kicked him and threw him down ‘seven or eight times’.¹⁸¹ PC Pearson was struck on the face and kicked while attempting to arrest Joseph Gowthorpe, aged 24, and in the same session the court

¹⁷⁶ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 9, 21 November 1905.

¹⁷⁷ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 5, 27 July 1880.

¹⁷⁸ For a detailed discussion of policing the streets and commercial districts of York, see chapter four.

¹⁷⁹ Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844*, ed. by D. McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 171.

¹⁸⁰ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 5, 23 May 1883.

¹⁸¹ *York Herald*, 21 August 1886.

heard how PC Benson was assaulted by Joseph Mullen of the 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers.¹⁸² However, it was not only rowdy young men that appeared before the courts for assaulting an officer. In April 1883 Michael Flannagan was drinking in the Woolpack Inn, Cattle Market, when PC Busby was called to remove him for being drunk and disorderly. Flannagan then kicked him in the shin, and was joined by Annie Short who also kicked the officer. The ‘bystanders took Flannagan’s side and the officer was pushed down and illused’. Both Flannagan and Short were given prison time for being drunk and disorderly, and extra time for assaulting Busby, and Short was later admitted to the York Penitentiary Refuge.¹⁸³ When attempting to arrest drunken men and women, police officers regularly found themselves on the receiving end of a well-placed kick, and communities often rallied in support of those being arrested. Henry Hart, a ‘young man’ was charged in 1888 with drunk and disorderly conduct, and for assaulting two policemen - after biting out a piece of PC Ellerbeck’s thumb. However, the court heard how the officers had ‘knocked down the defendant ... and hit him on the head [with their staffs]’. Further, the crowd that had now collected cried ‘shame’ on the police. Regardless, Hart was charged with interfering with the police, and despite promises of an investigation by Chief Constable Haley, it appears no action was taken against the officers.¹⁸⁴

Rene Sheard, who grew up in two public houses in the Hungate area recalled one customer’s relationship with the police:

There was one certain person on Haymarket, she liked a drink. Then she’d quarrel with anybody. The police were always there Saturday nights. She’d go upstairs and then emptied the water closet on the coppers’ heads. “Get out, yer so-and so’s, get away, clear off”.¹⁸⁵

While it is difficult to determine precisely how the young working class felt about both the police as an institution and the individual officers they came in contact with,

¹⁸²*York Herald*, 4 August 1894.

¹⁸³*York Herald*, 4 April 1883 and Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, April 1884.

¹⁸⁴*York Herald*, 23 May 1888. Police Files, Service and Character Books, Acc. 236.23.12.13 Henry Barker. The lack of action against the officers could be explained by the fact that Henry Hart was a well-known character, by this appearance he had already been before the courts at least three times previously. *York Herald*, 24 July 1886, 20 September 1887 and 3 January 1888.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Rene Sheard, born 1911, YOHP.

the large number of assaults committed by some young people suggests that there could be tension between them. When policing ‘rough’ areas, the police – perhaps expecting violence and hostility – were more likely to overreact to trouble, and those experiencing heavy handed policing in turn could act aggressively.¹⁸⁶ Young people could object to the intrusion by the police into ‘their’ space, and Stephen Humphries and Andrew Davies have addressed the concept of neighbourhood belonging in their studies of young people and gang culture before the war.¹⁸⁷ For Robert Storch, the policeman served as a ‘domestic missionary’; a ‘professional, bureaucratically organised lever of urban discipline [introduced] into the heart of working-class communities’.¹⁸⁸ Although the language of ‘missionary’ has been objected to,¹⁸⁹ the enforcement of public order was certainly part of the role ascribed to the new police, though they also quickly gauged the ‘real limits of their effectiveness in these areas’.¹⁹⁰

Of course, not all the young working class were hostile to the police. Fred Milburn recalled that ‘[people] feared you in a sense, but they would never hesitate to come to you for wanting any help at all. They respected you’.¹⁹¹ Many officers lived within the community, and some found themselves chastised for ‘gossiping in the street’, or being too closely involved with local young people.¹⁹² Twenty-four year old PC George Morrill was fined for gossiping with a man for ten minutes at St Andrewgate corner.¹⁹³ In a case investigated by the Watch Committee, PC Maude was charged with neglect of duty after he failed to take the prostitute Elizabeth Claxton into custody. It later emerged that the public house which she regularly frequented was owned by Maude’s father-in-law.¹⁹⁴ It would seem that those in the habit of drinking or socialising with young people could then be reluctant to take them into custody, and it is impossible to know how often the police issued informal cautions. There could be a certain amount of discretion afforded to individual

¹⁸⁶ Stefan Slater, ‘Street Disorder in the Metropolis’, *Law, Crime and History*, 1 (2012), 59-91 (p. 65).

¹⁸⁷ Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels?* and Davies, *The Gangs of Manchester*.

¹⁸⁸ Storch, ‘The Policeman as Domestic Missionary’, 481-509 and Robert Storch, ‘The Plague of Blue Locusts: Police Reform and Popular Resistance in Northern England, 1840-57’ *International Review of Social History*, 20:1 (1975), 61-90.

¹⁸⁹ For example: Stephen Inwood, ‘Policing London’s morals: the metropolitan police and popular culture, 1829-1850’, *The London Journal*, 15 (1990), 129-146.

¹⁹⁰ Storch, ‘The Policeman as Domestic Missionary’, 481-509.

¹⁹¹ Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1893, YOHP.

¹⁹² Police Files, Service and Character Books, Acc. 236.23.12, John Leadley, 28 January 1898.

¹⁹³ Police Files, Service and Character Books, Acc. 236.23.12, George Morrill, 4 September 1899.

¹⁹⁴ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 3, 6 December 1871.

officers, although these discretionary powers could be a cause for concern amongst those in charge of the organisation of the force. In 1889 a sub-committee investigated the York force and its organisation, with a special focus on allegations regarding constables being drunk on duty, their involvement in illegal betting and discharging drinking companions without charge. Inspector Denham faced one of the most serious charges; of having warned brothel owners and publicans about police raids and taking payment for doing so. As a result of the investigation a number of officers were demoted or dismissed by the Watch Committee, although Chief Constable Haley astutely resigned – on full pension – before the investigators published their report.¹⁹⁵ In more mundane cases, PC Reighton Lowther was warned in 1898 for failing to report a woman for using obscene language, and PC Arthur Robinson was similarly cautioned by the chief constable for failing to get the name and address of a man who had been accused of using very bad language.¹⁹⁶

The streets of Walmgate and Hungate could be particularly lively, and as well as fighting ‘there was a lot of gambling going on’.¹⁹⁷ Jerry White, Andrew Davies and Carl Chinn, among others, have highlighted that gaming was one of the most important street activities in working-class districts, as seen by the persistence of mass forms of illicit gambling.¹⁹⁸ For Rowntree, to ‘those who know the facts ... gambling and drinking [are] national evils of almost equal magnitude’.¹⁹⁹ Rowntree’s objections to gambling were both moral and practical; religious conviction played a part, as did his conclusion that drink and gambling were the major causes of secondary poverty.²⁰⁰ For others, gambling offended the legitimate process of money making, and in an address to a working men’s meeting in Walmgate, the archbishop noted how ‘he supposed [many men] bet to obtain money

¹⁹⁵ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 6, May 1889. See also ‘Correspondence’, *York Herald*, 24 May 1889.

¹⁹⁶ Police Files, Service and Character Books, Acc. 236.23.12, Reighton Lowther, 15 September 1898 and Arthur Robinson.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Stan Lea, born 1909, YOHP.

¹⁹⁸ White, *The Worst Street in North London*; Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty* and Carl Chinn, *Better Betting with a Decent Feller: A Social History of Bookmaking* (London: Aurum Press, 2004).

¹⁹⁹ *Betting and Gambling: A National Evil*, ed. by B. Seebohm Rowntree (London: Macmillan, 1905), p. vii.

²⁰⁰ Families living in secondary poverty in York were those whose ‘total earnings would be sufficient for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency were it not that some portion of it is absorbed by other expenditure, either useful or wasteful’. ‘[Secondary poverty] would appear to be mainly due to the following causes, namely – Drink, betting, and gambling. Ignorant or careless housekeeping, and other improvident expenditure, the latter often induced by irregularity of income’. Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, pp. 86-87, pp. 140-145.

which they had not earned'.²⁰¹ Rowntree was perhaps one of the best known members of the National Anti-Gambling League (NAGL), founded in 1890 by F. A. Atkins, which set out to attack both the gambling structure, and to convince poor gamblers of 'the errors of their ways'.²⁰² Rowntree was concerned with what he termed 'the growing evil' of betting and gambling amongst the working classes, and in a lengthy footnote describes a case in *Poverty* of two men prosecuted for using a house 'situated in a working class district of the city' for betting purposes. PC Whittaker watched the house across five days, and in that time witnessed 534 'men, women, boys and girls' call at the house. The PC also noticed the bookmaker 'pass out into the street and take slips from cabmen and carters by the roadside'.²⁰³ Gambling amongst the working class was widespread in mid-Victorian Britain, although from the 1880s onwards it became, McKibbin has argued, unprecedented in both 'scope [and] character'.²⁰⁴

Its opponents certainly saw the practice as widespread and excessive, and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century there were concerted efforts made to control gambling among the working class. Mark Clapson and Carl Chinn have suggested, however, that gambling amongst the working class was actually small-scale and regular, and persisted despite the activities of anti-gambling groups such as the NAGL.²⁰⁵ Rowntree was a major driving force behind attempts to control money off-course gambling in York, but its popularity amongst the working class, and even his own workers, did little to subside.²⁰⁶ A particular concern of Rowntree and the anti-gambling lobby was the involvement of women and children in the activity, and female gambling was seen as evidence of 'just how far the betting epidemic had

²⁰¹ *York Herald*, 17 November, 1888.

²⁰² Roger Munting, *An Economic and Social History of Gambling in Britain and the USA* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 25.

²⁰³ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 144.

²⁰⁴ Ross McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain 1880-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), pp.102-3.

²⁰⁵ Mark Clapson, 'Playing the System: the world of organised street-betting in Manchester, Salford and Bolton, c.1880-1939', in *Workers' Worlds: Cultures and Communities in Manchester and Salford, 1880-1939*, ed. by Andrew Davies and Steven Fielding (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 156-178 (p. 159) and Chinn, *Better Betting with a Decent Feller*.

²⁰⁶ In 1914 a referendum was held at the Cocoa Works on whether to close the works for employees to attend the Races, and a large majority of men voted in favour. See chapter three: leisure, courtship and young people. In his second social survey of York Rowntree complained of the York Races that 'they are popular with workers'. B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty and Progress: A Second Social Survey of York* (London: Longmans, 1941), p. 400.

spread'.²⁰⁷ In working-class areas Missions and non-conformist chapels were often the main site of anti-gambling activity, and in 1890 the Hungate Mission – which operated from the Garden Place Mission rooms in Hungate – informed its supporters that gambling was almost 'universal' in the district, and later that it held a 'bewitching power' over the area's residents.²⁰⁸

Bookmakers and their agents – the runners, touts and lookouts – could do business from a street corner pitch, the entry to an alleyway, or in a house, pub or workplace. Much of what was termed 'street betting' in fact took place in the back-rooms of houses, and runners collected bets and brought them back to the bookmaker. Others operated out of shops, or had agents working in factories to collect the bets and take them back to the bookmaker. Emily Fratsen liked to bet on the horses as a young woman, and the errand boy who brought the meat from the butchers to the house where she worked as a nursemaid used to take the bets. She recalled one occasion when they sent the boy with a bet and 'when he got there the police were there and the boy had the presence of mind and he said "I've come for my Dad's boots, are they done yet?"'.²⁰⁹ Newspaper-sellers, confectioners, barbers and tobacconists were often identified by the authorities for illegal betting, the nature of their legitimate activities covering their illicit ones, which could make it difficult for the police to take action against them. Nell Fearn spoke of Billy Calpin's barber's shop where 'nobody used to get their hair cut. They used to go and put a bet on'.²¹⁰ Mrs Lonsdale's sister worked in a grocer's shop, '[but] I think he did a bit of booking really, I think the grocer shop was a cover up'.²¹¹ The organisation of gambling around such community locations demonstrate how much the practice was embedded into working-class life, but it was not simply the widespread nature of betting which posed problems for the police and others who wished to control it, but also that the majority of punters saw gambling as a harmless leisure pursuit, and thus resented any attempts by the police to suppress it.

Corner pitches were used by some street bookies in the Hungate and Walmgate districts, which enabled them to be easily found by punters, while

²⁰⁷ Mark Clapson, 'Playing the System', p. 159.

²⁰⁸ York City Mission Records, Acc. 223, Minute Book of Committee Meetings, Hungate Mission, 1890, p.6.

²⁰⁹ Interview with Emily Fratsen, born 1897, YOHP.

²¹⁰ Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918, YOHP.

²¹¹ Interview with Mrs Lonsdale, born 1907, YOHP.

allowing an easy escape should the police approach. Corner pitches were susceptible to police raids, so the positioning of lookouts was essential, and the small courts and narrow passageways assisted in this. Passageways, yards and back lanes were also commonly utilised as places for betting, often seen as a boundary between the public space of the street and the private space of the home. They were well used, and could be protected by lookouts, and provided get away runs for both runners and punters; ‘Police used to come and raid and everybody’d run like hell, you could go in anybody’s house ... there was that many little houses ... you couldn’t go wrong’.²¹² Violet Quigley noted how:

all t’lads and fellas used to gamble ... and every so often t’police used to raid ‘em ... They used to have lookers-out to see if any coppers was coming and ... they’d run anywhere. And they used to run in anybody’s house and coppers used to chase after ‘em. And go in t’house after ‘em.²¹³

The community, however, rallied round those gambling and ‘nobody stopped ‘em. So long as they got away from t’police, they didn’t bother.’²¹⁴ For Violet and her friends, such drama was fantastic entertainment; ‘they used to run all ways to get away from ‘em ... oh ay, we used to love to see owt like that. When police used to come down both ways and up both ways, meet in the middle’.²¹⁵

Betting was certainly one of the only ways, other than theft, to quickly get money without earning it, and even younger children could be involved in street betting games, acting as lookouts or playing pitch and toss. In January 1893 in a typical case, three ‘youths’ were charged with playing pitch and toss in Wesley Place, although the case was dismissed as the young men claimed they were simply tossing to see who would pay for cigarettes.²¹⁶ Nell Fearn used to ‘doggy out’ for others involved in street betting, and Thomas Rhodes recalled the lookouts who would notify others about the police; ‘by the time police had got right round the corner, there was nobody there’.²¹⁷

²¹² Interview with Thomas Rhodes, born 1910, YOHP.

²¹³ Interview with Violet Quigley, born 1912, YOHP.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ *York Herald*, 30 January 1893.

²¹⁷ Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918 and Thomas Rhodes, born 1910, YOHP.

Conclusion

For Rowntree, the chief characteristics of slum life were:

The reckless expenditure of money as soon as obtained, with aggravated want at other times; the rowdy Saturday night, the Monday morning pilgrimage to the pawn shop, and especially that love for the district, and disinclination to move to better surroundings.²¹⁸

However, Rowntree's characterisation of life in the Hungate and Walmgate districts, with its undercurrent of recklessness, hopelessness and disorganisation, fails to capture the true interactions of the working class at street level. It does not consider the community ties that linked many young people to the area, the resilience, or lively sociability that often characterised life in the 'slum'. Newspaper reports, sanitary authority investigations and social surveys offered merely a snapshot of the urban landscape. The Hungate and Walmgate districts could not simply be reduced to overcrowded conditions, drinking, and violence. The physical environment and conditions evidently did impose certain restrictions on activity, and the young working class of the Hungate and Walmgate districts inhabited a physical world over which, at times, they had very little control. The tangible conditions of the street mattered less to outsiders than the images of dirt and squalor they were presented with, and this perception of the area could also impact on the social life of young people who lived in these districts. Nell Fearn's could not tell outsiders where she lived for fear of stigmatisation.²¹⁹ Louisa Aldrich did not get on with her 'la-di-dah' neighbours who looked down on Hungate.²²⁰ Other young people ignored these discourses and behaved in the spaces of Hungate and Walmgate according to their own needs. They courted, drank, fought, gambled and socialised in the streets, yards and courts of the district, and often felt a sense of ownership over these neighbourhood spaces. Street corners could be utilised as a leisure venue; a place to gossip and socialise, and district neighbourhoods retained considerable social importance, with well developed support networks and strong ties.

²¹⁸ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 5.

²¹⁹ See p. 93.

²²⁰ See p. 93.

Actively utilising the streets in their own neighbourhood, however, was one thing, doing the same in the public spaces of the city centre was a different matter. Some rowdy leisure was tolerated in the working-class neighbourhoods of the city, but as the young working class socialised in the city's principal streets, their behaviour was seen by some commentators as more threatening, and their activities in public space were more likely to bring them into contact with the police and reform institutions, as the following chapters will explore. Other reformers and middle-class commentators hoped to find positive alternatives to rowdy street culture, alternatives that would remove the young working class from the public spaces of the city altogether.

CHAPTER THREE

‘WHOLESOME INFLUENCES’ AND ‘DANGEROUS AMUSEMENTS’: LEISURE, COURTSHIP AND THE YOUNG WORKING CLASS OF YORK

Introduction

Leisure and courtship played a large part in the lives of young people, and the period between starting work and getting married was seen as one of the most prosperous stages of life for the working class. Rowntree highlighted the affluence of young workers in his second study of York, and oral history respondents noted their increased spending money after starting work but before the responsibilities of a family.¹ York may have offered fewer commercial leisure opportunities than the larger industrial centres of Leeds or Manchester, but the young people of the city could take advantage of a number of occasions for sociability and leisure. The streets, markets and parks of York provided space to socialise with friends and potential partners, and in the neighbourhoods and public spaces of the city, young people could walk out together, drink in one of the numerous public houses, and attend the cinema or music hall. Young workers could enjoy considerable freedom in their social interactions with one another, and for those with the time and money to spare, commercial leisure activities became increasingly available. Others could take advantage of the free street-based leisure that formed the basis of much social activity, congregating in the streets or parading in front of those of the opposite sex.

There were those in York who believed that leisure activities should promote moral values and teach good character, condemning certain recreations as trivial at best, and at worst, damaging to both individual and society. The promotion of ‘rational recreation’ by moral reformers, churches and religious groups, as well as York’s two largest employers – Rowntree and Co (Rowntree’s) and the North Eastern Railway Company (NER) – created expectations of how the young people of the city should spend their leisure time. Moral reformers held up leisure as an

¹ Rowntree, *Poverty and Progress*, pp. 329-449. Interview with “Mrs C”, born 1909, YOHP. Cisse Colley was forced to leave home by her father after she began courting, but sent money home to her mother from her job at Terry’s. Interview with Cisse Colley, born 1910, YOHP.

opportunity to educate the working classes, whether through providing lessons in domesticity for young female factory workers, or supplying improving literature for the young men employed in the Railway Carriage Works. These activities were set up in opposition to vibrant working-class street culture. The York Penitentiary warned parents about the dangers presented by commercial leisure opportunities, noting that a large proportion of the girls they saw were ‘ruined’ by ‘attending the Theatre and by getting into bad company on Sundays instead of attending a place of worship’.²

Historians have also seen working-class leisure as a site of contest, examining rational recreation as a means of controlling the working class and exploring resistance to this control.³ But how did the young working class of York engage with the leisure opportunities available to them? For many young people, participation in one form of leisure did not prevent involvement in another. Activities moved outside of ‘social control’ and resistance and became independent working-class leisure. Returning from church dressed in ‘Sunday best’ presented a perfect opportunity to socialise and show off in front of other young people, and perhaps even pair off with someone of the opposite sex. Rational recreationists may have seen their leisure provisions as an alternative to the disorderly traditional and commercial leisure of the working class yet, as the evidence presented in this chapter will suggest, many young men and women explored all forms of leisure as part of their daily social lives. This chapter goes beyond previous considerations of working-class leisure to argue that a variety of factors shaped young people’s leisure choices. Reform institutions, the police and rational recreationists had only a limited impact on young people’s selections.⁴ The young working class of York were not passive consumers of leisure; they took advantage of a range of leisure opportunities and explored both the ‘dangerous amusements’ and ‘wholesome influences’ that York had to offer.

² Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.246.1, ‘Address to fathers and mothers in York, Martinmas Fair’, 1891.

³ Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) and Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution c.1780-1880* (London: Croom Helm, 1980). See also Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain* for a return to the questions first presented in the studies of Bailey and Cunningham. Beaven argues that overtly moral leisure activities were often heavily contested by the working classes.

⁴ Chapter four explores the ways in which the police, magistrates and reform institutions attempted to control the urban space in which social relations were played out.

1. Leisure, gender and generation

The lifestyles of young workers changed in the inter-war years, with youth increasingly seen as a distinct period of working-class life, as highlighted by Selina Todd, Andrew Davies, Claire Langhamer and David Fowler.⁵ The regular leisure time and increasing leisure opportunities that characterised youth, however, were already in evidence by the closing decades of the nineteenth century in York. Paid work often dominated the lives of the working classes, but it also constituted ‘earned’ leisure, giving young wage-earners a legitimate right to leisure time not necessarily enjoyed by younger siblings. Young men and women made connections between their wage contributions and their right to enjoy the city’s entertainments. Youth was marked by a degree of personal independence, and over the course of the nineteenth century the parameters defining it became much clearer. Courtship was considered a significant rite of passage for both young men and women, and within a society where marriage was expected, became a formative stage of youth in which emotional attachments could be made and developed. Alongside greater leisure opportunities, courtship also helped to further distinguish young people from their parents or younger siblings; it was an important part of youth, a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood. For young women in particular, courtship represented a negotiation to the next life-cycle stage of marriage, and courting activities formed a core part of the social activities of the young working class.⁶ Relative freedom allowed young people to take advantage of leisure opportunities, but gender and generation were also central in shaping the experiences of the working class in York.

Material, moral and gender constraints could impact on young working-class access to leisure. For both young men and women, leisure experiences were framed by various considerations, including the level of wages and the amount to be ‘tipped up’, allocation of spends, the age when work started, the hours of work, the

⁵ Selina Todd, ‘Young women, work and leisure in interwar England’, *Historical Journal*, 48: 3 (2005), 789-809; Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty*; Langhamer, *Women’s Leisure in England*, and Fowler, *The First Teenagers*.

⁶ Langhamer, ‘Love and Courtship in Mid-Twentieth Century England’, p. 175.

reliability of work, and family duties and responsibilities.⁷ Arthur Simpson worked the night shift at Rowntree's as a young man, and while he 'got a night bonus of 2 shillings a week', he regarded this as 'poor compensation for missing your evening's leisure'.⁸ These factors varied across different working families, and could change within a family as needs changed, and Selina Todd has argued that gendered and generational divisions in access to spending money and leisure time were 'largely attributable to the households' economic circumstances and individuals' economic roles'.⁹ Ada Cade 'had to look for a job' because her parents 'couldn't afford to keep two of us at home'.¹⁰ Violet Quigley, who left school at fourteen to work at Terry's, 'tipped up' her wage of ten shillings and was given a shilling back in pocket money, but if her mother 'was hard up, she used to borrow t'shilling back'.¹¹ Leila More worked at Rowntree's and tipped up all her wages: 'me mother always gave me coppers for that, or coppers for anything I wanted but I never 'ad a weekly wage'. However, once she started courting she was allowed to pay 'so much in lodgings like everybody else', and paying board denoted a further degree of autonomy.¹² While young wage earners often enjoyed a higher standard of living than other members of their family, they were still vulnerable to poverty. In 1899 Rowntree estimated that 9.91% of York's population lived below the poverty standards he outlined, which were characterised by an absolute lack of spending money;

The children must have no pocket money for marbles or sweets. The father must smoke no tobacco and drink no beer. The mother must never buy any pretty clothes for herself or her children.¹³

⁷ Historians have demonstrated that most young workers 'tipped up' their weekly earning to their mothers, and received a proportion back as spending money, a process recalled by York oral history respondents: Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty*, pp. 84-87, Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England*, pp. 101-102. Mr Slater gave all his wages to his mother, who used to give him a shilling for his pocket money. Interview with Mr Slater, born 1908, YOHP. See also, interview with Cissey Colley, born 1910; Mrs C, born 1909; and Ada Cade, born 1893, YOHP.

⁸ Arthur Simpson started work at Rowntree's in 1913, and in 1973, at the age of 79, wrote an account of his life and time there, which is kept in the Rowntree Factory Archive. Borthwick, TS ARCH 2633, Rowntree Factory Archive, Arthur Simpson, 'All in a Worker's Lifetime: The Autobiography of a Worker from Late Victorian Times, 1893-1973', p. 44.

⁹ Todd, 'Young Women, Work and Leisure', p. 790.

¹⁰ Interview with Ada Cade, born 1893, YOHP.

¹¹ Interview with Violet Quigley, born 1912, YOHP.

¹² Interview with Leila More, born 1895, YOHP.

¹³ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 134.

Rowntree noted the importance of supplementary income from young people in his study of poverty in York; ‘the sums contributed by supplementary earners ... materially affect the standard of living of the whole family’ and he recognised that many families in secondary poverty could rise to a higher class as soon as children began to earn.¹⁴ While young people may have had greater expectations of leisure time than their parents, and gender differences were perhaps less pronounced than after marriage, inequalities were still evident.¹⁵ While there were increasing earning opportunities for young women, particularly in the confectionery industry in York, domestic and familial duties could hinder access to leisure in a way that did not affect male relatives and friends. Despite their status as wage-earners, family needs, parental control and moral considerations could have a significant impact on young women’s leisure opportunities. Collier’s investigation of young industrial workers during the First World War found that working women of all ages suffered the double burden of paid work and domestic chores.¹⁶ Rowntree concluded in his second study of York, *Poverty and Progress: A Second Social Survey of York* (1941) that within a family, it was the eldest daughter whose leisure time was most likely to be restricted by familial responsibilities. Younger siblings were also then likely to benefit from the financial contributions of their older brothers and sisters.¹⁷ Bertha Linfoot was not able to go dancing as she had to stay at home and look after her parents while her younger brother and sisters ‘danced and went to dances’.¹⁸

Not all young working-class women were employed, some may have worked for short periods, while others were expected to stay at home and help with families. Ethel Smith stayed at home to help her mother look after her younger siblings. She was also in charge of collecting housekeeping from her father, whom she met every Friday on Holgate Road ‘to get some money off him before he went to the Fox Hotel, because he never knew when to come out when he got in there [laughs]’.¹⁹ Young women who did not work outside the home could usually expect very little leisure time. Female wage-earners could gain some freedom by going to work, but

¹⁴ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 31, p. 59.

¹⁵ Margaret Williamson examined leisure opportunities within marriage in an industrial community in East Cleveland, and found there were often pressures for married women to abandon any independent leisure, Margaret Williamson, ‘Gender, Leisure and Marriage in a working-class community, 1939-1960’, *Labour History Review*, 72:4 (2009), 185-198. See also Roberts, *A Woman’s Place*.

¹⁶ D. J. Collier, *The Girl in Industry* (London: Bell and Sons, 1918).

¹⁷ Rowntree, *Poverty and Progress*, p. 56, p. 80.

¹⁸ Interview with Bertha Linfoot, born 1897, YOHP.

¹⁹ Interview with Ethel Smith, cited in Masters, p. 150.

they were often still bound by family life. During this period, the young working classes mostly lived with family until marriage, and remained financially and morally dependent upon them. Parents could wield expansive moral authority, and rules about appearance, partners, suitable leisure venues and what time to come home in the evenings could often have a greater impact on young women. Alice Hick had to be home ‘at a certain time – half past nine, ten o’clock latest’, and for Mrs Allan there was little question of disobeying; ‘you used to be in at the time they stated’.²⁰ Clearly some young women could attend leisure venues without parental knowledge; Mary Graham’s father didn’t know she went parading on Coney Street and Alice Hick used to pretend to go to bed before sneaking down the stairs, but more often than not ‘got caught when we got to the bottom’.²¹

Parents were particularly concerned to protect the respectability and welfare of daughters, and often tried to regulate courtship or involvement in youthful street life. Ciskey Colley’s father forbade her from going out with boys or going dancing, ‘and if he saw you with any lad he used to bray [hit] you from Ousebridge to Florence Row ... take off his belt and bray you the whole of the way home’. She was later forced to leave home after she refused to stop seeing the young man who would become her husband.²² Mary Jane Cook was seduced under promise of marriage by a man with whom she had ‘kept company’ against her mother’s will. She lived with her seducer for five years ‘til he had spent all her money, took to drink and left her’.²³ Elizabeth Benton lived in York with her father, a labourer, when she met a young man and ran away with him to Hull after he promised to marry her. He left her and went to sea, and she returned to York to go into service. Subsequently she was sent to prison six times for being out at night, and was admitted to the York Penitentiary in July 1883.²⁴ Young women were vulnerable to the very real consequences of loss of reputation or pregnancy, and as Shani d’Cruze has highlighted in her study of sex, violence and Victorian working women, associations of drink, sex and aggressive masculinity could make courtship a predatory activity

²⁰ Interview with Alice Hick, born 1901; and Mrs Allan, born 1912, YOHP.

²¹ Interview with Mary Graham, born 1908; and Alice Hick, born 1901, YOHP.

²² Interview with Ciskey Colley, born 1910, YOHP.

²³ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 26 November 1888.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 30 July 1883.

for men, and for women could mean fear and violence.²⁵ Courtship in particular could be fraught with tension for young women. Despite a lengthy courtship, Mrs P's boyfriend abandoned her when she became pregnant with her daughter; 'he wouldn't have it was his y'see. He said that it wasn't his ... it was his, we knew it was his, he knew it was his, 'cause I mean I hadn't been with anybody'.²⁶

Those who lived outside the family home were also subject to controls over leisure; Ciskey Colley moved into lodgings aged eighteen, but even there her participation was restricted by a landlady who set out a list of house rules: 'I want no swearing, no bad talk because if I hear of it you're out. You come in this house before eleven o'clock on a night or you'll be out ... you can't go out every night because it's not good for you'.²⁷ Domestic servants often worked long hours with little free time. By the opening years of the twentieth century most industrial workers had been granted the Saturday half day holiday; Rowntree's workers had secured the half day by 1880, and in 1881 the NER locomotive workers finished at 1pm on a Saturday.²⁸ The 1912 Shops Act gave shop workers in York the opportunity to leave work early on a Wednesday. Domestic servants, on the other hand, could not even guarantee time off on a Sunday. Miss Kirby worked in service and later at Rowntree's; '[at Rowntree's] I finished at dinnertime on Saturday, and I didn't have to go to work again til Monday, whereas in service you have to work all the time'.²⁹ Ruth Redpath, who had worked in service since the age of fourteen, was given one weekend a month free and recalled sneaking out of the house; 'when we'd got over dinner – we got the dinner over at nine – we used to sneak out, and we used to go out ... and we used to sneak in on a night'.³⁰ Edith Harton was given 'one night off a week' which she used to visit her family, and she was 'never allowed to come out' while in service.³¹ Even if they had free time, some young domestic servants may have felt little inclination to use it. Ruth Redpath noted that by the end of a working day she was usually 'worn out, tired out, ready for bed'.³² Employers also felt entitled to direct the social lives of their servants, believing their conduct could

²⁵ Shani d'Cruze, *Crimes of Outrage: Sex, Violence and Victorian Working Women* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), p. 4.

²⁶ Interview with Mrs P, born 1902, YOHP.

²⁷ Interview with Ciskey Colley, born 1910, YOHP.

²⁸ Masters, p. 218.

²⁹ Interview with Miss Kirby, born 1891, YOHP.

³⁰ Interview with Ruth Redpath, born 1914, YOHP.

³¹ Interview with Edith Harton, born 1901, YOHP.

³² Interview with Ruth Redpath, born 1914, YOHP.

reflect on the moral position of the household. Some young women were dismissed after being caught sneaking out, and for others the risk of being caught out after hours restricted any participation in leisure activities. Agnes Mary Robinson was admitted to the York Penitentiary aged sixteen after going to the Knavesmire race ground to watch the Volunteers drill. She stayed out so late that she was afraid to return to her situation at Mrs Sanderson's on Gillygate, and instead slept in the toilet in her parents' back yard.³³ A lack of leisure time was one of the major sources of dissatisfaction among female domestic servants throughout the period, although there were opportunities to snatch sociability within the rhythm of work, such as gossiping in the street while running errands.

The typically isolated work of domestic servants was distinct from the often social atmosphere of the factory. Paid work could be a restriction on leisure time, but it could also be an area for social activity, and elements of leisure could be found in work. Former Rowntree's workers recalled the friendship groups, gossiping and singing that often characterised daily life working at the Cocoa Works. Eva Gyll worked on the assembly line at Terry's; 'we used to have a natter and a laugh', and Gertie Hutchinson met a boyfriend while working at the factory: 'Arthur Whittington, they called him. He was a real nice lad, same age as me, fourteen. He worked in Terry's bakehouse and that's how I met him'.³⁴ Mr Galtress met his wife at the jewellers in High Ousgate where she worked, he used to visit while stationed at the barracks.³⁵ Workplace life did not exist in isolation from social activities outside; home and work could interact through gossip and sociability, and the presence of courtship and gossip in work time and space can problematise any straightforward division between work and leisure. For others, the walk to and from work could present an opportunity for leisure, a chance to socialise and walk with friends. This journey could be a long one – for the young Irish farm labourers living in the yards and courts of Walmgate and working in fields outside the city, 'often tramping out for miles in the early morning' there would be little time for leisure on working days.³⁶ Many agricultural labourers worked as far afield as Tollerton and

³³ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 24 June 1891.

³⁴ Interview with Eva Gyll, born 1914; and Gertie Hutchinson, born 1906, YOHP.

³⁵ Interview with Mr Galtress, born 1895, YOHP.

³⁶ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 10.

Wheldrake, villages which would have required a daily round trip of up to twenty miles.³⁷

Gendered and generational divisions, then, had an impact on the leisure experiences of the young working class of York. Access to leisure time and spending money were also dependent on a family's economic circumstances, and the role of an individual in contributing to the household economy.³⁸ Young working people became increasingly prominent leisure consumers from the late nineteenth century, and their leisure patterns became more distinguished from those of adult workers. Working gave young men and women relatively free access to the streets and a degree of autonomy. Those with less money to spend on York's commercial leisure venues could take advantage of the free recreation of the street, or the sociability of the workplace.

2. 'Dangerous amusements': street life, courtship and commercial leisure

Young people embraced the various leisure opportunities offered by the city; the regular fairs, markets and festivals provided the perfect opportunity for them to socialise; they met and gossiped in the streets and attended the commercial venues increasingly springing up across the city.³⁹ Leisure activities also occurred within the home, although as discussed in the previous chapter, for the poorer sections of the working class, housing conditions could restrict this. Mrs Dunnington spent many winter evenings with her mother and sisters making a rug; 'we used to start it for Christmas', and Annie Butler enjoyed reading, knitting and sewing.⁴⁰ Street based leisure in particular troubled moral commentators who were alarmed by its often raucous and unrestrained nature, although there were similar concerns around music halls and public houses. For the young working class, however, the streets and parks of York offered the pleasure of meeting and walking with friends, and they could take advantage of this space on the way home from work, on a Sunday afternoon, or later in the evening once all household chores had been completed. The streets also

³⁷ Finnegan, *Poverty and Prejudice*, p. 141.

³⁸ Todd, *Young Women, Work and Family in England 1918 – 1950*, p. 196.

³⁹ See pp. 129-136.

⁴⁰ Interview with Mrs Dunnington, born 1900; and Annie Butler, born 1896, YOHP.

provided a space for activities; from pitch and toss games in the yards of Walmgate, to horseplay on Coney Street, and the footracing, public house altercations and more ritualised fighting that took place in working-class districts. In *Poverty and Progress* Rowntree noted that in the early years of the twentieth century the young men and women of the city spent many evenings ‘lounging about in the neighbourhood of their houses or promenading up and down certain streets’.⁴¹ Young men and women could meet and gossip in the courtyards, alleys and streets of the city, and as Melanie Tebbut’s study demonstrates, gossip was one of the most ubiquitous activities of working-class neighbourhoods.⁴²

One integral aspect to late nineteenth and early twentieth century leisure, which took place both inside and outside the home, and involved traditional and commercial aspects, was courtship. Terms such as ‘walking out’ and ‘stepping out’ to refer to courtship illustrate how such relationships were increasingly played out in public and within developing leisure opportunities. Courtship was not simply another leisure practise, although it certainly overlapped with aspects of popular leisure. Courtship rituals could bridge the gap between group sociability, the cultures of the pub, the commercialised or more traditional popular leisure and the home, family and neighbourhood.⁴³ Young people’s leisure was often centred around going out in the evenings, attending dances, the music hall and later the cinema, or simply walking out with a group of friends. Young people often socialised in mixed groups in largely informal settings, and where a couple ‘kept company’ involved choices about the activities they could attend and the level of supervision they received. The amount of privacy young couples could expect was dependent on issues of space, community surveillance, parental curfews and the long hours of both paid and unpaid work. Young women were often more constrained – both by parents and notions of respectability – in their use of the street or attendance at a dance hall. It was in the recreational domain, however, that many young people met, and romantic encounters were a central feature of the social life of the young working class. For some young women, however, ‘walking out’ or seriously courting could see their leisure horizons begin to contract, foreshadowing the constraints on leisure time that

⁴¹ Rowntree, *Poverty and Progress*, p. 469.

⁴² Melanie Tebbut, *Women’s Talk?: A Social History of “Gossip” in Working-Class Neighbourhoods, 1880-1960* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995).

⁴³ d’Cruze, p. 111.

often followed marriage and maternity.⁴⁴ Mary Barnes told the YOHP how her leisure activities changed after her engagement; her fiancé did not like dancing and she was forced to restrict an activity she had previously enjoyed.⁴⁵ Other young women, however, refused to curtail their activities. Alice Hick told her fiancé she was washing her hair; ‘he didn’t like dancing and I did so there was many a night I wanted to go to a dance. I would wash my hair – can’t come out tonight I’m washing me hair’. When Mrs C started courting her future husband she refused to see him on Sundays, as that was her night for going out.⁴⁶ For many young wage-earners, courtship could occupy a large degree of leisure time, and many of the emerging commercial activities were centred around courtship opportunities. Courtship could serve a number of functions for both a young couple and their families. A relationship could solidify economic relationships, form new families and be a place to express love and affection. For many young people, courtship developed out of sociability with friends and social activities such as attending the fair were often a prelude to or associated with it.

Families and local support networks also remained important to many relationships, and young people continued to meet through family connections. Relationships that had begun with walking out or trips to the fair could move onto the next stage when partners were introduced to family members. A family tea in the domestic space of the home could be ‘a ritualised entry point into the family circle’ for a potential son or daughter-in-law.⁴⁷ Alice Hick’s parents invited her ‘young man’ in to ‘check he was okay’, and Mary Barnes took her boyfriend home for Sunday tea, ‘to be vetted, so to speak’.⁴⁸ Family members could act as chaperones to police aspects of a relationship, although they were not always successful, and the relative privacy of domestic space could be capitalised upon. Fanny Jeffery was seduced by her brother-in-law’s younger brother. Her family looked favourably on the courtship, and George visited Fanny at the house, took her for long walks and treated her ‘as his affianced sweetheart’. It was whilst visiting his mother’s house,

⁴⁴ Parratt, *More Than Mere Amusement*, p. 9. Also discussed by Margaret Williamson in her consideration of married women’s leisure in East Cleveland; Williamson, ‘Gender, Leisure and Marriage’, p. 185. Emily Fratsen told the YOHP that she never really wanted to get married because ‘I liked my freedom’. Interview with Emily Fratsen, born 1897, YOHP.

⁴⁵ Interview with Mary Barnes, born 1912, YOHP.

⁴⁶ Interview with Alice Hick, born 1901; and Mrs C, born 1909, YOHP.

⁴⁷ d’Cruze, p. 130.

⁴⁸ Interview with Alice Hick, born 1901; and Mary Barnes, 1914, YOHP.

after a promise of marriage that ‘the defendant succeeded in seducing Miss Jeffery’. After he discovered ‘her condition’, George abandoned her and immediately married another girl from Leeds.⁴⁹

Unlike the largely monitored courtship practices of the middle and upper classes, the young working class could take advantage of public spaces, and walking out provided couples with the opportunity for both sociability and intimacy.⁵⁰ Albert Howard started courting his wife at sixteen, and they ‘used to go for a walk around Fulford, Dringhouses, walking. I used to take her all over t’place. We walked for miles’.⁵¹ Young couples often walked the streets together, and walking had long been an established part of courtship. Rebecca Solnit suggests that, much like marching together can affirm and generate solidarity between a group, the delicate act of matching the rhythms of their strides aligns two people emotionally and bodily; ‘perhaps they first feel themselves a pair by moving together through the evening, the street, the world’.⁵² Walking out could use outdoor space in particular ways, and was often place and age specific, as was the case with the Coney Street ‘monkey run’ in York.⁵³ This popular youth custom saw young people parade up and down Coney Street, socialising with friends and showing off in front of the opposite sex; ‘all the young people would make for Coney Street and they’d walk up and down, up and down and sort of eye each other’.⁵⁴ Any leisure arena had the potential to become a place for courting couples, away from home and family, but still in public, which removed some of the dangers for young women who were vulnerable to the consequences of pre-marital pregnancy or loss of reputation.

Informal street based leisure was central to the social lives of many young working-class men and women. The streets, markets and parks offered a free alternative to a night of dancing or watching a film. For some young people there was little alternative to the street; ‘all the people that couldn’t afford to go anywhere used to get dressed and simply walk up and down ... without two ha’pennys in their

⁴⁹ *York Herald*, 1 August 1891.

⁵⁰ For a discussion of middle-class courtship in the first half of the nineteenth century see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2002). In Jane Lewis’ edited collection, experiences of courtship are discussed covering the latter half of the century; *Labour and Love: Women’s Experiences of Home and Family 1850-1940*, ed. by Jane Lewis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

⁵¹ Interview with Albert Howard, born 1913, YOHP.

⁵² Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (London: Verso, 2001), p. 232.

⁵³ See chapter six.

⁵⁴ Interview with Mary Barnes, born 1912, YOHP.

pockets some of ‘em’, although parading came with its own costs of looking good in ‘Sunday Best’.⁵⁵ For some young people, the street offered its own form of cheap entertainment; Mrs Lonsdale used to hang around Walmgate in the early years of the twentieth century ‘to see if there were any Irish men fighting, because a fight in them days was a novelty’, and Doreen Bolton used to sneak out to Walmgate to watch fights.⁵⁶ The often public aspects of such fights meant they became a spectator sport as much as a participant event, and if the police became involved a small fight had the potential to turn into a much larger affair. Michael Gill was arrested for assaulting PC Pearson in Walmgate on a Saturday night. PC Pearson had taken Gill’s friend Joseph Gowthorpe into custody for fighting in the street, and after watching the fight, Gill and a number of others attempted to rescue Gowthorpe, and Gill struck the officer on the chin and kicked him. Gowthorpe was charged with being drunk and disorderly and fined, while Gill was sent to prison for fourteen days for assaulting the police.⁵⁷

Fairs, markets and festivals provided the perfect opportunity for young people to socialise and for courting couples to come together, away from work and family. The Martinmas [Hiring] Fair and fortnightly cattle fair were important events, and also provided opportunities to socialise. Alice Hick went to the Martinmas Fair in Parliament Street with other girls from Terry’s; ‘‘af a dozen of us used to go into the fair together you know and go round and have a right good time’.⁵⁸ Arthur Simpson noted that the Martinmas Fair was ‘always eagerly looked forward to as [it] provided a lot of fun and entertainment for those who could not afford to pay the modest entry fees to the many shows’.⁵⁹ In 1899 *The Herald* reported on the record number of visitors to the annual Yorkshire Gala, with over 10,000 people paying for entrance on the first day, and almost 33,000 going through the gates on the second.⁶⁰ Occasions such as the Gala attracted thousands of visitors to the city, and public holiday celebrations such as the Queen’s Jubilee and the New Year festivities also brought tourists flocking into the city. Harriet Drednall reported meeting a young private soldier at the Royal Agricultural Show. The soldier took

⁵⁵ Interview with Mr Allan, born 1912, YOHP.

⁵⁶ Interview with Mrs Lonsdale, born 1907; and Doreen Bolton, born 1910, YOHP.

⁵⁷ *York Herald*, 4 August 1884.

⁵⁸ Interview with Alice Hick, born 1901, YOHP.

⁵⁹ TS ARCH 2633, Rowntree Factory Archive, Arthur Simpson, ‘All in a Worker’s Lifetime: The Autobiography of a Worker from Late Victorian Times, 1893-1973’, p. 12.

⁶⁰ *York Herald*, June 1899.

her to Selby where the couple lived as man and wife at his parents' house for five months, before he deserted her.⁶¹ Mrs P met John at the York Gala in 1920; 'it was a wonderful thing was the York Gala ... I'd never had boyfriends, only when I met John. I met him at the Gala, I was 18, the first time kissed!'⁶² The various fairs and markets were an opportunity for young people to come together dressed in their best clothes. The *Herald*, reporting on the Yorkshire Gala in 1899, used agricultural show terminology to compare the well-dressed young women to the livestock also on show;

It is a well known fact that almost all the young ladies look their best at the Galas, if fine feathers do make fine birds; these were some *first prize winners on the ground* yesterday. [emphasis added]⁶³

Cavalry reviews on the Knavesmire attracted large crowds, and from 1885 the first Sunday in May saw young people from York and the surrounding areas congregate to watch soldiers parade. The first Military Sunday parade was held in memory of General Gordon, but proved so popular with York residents it became an annual event until the Second World War. Joan Saddler recalled the day as a huge event with a parade from the Barracks to the Minster, with troops wearing dress uniform and observers lining the streets dressed in their 'Sunday best'.⁶⁴ Mrs Gertrude watched 'a lot of soldiers marching past our house in Fulford Road'.⁶⁵ The York Races also formed an important part of the city's social calendar. Over the course of the eighteenth century racing had grown into a popular organised social activity, often accompanied by side shows and other entertainments. The race meets and accompanying entertainments continued to be very popular, only stopping for a brief period during the war when the grandstand was used for the cavalry reserve.⁶⁶

For those that could afford it, York offered an increasing number of commercial leisure opportunities. Young working-class people's social life centred around going out in the evenings and at weekends, and by the 1920s young people

⁶¹ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 30 June 1884.

⁶² Interview with Polly Preston, born 1902, YOHP.

⁶³ *York Herald*, 17 June 1899.

⁶⁴ Interview with Joan Sadler, born 1922, YOHP.

⁶⁵ Interview with Mrs Gertrude, born 1897, YOHP.

⁶⁶ Peacock, *York in the Great War*, p. 300.

had more places to choose from. The expanding commercial leisure ventures in York were most heavily patronised by the young and single. Increasing spending power and independence meant that the young were able to help drive the expansion of leisure industries such as the cinema and the dance hall, both of which became extremely popular in the first half of the twentieth century. In York, dancing was available at venues across the city; the Ebor Hall behind Leak and Thorp's on Coney Street charged nine pence for dances which lasted three hours.⁶⁷ Dances at the Bishophill Adult School cost sixpence, although soldiers were given a discounted rate. Stan Lea went to the Rialto; 'I used to go to the Rialto and watch them dance for sixpence, and only a shilling to go on the floor'.⁶⁸

The increasing popularity of dancing was related to the opportunity it offered for dressing up and socialising, but perhaps more importantly the chance to meet potential partners. Dancing, as Claire Langhamer argues in her study of women's leisure in the twentieth century, could be a complex leisure experience. The overall experience involved issues of appearance, consumption, sexuality, friendship and music, as well as the physical movement itself.⁶⁹ Part of the attraction of dance halls was the mixed leisure environment, which provided the opportunity to socialise with those of the opposite sex. Mrs Allan recalled attending commercial dance halls in York and the potential for picking up; 'if you were lucky, someone would come up and ask you to dance'.⁷⁰ As leisure venues, dance halls were designed to accommodate heterosexual couples.⁷¹ The oral history evidence can reveal lots of detail about individual venues, about their reputation or the opportunities presented for picking up, but like the documentary sources remain silent about homosexual couples. It would appear that those who wished to meet partners of the same sex had to carve out their own opportunities.⁷² Commercial dance halls could be invested with extremely diverse reputations, dependent on both location and clientele, and some young women were forbidden to attend certain dances. MG was not allowed to go to any army dances 'because me dad wouldn't have allowed it, to go into

⁶⁷ Interview with Leila More, born 1895, YOHP.

⁶⁸ Interview with Stan Lea, born 1909, YOHP.

⁶⁹ Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England*, p. 67.

⁷⁰ Interview with Mrs Allan, born 1912, YOHP.

⁷¹ Mrs Allan said of one particular dance hall that the patrons 'went for pickups mostly (laughs).'

Interview with Mrs Allan, born 1912, YOHP.

⁷² Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England*, p. 120.

t' Barracks dances'.⁷³ In 1892 Jennie Bundle was admitted to the York Penitentiary after attending a dance with some friends, she was 'afraid to return home' after being banned from attending by her parents, and thus stayed out so late 'that she got into bad company'.⁷⁴ Isabella Harrison was found in a shed at midnight by the police 'after a dance in King Street'.⁷⁵ Fear about uncontrolled sexual behaviour was evident, although for other parents the supervised nature of the dances was preferable to other potentially secret meetings between young couples; 'I went to dances with two older sisters so dad didn't mind'.⁷⁶ Dancing was an area of particular concern to moral reformers, and in the years following the First World War, adult schools began to provide alternative dances. Every Monday night a dance was held at Layerthorpe Adult School, and the Coffee House, Walmgate, and the Co-operative Large Hall also offered dancing.⁷⁷ Rowntree's began to hold departmental dances on a Friday night, and later an open dance, the 'Saturday night hops', which cost 9d in the boys' gym.⁷⁸ In 1920 both the York YMCA and Co-operative started English country dancing lessons as a response to the perceived danger of jazz dancing at commercial halls.⁷⁹

York also housed a number of small music halls, and many public houses had concert and singing rooms. For Peter Bailey, the music hall became the most embattled institution in working-class life after the public house, although by the closing years of the nineteenth century it had managed to shake off the worst of its reputation.⁸⁰ The sexual innuendo of some music hall entertainment was alleged to corrupt young working-class women. A lecturer at the Old Priory Adult School commented that on a visit to a local music hall he 'heard a song in which the suggestions were disgusting'.⁸¹ Ellen Dinsdale was forbidden to attend the music

⁷³ Interview with MG, born 1908, YOHP.

⁷⁴ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 24 February 1892.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 26 September 1899.

⁷⁶ Interview with Alethea Asplinn, born 1905, YOHP.

⁷⁷ See pp. 145-146 for further discussion of York Adult Schools.

⁷⁸ Interview with Alethea Asplinn, born 1905, YOHP.

⁷⁹ *York Herald*, September 1920. Folk music and country dancing were increasingly used as a counter to jazz music and new styles of dancing. The folk revival in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century saw the need for cultural alternatives, with the culture of the past seen as superior to the contemporary. See Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined*, ed. by Neil V. Rosenberg (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993) and Dave Harker, 'May Cecil Sharp be praised?', *History Workshop Journal* 14:1 (1982), 45-62.

⁸⁰ Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*.

⁸¹ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 2 November 1912.

hall by her father, and as a result ‘followed her sister to a bad house because her father was angry with her for habitually going to music halls’.⁸² Eighteen year old Susannah Rogerson ‘went wrong through bad companions met at music halls’.⁸³ By the later decades of the century the music hall was becoming an increasingly popular and reputable entertainment venue, moving away from its more bawdy image and being styled as a type of variety theatre. In 1902 the Grand Theatre and Opera House was constructed on the site of the Corn Exchange in King Street, renamed the Opera House and Empire in 1903 in a move to attract a mass audience, and later known simply as the Empire Theatre. The *Gazette* noted in 1908 that for those ‘who wish to enjoy a good laugh, a good joke, or hear some delightful singing, we recommend a visit to the York Empire’.⁸⁴ The Palace of Varieties – which would become the Tower Cinema in 1920 – was opened in New Street in 1908 and also featured a regular programme of music and films. The Victoria Hall in Goodramgate had been granted a music and dancing license in 1902, and the Wellington Music Hall was also situated on the street. The Lamb public house provided regular acts in its singing room, and was often referred to locally as ‘Lamb’s Varieties’.⁸⁵ During the war, concert parties were formed to entertain in the various venues offering variety shows.

The Empire was described in 1902 as a theatre ‘of noble proportions’ with ‘unique decoration’ and ‘electric lighting, heating, ventilation and safety fire appliances ... of the most approved and up-to-date character’.⁸⁶ The auditorium was built on three levels, with boxes to the side of the auditorium; ‘those were posh that went in there’.⁸⁷ The cheapest seats were in the upper circle – or gods – with wooden seating around in tiers, although often members of the audience would have to stand. Seats in the gods may have been cheap, but they were also a desired commodity; the ‘first opportunity they saw somebody stand up, they’d jump into his seat straight away’.⁸⁸ People were often found queuing down King Street to get inside for the first

⁸² Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 25 March 1891.

⁸³ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.16, Penitentiary Minute Books, 26 November 1900.

⁸⁴ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 21 November 1908.

⁸⁵ Van Wilson, *An Oral History of Popular Music in York: Rhythm and Romance*, vol. I, (York: York Oral History Society).

⁸⁶ *Playgoer*, Vol. I, October 1901 – March 1902.

⁸⁷ Interview with Mr Allan, born 1911, YOHP.

⁸⁸ Interview with Mrs Allan, born 1912, YOHP.

BOOKING PLAN.

Opera House and Empire, York.

Managing Director - WILLIAM PEACOCK.

UPPER CIRCLE.

12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1																																																																																																																																																				
Upper Circle	159	160	161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180	181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	Upper Circle																																																																																																																													
	158	157	156	155	154	153	152	151	150	149	148	147	146	145	144	143	142	141	140	139	138	137	136	135	134	133	132	131	130	129	128	127	126	125	124	123	122	121	120	119	118	117	116	115	114	113	112	111	110	109	108	107	106	105	104	103	102	101	100	99	98	97	96	95	94	93	92	91	90	89	88	87	86	85	84	83	82	81	80	79	78	77	76	75	74	73	72	71	70	69	68	67	66	65	64	63	62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55	54	53	52	51	50	49	48	47	46	45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Upper Circle

DRESS CIRCLE.

Dress Circle	258	257	256	255	254	253	252	251	250	249	248	247	246	245	244	243	242	241	240	239	238	237	236	235	234	233	232	231	230	229	228	227	226	225	224	223	222	221	220	219	218	217	216	215	214	213	212	211	210	209	208	207	206	205	204	203	202	201	200	199	198	197	196	195	194	193	192	191	190	189	188	187	186	185	184	183	182	181	180	179	178	177	176	175	174	173	172	171	170	169	168	167	166	165	164	163	162	161	160	159	158	157	156	155	154	153	152	151	150	149	148	147	146	145	144	143	142	141	140	139	138	137	136	135	134	133	132	131	130	129	128	127	126	125	124	123	122	121	120	119	118	117	116	115	114	113	112	111	110	109	108	107	106	105	104	103	102	101	100	99	98	97	96	95	94	93	92	91	90	89	88	87	86	85	84	83	82	81	80	79	78	77	76	75	74	73	72	71	70	69	68	67	66	65	64	63	62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55	54	53	52	51	50	49	48	47	46	45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Dress Circle
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STALLS.

Stalls	181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195	196	197	198	199	200	201	202	203	204	205	206	207	208	209	210	211	212	165	164	163	162	161	160	159	158	157	156	155	154	153	152	151	150	149	148	147	146	145	144	143	142	141	140	139	138	137	136	135	134	133	132	131	130	129	128	127	126	125	124	123	122	121	120	119	118	117	116	115	114	113	112	111	110	109	108	107	106	105	104	103	102	101	100	99	98	97	96	95	94	93	92	91	90	89	88	87	86	85	84	83	82	81	80	79	78	77	76	75	74	73	72	71	70	69	68	67	66	65	64	63	62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55	54	53	52	51	50	49	48	47	46	45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Stalls
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Figure 18. Booking plan from the Empire, Programme, 11 April 1932. Author's own.

or second nightly show but door keepers prevented any undesirables from entering; ‘if they saw anybody they thought wasn’t dressed sufficiently, they just told them to get out of the queue’.⁸⁹ Behaviour could also be self-regulating, when members of the crowd got too rowdy, ‘the audience didn’t like that, so it was the audience itself that more-or-less got them thrown out’.⁹⁰ During shows the theatre would be ‘every bit in darkness’, apart from the stage lights. Mr and Mrs Allan visited the theatre regularly when courting, always in the gods, ‘because we couldn’t afford anything else’. When they went back to the theatre with their children, they noted, ‘we used to think it was right common up there [in the gods], because we could afford better.’⁹¹ Ida Gault had a different reason for sitting at the back in the cheap seats – because she didn’t want to take her hat off.⁹²

Women made up a significant proportion of music hall audiences, and Nell McTurk met her husband at the Victoria Hall; ‘we were at the Victoria Hall and these two Scots Greys sat behind me and my friends and we walked home with them’.⁹³ The Empire in particular formed a central part of the social lives of many young people, and the lively involvement of the audience often set the tone for the evening. Ciskey Colley and her friends were ‘thrown out twice’ and ‘banned from going’ after ‘making noise’ and ‘sitting behind a group of lads and making awful jokes’.⁹⁴ Others were the subject of rowdy behaviour; ‘everything got thrown there ... apple cores, chewing gum, everything yes. Bits of spit as well. The rough lot did.’⁹⁵ For some, a performance at the Empire was just a small part of an evening out, while others had to budget:

We used to go to the Empire in them days, on a Saturday night, to the last half, which cost ... fourpence, but we only got a shilling pocket money, so we could only afford to spend sixpence out of that ‘cause the other went on stockings and towards a pair of shoes.⁹⁶

⁸⁹ Interview with Mr Allan, born 1911, YOHP.

⁹⁰ Interview with Mrs Allan, born 1912, YOHP.

⁹¹ Interview with Mr Allan, born 1911, YOHP.

⁹² Interview with Ida Gault, born 1899, YOHP.

⁹³ Interview with Nell McTurk, born 1896, YOHP.

⁹⁴ Interview with Ciskey Colley, born 1910, YOHP.

⁹⁵ Interview with Mr Allan, born 1912, YOHP.

⁹⁶ Interview with Cissy Colley, born 1910, YOHP.

Slightly different in tone to the Empire, the Theatre Royal was also well attended by the working class of York.⁹⁷ Opened in 1734, the theatre presented a programme characterised largely by light entertainment.⁹⁸ Suggestions in 1905 that it was to be converted into a music hall resulted in a vocal protest – the council received a letter signed by number of citizens arguing that if ‘this historic house, with its worthy past, should pass into ‘twice nightly’ variety ... [it would be] deplorable’. They further urged that the city had a responsibility to protect the theatre as ‘a potent educational force’.⁹⁹ However, by 1906, in order to attract the big audiences drawn by the Empire, some weeks were given over to variety and for the first time the Theatre Royal began to put on twice nightly variety performances.¹⁰⁰ The theatre remained open during the First World War, and was ‘thrown open free of charge to wounded soldiers’.¹⁰¹ However, in the years following the war, it faced increasing competition from the cinema, which came to be identified with the fashionable American way of life, particularly amongst younger people.¹⁰²

Throughout the early years of the twentieth century, the cinema became an increasingly popular leisure activity for young people. Courting couples in particular could take advantage of the darkness and intimacy of the picture house for ‘a bit of canoodling’.¹⁰³ The first film screening in York was held in December 1896 at the Theatre Royal (without the management realising that this medium would shortly prove to be the greatest danger to the theatre’s existence) and in the years following, pictures were also shown at the Grand Opera House, the Festival Concert Rooms, the Exhibition Building and the Victoria Hall.¹⁰⁴ New Street Hall, a former Wesleyan Chapel, was converted into a cinema in 1908, and the first purpose-built cinema, the Electric Theatre (known locally as the Flea Bin) was opened on Fossgate in 1911.¹⁰⁵ This led the way for a number of picture houses to open in quick succession; the City

⁹⁷ ‘The theatre was, er, well, how could you call it? More classical types’. Interview with Mr Allan, born 1911, YOHP. ‘I didn’t go to the Empire, all those smutty things that they used to put on, they weren’t my cup of tea at all ... I liked the Theatre Royal’. Interview with Bertha Linfoot, born 1897, YOHP.

⁹⁸ Anselm Heinrich, ‘The Making of the Civic Theatre: The history of the Theatre Royal in York between 1744 and 1945’, *York Historian*, 19 (2002), pp. 74-89 (p. 76).

⁹⁹ Minutes of Full Council, Y/COU/1/2, House Book 30, 1904-1906, pp. 965-966.

¹⁰⁰ Sybil Rosenfeld, *The York Theatre* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 2001), p. 314.

¹⁰¹ *Yorkshire Evening Press*, ‘York Theatre Memories’, 23 December, 1932.

¹⁰² Heinrich, p. 80.

¹⁰³ Interview with MG, born 1908, YOHP.

¹⁰⁴ York Oral History Project, *York Memories of Stage and Screen: Personal Accounts of York’s Theatres and Cinemas, 1900 – 1960* (York: York Oral History Project, 1988), pp. 40-55.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Louise Aldrich, born 1919, YOHP.

Palace on Fishergate opened its doors in 1914, Coney Street Picture House in 1915, and in 1919 the Grand opened on Clarence Street. At the end of the 1930s York was home to nine cinemas.¹⁰⁶ In 1918 Canon Rawnsley, the honorary chaplain to George V, used the York Convocation as an opportunity to criticise the cinema for its lack of opportunity for self-improvement. The *Evening Press* followed up this attack by interviewing local cinema managers for their response. The manager of the Clifton Cinema retorted that since the arrival of the cinema ‘Brewers’ receipts have gone down’, further pointing out that ‘in York, we never had a year in which there were so many blank days in the Police Court as this year. The pictures don’t get any credit for that’.¹⁰⁷ The Reverend Chancellor Austen addressed a York Penitentiary Society meeting: ‘while cinema shows might be perfectly wholesome and healthy, there were such things as films and shows which would be better not exhibited – they were too suggestive’.¹⁰⁸

Cinemas, dance and music halls were mixed leisure arenas, but certain leisure venues catered overwhelmingly to men. Public houses were generally viewed as a masculine leisure arena. While Rowntree noted that ‘in York, there is much public house drinking by girls’, entry of women was often restricted, or subject to spatial restrictions or behavioural dictates.¹⁰⁹ Rose Sturdy’s father ran a number of public houses in York before the war, but refused to admit women; ‘We don’t serve women. We don’t have women in pubs, we don’t have women in’ he insisted.¹¹⁰ Alice Hick noted ‘it wasn’t proper for you to go in pubs’, and even when courting only went to public houses with gardens so ‘you could have drinks outside’.¹¹¹ Before the coming of the railway, York was home to numerous coaching inns, but by the late nineteenth century the licensing justices looked to reduce the number of licensed premises in the city. Between 1814 and 1914, 138 public houses were closed, although this still left 180 ale and spirit, and 32 beer only houses licenced in the city.¹¹² Along Walmgate alone there were 20 public houses, 4 off-licence shops

¹⁰⁶ Heinrich, p. 80.

¹⁰⁷ *Yorkshire Evening Press*, 29 February 1918.

¹⁰⁸ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 25 February 1920.

¹⁰⁹ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 313.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Rose Sturdy, born 1908, YOHP.

¹¹¹ Interview with Alice Hick, born 1901, YOHP.

¹¹² YCA, Chief Constable’s Report on Alehouses, Acc. 258, 1902.



Figure 19. Rowntree's 'Drink Map of York'. Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*.



Figure 20. Entrance to the yard of the Brown Cow Inn, Long Close Lane, Walmgate, c. 1933, York City Health Department. Image courtesy of Imagine York [accessed 12 July 2013]. The front entrance to the inn was situated in Hope Street, and its yard led into Long Close Lane. The Brown Cow had a ‘best room’, where beer was served in the middle, and a room at the back, which was popular with men playing dominoes. The front entrance led straight into a passageway that went through to the back yard, and often women would sit in this passageway drinking. Interview with Violet Quigley, born 1912, YOHP.

and one licensed club in 1901.¹¹³ The public house remained central to the social lives of many young working-class men and women by providing rooms for society meetings. Even temperance reformers recognised that one reason for the ubiquity of the pub was that they satisfied a wide array of legitimate social needs, alongside the sometimes more disreputable kind.¹¹⁴ Rowntree noted that in pubs where music was provided ‘the rooms are, as a rule, brilliantly lit and often gaudily, if cheaply, decorated. In winter they are always kept temptingly warm. The company is almost all entirely composed of young persons, youths and girls, sitting around the room and at small tables’.¹¹⁵

Every working-class neighbourhood in York boasted at least one corner pub, and in some neighbourhoods they dominated the physical space of the locality.¹¹⁶ The reputations of these pubs could vary dramatically. Robert Kay, a temperance supporter, was particularly keen to highlight those pubs in the Walmgate district with a distinct low character. While moral reformers were aware that drunkenness and immorality could not be entirely stamped out, they hoped that it could be regulated and controlled. For others it was the unacceptable behaviour the public house seemed to encourage, such as bad language and rowdy behaviour, that posed the biggest problem. Robert Kay noted that The Spotted Dog was ‘the birthplace of many of the Guildhall cases for which Walmgate is so noted’, while in 1886 the landlord of the Malt Shovel Inn was charged with being drunk on his own premises and assaulting two police officers.¹¹⁷

The link between prostitution and alcohol consumption was also explored by social commentators of the time. Robert Kay noted the reputation of Britannia Inn was particularly bad, recording in his diary; ‘Detective Worcester told me this week that last Saturday night not less than 40 drunken boys – with a lot of low girls (with which this street abounds) could not be controlled ... this is a low place’.¹¹⁸ Rowntree

¹¹³ Hugh Murray, *A Directory of York Pubs 1455-2004* (York: Voyager Publications, 2004). Rowntree’s first study of York; *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* also included a map depicting the concentration of public houses across the city.

¹¹⁴ G. R. Searle, *A New England?: Peace and War 1886-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 558.

¹¹⁵ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 311.

¹¹⁶ See figure 19. Rowntree’s ‘Drink Map of York’.

¹¹⁷ Robert Kay, Acc. 974, Grandfather Robert Kay’s Notebook, 1875-1900, The Spotted Dog, and *York Herald*, 6 April 1886.

¹¹⁸ Robert Kay, Acc. 974, Grandfather Robert Kay’s Notebook, Britannia Inn, 6 April 1886.

recorded that ‘there can be no doubt that many girls spend their evenings in public houses with a view to meeting men for immoral purposes’.¹¹⁹ Doreen Bolton grew up in the King’s Head in Feasegate and recalled how they ‘used to get a lot of birds in ... I would think they were whores on the quiet like, I used to call ‘em all aunty’.¹²⁰ As well as a place to drink and pick up clients, public houses could also be brothels. The Bay Horse Inn in Walmgate was raided in 1881, and behind a door which had been papered over, the police found two prostitutes.¹²¹ In 1868 William Acton was shocked at the ‘elbowing of vice and virtue’ in the pubs of London’s East End, but the public house could provide a common meeting ground for respectable and less respectable alike.¹²² Some houses were seen as respectable working-class drinking haunts, and Rowntree noted on one of his visits that ‘everyone is drinking, but not heavily’.¹²³ In 1896 the chief constable noted that ‘the vast majority of publicans ... do their utmost to have their houses conducted respectably’.¹²⁴ Ethel Atkinson and Charles Lambert socialised both as a couple and as part of a wider social group at the pub, before she fell pregnant and took out an affiliation order against him. In her testimony at the York Police Court she recalled how they met at the York Gala and ‘he invited me to have a drink with him’. Later in the company of a girl friend she met Lambert ‘and [they] all went together into a public house’.¹²⁵ Other young people visited the public house as part of an evening’s entertainment; ‘our entertainment on a Saturday night ... was, there was these 7 or 8 pubs, and then you’d probably go off somewhere, to the pictures or to the Empire’.¹²⁶

¹¹⁹ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 313.

¹²⁰ Interview with Doreen Bolton, born 1910, YOHP.

¹²¹ *York Herald*, 5 February 1881.

¹²² William Acton in Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 29.

¹²³ Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p. 311.

¹²⁴ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 7, ‘Annual Returns of the Chief Constable, 1896’, 25 March 1896.

¹²⁵ York Poor Law Union, Board of Guardians, Acc. 2.10.2, York Police Court, Ethel Atkinson, May 1907.

¹²⁶ Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918, YOHP.

3. Rational recreation

A Sabbath well spent
Brings a week of content
And help for the cares of tomorrow,
But a Sabbath profaned
What 'er may be gained
Is sure to bring nothing but sorrow.¹²⁷

By the turn of the century, concern was growing around young working-class leisure, with fears that young people were not using their leisure time profitably. The often raucous and disorderly activities of the working class appeared to moralists and reformers to lack any potential for improvement, and they were often quick to condemn both the street based and commercial activities of the working class. In April 1901 the *Yorkshire Gazette* published an editorial on the need to help the young working class that gathered in Coney Street at the weekends, stating; ‘as we love the souls of our citizens, the happiness of our people, the name of our fair city, we must hasten to help’.¹²⁸ In their annual report, the York City Mission declared that ‘young life is thrown away on the streets ... habits are formed and practices indulged in which are both morally and spiritually injurious’.¹²⁹ For the Penitentiary Committee, many aspects of popular leisure represented a threat to the moral well-being of young women. The fairs and races presented a particular opportunity to fall into bad company, and in a pamphlet published to warn parents of the dangers of letting their young people participate in commercial leisure activities, the Penitentiary Society also named the theatre, the public house and the Barracks as immediate dangers to young women, and implied attendance at any of these places was a road that led directly to prostitution. The Committee concluded the pamphlet with a plea to ‘Parents! Never allow your young people to go out after dark, nor to display themselves in a dressy manner, nor to stroll about on Sundays’.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Harry Bulme, ‘The Observance of Sunday’ printed in *Class Messenger*, the monthly periodical of the Priory Street Wesleyan Young Men’s Class. Borthwick, MR Y/WC.191, *Class Messenger*, June 1890, p. 3.

¹²⁸ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 27 April 1901.

¹²⁹ York City Mission, Acc. 223, Minute Book of Committee Meetings, 1902, pp. 7-8.

¹³⁰ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.246.1, Address to Fathers and Mothers in York, Martinmas Fair, 1891.

Reformers, then, looked to leisure as a means of educating the masses, and considered the leisure arena as one which could be used to help shape the attitudes and behaviour of young working people. They aimed to find or provide a positive alternative to the rowdy street culture of the ‘monkey run’ or pub culture, and attempted to remove the young working class from the public spaces of the city altogether. Some of the most important players in providing these so called rational alternatives were the Church and other religious organisations. Two of York’s largest employers, the Railways and Rowntree’s, were also concerned to see their employees use leisure time profitably.

Historians have placed rational recreation as the opposite to vibrant working-class culture, and argued that leisure was a particular site of contest. Peter Bailey depicted the rational recreation movement as one in which middle-class reformers attempted to control the working class, but argues that the working class were largely resistant, and working men simply selected what they wanted from the recreationists and ignored the rest.¹³¹ He uses the working men’s club movement as a prime of example of this contest – a movement which derived its momentum from middle class support but by the 1880s had become a largely working class preserve, with the ‘original designs of its mentors ... all but frustrated’.¹³² Bailey’s consideration of rational recreation is largely concerned with the experiences of men, and Hugh Cunningham further argues that rational recreationists were ‘almost exclusively ... men dealing with men’ because such reformers largely assumed that working-class women spent any leisure time ‘confined within the bonds of home, family and class’, and therefore their leisure received little attention.¹³³ However, women were both the focus of, and propagandists for, rational recreation, and their participation in commercial and street leisure was increasingly brought under scrutiny. Catriona Parratt notes that in an expanding leisure world, working-class women’s leisure was increasingly constructed as problematic, and within a compass of broader philanthropy upper and middle-class women became sponsors of reform.¹³⁴ The Girls’ Friendly Society, established in 1875, was perhaps the most palpable result of such attentions, grouping together young working-class women with those of a

¹³¹ Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹³³ Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 90-107.

¹³⁴ Catriona M. Parratt, ‘Making Leisure Work: Women’s Rational Recreation in Late Victorian and Edwardian England’ *Journal of Sport History*, 26: 3 (1999), 471-487 (p. 472).

higher social status to provide ‘for every working girl of unblemished character a friend in a class above her own’.¹³⁵ By 1885 the society had over 821 branches in England and Wales, and strongly discouraged leisure behaviour, ‘whether it be drinking, extravagance, or the reading of light literature’, which did not promote improvement.¹³⁶ Olive Waudby was a member of the Girls’ Friendly Society branch at St Denys Church, Walmgate from the age of fourteen until she got married; ‘it was just a collection of teenage girls’.¹³⁷ While set up for married women, the Mothers’ Union similarly warned members about ‘wandering the streets at night, unsafe companions and ... dangerous amusements’.¹³⁸

Churches, chapels and other religious agencies encouraged leisure as a means of improvement and offered alternatives to the amusements of the ‘monkey run’ or public house. An editorial in the *York Herald* urged local churches to be involved in the development of ‘good and pure’ amusements.¹³⁹ They continued to play an important role in the lives of the young working class and offered leisure choices that were motivated by religious principles. Recreational ministrations were among the duties of some clergymen, and others expected female relatives to play a role in promoting the leisure activities of the church. While attendance was on the decline, churches continued to provide social activities and influence the leisure time of York’s working class.¹⁴⁰ Religious belief could also have a broader impact on social customs, defining the suitability of a particular leisure activity. Walking, for example, was permissible on a Sunday in a way that playing an organised sport on the Sabbath was not.¹⁴¹ Some churches provided a number of opportunities to meet socially outside the Sunday service. The parish magazine of St Philip and St James in Clifton printed a programme of activities available to parishioners, and in a typical month in 1900, a Mothers’ Meeting and Boys’ Club was held every Monday, and the

¹³⁵ Agnes L. Money, *History of the Girls’ Friendly Society* (London: Well Gardner, Darnton and Co, 1911), p. 36.

¹³⁶ Brian Harrison, ‘For Church, Queen and Family: The Girls’ Friendly Society 1874-1920’, *Past and Present*, 61:1 (1973), 107-138.

¹³⁷ Interview with Olive Waudby, born 1909, YOHP.

¹³⁸ V. B. Lancaster, *A Short History of the Mothers’ Union* in C. M. Parratt, ‘Making Leisure Work’.

¹³⁹ *York Herald*, 27 June 1881.

¹⁴⁰ Edward Royle has shown how in York churches were in modest decline from the early 1880s, and in moderate but absolute decline from the early Edwardian years. Edward Royle, ‘Religion in York 1831-1981’, in *York 1831-1981: 150 Years of Scientific Endeavour and Social Change*, ed. by Charles Feinstein (York: William Sessions, 1981), pp. 225-27 and Royle, *The Victorian Church in York*, Borthwick Paper no. 64 (York: University of York, 1983).

¹⁴¹ Masters, p. 221.

second Tuesday of every month the church provided a Women's Social Evening for Domestic Servants, with a Mission Service held every fourth Tuesday. Each Wednesday a service and address was held in the church with the Reverend Alexander. On Thursdays a Men's Club and Bible Club met at the church, with a Working Party every alternate week. Saturdays were reserved for prayer meetings.¹⁴² The character of the local priest or minister could be a significant factor in the success of both the church and its leisure provisions. The Reverend Joseph Shannon was described as having a 'personality which forcibly appealed to the working men of the neighbourhood' and was credited with the high attendance at the new Anglican Church of St Barnabas, consecrated in 1904 in Leeman Road.¹⁴³ Nell Fearn said of the Reverend Payne of St Cuthbert's that 'he was a lovely man, oh, he was gorgeous!'.¹⁴⁴

Some churches responded to the growing competition of commercial leisure ventures by holding dances for young people, recognising the benefit of young couples meeting under supervision. Others responded to the needs of young people who were deserting the church for the cinema or to go courting; 'the children went 'til they were a certain age and then seemed to drift away. They asked if we could start a class for older ones and it absolutely took off'.¹⁴⁵ In Portsmouth, Reverend Dolling, on discovering many older girls stopped attending church groups once they began courting, set up mixed social clubs for his parishioners. However, he struggled to keep the focus on improving recreation; 'we tried games, but they always ended in horrid romps. All games seemed to end in kissing and forfeits brought forth witticisms which were not always conducive to propriety'.¹⁴⁶ A number of York's sporting clubs and brass bands also had an attachment to a place of worship, and the Priory Street Wesleyan Chapel boasted two cricket teams, a cycling club and a swimming group.¹⁴⁷ For both working-class young men and women, church life

¹⁴² Borthwick, York, St Philip and St James, Clifton, Parish Magazine, September 1900. See also The Groves Young Men's Mission which provided cricket, football and cycling clubs, as well as a mutual improvement society and three York companies of the Boys' Brigade, *York Herald*, 17 March 1899.

¹⁴³ Borthwick, Parish Records, York, St Barnabas, loose newspaper clippings, not dated, PR/Y/BAR/9-10.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918, YOHP.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Hilda Beaumont, born 1904, YOHP.

¹⁴⁶ Robert R. Dolling, *Ten Years in a Portsmouth Slum*, (London: Swann and Sonnenschein, 1898), pp. 41-43. See also Parratt, "The making of the healthy and happy home", pp. 59-60.

¹⁴⁷ Edward Royle, *Nonconformity in Nineteenth-Century York*, Borthwick Paper no. 68 (York: University of York, 1985), p. 19.

could provide opportunities to meet and socialise, although some young people chose not to take advantage of them. Ruth Redpath was given Sunday evenings off to go to church but ‘we never did, and we all used to go out for an hour’.¹⁴⁸ Emily Fratsen refused to go to church when she got older because it felt like as a child ‘we were never out of it’, and Mr Sutcliffe only attended church when he was forced to; ‘I didn’t care for anything where you were forced’.¹⁴⁹ Some couples continued to meet through church related social activities; ‘[we met] at a carol singing party. There were lots of social activities in connection with the church and we were both in the choir ... wherever we went we were thrown into each other’s company’.¹⁵⁰ Bertha Linfoot was not allowed to walk out at night because of the girls ‘looking for soldiers’, but she was allowed to socialise with the soldiers that went to her church.¹⁵¹

In their first annual report, the York District and Adult School Union noted that

the working classes in these [Hungate and Holgate] and other districts enjoy few opportunities for social intercourse outside of the public house or drinking clubs, and the need for wholesome influences is great.¹⁵²

While initially established to provide education for the poorer classes of York, adult schools increasingly offered a range of social and recreational activities, largely to provide alternatives to the less desirable forms of working-class leisure. Arnold Rowntree, President of the Leeman Road School noted that ‘the adult school has work to do in providing a counter attraction to the public house’.¹⁵³ While non-denominational, adult schools were subject to a powerful Quaker influence, and the thirteen separate schools in York by 1905 combined religion, teetotalism and leisure.¹⁵⁴ By the opening years of the twentieth century, adult schools across the city

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Ruth Redpath, born 1914, YOHP.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Emily Fratsen, born 1897; and Mr Sutcliffe, born 1897, YOHP.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Mrs S. H., born 1904, YOHP.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Bertha Linfoot, born 1897, YOHP.

¹⁵² YCA, York and District Adult School Club, Acc 412, Annual Reports, 1905-1982.

¹⁵³ Arnold Rowntree, cited in A. J. Peacock, ‘Adult Education in York’ in *Essays in York History*, ed. by A. J. Peacock (York: York Settlement Trust, 1997), pp. 266-291 (p. 282).

¹⁵⁴ Stephen Allott, *Friends in York: The Quaker Story in the Life of a Meeting* (York: Sessions, 1978), p. 92.

were providing socials as alternatives to the dances held at commercial venues. Nell Fearn's father made the distinction between a dance and the dancing socials provided by adult schools and later the Co-operative Society; and she was only permitted to attend the latter.¹⁵⁵ The Folk Hall at New Earswick, gifted by Joseph Rowntree to the village he founded, held a mixture of religious services, country dancing and music. Mary Barnes attended the dances with a group of friends; 'on Saturday evenings we all used to go to the Folk Hall at New Earswick'. They attended 'every week' despite the fact that she was 'not much [involved with the church]'.¹⁵⁶ Even with the growth of commercial leisure opportunities, religious organisations continued to be a part of the leisure time of York's young people, who took advantage of the provisions because they presented an opportunity for free leisure, they had nothing better to do, or because they held strong religious convictions - their decisions could be based on varied and complex motivations.

Churches and other religious groups had a definite interest in moral and spiritual reform, but other organisations were similarly concerned about the welfare of York's young people. By the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the NER was York's largest employer. The railway and the services ancillary to them brought jobs and industry to York, including not just the men that worked in the railway works, but also positions for guards, drivers and station officials, as well as those employed in administration offices. By 1910, the Engine and Carriage Works, which had moved to Holgate between 1880-81, had been extended to cover an area of 45 acres.¹⁵⁷ The NER built a Railway Institute on the site of the old Railway Tavern in Queen Street in 1889. Inspired by values of self-improvement, it was hoped the Institute would help the younger employees to 'employ their energies better than by wandering about the streets or resorting to places which would neither improve their mind or their pockets', and removing the Tavern itself was an important motive.¹⁵⁸ The Temperance Society had long been concentrating their efforts on the men employed at the Locomotive Works in Queen Street, stationing their first coffee cart outside the works every week from 1871-1880, to enable workers to buy coffee instead of alcohol.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918, YOHP.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Mary Barnes, born 1912, YOHP.

¹⁵⁷ *VCH, York*, p. 270.

¹⁵⁸ NER director, cited in Hugh Murray, *Opportunity of Leisure: The History of the York Railway Institute*, (York, 1989), p. 2.

The first Railway Institute had been established in Shildon in 1883 by the Stockton and Darlington Railway, and others followed in Gateshead, Darlington, Newcastle and Hull. The first Institute at Shildon was set up to meet the ‘urgent need for facilities to improve the social, moral and intellectual condition of their neighbours and associates’, and similar ideas were expressed in the founding of an Institute at York.¹⁵⁹ The Institute had a large library and reading room which subscribed to local and national newspapers, a dining hall and a smoke and games room for card and billiards.¹⁶⁰ It was formally opened by Henry Tennant on 4 July 1889, and the local newspapers reported that around 500 people gathered in the reading room to celebrate the occasion.¹⁶¹ Membership was open to those employed by NER as well as workers of other companies stationed at York, wives and unmarried daughters and sons under the age of twenty one. In 1889, membership of the Institute was 1,130 persons, a figure which remained largely steady, aside from a noticeable dip to 872 in 1905 when the Locomotive Department was moved to Darlington. However, well over half of the members belonged to the clerical sections of the Company, and very few of the workshop employees joined the Institute. As shown in the minutes, the Company were concerned that more eligible staff and their families did not avail themselves of the Institute’s facilities. While the Institute was concerned to compete with public houses, and combating the effects of drink remained a top priority, members were lost to other clubs in the city that served alcoholic drinks. The original object – to provide a worthwhile counter attraction to the pub – and the influence of Henry Tennant, the founding president and a Quaker, resulted in all alcohol being banned from the premises. A York branch of the NER Temperance Union was formed in 1892.¹⁶² Unlike the Working Men’s Club and Institute Union (CIU) which eventually recognised that many working men would not join a club without beer, the Institute did not permit any alcohol to be sold on the premises, and the attraction of the large number of public houses in the vicinity proved too much for some.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Murray, *Opportunity of Leisure*, p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ ‘The Railway Institute’, *York Herald*, 13 May 1889.

¹⁶¹ *York Herald*, 6 July 1889, *Yorkshire Gazette*, 6 July 1889.

¹⁶² Murray, *Opportunity of Leisure*, p. 3.

¹⁶³ T. G. Ashplant, ‘London Working Men’s Clubs, 1875-1914’, in *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590 – 1914: Explorations of the History of Labour and Leisure*, ed. by E. Yeo. And S. Yeo (Brighton: Harvester, 1981). By 1910 there were 37 working men’s clubs in York with 6, 346 members. A. J. Peacock, *York 1900-1914* (York: York Settlement Trust, 1992), p. 23.

At the AGM of 1907, Viscount Ridley emphasized that the purpose of the Institute was to allow a ‘happy combination’ of work and play.¹⁶⁴ Despite the overwhelming focus on education, pushed by both Institute founders and Company directors, by far the most popular activity was billiards, which could be played between 1.00pm and 10.00pm. Even the introduction of an age restriction after 7.00pm and an increase in charges from 2d to 3d did not affect its popularity, and a second table had to be purchased in 1889, and a third in 1906.¹⁶⁵ Competitive matches were initiated, firstly between departments, but soon extending to other local clubs and even other Railway Institutes. The emphasis on education, however, began to see a change in the years following the First World War. During the war, the activities of the Institute were restricted, with members enlisting or going to work in munitions. The building itself was also used for the war effort, with troops billeted in 1914. By 1918, the council focused on social activities, with less emphasis on technical education. A speech given by Viscount Grey at the last educational prize giving sums up this change of direction in the post-war years;

The most enviable people were those who had great gifts for work of some kind and love for that work. Others whose work did not interest them found compensation in doing it to the best of their ability and then making the most out of their leisure. Everyone should take the trouble to cultivate the sorts of recreation which would give pleasure.¹⁶⁶

This attitude was further expressed in the suggestion that the formation of a Golf Club should be the first post-war ‘recreative and social activity’, and six greens were opened at Hob Moor in June 1920.¹⁶⁷ This post war shift reflected the gradual realisation that the achievement of sociability in rational recreation could not be achieved with such a heavy moral and prescriptive burden, and clubs increasingly looked to strike a more nuanced balance between fun and improvement.

The coming of the railways to York not only created jobs in that sector, it also enabled York’s confectioners to develop into national and international

¹⁶⁴ YCA, York Railway Institute, Acc. 430, Annual Reports, 1912.

¹⁶⁵ Murray, *Opportunity of Leisure*, pp. 7-9.

¹⁶⁶ York Railway Institute, Acc. 430, Annual Reports, 1920.

¹⁶⁷ York Railway Institute, Acc. 430, Annual Reports, 1921.

businesses. In the late nineteenth century, York became a well-known centre for the production of cocoa and confectionery, with Rowntree's, Terry's and Mary Craven all independently moving into the production of chocolate and sweets. By the turn of the century, this industry was the second largest employer in York, and unlike the railways, was a major source of employment for young women. By the 1901 census, the confectionery industries employed 1,944 people, rising to 3,737 by 1911, not including the administrative workers.¹⁶⁸ The largest confectionery business, Rowntree and Co. (Rowntree's) expanded rapidly from the 1870s and employed a very large percentage of York's young female workers, with Joseph Rowntree estimating that by 1913 his firm was employing one third of all York's 14-17 year old girls, despite the fact that 'in those days, er, you know it was supposed to be common (chuckles)'¹⁶⁹ Until the 1940s, Rowntree's enforced a marriage bar – meaning the majority of workers at the factory were young and single, and women made up more than half of the workforce. Alethea Asplinn recalled a young woman who worked in the labelling room; 'she'd got into trouble and got instant dismissal. They was awfully strict'.¹⁷⁰ Mrs C earned 'three shillings more' than her husband, but left the factory as soon as she was married. 'I was an over-looker, I was in charge of 100 girls. But when I married, I couldn't go back ... you had to leave'.¹⁷¹

The firm encouraged their workers to become involved in social activities at the factory, using their leisure time in a rational and improving manner. The importance of leisure to the Company was highlighted by Joseph Rowntree who wrote in the *Cocoa Works Magazine (CWM)* that 'what a young man earns in the day time goes into his pocket, but what he spends in the evening goes into his character'.¹⁷² Between 1898 and 1905 a number of small classes and clubs were established for the young women employed at the Cocoa Works, often taking place in lunch breaks. The majority of social clubs were segregated by gender, and the clubs provided for young women were overwhelmingly organised by the female staff in the Social Department. The activities varied from more informal work groups for

¹⁶⁸ Charles Feinstein, 'Population, Occupations and Economic Development, 1831-1891' in *York 1831-1981*, p. 126.

¹⁶⁹ Borthwick, Rowntree/DL/CWM/1910-1919, *Cocoa Works Magazine (CWM)*, 136, June 1913, p. 1500. Interview with Ada Cade, born 1893, YOHP.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Alethea Asplinn, born 1905, YOHP.

¹⁷¹ Interview with "Mrs C", born 1909, YOHP.

¹⁷² *CWM*, 106, December 1910, p. 990.

knitting and sewing, to more formal organisations such as the Girls' Gymnastics Club and the Girls' Temperance Society. Nell McTurk, who worked for the Company during the war recalled the gymnastics programme: 'they used to have gymnastics twice a week at Rowntree's ... it gave us time off work. The Company believed that a "healthy body means a healthy mind"'.¹⁷³ The clubs were voluntary, except the Domestic School classes, introduced in 1905, which were 'more or less' compulsory for the young women employed at the factory.¹⁷⁴ The domestic classes were held up as the ideal for young women working in factories, with Charles Russell wishing that they 'were made a condition of [girls] being allowed to work in factories ... as must the employees of Messrs. Rowntree at York'.¹⁷⁵ The Company gave assistance to these clubs in various ways, providing staff and facilities or at times monetary contributions. However, in 1905 the firm had to concede that the clubs and activities 'which arise spontaneously and are carried on by the employees themselves ... are often more vigorous and active' than those started by the company.¹⁷⁶ Further, attendance figures in the *CWM* suggest that only a small percentage of female employees took advantage of the recreational opportunities available.

The *CWM* was established by Joseph Rowntree in 1902 as a means to communicate with staff, as the company had grown too large for him to know everyone personally.¹⁷⁷ The *Magazine* focused largely on the life and leisure of Rowntree's employees; they could read about the leisure provisions available at the factory as well as learn about other departments or contribute their own articles. Through the *CWM*, the company directors attempted to discourage workers from attending the York Races, and temperance was promoted. Alcohol and betting were prohibited across the factory site. Despite this, in 1914 a referendum was initiated to

¹⁷³ Interview with Nell McTurk, born 1896, YOHP.

¹⁷⁴ 'At Rowntree's to me it was very strict and when you first went to Rowntree's you had to do so much in your working hours ... gym, dressmaking and then you had to do what you call housewifery and that was more or less compulsory'. Interview with Alice Hick, born 1901, YOHP. Catriona Parratt has argued that the opening of the Domestic School in September 1905 marked a 'tacit acknowledgement' by the firm that 'education and compulsion had to be conjoined with recreation and choice'. Parratt, 'The making of the healthy and happy home', p. 74.

¹⁷⁵ Charles Russell, *Social Problems of the North* (London: Garland Publishers, 1980 [1913]), p. 71.

¹⁷⁶ Rowntree and Co., *Industrial Betterment at the Cocoa Works, York* (Delittle, Fenwick, 1905), p. 6.

¹⁷⁷ 'The increasing number of those who are associated with the Cocoa Works – more than 2, 000 – makes it impossible to keep up a personal acquaintance with staff as fully as was the case in the earlier years of the business. I hope this periodical may to some extent make up for the loss of personal intercourse that has thus been occasioned'. Joseph Rowntree, *CWM*, 1, March 1902, p. 2.

decide whether to close the works to enable employees to attend the Races; a large majority of men voted in favour and were granted a 'leave of absence'. Many women voted against the move, and 'no leave of absence [was] granted to women or girls.'¹⁷⁸

In 1902, Winifred Rowntree set up the 'Honesty Girls' Club' at the age of seventeen. Meeting one evening a week in the Adult Evening School, by 1915 the club had 200 members, organised into smaller groups by age.¹⁷⁹ Gertie Hutchinson recalled the club meeting 'in the street where I used to live [off Leeman Road] there used to be an Adult School. The Honesty Girls' Club was upstairs – they had a dance hall up some steps and then there was a small place off that to play cards and dominoes'.¹⁸⁰ The Wednesday Club, founded in 1898, aimed to elevate the moral conduct of its female members. Florence Skirrow and Emily Rowntree led the classes, firstly in Emily Rowntree's office at the Tanner's Moat factory site, and later at the Haxby Road Lecture Room, and the purpose of these classes were made clear; 'as women and girls working in a large Factory in a city of old England that is very dear to us, we mean to use our influence, and *make our force felt*, on the side of all that is good and strong and noble and self-respecting'.¹⁸¹ There were other Girls' Clubs in the city; York had its own branch of the Girls' Friendly Society, established in 1881. During the early part of the war, a number of other clubs for young women were established to provide distraction from the soldiers gathering in the city. Edith Milner set up a number of clubs in which young women could meet and knit for the troops. The Girls' Patriotic Club was formed in 1915 to 'provide a place for social intercourse under the best possible conditions for the girls and their man friends and supply healthy influences to counteract the excitement of the present time'.¹⁸² Later the same year, the National Union of Women Workers set up a meeting place to provide an alternative to street culture and activities that took place near the fairground.¹⁸³

The recreational and social clubs for women encouraged by the Rowntree's directors were influenced by particular ideas of femininity. The Cocoa Work's

¹⁷⁸ CWM, 149, July 1914, p. 1710.

¹⁷⁹ CWM, 151, May 1915, p. 1757.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Gertie Hutchinson, born 1906, YOHP.

¹⁸¹ CWM, 33, November 1904, p. 101.

¹⁸² *York Herald*, 29 September 1915.

¹⁸³ Peacock, *York in the Great War*, p. 346.

directors, along with other moral commentators, believed that young women in particular were susceptible to the temptations of idle gossiping, attending cheap theatres and promenading. The classes, 'compulsory for all girls who joined the factory under the age of 17', sought to provide lessons in domesticity as leisure increasingly became a focus a focus of reformers seeking to pass on the skills and ideology of domesticity to young working-class women.¹⁸⁴ For B. Seebohm Rowntree it 'was felt that ... girls who leave school for the factory and leave the factory to marry have little chance to become proficient in the domestic arts by helping at home', and in 1913 the archbishop of York wrote in the *CWM*;

I will venture to say ... whatever positions of prominence [girls] may gain in the Works here ... the greatest honour that can possibly await them is to become a wife, and that there is an even greater honour that may ... await them, and that is to become a mother.¹⁸⁵

Such activities, then, were seen as particularly important when young girls were employed in manufacturing rather than domestic service, and were intended to provide young women with the skills necessary for self-improvement, and to become good wives and mothers. 'Will [the boys] be likely to grow up as good citizens, and will the girls be helped to be good daughters and sisters, and in future years to become good wives and mothers?'.¹⁸⁶ In contrast, the classes for young men were concerned with metal and woodwork, and the clubs provided were largely focused on physical activity. Education classes for 'lads' were compulsory up to seventeen years of age, and alongside gymnastics, mathematics and woodwork, English classes were provided to 'extend a boy's ability to express himself orally and in writing ... and give him some knowledge of and liking for our best literature'.¹⁸⁷ The Cocoa Works had a number of representative sports teams, and they took part in association football and cricket. The segregation of the social clubs mirrored the sexual division

¹⁸⁴ *CWM*, 136, June 1913, p. 1510.

¹⁸⁵ B. Seebohm Rowntree, *The Human Factor in Business* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1921), p. 101 and *CWM*, 136, June 1913, p. 1506.

¹⁸⁶ Joseph Rowntree, *CWM*, 136, June 1913, p. 1500.

¹⁸⁷ *CWM*, 136, June 1913, p. 1512.

of labour in the factory, with some clubs explicitly refusing to admit women, and others subtly excluding them.¹⁸⁸

It is evident that rational recreation activities often formed part of the social lives of young working-class men and women, although it is difficult to assess what they actually felt about such provisions. The most positive thing Alice Hick could say about the compulsory domestic classes at Rowntree's was 'I didn't mind it so much', and perhaps by definition, such compulsory classes cannot be defined as recreational.¹⁸⁹ June Purvis has argued that many young women learned domestic skills at home and thus saw the teaching of domestic skills in clubs as unnecessary, treating them with disdain.¹⁹⁰ B. Seebohm Rowntree said of the domestic classes that '[the piece workers] would absent themselves if attendance were not compulsory'.¹⁹¹ For the young workers at Rowntree's, the factory offered leisure opportunities not generally available to young working people, but attendance figures demonstrate that these were not always taken up. The Girls' Temperance Society reported of one week's meeting that 'the fine weather attracted many of the members into the garden, but those who stayed in to hear Mrs Thompson had an equally enjoyable quarter of an hour'.¹⁹² Lectures and classes were much less popular than outings or picnics, and the firm's directors used a number of incentives to encourage participation in the former – they published the names of those who earned praise in the *CWM* and displayed some of the employees' craft outputs in the communal spaces of the factory. They also offered a return of the joining fees to those women who successfully completed the dressmaking class.¹⁹³ Alethea Asplinn, however, 'loved Rowntree's, I played cricket, hockey, netball, rhythmic dancing, gymnastics'.¹⁹⁴ Rational recreation provisions, which were largely segregated by gender, often found it difficult to compete with the powerful counter attractions of

¹⁸⁸ The swimming and boating club refused female members, while the committee of the bowling club made an appeal for members in 1906, stating 'he may smoke while playing and is not bound to dress in his best clothes. He may bring his wife or his sister to watch the game and she can enjoy the fresh air with her sewing or knitting'. *CWM*, 44, March 1906, p. 157.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Alice Hick, born 1901, YOHP.

¹⁹⁰ June Purvis, *Hard Lessons: The Lives and Education of Working-Class Women in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), pp. 76-80.

¹⁹¹ Rowntree, *The Human Factor*, p. 109.

¹⁹² *CWM*, 16, June 1903, p.44.

¹⁹³ *CWM*, 57, November 1906, p. 260.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Alethea Asplinn, born 1905, YOHP.

the dance hall or public house, and the distractions of courtship. In order to be successful, rational recreation had to resonate with existing patterns of sociability.

Conclusion

The streets and public spaces of York provided a space for young people to socialise and walk out together, while public houses, cinemas and dance halls provided entertainment for those that could afford it. The young working class of the city took advantage of these opportunities as they received more leisure time and greater spending money. But young people also spent their free time engaged in social activities at their local church, and joined Girls' Clubs or played billiards at the Railway Institute. Leisure activities with an educational or moral purpose were seen to be in competition with rowdy street life and working-class consumerism. Rational recreationists certainly sought to provide alternatives to what they perceived as disorderly working-class leisure, yet for many of the young working classes, the rational could be incorporated into the irrational, and vice versa. As they moved through different spaces and times, young wage earners could explore and negotiate multiple identities. Mrs Lonsdale, a Sunday School member, would also hang around Walmgate to watch Irish men fighting.¹⁹⁵ Mrs Hall promenaded down Coney Street after attending church; 'after church, my friend and I would go walking down Coney Street. That's what you did when you were in your teens, looking for boyfriends ... I used to love to go to that church'.¹⁹⁶ Mary Barnes and her friends attended dances at the New Earswick Folk Hall but outside of these social events she wasn't much involved with the church.¹⁹⁷ Alethea Asplinn was 'mad on dancing' and danced at the 'Albany, Grand, St Georges's' as well as taking advantage of the departmental dances at Rowntree's.¹⁹⁸ For those who chose to attend, what mattered was the convenience and attraction of the leisure provisions. Young people were not passive consumers of leisure, they made active choices and expressed autonomy. Where they went, who they went with and what they went for could be based on decisions involving a number of reasons, including cost, personal preference, practicality and

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Mrs Lonsdale, born 1907, YOHP. See also p. 128.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Lily Hall, born 1912, YOHP.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Mary Barnes, born 1912, YOHP. See also p. 146.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Alethea Asplinn, born 1905, YOHP. See also p. 131.

social mores, and the young working classes that socialised in York took advantage of all the leisure opportunities available to them.

CHAPTER FOUR

REGULATING BEHAVIOUR IN THE PUBLIC SPACES OF THE CITY

Introduction

Throughout the late nineteenth century, local newspapers regularly reported on the state of York at night, and magistrates complained about the behaviour of the city's young people as they gathered in public spaces. Out and about in York, young people moved around and across the city in search of sociability, fun, love, and sex. They took advantage of the leisure opportunities available to them, and used the streets and public spaces of the city to socialise with friends and lovers. At times their behaviour in these public spaces transgressed ideas of appropriate conduct and brought them to the attention of the policeman walking his beat. Young people appeared before the Bench charged with a variety of offences; obstruction of a footpath, using obscene language, being drunk and disorderly, and even assaulting a police officer, resulting in punishments ranging from a small fine to incarceration with hard labour. Other young women found themselves escorted by an officer to one of the rescue homes in the city, most commonly the Penitentiary in Bishophill, where the police provided a number of the female inmates.¹ As the previous chapter has demonstrated, young people made choices about their leisure activities, and their social interactions often played out in the streets and public spaces of the city; as they explored public spaces and relationships were they more likely to come into conflict with the law and policing institutions? How did these institutions both define and attempt to regulate the behaviour of the working class of the city, and did such interactions with the law help shape the way young people both perceived, used and produced the public spaces of York?

As a place of transit and communication, the street was an integral part of the city. The streets, markets and parks of York provided a space for young people to

¹ Of the 264 young women admitted to the York Penitentiary Sheltering Home – opened in 1902 to provide local and temporary cases with a shelter – between June 1914 and March 1918, 37 had been 'rescued' or 'directed to the shelter' by the police, and many more had previous or subsequent contact with the law. Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.19, York Shelter: Case Book, 1914 – 1918. For detailed discussion of such cases, see chapter five.

meet up and walk with friends after work, or at the weekends, and street based leisure was central to the social lives of many young working-class men and women. There were those in York that hoped to divert young people away from street life by providing ‘rational’ and ‘improving’ recreation.² It was the police, however, who acted to clear disorderly working-class men and women from the streets, and as Andrew Davies has highlighted, street based activities could bring young people into conflict with them.³ Both the physical condition of the public street and the behaviour of those using it became increasingly significant throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. While it would be over-simplistic to view efforts to clear the streets of disorderly behaviour simply as a class project, it was undoubtedly the working class who bore the brunt of such efforts. The police and magistrates, alongside reform institutions, attempted to control the urban space in which social relations played out and this chapter is concerned with young people’s behaviour in the street, and how the authorities attempted to control this behaviour. What factors affected young working class access to and use of public space? Police records and court proceedings reported in the local press can provide detail about the many ways the streets of York were used and contested, and how the law impinged on key spatial and cultural locations of young people’s lives.

1. Streets and public space

The young working classes of York could take advantage of public spaces, and walking out, particularly in the evenings, provided couples with the opportunity for both sociability and intimacy. As social activities increasingly began to take place in public – whether socialising in Coney Street, walking through the Saturday evening markets or simply using the streets to travel to the dance hall or theatre – young people found themselves under the surveillance of the police, magistrates, and reform institutions who were concerned with public order in the streets.

² See chapter three, pp. 141-154.

³ Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty*, p. 83.

Public space in the city was ‘defined by its ownership, by its accessibility and by the generality of its use’.⁴ Such public spaces consisted of areas in the city that were (theoretically at least) open and accessible to all residents, and were created and known through common experiences.⁵ However, experiences and understandings of public space were not uniform, and not all were permitted to access or use it in the same way. Public space was regulated by a combination of law and custom, with both civic authorities and the city’s inhabitants concerned with the maintenance and order of the urban environment. How was public space recognised? It had to be read by the residents of the city as such. Interpretations of public space and ‘public’ are the subject of an extensive literature,⁶ but this chapter is concerned largely with how space that was generally accessible to all was regulated. Efforts to keep city centre spaces clean, in good repair and well-ordered gave visual clues to public space, and also served as reminders of authority.⁷ Foucault saw the disciplinary gaze from Bentham’s prison design present in attempts to broaden city thoroughfares and introduce street lighting, and clean and orderly public space could signal the civility and urbanity of its residents.⁸ The ideal city centre street was wide, straight, clean and well lit in contrast to the dark, narrow, overcrowded and dirty working-class neighbourhood spaces that surrounded it.⁹ Streets should be ordered and rationalised, both in the way they looked and the way they were used. In his history of York Francis Drake noted how ‘our streets are kept clean and lighted with lamps every night in the winter season; and so regular are the inhabitants to their houses of rest, that it is rare to meet any person, after ten or eleven at night, walking in them’.¹⁰ At the end of the nineteenth century a number of street improvement schemes took place across the city, including Skeldergate and Gillygate in the 1880s, Lord Mayor’s Walk, Coppergate and Goodramgate in the 1890s and the creation of Piccadilly and the development of Pavement in the 1900s.¹¹ The Castlegate Improvement Scheme in the 1880s witnessed the clearance of the Water Lanes and

⁴ Peter G. Goheen, ‘Negotiating access to public space in mid-nineteenth century Toronto’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 20: 4 (1994), 430-449 (p. 432).

⁵ Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976), p. 34.

⁶ See chapter one, p. 37.

⁷ Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 46.

⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

⁹ For detailed discussion of neighbourhood spaces and their presentation as ‘slums’ see chapter two.

¹⁰ Drake, *Eboracum*.

¹¹ *YCH, York and YCA, City Engineers Plans, Acc. 407, 1891-1981*.

the creation of Clifford Street.¹² Streets were widened to accommodate greater volumes of traffic, and improvements were made to paving and sanitation. The cleaning and repair of the streets had been a matter for individual responsibility through the Middle Ages and beyond, but in 1850 this fell under the responsibilities of the Corporation.¹³ Individual citizens still made their voices heard, however, and were quick to speak out if they found the improvements unsatisfactory. William Leak, one of the proprietors of Leak and Thorp's department store in Coney Street, wrote to the *York Herald* to complain about the paving, mud and dirt which was presumably having a negative impact upon his business: 'Coney Street, from its peculiarity in paving, which holds water that cannot find its way into the grates, is like a cesspool, and a disgrace to our city'.¹⁴ Between 1884 and 1899 the Corporation spent £40,000 on macadamisation, wood paving and other street works.¹⁵

Busy city centre streets were places of transit, of communication, and spaces of 'economic function and social significance'.¹⁶ Pamela Hartshorne noted in her study of early modern York that body metaphors were often used to describe these streets; as arteries or the skeleton of the city, and such representations helped to express the importance of streets within an urban environment.¹⁷ When blocked, or access impeded, the business of the city stopped. The Urban Sanitary Committee dealt with 'nuisances', and could direct citizens to clear any encroachments into public space, both those that physically obstructed and those which polluted.¹⁸ As a way to allow the circulation of people and traffic, the authorities were aware of the need to keep such spaces free of obstructions, but there were tensions between the need to allow circulation and the constant commercial activity. One correspondent to

¹² See chapter two for more details of the Water Lanes clearance, and chapter one, pp. 51-53 for discussion of the creation of Clifford Street.

¹³ *VCH, York*, 'Public Services', pp. 460-472. Hartshorne's close study of the wardmote courts looks at how these responsibilities were enforced in the early-modern city: Hartshorne, 'The Street and the Perception of Public Space'.

¹⁴ *York Herald*, 4 May 1875. See also 7 June 1877 for further correspondence regarding the paving in Coney Street.

¹⁵ YCA, York City Council, Engineers Department, Acc. 160, *York Corporation Report of the City Engineer on Macadamised Roads*, 1899.

¹⁶ Spiro Kostof, *The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Throughout History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), p. 189.

¹⁷ Hartshorne, p. 15.

¹⁸ In August 1883 the Committee directed Mr Walter Cattley to 'abate the nuisance' arising from the emission of black smoke from his chimneys in Skeldergate, and instructed Messers Hotham and Co. to remove a structure built by them outside the Castle Inn, which obstructed the pavement of Clifford Street. *York Herald*, 4 September 1883.

the *York Herald*, who signed himself simply as ‘Decency’, complained of the ‘nuisance’ caused by hanging goods outside shops in a way that obstructed movement. He noted that he had even witnessed ‘a Gentleman’s hat knocked off by a string of boots’.¹⁹ Another grumbled about the footpath between All Saint’s Church and Pavement being constantly ‘blocked by vendors of ice-cream, potatoes, peas’.²⁰ In 1875 both the *York Herald* and the *Yorkshire Gazette* reported with some glee on a ‘novel visitor’ to the city centre. This ‘visitor’, a cow, had escaped its driver and proceeded to go on a rampage through the city, running down Bootham, through a boarding school where it ‘commenced an attack upon the furniture’ before again eluding capture and continuing its journey along Coney Street and into Ousegate.²¹ A more everyday occurrence was the obstructions caused by carts, stalls and groups of pedestrians. James Whimp and William Fox were two ‘young lads’ charged with obstructing the street so that ‘people could not get along the footway on account of their conduct’.²²

Tensions could also arise between those travelling on foot and those utilising other ways. Two young men were charged in August 1886 for being drunk and driving a trap down Coney Street. The magistrate noted disapprovingly that despite a number of people having to run out of the way, the young defendants seemed to ‘regard the matter as a joke’.²³ One resident wrote to the *York Herald* to protest about bicycles, relating how on a bustling Saturday afternoon a group of young men had almost knocked down his child while ‘furiously’ riding their cycles through a busy junction. He noted that ‘when a fatal accident has occurred this dangerous amusement will probably be put a stop to’.²⁴

City centre improvements were an attempt to cleanse the city and create an ordered sanitised space. Widened streets, grand buildings, street and shop lighting distinguished the city centre from its surrounding areas, and presented visual clues to the meaning of such space. As Simon Gunn has noted, such improvements became emblematic of civic pride and had several purposes; providing space for the circulation of people and traffic, defining the boundaries of the city centre,

¹⁹ *York Herald*, 13 June 1884.

²⁰ *York Herald*, 26 September 1884.

²¹ *York Herald*, 15 March 1875. See also *Yorkshire Gazette*, 15 March 1875.

²² *York Herald*, 18 October 1889.

²³ *York Herald*, 21 August 1886.

²⁴ *York Herald*, 7 July 1880.

containing the 'slum' districts which bordered it, and enabling the creation of civic and commercial areas.²⁵ The newly created Clifford Street formed the centre of civic space, boasting the Magistrates' Court, Police and Fire Station and the Institute of Popular Science and Literature, signalling an identification with municipal authority and civic power. Coney Street and Parliament Street formed the principal shopping streets of the city, with Coney Street also home to the Guildhall. The physical environment of the street was important to those who wanted to regulate public spaces, but city centre improvements were also about cleaning the city by removing undesirables from city centre spaces. The authorities were concerned with what the street looked like, its noises and smells, its cleanliness and suitability of paving, but more importantly they were concerned with *who* was using the streets, and *how* they used them.

Regulations regarding how public space should be used were implemented by a small group of elite citizens; the civic authorities, magistrates and reform institutions, and as such it was their ideas of suitable conduct that came to represent appropriate behaviour in the streets and public spaces of York. Use of the streets demanded conformity to a range of behavioural expectations that could then be enforced by the police. Regulations passed by the Corporation sought to control who was using the street, at what times and in what manner, and to exclude those people and actions not deemed appropriate, and they were alert to the importance of maintaining the urban environment. City centre streets were seen as spaces that should be free of disorder and danger, and these institutions sought to manage the use of public space. Many prominent individuals were involved in multiple aspects of this administration. Joseph Agar (1832-1920) was an alderman for nearly forty years, Lord Mayor of the city three times (and therefore the Chief Magistrate), and sat on the Board of Guardians, the Parliamentary Committee and the Watch Committee.²⁶ His impact could therefore be felt in poor relief, legal administration and police control. The Watch Committee minutes indicate that the group of wealthy citizens that were involved in police control also played a role in the running of the Penitentiary and other leading charity and reform organisations. The Board of Health was composed of 'only magistrates, clergy and doctors'.²⁷ The York Penitentiary

²⁵ Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class*, pp. 47-48.

²⁶ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3 and *York Herald*, February 1900.

²⁷ *Essays in York History*, p. 130.

Ladies' Committee members were often the wives of prominent men and had their own widespread influence. Both Joseph Rowntree (1801-1859) and his son Joseph (1836-1925) – father of Seebohm Rowntree and director of the Cocoa Works – sat on the Gentlemen's Committee. By the early twentieth century the Corporation was predominantly Conservative, with many of its members responsible 'for the payment of no small part of the city rates'.²⁸

The civic authorities were concerned with the maintenance of public space and public order, and the street could be used as a means of communicating authority. Street improvements were one way in which this was done, but the York Corporation was also alert to the need for ritualised displays of authority and civic identity in the public spaces of the city. As Simon Gunn has argued, 'authority was conventionally demonstrated by the regular, formalised and often ceremonial appearance of the rich and powerful in the city centre'.²⁹ The nineteenth century was a period in which formal processions proliferated as never before and in the industrial city, 'marching in rank order through the main city streets with banners and costume dress became an important part of the social experience of a significant section of the urban population'.³⁰ Civic rituals could serve as a focus for a city's identity; promoting urban life, order and values, and formalised processions contrasted with the disorderly actions of the crowd. They were carefully choreographed ceremonies, with accepted codes of dress and behaviour that represented an 'ideal of the self regulating urban community' that policed itself through intrinsic codes of conduct.³¹

Normal everyday activities could be displaced by ceremonies and celebrations that promoted power and prestige. Rowntree's workers were granted time away from the factory to participate in displays for York Civic Week; the streets were closed to normal foot-traffic for Military Sunday parades; and crowds

²⁸ *York 1831-1981: 150 years of Scientific Endeavour and Social Change*, p. 257.

²⁹ Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 1.

³⁰ Paul O'Leary, *Claiming the Streets: Processions and Urban Culture in South Wales c.1830-1880* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), p. 5 and Simon Gunn, 'Ritual and Civic Culture in the English Industrial City', in *Urban Governance: Britain and Beyond since 1750*, ed. by Robert J. Morris and Richard H. Trainor (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 226-241 (p. 231).

³¹ Gunn, 'Ritual and Civic Culture', p. 233.



Figure 21. This is the Children's Fete on Bootham Field which was held to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee on 22nd June 1897. York held a variety of events to celebrate the occasion including 'Procession of the Corporation, Magistrates, Clergy, &c., &c.' Image courtesy of Imagine York [accessed 12 July 2013].

gathered and flags were draped from shop windows and homes for Royal visits and celebrations.³² In January 1880, the funeral of the Lord Mayor was 'probably the greatest funeral procession that was ever seen in York'.³³ Shops on the line of the route were closed, and Coney Street was crowded with people, who 'kept the most perfect order, and in every respect acted in a manner befitting the occasion'.³⁴ Military Sunday was one of the biggest parades in the city and soldiers would 'come out in full dress uniform and march from the Barracks through the market place,

³² CWM, 1906-1909; *Yorkshire Gazette*, 3 June 1889 and *York Herald*, 25 July 1896.

³³ *York Herald*, 22 January 1880.

³⁴ *York Herald*, 22 January 1880.

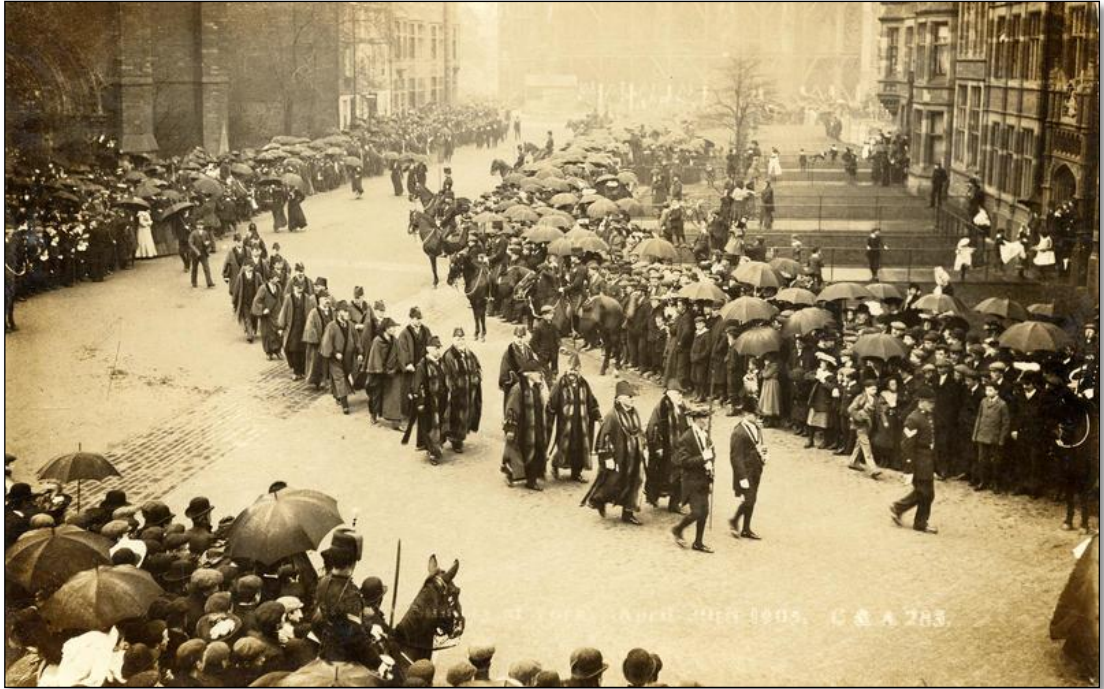


Figure 22. A civic procession, led by the ceremonial sword-bearer and mace-bearer as part of Military Sunday celebrations in April 1905. Image courtesy of Imagine York [accessed 12 July 2013].

Coney Street to Duncombe Place and then to the Minster'.³⁵ These processions were carefully choreographed, and there was significance behind who was placed where, how they were dressed, and what symbols of authority they may be carrying.³⁶ The local press often carried detailed reports of such occasions, such as the funeral of the Lord Mayor, whose procession was headed by the Mayor's tenantry, followed by his household, then the sheriff, Aldermen and councillors. Other prominent residents followed, including the magistrates and poor law guardians. The boys from the Industrial School and workhouse closed the procession.³⁷ Civic authority could also be made visible whenever the city officials processed through the streets, following church services at the Minster or travelling from the Mansion House to the Guildhall

³⁵ Interview with George Thomas, born 1901, YOHP.

³⁶ See figure 22.

³⁷ *York Herald and Yorkshire Gazette*, 22 January 1880.

for the City Assizes, when the sword and mace were carried in front of the judge.³⁸ Rituals and civic processions were potent expressions of civic power.³⁹

The tension between attempts to manage and control the behaviour of city dwellers, and popular aspirations for freedom of action on the streets is arguably one of the most abiding features of town and city life. As places where people live, work, play, consume, and socialise, these tensions are perhaps not surprising. While by definition, public space was open and accessible to all, in practice this was not the case. There were numerous attempts in York to control both who was allowed access to these spaces, and also to manage social relations in it. How people dressed, moved, talked, gestured, and interacted became increasingly important.⁴⁰ The authorities perceived the street as a thoroughfare and not a social location, and attempts to regulate public space influenced what the street looked like, and who could use it. Such efforts could curtail young people's movements around the city, and the scrutiny of their behaviour necessitated identifying deviations from the 'norm' in order that such practices might be condemned and prevented. Attempts to manage these spaces demonstrate the importance to contemporaries of ensuring public space was used appropriately. These regulations were open to resistance, but it was in the interests of the authorities to maintain the 'status quo'; if enough people behaved in a certain way, the meaning of a space could be challenged. Urban space was not static, and even fixed location could acquire different meanings over time.⁴¹

³⁸ *York Herald*, 25 July 1896 and 30 November 1896.

³⁹ The role of parades and processions in urban culture – including temperance, salvation army, friendly society and church parades – have been explored in detail by Paul O' Leary in the context of nineteenth century south Wales: O' Leary, *Claiming the Streets*. Simon Sleight has examined the politics of performance and the participation children and young people in formalised processions: Sleight, pp. 171-212.

⁴⁰ 'People took each other's appearance in the street immensely seriously; they believed they could fathom the character of those they saw'. Sennett, p. 161. John Harvey has traced the fashion for black clothes for men in the nineteenth century, highlighting the connection with the forms of constraint with which European society increasingly regimented itself. John Harvey, *Men in Black* (London: Reaktion Books, 1995).

⁴¹ For further discussion, see chapter six.

2. Young people, crime, and the justice system in York

The York Police Court, or court of Petty Sessions, met daily in front of the Lord Mayor and magistrates at the Guildhall in St Helen's Square, before moving to the new courts at Clifford Street in 1892. The courtroom was an additional space of significance to some young people, dealing with a wide range of mostly minor crimes, licensing offences and civil matters; the magistrates used it to discipline the 'rough' elements and those whose practices subverted an increasingly rigid ideal of urban order. The Quarter Sessions, which met four times a year, dealt with slightly more varied cases, the most serious referred to the Yorkshire County Assize Courts to be dealt with by professional judges. However, definitions and procedures were constantly shifting, and alongside cases of selling bad meat or using obscene language, the police court also heard cases involving gross cruelty to a child and often officiated in cases of serious aggravated assault.⁴² If a defendant was found guilty there were a number of sentences they could expect. At the police court fines were the most common penalty, although in the case of persistent offenders the magistrates frequently imposed a prison sentence. Imprisonment, with or without hard labour, was the standard punishment at the Quarter Sessions, at the Assizes it could be a capital sentence. York had a history as a legal centre, and during the early decades of the nineteenth century the York Races were timed to follow the August Assizes, attracting the gentry and high profile members of the judiciary to the city.⁴³ Many of York's magistrates were also involved in the work of the city's various charities and other institutions that were aimed at reforming offenders or those considered potential future offenders. The policing of working-class leisure meant that young people often appeared before the courts charged with minor theft, drunkenness, casual violence and prostitution, and such offences were largely dealt with by the police court. The young people that were picked up by the police were often presented firstly to the court, and then by local journalists to the population of the wider city, and the press played an important role in establishing the norms of acceptable behaviour. Reports of police court proceedings appeared almost daily in the *York Herald* and regularly in the *Yorkshire Gazette*. However, not enough is

⁴² For example, *York Herald*, 29 June 1895 and 11 September 1900.

⁴³ *YCH, York*, p. 266.

known about the criteria employed in the selection of cases and composition of reports: not all cases were reported on, suggesting editors could choose which offenders and offences to include, and to a certain extent how they were represented. Newspapers played an important role in shaping residents' views of the society in which they lived and were 'tireless promulgators of notions of urban civilization'.⁴⁴ Fred Milburn worked as a copy boy in the years preceding the First World War, and attended the police court regularly; 'waiting on the reporters until they had copy ready [in order to] rush it off to be set up in print right away'. Attending the police court and assizes was one of 'the main jobs, as far as reporters were concerned', and 'murder cases and important cases would justify columns and columns and columns'.⁴⁵ Even more mundane accounts of young men and women charged with disorderly offences horrified, delighted and entertained newspaper readers, and reports of disorderly behaviour helped contribute to the process by which acceptable behaviour was defined. Journalists and the local press not only reported on events, they also helped to structure readers' perceptions of society.

The young men and women who appeared before the courts were for the most part those who used the streets to socialise, drink, gamble and parade, and an examination of the newspaper reports demonstrates that drunkenness, theft and violence were the most common crimes seen at the police court. While perhaps unsurprisingly the court dealt with a large number of drunken young men charged with creating a disturbance in a public space, a significant number of young women also appeared before the Bench charged with these types of offences. Previous historical research has often concentrated on women as victims of crime,⁴⁶ or focused largely on 'female' crimes such as prostitution, witchcraft, abortion and infanticide, an overemphasis on which has distorted the picture of the nature of women's offences in the nineteenth century.⁴⁷ As Susan Grace suggests in her comparison of female criminality in York and Hull, the majority of working-class women that appeared before the Bench did not commit 'female' crimes, but like

⁴⁴ Croll, *Civilising the Urban*, p. 110.

⁴⁵ Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP.

⁴⁶ d'Cruze, *Crimes of Outrage* and Anna Clark, *Women's Silence, Men's Violence: Sexual Assault in England 1770-1845* (London: Pandora, 1987).

⁴⁷ Susan E. Grace, 'Female Criminality in York and Hull 1830 – 1870' (University of York: unpublished PhD thesis, 1998), p. 22. See also Shelagh Mary Ward, 'Female Criminals in Late Victorian Bradford' (University of Leeds: unpublished PhD thesis, 2013).

working-class men were charged with drunkenness and theft.⁴⁸ A large number of the cases reported in both the *Herald* and the *Gazette* did in fact fall into these categories. However, particular elements of women's criminal behaviour – especially sexually related behaviour – were more heavily policed, and female drunkenness always excited especial disapproval.⁴⁹ Responses to women's offending were varied and complex, but certainly shaped by gender ideologies and cultural assumptions about social roles.⁵⁰ The control of such behaviour, alongside other actions condemned as disorderly, and resistance to this control, played an important role in the way young people both used and understood certain parts of the city.

2.1 The police and urban discipline

As young people's leisure and courtship activities played out in the streets and public spaces of the city, they increasingly came into conflict with the police. What was the role of the police in the maintenance of the social and physical environment of the street, and how were the central streets of York policed? Under the York Improvement Act of 1825, the appointment of a number of 'able bodied men' was called for, whose primary purpose would be the apprehension of

All rogues, vagabonds, idle, disorderly or suspect persons, disturbers of the peace, prostitutes and night walkers, and all persons found wandering or misbehaving themselves.⁵¹

A City Patrol was formed and in 1836 a unified police force was created, a Watch Committee appointed, and the city divided into fifteen beats to be patrolled. This new force was expected to be a preventative force and to maintain order in the streets; they were tasked with securing public space in the interests of order. Constrained by time and resources, the police focused on controlling behaviour in public spaces and acted when behaviour contravened public decency. A repeated

⁴⁸ Grace, p. 23.

⁴⁹ Lucia Zedner, *Women, Crime and Custody in Victorian England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991).

⁵⁰ Shani d'Cruze and Louise Jackson, *Women, Crime and Justice in England since 1660* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 3.

⁵¹ YCA, Y346.1 York Improvement Act, 1825.

concern, expressed in letters to the Watch Committee and the local press, was that the police were doing too little to clear the streets of drunks, gamblers and other unsavoury characters, and the policing priorities of the rate-payers lay particularly in the maintenance of public order in the city centre streets. In 1871 the residents of Fossgate wrote to the Lord Mayor about the ‘ineffective police arrangements in Fossgate’ where ‘frequent brawls and disturbances of the public peace took place’ and the ‘assembling of loose women on the footways’ were a cause of much distress.⁵² In September 1884 a resident complained about the ‘disorderly state of Skeldergate’ with specific reference to police negligence in dealing with prostitutes and drunkards, whose presence made the street ‘at times impassable for respectable females’.⁵³ Growing calls for better policing were perhaps fuelled by the mounting concern over disorderly behaviour, and public opinion certainly impacted upon the actions of the Watch Committee and the chief constable. Chief Constable Haley informed the Watch Committee that he often had to ‘revise the mode of working in [his] endeavours as far as possible to attend the numerous complaints which arise and will still continue to do so’.⁵⁴ As Fred Milburn recalled, ‘most men were kept on city centre beats, that’s where the property is, Coney Street, Pavement, Goodramgate, Gillygate, those places, they were full of property, full of business premises ... every yard, every street, every passageway was examined.’⁵⁵

Assessments of police effectiveness were based on visibility, of both the police officer walking his beat and the amount of public disorder. In October 1882, the chief constable Samuel Haley reported to the Watch Committee on ‘the very satisfactory state’ of the city, noting the decline in serious crime, but also commenting on the ‘decrease in drunkenness and other disorderly offences’,⁵⁶ yet despite a drop in crime recorded in the official statistics, popular anxieties about urban disorder did not abate.⁵⁷ Constraints including limited resources and conflicted notions of their duties shaped police practice and often led them to concentrate their

⁵² Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 3, June 1871.

⁵³ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 5, September 1884.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 27 July 1880.

⁵⁵ Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP.

⁵⁶ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 5, 11 October 1882.

⁵⁷ On some of the problems with nineteenth century crime statistics as a source, see John Wallis, ‘Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics? Nineteenth Century Crime Statistics for England and Wales as a Historical Source’, *History Compass*, 10:8 (2012), 574-583.

attention on the urban poor, in particular those already known to them.⁵⁸ A female offender may have been seen as less physically threatening than a male one, but women who transgressed ideas of appropriate conduct could also be seen as more threatening morally.⁵⁹ While they were used to confronting young men – as the group most commonly associated with criminal offending – the only women police had regular dealings with were those they identified, rightly or wrongly, as prostitutes.⁶⁰ Margaret Riley appeared before the magistrates in February 1877, aged twenty four, charged with the theft of two shirts from a young man she met in a public house. She was described to the court as a prostitute who had been fourteen times previously before the Bench.⁶¹ By October 1880 the *Herald* described her as ‘a frequent visitor’, with twenty-three previous convictions, and for her twenty-fourth she was fined for being drunk and disorderly. In a statement to the Court in 1881, Chief Constable Haley declared that Riley ‘was one of the worst characters the police had to deal with’, and by September 1883 she was brought before the Quarter Sessions and charged with being a common prostitute, wandering abroad and behaving in an indecent manner, and sent to prison for twelve months with hard labour.⁶² By 1895, and certainly no longer young, Riley had appeared before the Bench seventy three times, been expelled from the workhouse and sent to prison on numerous occasions. With so many appearances before the court it seems unlikely many officers in York could fail to recognise her, but it was not only those with such long careers as Riley that were well-known to the police. Bridget Roach was charged in 1887 with loitering and importuning passengers in Pavement. The *York Herald* reported that ‘though a young woman, [Roach] had previously been 12 times before the court for drunkenness and other offences’.⁶³ Such cases seem to suggest that the police may have harassed or targeted well known criminals, while others indulging in similar behaviour may have been treated more leniently.

⁵⁸ Jennifer Davis, ‘Urban Policing and its Objects: Comparative Themes in England and France in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century’ in *Policing Western Europe: Politics, Professionalism and Public Order, 1850-1940*, ed. by Clive Emsley and Barbara Weinberger (London: Greenwood Press, 1991), p. 6.

⁵⁹ Grace, p. 102.

⁶⁰ Clive Emsley, *The Great British Bobby: A History of British Policing from the 18th Century to the Present* (London: Quercus, 2009), p. 163.

⁶¹ *York Herald*, 17 February 1877.

⁶² *York Herald*, 26 October 1880; 2 December 1881 and 11 September 1883.

⁶³ *York Herald*, 2 April 1887.

3. Regulating disorderly behaviour

In March 1881, a letter signed by several members of the medical profession was presented before the Watch Committee. In it, the signatories decried the ‘want of order’ in the city centre streets, which they believed to be worse ‘than in almost any other place ... even including the manufacturing districts’, and the letter concluded with a warning: ‘should the state of things not be amended, it will greatly tend to deter persons of the genteel and refined class from coming to reside in or near the city’.⁶⁴ The achievement of a more orderly society required the suppression of ‘disorderly’ behaviour in the streets, but this was tempered by the practicalities of policing, from the day-to-day dealing with prostitutes and drunks to the wide range of competing pressures under which the police worked. The term ‘disorder’ applied to a range of actions that took place on the street, from riots associated with public protest, to public drunkenness, indecent language and playing football in the street.⁶⁵ In one instance, the residents of St Sampson’s Square wrote to the chief constable to complain of the ‘nuisance’ caused daily by ‘the uproarious and disorderly conduct of a number of boys engaged to sell evening newspapers’.⁶⁶ Eighteen year old Sarah Ann Bale was ‘taken up by the police’ for creating ‘a disturbance’ in the streets, and was admitted to the Penitentiary in August 1883.⁶⁷ In 1881, the chief constable reported on an assembly of young people dancing at the Grand Stand on the Knavesmire, and ‘asked the directions of the [Watch] Committee’. It was not deemed expedient to ‘institute a prosecution’ in this case.⁶⁸ The police found themselves under pressure from moral reformers to take action, and any activity which threatened orderly public space was liable to prosecution. The notion of disorder resonates through the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth, and was used to justify projects of administration and discipline. Much of the business of the

⁶⁴ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 5, 30 March 1881.

⁶⁵ *York Herald*, 21 August 1886, 21 September 1886 and 28 April 1898. For an analysis of disorder stemming from industrial unrest see Jane Morgan, *Conflict and Order: The Police and Labour Disputes in England and Wales, 1900-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987). Stefan Slater has examined patterns of street disorder in London in the first half of the twentieth century; Slater, ‘Street Disorder in the Metropolis’.

⁶⁶ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 5, 27 February 1884.

⁶⁷ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.6, Minute Books, 27 August 1883.

⁶⁸ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 5, 16 February 1881.

police court was concerned with such disorder, which could also be connected to reputation in particularly gendered ways.

In their use of the streets, young people found their activities under ever more under scrutiny, and in the face of increasingly vocal calls from reformers, magistrates and civic authorities, the young working class of York found their access to public space curtailed. As they embraced the various leisure opportunities offered by the city, a concentrated police presence meant that those who socialised in the streets were increasingly likely to come into contact with the law as the police, magistrates and civic authorities sought to clear the city centre of disorderly behaviour. Ethel Smith noted that ‘if you stood at the street corner, they [the police] asked you what you was doing, then “it’s time you was in”’.⁶⁹ Alethea Asplinn’s family lived above a shop in Stonegate and when she was courting, a policeman shone a light on the couple and said ‘come on, lets have you out of here’.⁷⁰ In 1886 five ‘youths’ were charged with obstructing the footpath, forcing other pedestrians to walk on the road, and the Lord Mayor complained of the ‘great nuisance’ of groups of young people ‘constantly standing about the streets’. PC John Berry was complimented by the magistrates in 1908 for his part in the arrest of two young men for loitering in the city centre streets.⁷¹ Idling young people, loitering for no apparent reason, went against the notion of purposeful circulation. To external observers, loitering was a waste of leisure time and potential, young people were doing nothing, and worse, impeding others who wished to use the street. As Paul Corrigan has proposed, however, ‘doing nothing’ is in fact an intense experience, full of incident and anticipation.⁷² Young men and women could socialise, gossip and make plans, all away from the community supervision they may have had closer to home.

While ‘doing nothing’ was bad enough, young people throwing stones, playing pitch and toss or football in the streets was worse. ‘Juvenile rowdies’ were ‘infesting’ the streets, as one letter writer complained to the *Herald*, and ‘if the police staff of York is not sufficient to deal with this nuisance, would it not be as

⁶⁹ Interview with Ethel Smith, born 1908, YOHP.

⁷⁰ Interview with Alethea Asplinn, born 1905, YOHP.

⁷¹ *York Herald*, 10 August 1886 and York City Police, Acc. 264.32, Personal Record Sheets, 14 July 1908.

⁷² Paul Corrigan, ‘Doing Nothing’ in *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Sub-Cultures in Post-War Britain*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (London: University of Birmingham, 1976), pp. 103-105.

well for the Watch Committee to increase it?’⁷³ In 1896 four ‘youths’ from fifteen to seventeen years of age were summoned for throwing stones from the banks of the Ouse, and in 1899 a number of young people were charged with throwing stones and playing cricket and tipcat in the street. The magistrate commented that ‘no doubt these charges seemed ridiculous to outsiders’ but he hoped the lads would ‘remember in future that they must not act in this manner *except in proper places*’ [emphasis added].⁷⁴ In 1919, Chief Constable Henry Woolnough reported his concerns about juvenile crime to the Watch Committee, and the *Yorkshire Evening Press* carried a report headed: ‘Juvenile Offenders: York Chief Constable on Lack of Parental Control’. The report focused on ‘offences against police regulations, such as stone throwing, disorderly behaviour, bathing by-laws [and] street gaming’.⁷⁵ The police and authorities objected to such acts of disorder in the streets and public spaces of the city as they acted as a form of spatial occupation. They had long been keen to clear the streets of ‘the curse of betting’, and in urging the council to adopt a 1896 by-law to deal with street betting, Alderman Clayton declared that ‘many of [the council] would have noticed that there were several men who frequented *their streets* between 12 o’clock and 1 o’clock, and at present they had no power to deal with them’ [emphasis added]. Offering his support for the by-law, Mr Mansfield noted that ‘the citizens of York would think it right that they should be protected from these people who made a practice of betting in the streets and ruining their young people’.⁷⁶

The anti-gambling movement often blamed gaming for pushing some young men into crime; it offended the legitimate process of money making and was supposedly part of a lax attitude towards work and money amongst this group. In September 1893 John Dooley was charged with assaulting his son, and the chief constable noted how his criminal career ‘commenced twenty years ago with a conviction for playing pitch and toss’.⁷⁷ Young people, but young men especially, played a central role in working-class gambling culture; frequenting the York Races, selling (and stealing) sporting and betting papers and playing coin games like pitch and toss. Under the headline ‘Gaming in the streets: a warning to youths’ the *Herald*

⁷³ *York Herald*, 27 September 1880.

⁷⁴ *York Herald*, 22 August 1896 and 30 May 1899.

⁷⁵ *Yorkshire Evening Press*, 30 January 1919. See also *York Herald*, 30 January 1919.

⁷⁶ *York Herald*, 11 August 1896.

⁷⁷ *York Herald*, 29 July 1893.

reported on a number of young men appearing before the police court on gambling related charges. Three young men were charged with playing pitch and toss in the street, and another two with aiding and abetting. The chief constable made special mention of twenty-one year old Michael Kerone, whom 'he looked upon as the ring leader', and who was 'doing a great deal of harm'.⁷⁸ In 1892, then aged eighteen, Kerone had been charged along with Robert O'Bryan and John Dukin – both aged sixteen – for playing 'banker' in Coney Street on Saturday afternoon. In both instances Kerone was given fourteen days imprisonment with hard labour.⁷⁹ William Ball, 'a youth', was fined for playing pitch and toss one Saturday evening in Parliament Street. A 'lad' named Thomas Walker was rather unfortunate; he was caught with all the cards and money in New Street while his 'companions' managed to run away. He was fined 2s. 6d. for gaming.⁸⁰

William Chadwick and twenty-one year old William Beardmore were charged with obstructing Castlegate, as they were fighting in the street.⁸¹ Fighting could be a method of settling disputes, and a means of proving ones-self, although unlike the working-class districts of Hungate and Walmgate where the police often 'wouldn't do nowt', disorderly behaviour of this nature was not tolerated in the central commercial districts of the city.⁸² Thirteen year old Martin Crane of Hope Street, Elizabeth Florence and Ellen White were fined in 1889 for causing an obstruction by fighting in the streets.⁸³ John Deighton, twenty one, and William Lyons were summoned for behaving in a riotous manner in Parliament Street. The two young men were strangers, and the fight 'appeared to have arisen out of a casual meeting in the street'.⁸⁴

Given the number of public houses distributed throughout the city, even pedestrians in the central commercial districts could not be protected from contact with drunk young men and women. Robert Kay recalled that one landlord would 'peep out to see if a policeman was about, before turning out all poor degraded females, who could do little more than walk a few yards, then lay helpless in the

⁷⁸ *York Herald*, 29 March 1895.

⁷⁹ *York Herald*, 1 October 1892.

⁸⁰ *York Herald*, 30 July 1892 and 1 October 1892.

⁸¹ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 24 February 1887.

⁸² Interview with Thomas Rhodes, born 1910, YOHP.

⁸³ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 6 December 1889.

⁸⁴ *York Herald*, 1 February 1896.

street'.⁸⁵ Moral reformers hoped to regulate and control drunkenness, particularly when it spilled out of the public house and into public space to be witnessed by more 'respectable' residents. The achievement of a more orderly society necessitated its suppression. Drunks were mobile 'dark spaces', their behaviour difficult to predict or control, and thus particularly troubling to those who wished to regulate public space.⁸⁶ Paul Jennings has noted that between 1857 and 1913, typically around a fifth to a quarter of all offences dealt with by magistrates in England and Wales were for drunkenness, although argues the rate is probably higher as the statistics do not include offence in which drink was implicated.⁸⁷ The police attempted to keep the city centre streets and major thoroughfares clear of noisy and troublesome drunks: 'the trouble used to start when public houses turned out. There was one or two rough ones in St Sampson's Square'.⁸⁸ In one session eight cases of drunkenness were brought before the Bench. Twenty-five year old Frank Smith, a labourer from Aldwark was charged with having been drunk in the public street, obstructing the footpath and, following his arrest, breaking three panes of glass in his cell window.⁸⁹ The first time Mr Allan got drunk he was 'as sick as a dog'. After drinking in a public house he set off to walk home along the railway line but 'was walking two steps forward and three steps backwards', and he fell asleep on the line and ruined his new suit.⁹⁰

Particular occasions may have seen the young working class more likely to come into contact with the police; the regular fairs, markets and festivals presented an opportunity for young people to socialise, although such occasions were 'always well policed. Had to be. People, especially the youngsters ... they used to take over the market place'.⁹¹ Such occasions attracted young people who wanted to socialise, but also prostitutes, thieves and fraudsters, who came from all over the surrounding area. John Roberts and John Stewart came from Leeds and stole a purse belonging to Mrs Hemmant of Pontefract, who was in the city for the Gala. The defendants

⁸⁵ Robert Kay, Acc. 974, Grandfather Robert Kay's Notebook, 1875-1900, The Spread Eagle.

⁸⁶ Andy Croll, 'Street disorder, surveillance and shame: regulating behaviour in the public spaces of the late Victorian British town', *Social History*, 24:3 (1999), 250-268 (p. 257).

⁸⁷ Paul Jennings, 'Policing Drunkenness in England and Wales from the Late Eighteenth Century to the First World War', *Social History of Alcohol and Drugs*, 26 (2012), 69-92 (p. 69).

⁸⁸ Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP.

⁸⁹ *York Herald*, 15 October 1889.

⁹⁰ Interview with Mr Allan, born 1911, YOHP.

⁹¹ Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP.

were traced through a postal order they had tried to cash while still in the city.⁹² The Watch Committee frequently noted the need for extra police at the races, and in 1909 the chief constable reported that 32 officers were required to police the course, ‘principally occupied in regulating the crowds outside the enclosures and preventing breaches of the peace and offences against persons and property’.⁹³ After the August races in 1895, the York City Police Court was full of people facing various ‘disorderly’ charges for their behaviour at the races. Joseph Coyle was believed to be a professional thief operating as part of a gang of thieves from London, who purposefully targeted the race meeting. The following day, sixteen men were charged under the vagrancy laws for sleeping in a hay loft in Walmgate after attending the races. The men had come to the city from Bradford, Leeds, Manchester, Middlesbrough and Stockton-on-Tees.⁹⁴

The magistrates, councillors and aldermen attempted to police young working class behaviour on the streets, and young people responded by adjusting their behaviour and developing forms of resistance, while others simply escaped notice. The streets and public spaces of York could be the sites of more or less dramatic acts of transgression, and those who asserted their right to use public space had, on occasion, to confront the authorities. When PC Benson spoke to twenty-five year old Morris Hurton about his conduct on the New Walk, Hurton ‘turned upon him and struck him in the face’.⁹⁵ Alice Twigg, a young woman from Hungate, was accused of being drunk in Coppergate on Saturday night, but was charged before the Bench with assaulting the police officer who attempted to arrest her.⁹⁶

Conclusion

The streets of York could evidently be lively, yet often their use was subject to undefined rules and regulations, as well as legal ones. While the wide quiet streets of Bootham were used by respectable residents for getting to work, church or going shopping, and the streets in the working-class districts of Walmgate and Hungate

⁹² *York Herald*, 18 July 1896.

⁹³ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 10, 14 June 1909.

⁹⁴ *York Herald*, 31 August 1895.

⁹⁵ *York Herald*, 30 June 1891.

⁹⁶ *York Herald*, 21 August, 1886.

were a site of constant activity, and a place for courting, drinking, fighting and gambling, public spaces at the heart of the city were less easily definable. Young working-class men and women could meet and socialise in different parts of the city, but these spaces were subject to certain rules dictating their uses, and young wage earners infringing these rules could find themselves having to defend their behaviour in court. As this chapter has demonstrated, the young working classes often bore the brunt of regulation, and the attempts to regulate public space highlight the importance of such spaces to contemporaries. The law, civic authorities and reform institutions attempted to control both the physical space and social relations within it, and a concentrated police presence meant that the young working people who socialised in the streets were increasingly likely to come into conflict with the law.

Yet, despite the efforts of the authorities, young people's presence in the public spaces of the city was a constant feature of the urban scene; they moved around the city in search of sociability and fun. For some young people, as they attempted to explore the streets, they found themselves before the magistrate charged with transgressing common ideas of appropriate behaviour. Some young people conformed to ideas about the use of public space, while others may have simply managed to avoid detection. The streets and public spaces of the city were obviously used in myriad ways beyond those discussed above. However it was used, public space evidently had different meanings for different people. The civic authorities saw it as a clean, orderly and civil space, while the young working class utilised it as a place to meet and socialise. Beyond these expected differences, it is also important to acknowledge that the experience of the street could vary widely along gender lines, as well as status and class. Not everyone was able to use the streets in the same way, and the public spaces of the city were not open and accessible in the same way for young women as they could be for young men. Their perceptions of space could differ accordingly; 'women worked with their own mental maps, delineating for them the strange and familiar, the welcoming and the threatening'.⁹⁷ The conduct of women in the streets was expected to be different; clearly public space was not closed to young women, but their use of space was constrained in a way that did not

⁹⁷ Laura Gowing, "'The Freedom of the Streets': Women and Social Space, 1560-1640' in *Londinopolis: A Social and Cultural History of Early Modern London, 1500-1750*, ed. by Mark S. R. Jenner and Paul Griffiths (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 130-153 (p. 138).

apply to young men, and some of these constraints will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

SPACE, PLACE AND GENDER: YOUNG WOMEN AND THE CONTROL OF DISORDER

Introduction

Expectations, concerns and ideas about public space both reflected and, at times, intensified the prevailing gender ideology. Gender and space are intricately related; ‘spatial control, whether enforced through the power of convention or symbolism, or through the straightforward threat of violence’ is a ‘fundamental element in the constitution of gender in its (highly varied) forms’.¹ The conduct of young women in the streets could act as a significant factor in the signals that indicated the public nature of space, and femininity could be dependent on space, time and occasion. As a site of spectacle and relative anonymity, young working-class women could find new freedoms in the streets and public spaces of York, but they could also be vulnerable. The city offered possibilities, but also presented perils. York’s reform institutions were concerned to protect young women from the dangers inherent in the city, but also to prevent the presence of disorderly young women from threatening middle-class constructions of the city centre as a moral and civic space.

The streets and public spaces of York were social spaces in which gender relations played out, and the image of the city invoked tensions around space, place and gender. Middle-class reformers, the police and civic authorities could not ignore the presence of large numbers of young women in the streets, and their responses to them were located within much wider concerns about changing urban life in the late nineteenth century. Young women were in the minority of those who appeared before the courts charged with offences, and yet their behaviour was closely monitored and regulated across public space. This chapter considers gendered regulation of the streets, focusing in particular on the role of the Penitentiary in both defining and controlling the behaviour of young working-class women, but also noting their resistance to such controls. As young women explored the streets and public spaces of the city, how did they understand and construct public space?

¹ Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p. 180.

1. Space, place and gender

The position of women in the nineteenth and early twentieth century urban environment has been the subject of considerable historical interest. Elizabeth Wilson noted how city streets could offer women sexual freedom, while Judith Walkowitz traced the city as a place of danger.² In *City of Dreadful Delight*, she examines space and power in late nineteenth-century London, considering the ways different urban spaces were classed and gendered, and demonstrating how closely the spatial and the sexual were intertwined. Tropes existed to construct the city – specifically the East End – as dangerous to women, reinforcing a gendered ‘segregation of social space’, especially at night.³ Respectability for women was spatially and temporally defined, and histories of Victorian society have traced the separation of the public and private spheres; for women, respectability was connected to domesticity and the private realm. Men could move freely around the city, but women could lose their respectability on entering public space. Reformers including Josephine Butler wrote of occasions when respectable women were mistaken for prostitutes, and in 1887 questions were asked in parliament following the arrest for solicitation of a young dressmaker in London.⁴ The prostitute was the biggest symbol of sexual danger, and in public space, the boundary between respectability and disorderly sexuality seemed fragile. As women explored public spaces, they faced an increasing risk of being identified as public women. In the spaces of commercial exchange, they themselves became commodities.⁵ However, a tendency to view women in the city through the ideology of separate spheres has falsely evicted respectable women from the streets, and produces an oversimplified and rather sensational account of the Victorian city; with unaccompanied women classified as streetwalkers.⁶ Respectable middle-class women clearly did move

² Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City* and Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*.

³ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 220.

⁴ ‘Arrest of young woman for alleged soliciting’, *Hansard*, HC Deb 8 July 1887, vol. 317, cc222-3.

⁵ Lynda Nead, ‘Mapping the Self: Gender, Space and Modernity in mid-Victorian London’, *Environment and Planning*, 29 (1997), 659-672 (p.660) and Judith R. Walkowitz, ‘Going Public: Shopping, Street Harassment, and Streetwalking in Late Victorian London’, *Representations*, 62 (1998), 1-30.

⁶ Nead, ‘Mapping the Self’, p. 660 and Margot Finn, ‘Sex and the City: Metropolitan Modernities in English History’, *Victorian Studies*, 44:1 (2001), 25-32.

through the city; shopping, travelling through, and even visiting less-salubrious districts in their guise as philanthropists. Rowntree had a female social investigator, and women of the Penitentiary Society watched the streets and visited working-class neighbourhoods, including Hungate and Walmgate. The Penitentiary Society noted how ‘great efforts’ were made to seek the lost, and engaged a ‘Bible-woman’ to visit the Water Lanes and other working-class districts in 1873, ‘although no great success attended her efforts’.⁷ In 1902 they reported that the matron of the Refuge, along with members of the Ladies’ Committee, ‘go out into the streets and slums of the city’, and in 1914 they appointed a trained rescue worker.⁸

Colin and Siân Pooley have similarly challenged perceptions of young women as being primarily bound to the domestic realm; their movement within the public domain restricted by familial responsibilities and parental control, having to assist with domestic tasks and watch over younger siblings.⁹ A diary kept by Elizabeth Lee revealed that between 1884 and 1892, she led a very active and independent life away from home, travelling to Birkenhead and Liverpool, as well as socialising closer to home. The Pooley’s conclude that Elizabeth Lee’s freedoms were the product of a ‘very specific time, place and class’, but opportunities for outdoor engagement were also capitalised upon by the young working-class women of York.¹⁰ The presence of young working women in the city centre streets was an everyday experience; they utilised the streets and public spaces of York for work, leisure, and courtship activities, moving though the city alone, and with friends and boyfriends. How then did the young working-class women of York negotiate space, and how was their behaviour in public defined and controlled?

The place of young women within the city fed into debates about the duality of woman; should she be protected or feared, a victim of circumstance or an active agent of her own destiny?¹¹ The urban environment was a place of both possibility and peril, pitfalls as well as pleasures characterised the urban scene. Young women

⁷ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Report, 1873.

⁸ Ibid., 1902 and 1914.

⁹ Bertha Linfoot complained of not being able to go to dances as she had to look after her parents, while her young brother and sisters were able to attend. Interview with Bertha Linfoot, born 1897, YOHP.

¹⁰ Colin G. Pooley and Siân Pooley, ‘Constructing a Suburban Identity: Youth, Femininity and Modernity in Late-Victorian Merseyside’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 36 (2010), 402-410 (p. 410).

¹¹ See pp. 189-190.

were to be protected from the dangers inherent in the city, but their sexuality was also to be feared. The Penitentiary Society and other reformers were concerned with the dangers inherent in the city, but also with how young people, and young women in particular, could threaten conceptions of orderly and moral public space.

1.2 The York Penitentiary

The York Penitentiary Society was formed in 1822, opening its sheltering home, the Refuge, in 1845 to provide ‘asylum for such women as, having followed vicious courses, are desirous of obtaining the means of reformation’.¹² The Refuge was often seen as an alternative to other forms of punishment, with some young women petitioning to be sent there rather than to prison, while others went on the recommendation of the magistrates. Kelly Smith was arrested for soliciting near the barracks, and asked the magistrates to be allowed to go into a Home instead of being sent to prison. Twenty-one year old Kate Newberry was brought before the magistrates for being ‘helplessly drunk’ with two soldiers in St George’s Fields, and would have been sent to prison, but ‘pleaded to be sent to the Penitentiary’. Elizabeth Gardener, seventeen, was taken by the police for ‘misconduct’ on the New Walk and the magistrates gave her the option of going to prison or the Refuge. Sarah Bell was arrested for soliciting and appeared before the courts, but rather than sending her to prison for seven days, the Lord Mayor referred her to the Penitentiary, where she escaped after two weeks.¹³ In 1915 the Penitentiary sheltering home noted ‘by far the greater number of those being dealt with have been brought by the police having been found wandering about late at night.’¹⁴ Other girls were sent to the Penitentiary after being in and out of prison.¹⁵ Life in the Penitentiary did bear some resemblances to gaol, with the girls being forced to wear ‘Penitentiary dresses’ and referred to as ‘inmates’.¹⁶ The Society lacked the statutory power to detain young

¹² Penitentiary Society, Annual Reports, 1845.

¹³ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 26 October 1897, 27 June 1887 and 29 June 1892, and Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.6, Minute Books, 1883-90, pp. 3-5.

¹⁴ YCA, York Association for the Care of Young Girls and York Training Home, Acc. 435, Monthly Meeting, June 1893 and Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Reports, 1915.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Benton was sent to prison six times for being out at night, and was admitted to the Penitentiary in July 1883.

¹⁶ Penitentiary Society, Annual Reports, 1845-1919.

women against their will, but once admitted, it was difficult to leave. The young women and girls were required to sign a declaration stating:

I am wishful to abandon my sinful life and by God's grace to lead a better life. I am willing to remain two years in the Home. I will do my best to conform to the rules and discipline of the Home.¹⁷

The young women who entered the Penitentiary were constantly supervised, and the Matron had the power to punish them as she saw fit. One girl recalled 'never a day goes by but what I think of something she has ... scalded me for'.¹⁸ The high wall which surrounded the building, lack of contact with those outside and stifling daily conditions all emphasized the focus on punishment, and in 1899 a correspondent to the *Gazette* argued that 'life in the Refuge is too restrained', concluding that 'we cannot suppose all the fallen women of York can be usefully converted into laundresses and general servants ... the range of employment ought to be extended'.¹⁹

The first female penitentiaries began to appear in the late eighteenth century, with the London Magdalene Hospital opening in 1758.²⁰ Penitentiaries were just one of a number of semi-public institutions, including Lock Hospitals, psychiatric hospitals and inebriates' reformatories that attempted to reform 'deviant' women. They were initially established as a way to divert young women away from prisons and the workhouse where they could be further corrupted by associating with older women and professional prostitutes. The Committee of the York Penitentiary clearly stated that 'it is thought undesirable that fallen women should be mixed with other classes; and the Refuge is only intended for those who, having pursued vicious courses, are desirous of amendment.'²¹ In 1902 a separate sheltering home was opened in order to provide local and temporary cases with a shelter. The York Home for Friendless Girls was established in 1868, setting up a rescue home in Skeldergate in the same year. The York Association for the Care of Young Girls opened a sheltering home in Petergate in 1881, focusing largely on preventative work.

¹⁷ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Reports, 1845-1919.

¹⁸ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Miscellaneous Correspondence, 8 December 1896.

¹⁹ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 3 July 1899.

²⁰ Linda Mahood, *The Magdalenes: Prostitution in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 75.

²¹ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Reports, 1870.

The York Penitentiary Refuge was the only long term shelter in the city, and as a charitable institution relied on voluntary subscriptions and support from wealthy local donors, although some expenses were met by the laundry work undertaken by the girls. Its premises were purchased with a bequest from Doctor Stephen Beckwith in December 1843, and the following year No. 43 Bishophill was purchased, and the premises extended in 1902 with the acquisition of 41 Bishophill. Two committees, the Gentlemen's and Ladies', were in charge of managing the Refuge, with the Gentlemen in control of the financial and administrative aspects and the Ladies' tasked with overseeing the Matron and the home's day-to-day running. The minute books reveal there were clashes between the two committees over their roles in the management of the Refuge. In 1861 the Ladies' Committee presented their resignations *en masse* in response to the Gentlemen dismissing a laundress without their consent.²²

Through incarceration, moral education and training in basic domestic tasks it was hoped the young women 'rescued' by the Penitentiary Society would be found employment in service, and the penitentiary sources give a strong impression of the youth of most of the girls involved. The inmates also received religious instruction and were 'forced to do prayers every night'.²³ The Society did not intend to reform hardened street walkers with lengthy criminal records, but young female offenders that had not been on the streets long enough to be intractable from their habits. The majority of women admitted were aged under twenty five, and if found to be pregnant or diseased were immediately sent to the workhouse or hospital. The Penitentiary would only admit 'hopeful' women – which in practice meant mostly young women who would be most amenable to moral training.²⁴ Women over a certain age were deemed to be beyond reclamation; 'the older the girls are when they come to us the more difficult they are, as a rule, to mould, as they have more to unlearn, and consequently more difficulty in learning what is good'.²⁵ The general regulations of the Penitentiary stated quite clearly that 'no applicant shall be

²² Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 1845-64.

²³ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Matron's Report Book, 1906-09.

²⁴ The Penitentiary did on occasion admit older women, but only if they could demonstrate they would be 'amenable to discipline' and desired to reform, as was the case with Elizabeth Corkhill, admitted in 1885 at the age of thirty-one. Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Miscellaneous Correspondence, 8 December 1896.

²⁵ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Reports, 1906.

admitted or retained in the House who is found to be in a state of pregnancy.²⁶ However, even some of the younger girls had been living on the streets for some time. Lilly Atkinson, admitted to the Penitentiary aged twenty three, told the Ladies Committee that she had been in service since she was twelve years old, and ‘got into bad ways’ before she turned fifteen.²⁷

The Penitentiary Annual Reports were used to gain support and monetary donations from potential benefactors, and as such recounted the success stories of the home; girls who were rescued by the Refuge and, after receiving two years of training were returned, fully repentant, to their family and friends, or found a position in service. The Ladies’ Committee notebooks, alongside other unpublished sources, provide a more revealing picture, including the admission notes for the girls who applied to the Home. However, the narratives from these records should not be taken at face value and feature assertions of women often in a state of desperate material and emotional distress, filtered through the questions and pens of the Ladies’ Committee. As is the case with any reliance on the literature of young girls and sexual delinquency, how the working-class women in the Penitentiary interacted with the middle-class reformers, and how these reformers interpreted women’s sexual agency must both be considered. The constructed testimony of these accounts helped to present these young women as ‘prostitutes’ and ‘fallen woman’ with a loss of agency. The Penitentiary records allow mediated access to the voices of those women and girls involved in prostitution, and those identified by the Ladies’ Committee as ‘fallen’ women. As Philippa Levine found in her examination of nineteenth and early twentieth century texts on prostitution, there is a constant allusion to the external reasons for prostitution, most commonly parental neglect, insanitary and overcrowded housing conditions and seduction, which enabled the category of feminine, helpless ‘Woman’ to stand firm.²⁸ On the other hand, in the same texts women involved in prostitution were found to demonstrate the worst characteristics, such as laziness, ‘bad’ character and lust.²⁹ The confusion on the part

²⁶ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Reports, 1870.

²⁷ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 25 July 1884.

²⁸ Philippa Levine, ‘Rough Usage: prostitution, law and the social historian’ in *Rethinking Social History: English society 1570 – 1920 and its interpretation*, ed. by Adrian Wilson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 266-292 (p. 270).

²⁹ For example, in their 1902 Annual Report, the Penitentiary Society reported how ‘many conditions of our own modern life tend to accentuate the danger for young girls. The lamentable want of parental care and control, the late hours to which our young folk are now accustomed almost from infancy, the

of those recording the testimonials of women and girls seeking admission to the Refuge over which of these two characters was most correct could leave little space for the voices of actual women to be heard.³⁰ The young women themselves often used passive language when describing their feelings about sex and the ‘fall’ that brought them to the Penitentiary, there is little admission of desire. One notable exception is Mary Jane Barnett, who told the Ladies’ Committee that she was feeling quite reckless, and ‘very deliberately’ went wrong with a young man she had known for some time.³¹ The admission notes demonstrate the blurred lines between prostitution, service, respectability, dishonesty, and sincere repentance. They also reveal that the women admitted were largely drawn from the working class. In the case of one young woman, whose friends were ‘in a very respectable position in society’, she was kept at the Refuge until arrangements were made for her to be ‘received into an institution intended for the more educated class of fallen women’.³² Street walkers and working-class women were more likely to come into contact with the police and reform institutions, and their behaviour in the streets and public spaces of the city was closely monitored. Middle-class reformers and the police and civic authorities focused in particular on the presence of large numbers of young women in the streets, women whose appearance or behaviour often led to them being labelled as prostitutes.

The Penitentiary Society was concerned with protecting young women from the dangers of the city, but also acted as part of a wider disciplinary network.³³ York’s magistrates, police and voluntary institutions co-operated to control young working-class women. Members of the Gentlemen’s and Ladies’ Committee were represented in the city’s legal, charitable, and civic organisations; young women were sent to the Penitentiary by the magistrates; and by 1904 the police provided a contribution of 1s a day for girls sent to the home as remand cases.³⁴ In 1905 the matron was advised by the chief constable to top the Penitentiary garden wall with

monotony of work in factories ... creating a thirst for amusement, leading to reckless spending and want of thrift, led many a girl into ways of gaining a livelihood at the expense of her character’. Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Reports, 1902.

³⁰ Levine, p. 271.

³¹ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 28 March 1887.

³² Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Reports, 1874.

³³ In their 1902 Annual Report the Penitentiary Society noted that the Shelter, opened in 1902, was for ‘the immediate reception of any girl or woman in need of *protection* and Christian care’ [emphasis added]. Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Reports, 1902.

³⁴ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 8, 24 May 1904. See also chapter four, p. 162.

broken glass.³⁵ Along with the police, magistrates and civic authorities, the members of the Penitentiary Society were concerned about the moral actions of the city's young people, and they observed the streets and attempted to control behaviour:

A great deal of work has been done at night, revealing the deplorable conditions consequent on the low moral standard which prevails amongst many of our young men and women. The problem is one that calls for the immediate and serious consideration of all who care for the welfare of our young people.³⁶

The Society made frequent reference to watching the streets and particular young women they believed to be in danger: 'Girls who have gone astray, or are in danger, are watched for months until an opportunity arises of gaining their confidence and bringing them in', and in 1912 the Committee reported how work had been found 'in the City Court, Assize Court, the Railway Station and in the houses and streets of the city.'³⁷ In 1917 they reported that 'the streets have been watched regularly; cinemas and the railway station visited', but their work monitoring the streets owed as much to the desire for urban order as principles of charity and Christian morality.³⁸ Through a system of 'constant labour, discipline and pious instruction', the Penitentiary Society sought to dismantle the culture of immorality in the city.³⁹ One visitor noted in October 1914 that it was 'impossible' to get girls to commit to two years in the home and 'away from the attractions of the streets'.⁴⁰ In 1920, at an appeal for financial assistance, the Reverend Chancellor Austen addressed the gathered meeting noting how 'some conditions of public amusement today involve great risks ... when one heard of girls going out three nights a week and even more often, and when they went for dances that were not according ... when one heard of girls going home at midnight and after in the darkness – well, it opened the door'.⁴¹

³⁵ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.6, Minute Books, 30 May 1905. See also chapter one, p. 55.

³⁶ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Reports, 1913.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1903 and 1912.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1917.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1845.

⁴⁰ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Penitentiary Committee Visitors Book, October 1914.

⁴¹ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 25 February 1920.

2. Young women, prostitution and the city

A concentrated police presence meant that the young people who socialised in the main streets were increasingly likely to come into conflict with the law as police and magistrates sought to clear the city centre of disorderly behaviour. And while any young person that loitered in the main streets could be subject to police harassment, it was only young women whose sexual behaviour was called into question. In May 1883 the Police Court heard two cases against young people for being drunk and disorderly in Clifford Street. Eighteen year old Mary Elizabeth Hobson and John Gibson were both charged, yet the *York Herald* only questioned the moral conduct of Mary.⁴² George Wheatley and Kate McLarkey were both fined in the same session for using obscene language in the public street. George was described as ‘a youth’, while Kate was labelled ‘an immoral character’.⁴³ As young women increasingly explored public spaces, then, were they at an increasing risk of being conflated with ‘public woman’?

The presence of prostitutes in city centre spaces was seen as particularly destabilising; they flouted codes of femininity and compromised the meaning of civic and moral space. This chapter is concerned with how the behaviour of young women in public space was regulated, and as such ‘public women’ are central to this study. How did those young women identified as prostitutes interact with the law and reform institutions, and what impact did the high number of arrests have on other young women who sought to explore public spaces? Prostitution has been the subject of numerous studies; with historians considering the place prostitution held in the middle-class imagination; the importance of the prostitute as both subject and symbol of health reforms; and the commercialisation of sex, amongst many others.⁴⁴ Prostitution carried complex meanings during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; any woman engaged in extra-marital sex could be labelled a prostitute, and while the exchange of sex for cash may have been grudgingly tolerated in private spaces, it became extremely problematic when conducted in public. It was the public

⁴² *York Herald*, 24 May 1883.

⁴³ *York Herald*, 24 April 1888.

⁴⁴ Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Linda Mahood, *The Magdalenes* and Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution and the Commercialisation of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992).

nature of street-walking that made it a central concern to the authorities; conducted in the open, visible to neighbours and respectable citizens. The presence of ‘public women’ in the street could act as a signal about the meaning of that space, compromising it.

While it is impossible to establish the exact number of women working as prostitutes in York during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it is evident that prostitution was occurring on a scale large enough to be of concern to the magistrates, police and reform workers. Frances Finnegan’s study of prostitution in York focuses not on the institutional aspect of prostitution during the early Victorian period, but rather on the prostitutes themselves. She looks especially at the extreme poverty that could drive women into prostitution, and identified over 1,400 women working as prostitutes in York between 1837 and 1887.⁴⁵ The location of York as a central stop-over point between London and Edinburgh, the advent of the railway and development of the city as a tourist destination, alongside its position as a garrison town, were all identified by Finnegan as contributing to this large-scale existence of prostitution in the city. However, she engages with her source material far too uncritically, often exaggerating the deviant status of prostitutes in her presentation of evidence. While she rightly highlights the need to consider the broader social and economic factors which could drive some women into prostitution, she focuses too closely on the lack of employment opportunities, poor wages and bad family backgrounds that forced the lower working-class women and girls she identifies as prostitutes working in the city into the trade. As Judith R. Walkowitz and Linda Mahood, among others, have argued, while a focus on individual prostitutes can be illuminating, defining these women as passive victims of their circumstances denies them the capability of being full historical agents.⁴⁶ Finnegan further ignores the context of the wider community; focusing solely on the

⁴⁵ Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*.

⁴⁶ Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*, p. 21. Judith R. Walkowitz, ‘Review: *Poverty and Prostitution: A Study of Victorian Prostitutes in York* by Frances Finnegan and *Prostitution and Victorian Social Reform* by Paul McHughand’, *Journal of Social History*, 16:4 (1983), 145-147 and Mahood, *The Magdalenes*. As Ruth Karras and Julia Laite have argued, historians must tread carefully; avoiding the danger of portraying prostitutes as victims by concentrating too much on how others saw them, and the risk of decontextualising them by concentrating too much on their agency. Ruth Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) and Julia Laite, *Common Prostitutes and Ordinary Citizens: Commercial Sex in London, 1885-1960* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

criminal activities of prostitutes and not considering their daily lives or social relationships, leaving little room for the social context or those who engaged in more casual prostitution. There are no questions asked about other relationships prostitutes may have formed – did they have other, not for profit, relationships? What other kinds of sexual and social exchange were taking place in areas such as Hungate or the Bedern, which Finnegan identifies as centres of prostitution?

Finnegan's figure, much like the available criminal statistics on prostitution, should be used with caution. By focusing on the criminal behaviour of women working as prostitutes and relying on sources that over-represent street-walkers, she has undoubtedly over-stated the number of women working as prostitutes in the city. She remains dependent on the law and reform institutions' definition of prostitution in the late nineteenth century. By failing to address the multiple social identities of women working as prostitutes Finnegan overlooks that for a number of women prostitution could be a part time activity when times were particularly hard. That some working-class women occasionally resorted to prostitution was well known and discussed by social commentators and writers of the period. Arthur J. Munby (who was born in York in 1828 and educated at St Peter's School, Clifton) describes such a situation in the West End of London in his notebooks:

In Regent Street I was followed by two shabby furtive looking girls and importuned in the usual manner, But they were not prostitutes – oh no! They were work girls, working at Mitchell's the artificial florist in Oxford Street: and when work is slack, they turn out onto the streets for a living.⁴⁷

Moral observers often grouped mistresses, prostitutes, promiscuous young women and those who engaged in pre-marital sex together as 'women of ill repute', but while a woman could at different times be all of these, they were distinct identities, and it is possible to perceive a spectrum of sexual relationships and activities. For women engaged in casual prostitution, it becomes even more difficult to define their sexual activity, and the distinction between promiscuity and prostitution could also become blurred.

⁴⁷ Arthur J. Munby cited in Françoise Barret-Ducrocq, *Love in the Time of Victoria: Sexuality, Class and Gender in Nineteenth-Century London*, trans. J. Howe (London: Verso, 1991), p. 52.

2.1 The Geography of Prostitution

Particular areas of the city were notorious for the numerous brothels they contained, or the large number of prostitutes living and sometimes working there. Prostitutes and brothel owners could not advertise in the same way as other businesses, so being well established in a particular area was an important way to attract clients. Elizabeth Alice Clement found in her study of New York that a high concentration of brothels tended to limit prostitution to specific geographical areas, leaving others relatively free of commercial sex.⁴⁸ In New York, brothels physically contained prostitution, although these patterns of space shifted as prostitution became more diffuse. While action was taken against brothel owners in York, the relative privacy of brothels, and the strengthening of existing legislation against brothel keeping in the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act saw the majority of prostitution related offences being sourced from the streets and public spaces of the city. Certain neighbourhoods were well known for the brothels which abounded in their streets, and the case of Emma Lacey suggests they were often well-known to the police.⁴⁹ When such behaviour took place in the residential districts of the urban poor, it was tolerated in a way which would have been inconceivable in the busy central streets of the city. By policing public space in this way the police could use their limited resources to satisfy the demands of ‘concerned citizens’ and ‘ratepayers’ as well as the civic authorities.⁵⁰ The link between prostitution and public house drinking was well explored by social commentators of the time, and Doreen Bolton recalled how Saturdays were busy in her mother’s city centre pub in Feasgate, especially around Martinmas Fair when ‘the farmers used to come and hire lads. Those ladies, they always seemed to be in when [the farmers] were in ... but where they “did it” I don’t know!’⁵¹

It was also in the busy main streets at the heart of the city that soliciting was most profitable, and certain main streets in the city saw numerous arrests for solicitation and immoral conduct. Coney Street, along with Parliament Street and the

⁴⁸ Elizabeth A. Clement, *Love for Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p. 87.

⁴⁹ See chapter three. PC Lawrence noted that there were women of immoral character living in a house next door to Emma Lacey and her parents. *York Herald*, 7 October 1893.

⁵⁰ The pages of the *York Herald* and *Gazette* were filled with correspondence from residents who signed themselves as ‘a ratepayer’, ‘a citizen’, ‘decency’ and ‘concerned citizen’.

⁵¹ Interview with Doreen Bolton, born 1910, YOHP.

adjoining St Sampson's Square, formed the principal commercial shopping areas at the heart of the city. The Parliament Street market was opened in 1836 to compensate for the inadequate facilities offered by the Thursday Market in St Sampson's Square, and continued to operate as a weekly market until 1955. However, while Coney Street was almost free of prostitution related offences, Parliament Street and St Sampson's Square saw high numbers of arrests for solicitation and 'wandering abroad' throughout the period of this study. In 1874 the *Herald* reported 'a raid on disorderly women' referring to four cases heard at the Police Court of women arrested in Parliament Street.⁵² Margaret Thomson, aged twenty one, was arrested in 1881 for 'wandering abroad' in St Sampson's Square, Mary Hall, aged twenty three, was charged with indecent behaviour in the same location in November 1881 and Eliza Precious, 'an immoral character', was sentenced to a month of hard labour for wandering abroad in Parliament Street and St Sampson's Square.⁵³ Alice Barnes, aged twenty seven, and Eliza Rose were fined for 'behaving in a indecent manner' in St Sampson's Square in March 1882 and in 1883 the chief constable declared that St Sampson's Square and adjoining Parliament Street were becoming a 'disgrace to the city on account of the assembling and conduct of [disorderly] women.'⁵⁴

There could be a variety of reasons arrests for these types of offences were so high in the main streets of the city. For women working as prostitutes, soliciting in a busy main street, particularly on market days, could prove extremely profitable. Many prostitutes met their clients walking in the main streets of the city before taking them back to houses in areas like Finkle Street or Hungate. Elizabeth Convin met Private Robert Eastwood in the street on a Saturday night and took him back to a house in Hungate where their exchange took place, and Eastwood was robbed of four pounds and fifteen shillings.⁵⁵ Ameila Hawkins and Margaret Smith were charged with importuning pedestrians in Clifford Street.⁵⁶ Journalists, sanitary inspectors and social surveyors increasingly publicised the 'dangerous' areas on the fringes of the city centre but there were concerns about working-class 'disorder' polluting city centre spaces and the respectable residents who used them. As found by Andy Croll

⁵² *York Herald*, 21 November 1874.

⁵³ *York Herald*, 25 February 1881, 17 November 1881 and 25 November 1881.

⁵⁴ *York Herald*, 31 March 1882 and 23 February 1883.

⁵⁵ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 21 May 1881.

⁵⁶ *York Herald*, 2 April 1887.

in Merthyr Tydfil, the urban population was large, but not sprawling, and the boundaries separating ‘dangerous’ and ‘safe’ spaces could be harder to determine than in larger cities.⁵⁷ Certain streets were obviously more important than others in the quest to rid the city centre of disorderly behaviour, and this importance was often rooted in the how these particular urban spaces were used.⁵⁸ As central commercial districts, Parliament Street and St Sampson’s Square were used not only to carry goods but also potential customers, and were frequently used by respectable shoppers and tourists. The police were particularly keen to clear these streets of disorderly behaviour, so not only were women working as prostitutes more likely to be apprehended, any female walking in these streets may also have run a greater risk of being identified as a prostitute. Young people socialising in the main streets of the city undoubtedly came into contact with prostitutes as they solicited for trade or talked with soldiers, but behaviour was not always definable. How could a constable differentiate between the young women laughing and gossiping in the street with young men, and the prostitute larking about with prospective clients? Problems of identification demonstrate why prostitution was perceived as such a threat to public space – not only were prostitutes a nuisance and danger to respectable men, and the embodiment of all that was anti-feminine – they also compromised the respectability of all women.

Fulford Road, leading to the barracks, saw high arrest figures for solicitation and prostitution related offences, and represented a matter of concern for police, magistrates and reform institutions. Soldiers and the girls who associated with them frequently appeared before the court and came into conflict with the police. In 1902, a letter from the secretary of the Ladies’ Committee was read to the Watch Committee regarding immorality at the barracks. The Committee instructed the chief constable to communicate with the military authorities with regard to the matter.⁵⁹ Girls ‘going wrong’ with soldiers, or being persuaded by other girls to go to the two barrack complexes on Fulford Road was something the Penitentiary Committee reported on frequently, and contemporaries noted the dangers for young women who became too friendly with servicemen. At an address to subscribers, the President of the York Association for the Care of Young Girls made an appeal:

⁵⁷ Croll, ‘Street Disorder, Surveillance and Shame’, p. 256.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

⁵⁹ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 8, 24 June 1902.

In making a special appeal to the wives of officers she said God forbid that she should dare to say that soldiers were worse than other men. She did not wish to think that for a moment, but they were much more attractive, and there was a glamour about a scarlet coat which turned the heart of a weak woman.⁶⁰

In her study of Fishergate and Fulford Road, Van Wilson found that between 1862 and 1892, over two thirds of the weddings at St Oswald's Church in Fulford were between local girls and soldiers from the barracks, demonstrating that the cavalry and infantry barracks had a large impact on the life of young local residents.⁶¹ The records of the Penitentiary Society suggest that there were many other liaisons which did not end in marriage. The barracks meant the city was often host to a large number of servicemen, numbers which increased after the outbreak of war in 1914. Bertha Linfoot noted how it was impossible 'to get up Fulford Road on a Sunday afternoon 'because of the soldiers'.⁶² The police and the Watch Committee were concerned about the large number of soldiers in the city long before the outbreak of war, and in 1882 the chief constable requested more officers because of the 'large influx of soldiers'.⁶³ There were a high number of charges against soldiers for their disorderly behaviour, and the *Herald* and *Gazette* reported on a number of clashes between soldiers and police constables. In September 1900, two privates in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry appeared before the Lord Mayor for being drunk and disorderly in Railway Street. The two soldiers created such a disturbance that a large crowd gathered and PC Kidney had to 'procure a handcart to move the men'. While the constable cleared the large crowd that had formed, Private John Carroll struck and kicked the civilian given the task of watching them, almost starting another fight.⁶⁴ However, it was not just the soldiers' disorderly behaviour in the streets of the city that concerned the Watch Committee, but the behaviour of the women who associated with them. The *Yorkshire Evening Press* reported in 1885 on

⁶⁰ YCA, York Association for the Care of Young Girls, Acc. 435, Annual Meeting Report, 1895.

⁶¹ Van Wilson, *Beyond the Postern Gate: A History of Fishergate and Fulford Road* (York: York Archaeological Trust, 1996), p. 56.

⁶² Interview with Bertha Linfoot, born 1897, YOHP.

⁶³ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 5, July 1882.

⁶⁴ *York Herald*, 4 September 1900.

the alleged assault of Anne Graeme by two soldiers from the barracks. Anne accused the two men of beating her, but they denied the charge, claiming only to have been 'having a sing-song' in her 'house of ill-repute' when she 'rushed upon them with a poker'. The Bench declared all parties equally reprehensible and ordered them to split the 16 shillings costs between them.⁶⁵

Young women were frequently warned about keeping company with soldiers. The Penitentiary Society published a pamphlet in 1891 in which they presented three examples of young women who had been 'corrupted' at the Barracks.⁶⁶ After Britain declared war on Germany in 1914, high troop concentrations in the city facilitated even greater sociability between young men and women. A garrison town for the whole period of this study, the first few months of the war saw the city become even more crowded with servicemen, and concern about moral conduct in the city grew. Lord Kitchener's famous poster appeared in the local papers on August 8, and many young men flocked to the city from the surrounding countryside to sign up at one of two recruiting stations.⁶⁷ Connections were made between sexuality, patriotism and the war effort, and some young people may have engaged in sex earlier than they might have before the war. Arthur Marwick has argued that the war encouraged divorce and 'spread promiscuity upwards and birth control downwards', although for Barbara Brookes the war brought freedom for women, as a certain amount of promiscuity had always been tolerated for men of any class.⁶⁸ The Archbishop preached to soldiers in the York Garrison chapel with a plea to keep their hands off the young ladies of York, while the leader of two Girls' Clubs involved with collections and knitting for the troops wrote to the *York Herald* expressing her hope that 'the mothers and girls of York [will] do their part and not lower the standards of our common womanhood by interfering with the soldiers and especially the recruits', emulating the 'unseemly conduct of too many girls and women on the streets'.⁶⁹ Residents were often against local young women going out with soldiers: 'Oh no, they didn't no ... and yet it's amazing the number of girls that married a soldier'.⁷⁰ Patriotism and the glamour of the uniform could entice some young women to visit

⁶⁵ *Yorkshire Evening Press*, 9 July 1885.

⁶⁶ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Report, 1891.

⁶⁷ Peacock, *York in the Great War*, p. 294.

⁶⁸ Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (London: Bodley Head, 1975) and Barbara Brookes, *Abortion in England, 1900-1967* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 13.

⁶⁹ *York Herald*, 19 October 1914 and 12 September 1914.

⁷⁰ Interview with MG, born 1908, YOHP.

the barracks; MG and her sister used to meet soldiers 'at the top of the street, because it wasn't nice to go out with soldiers in them days, you know. You weren't very good, you know'.⁷¹ Hester C, a twenty year old domestic servant who was charged with stealing a ring from a young army officer after attending the theatre with him, noted that 'they have a fascinating way with them, these officers, and as soon as they have got all they can out of a girl, they have done with you ... They won't speak to you in town in the day time, but when they get you in the dark they are quite all right'.⁷²

Unlike the central commercial districts of the city, the area around the barracks contained a large number of brothels, and it was an area the police actively sought to clear of disorderly behaviour. The chief constable reported to the Committee in 1885 that:

Fulford being an important district on account of its proximity to the barracks and the numerous prostitutes residing in the neighbourhood, I suggest that one inspector shall reside at Alma Terrace and take charge of the police station, with six night and two day men.⁷³

Elizabeth Benton, aged sixteen, was charged in 1887 for 'indecent behaviour' on Fulford Road, her second arrest for disorderly behaviour near the Barracks, and Betsy Roberts, twenty three, who had been charged three times previously for prostitution related offences, was prosecuted in 1894 for stealing a silk handkerchief from the Cavalry Barracks.⁷⁴ Women in the company of soldiers, or those who loitered in the streets around Fulford road were highly vulnerable to accusations of prostitution, and appearance in any street near the barracks was often enough to compromise respectability. Emma Cartwright, aged twenty three, was charged by PC Harvey for talking to soldiers in the street at night, and the magistrates sent her to prison for one month. On her release she was admitted to the Penitentiary.⁷⁵

Nineteen year old Hilda Frost 'had been a respectable girl' but was admitted to the

⁷¹ Interview with MG, born 1908, YOHP.

⁷² Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.19, Case Book: York Shelter, Hester C, 18 June 1914 – 20 June 1914.

⁷³ Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 5, 2 January 1885.

⁷⁴ *York Herald*, 17 June 1887 and 21 August 1894.

⁷⁵ *York Herald*, 19 July 1884 and Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 25 August 1884.

Penitentiary shelter after she began to walk out with a soldier ‘who wronged her’.⁷⁶ Elizabeth Ann Foster, aged seventeen, was similarly taken into custody for talking to soldiers on the Fulford Road, and in the same session the Ladies’ Committee heard the case of Louisa Watson, aged twenty two, who was found by a policeman at night near the barracks.⁷⁷

3. Defining behaviour: young women and public space

For young working-class women, as well as young men, the streets and public spaces of York provided a space to meet and socialise. As established in earlier chapters, young women’s sociability was often centred around going out in the evenings, attending dances and the music hall, and later the cinema, as well as simply walking out with a group of friends or a potential partner. Yet simply by being out in public, young women were subject to the disciplinary gaze; they were watched, and their activities noted as they used the streets and public spaces of the city.⁷⁸

Sexuality was central to perceptions of gendered space, and was implicated in both leisure and courtship. A good deal of young people’s socialisation and leisure could be seen as a prelude to courting and, whatever moral commentators may have believed, sex was just as likely to be associated with rational recreation as street culture or commercial activities. In her affiliation order against Walter Coates, eighteen year old Jane Dixon told the court how she used to ‘go to [Walter’s] parents’ house after church’, she went there ‘every Sunday night’.⁷⁹ Sex could form part of a relationship in transition towards respectable domesticity but it could also be incorporated into the realm of leisure and pleasure. There were monogamous young men and women, who sought courtship on the way to marriage, and there were solicitous prostitutes and their clients who openly exchanged sex for money. MG noted how many young women were ‘too frightened’ of the potential consequences to engage in sex outside of marriage, ‘because you don’t know what could have happened and then you’d be in dead trouble. It was a terrible thing ... if

⁷⁶ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.19, Case Book: York Shelter, Hilda Frost, September 1918.

⁷⁷ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 27 April 1897.

⁷⁸ See p. 187.

⁷⁹ York Poor Law Union, Board of Guardians, York Police Court, Acc. 2.10.2.1700, Jane Dixon and Walter Coates.

anyone was pregnant'.⁸⁰ Mrs P courted for ten years, but was deserted by her boyfriend after she fell pregnant; 'he wouldn't have it was his'.⁸¹ Twenty-one year old Maud Cantrel, admitted to the Penitentiary in 1893, 'went wrong' with one man, her boyfriend, and 'continued to do so ... but never with any other'.⁸²

Socialising, courtship and prostitution took place in the main streets of the city, and while as practices they differed significantly, participants and behaviours could overlap. Courting relationships could feature an element of sexual exchange, while prostitutes had relationships outside of their trade; they had lovers, they socialised, argued and gossiped like any other young working-class woman. Annie Brown, aged twenty, was dismissed from her position as a servant for going out in the evenings, and told the Ladies Committee at the York Penitentiary that she walked out with soldiers in return for small gifts and nights at the music hall. She was especially concerned to stress to the ladies on the Committee that she was not a prostitute and had never worked on the streets, but admitted having sexual relations with some of the soldiers she had accompanied.⁸³ Ellen Dinsdale followed her elder sister Florence into a bad house because her father was angry with her for staying out late.⁸⁴ Some working-class parents brought their daughters to the Refuge as a way of asserting authority over girls and their economic and sexual behaviour, turning to the Penitentiary when girls stayed out late, participated in popular leisure or had inappropriate boyfriends. Mary Ann Curtis' father would not allow her to remain at home because she went out in the evenings, and she was dismissed from her position at the Mason's Arms in Fishergate for staying out at night. She was admitted to the Penitentiary in 1896.⁸⁵ Seventeen year old Kate Smith, from Walmgate, went to the workhouse because her mother would not have her at home in consequence of her constantly being out at night.⁸⁶ Fifteen year old Daisy White was brought to the shelter by her mother because she had 'been out at night with soldiers' and was a 'wild and tiresome girl'.⁸⁷ Cissey Colley's grandmother would take her by the hand

⁸⁰ Interview with MG, born 1908, YOHP.

⁸¹ Interview with Mrs P, born 1902, YOHP.

⁸² Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 31 January 1893.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 29 July 1889.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 25 March 1891 and 25 November 1891.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 30 January 1896.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 23 February 1885.

⁸⁷ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.19, Case Book: York Shelter, Daisy White, 30 September 1916.

and walk past the Penitentiary, noting ‘That’s going to happen to you, me lass, if anything happens to you.’⁸⁸

Individual police officers may have had more cause than others in apprehending young working-class women they believed to be prostitutes. Finnegan found that police constables made up a large percentage of the known clients of prostitutes, concluding that the police constituted at least one in six of them, a figure exceeded only by labourers.⁸⁹ However, as with her identification of prostitutes, this figure should be used with caution. While the police may have had more contact with prostitutes and perhaps understood the business and its locations better than others – presenting them with greater opportunities to utilise the women’s services – this also made them more visible as clients. Their misdemeanours were more likely to be recorded, in the police service and character books or by the Watch Committee, than the many other men who went with prostitutes. Other clients rarely appeared in the records, the weight of the law falling mostly on the young women, and the only other easily identifiable men were those who attempted to retrieve stolen property through the courts. Presumably one would only press charges and risk exposure if they were desperate to recover their property, and most of the men who went down this route took pains to stress how they had been ‘beguiled’ by the young woman who went on to rob them.⁹⁰

The service and character books note a number of instances in which officers were dismissed for their behaviour with women believed to be prostitutes. PC Harry Clifford, who joined the force in 1905 aged twenty two was reprimanded for disorderly conduct in the Bay Horse Inn, Fulford, and later dismissed for ‘general misconduct likely to bring discredit to the force’. Clifford was accused of inviting Annie Walker into his sister’s house, putting his hand up her clothes and ‘ask[ing] her to have connections’. Walker, who the chief constable identified as a prostitute, had been drinking in a public house with Clifford and a soldier.⁹¹ Evidently there could be a complex relationship between female offenders and the police. What was the connection between prostitutes and those officers who went with prostitutes? Were these officers more likely to ignore women’s public misdemeanours, or would

⁸⁸ Interview with Ciskey Colley, born 1910, YOHP. See also chapter one, p. 55.

⁸⁹ Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*.

⁹⁰ For example, see *Yorkshire Gazette*, 21 May 1881 and *York Herald*, 16 February 1875.

⁹¹ Police Files, Police Service and Character Books, Acc. 236.23.12, Harry Clifford.

they more actively pursue cases involving suspected prostitutes?⁹² More importantly, how did this effect an individual officer's perception of all young working-class women and their behaviour in public? In London, PC Hennessy labelled nine of the sixteen women he arrested for drunken behaviour as prostitutes, making the assumption that most women out drinking alone after dark must fall into this category.⁹³ However, it must also be considered that police arrests did in fact reflect the behaviour of women in public, and drunken women may have indeed 'behaved in a sexually permissive fashion'.⁹⁴

Defining who was a prostitute could be dependent on space, time or appearance, and any young working-class woman socialising in the main streets of the city could be at a greater risk of being identified as a prostitute. Minnie Carr, aged seventeen, was arrested on charges of soliciting on a Saturday night in Parliament Street. While no evidence was presented regarding her conduct, Carr had been talking to a known 'bad girl' in the street, and being in a public space with a public woman was sufficient to call into question Carr's own sexual behaviour.⁹⁵ Carr had no previous contact with the police and does not appear in the records again. Kate Newsbury, aged twenty one, was brought before the magistrates for being 'helplessly drunk with two soldiers' and was sent to the Penitentiary for such 'indecent conduct'.⁹⁶ Annie Armitage was brought to the Refuge and admitted as a prostitute in 1892. Armitage told the Committee she enjoyed going out in the evenings and often stayed out late at night, although she denied living an immoral life. However, her association with young men and participation in popular leisure suggested to both the officer who brought her to the Penitentiary and the Ladies' Committee who admitted her that her moral behaviour was questionable, despite there being no evidence she was a prostitute.⁹⁷

Some young women more actively resisted attempts by the police and reform institutions to define and regulate their behaviour. Annie Wainwright was interviewed by the Ladies Committee in November 1899 but refused to stay in the Refuge. She admitted 'allowing a young man to do wrong to her' but rejected the

⁹² Grace, p. 102.

⁹³ Emsley, *The Great British Bobby*, p. 133.

⁹⁴ Grace, p. 201.

⁹⁵ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 29 December 1896.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 27 June 1887.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 29 June 1892.

claim that this was unacceptable behaviour.⁹⁸ Charlotte Ann Metcalf, aged twenty, was brought to the Refuge by a police constable, and while she admitted to having ‘gone with men and being a bad girl’, she ‘emphatically denie[d] having been guilty of immorality at any time’.⁹⁹ Fifteen year old Ellen Dinsdale, whose father was angry with her for going to music halls, denied having fallen, although admitted to associating with ‘bad girls’.¹⁰⁰ These distinctions in behaviour mattered a great deal to the young women accused, and others protested by running away from the home, or causing trouble. Ethel Wellerton, brought before the Ladies’ Committee in 1901 and described by the Ladies as ‘very wild and untruthful’ protested that she had been brought to the Refuge against her will, and that she would not stay. The Ladies admitted her on probation.¹⁰¹ Emily Whitwell was charged at the police court for absconding from the Penitentiary with clothing and boots. When the magistrate offered her the option between prison or the Penitentiary, she declared ‘I don’t want to go back to the home, I don’t wish to go into anymore homes’.¹⁰² Another unnamed girl fled out the committee room window, smashed the skylight and escaped. She was returned to the Home by the police, but just a few days later ‘took a square out of the ward window and went through it’.¹⁰³ Alice Pearson, Mary Cherry and Florence Dinsdale used a ladder left by a workman to scale the high garden wall, escaping because they wanted to attend a dance being held at the barracks.¹⁰⁴

The focus on clearing the city centre streets of disorderly behaviour coupled with the potential profit to be gained for prostitutes soliciting in these busy main streets meant Parliament Street, St Sampson’s Square, Clifford Street and the surrounding shopping streets of Petergate and the Shambles saw a high number of prostitution related charges. Those young women who socialised in these streets or around the barracks were liable to see their sexual behaviour called into question, or face police harassment. In these public streets at the heart of the city, young women’s sexual behaviour was heavily policed, and such spaces held uncertainties

⁹⁸ Ibid., 24 November 1899.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 30 January 1888.

¹⁰⁰ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.6, Minute Book, 25 March 1891. See also pp. 131-132.

¹⁰¹ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 29 October 1901.

¹⁰² Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.19, Case Book: York Shelter, Emily Whitwell, 10 June 1915 – 29 June 1915.

¹⁰³ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.84, Ladies Committee Monthly Reports, Miscellaneous Papers, 1891.

¹⁰⁴ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 25 November 1891.

for women hoping to explore relationships and sociability. Young women behaving in an ‘indecent’ manner in the public spaces of the city could threaten the moral integrity of that space, and their identification as prostitutes – whether or not they exchanged sex for cash – effectively marginalised them. The law, social mores, and dangers implicit in the city could limit a young woman’s ability to walk and socialise where she wished. Language was rife with words and phrases that sexualised women’s presence in public; with terms for prostitutes like street-walkers, women of the streets and public women, yet, as Rebecca Solnit has highlighted, phrases such as man of the streets, man about town, and public man meant very different things.¹⁰⁵

Conclusion

For both young working-class men and women, urban life involved concerns around the physical body; appearance, dress, body language, personal space, but the place of the female body in the city was shaped by a range of representations and ideologies. Dress and bodily demeanour could confer or compromise respectability, and the positioning of the female body in space and time could also have an impact. The busy central streets of the city could be dangerous for young women, and their use of the streets – particularly after dark or if they had been drinking – left them susceptible to accusations of immoral conduct. Similarly, young women who walked out with soldiers or socialised near the barracks often found their behaviour questioned by the police and courts. The streets and public spaces of the city could provide a space for sociability and intimacy between young couples, they also provided prostitutes and their clients with a place to conduct their business relationships.

The concern of the authorities to suppress prostitution, and remove ‘disorderly’ young women from public spaces suggests an awareness on their part of bodies as markers of space. The presence of ‘inappropriate’ women in the public streets could function as a signal about the meaning of space, and compromise it. The principal streets of the city, along with other areas such as Fulford Road and the barracks, were sites of gendered struggle, and space was an active element in the

¹⁰⁵ Solnit, p. 234.

constitution of social identities. However, as young working-class women explored the streets and public spaces of the city, they resisted controls and definitions that gendered their behaviour and separated them from men, and shaped cultural forms for their own purpose. It was in the commercial space of Coney Street, however, that this resistance had the biggest impact, as will be explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

NEGOTIATING THE MEANINGS OF PUBLIC SPACE: YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE CONEY STREET ‘MONKEY RUN’

Introduction

The social interactions and experiences of York’s young working class regularly took place in the streets and public spaces of the city. Young people could enjoy considerable freedom in their interactions with one another, and they took advantage of public spaces to meet and socialise. As they explored public spaces and relationships, however, some young people found themselves in conflict with the police or reform institutions.¹ The civic authorities, police and magistrates all attempted to regulate behaviour in the busy streets and public spaces of the city centre, and certain streets became the focus of debates about access to and use of public space. These debates involved anxieties about who was using public space, and acceptable behaviour within it. The young working class of York, however, challenged these attempts to regulate their behaviour, and in doing so contested spatial meanings. The streets and public spaces of York were not a passive back-drop to the lives of the city’s working class; through their leisure and courtship activities the meaning of these spaces was constantly redefined. The young working people of York played an active role in understanding and engaging with their environment. This chapter considers how activities that played out primarily in one central street of the city – Coney Street – enabled the participants to construct alternative narratives of space, and demonstrate how gender, class and generation were incorporated into contested conceptions of space.

Young people walked and gossiped in the streets of the city, and walking out – particularly in the evenings – provided couples with the opportunity for both sociability and intimacy. Walking out could use outdoor space in particular ways, and particular streets and spaces could gain semi-official recognition as a place for young people to gather and parade. The Coney Street ‘monkey run’ saw groups of young people gathering on Saturday and Sunday evenings to parade up and down the

¹ For detailed discussion of young people coming into conflict with the police, magistrates and reform institutions, see chapter four.

street; ‘all the young people would make for Coney Street ... and they’d walk up and down, up and down, and you know, sort of eye each other’.² These parades saw Coney Street become the focus of concerns about acceptable behaviour in public spaces. Newspaper reports and correspondence, court cases and police activity all brought Coney Street to the fore. Concerns were expressed about the use of the space by the young working classes, and their behaviour within it. The street was a space in which authority was demonstrated, yet it was also a space of resistance. Competing narratives of surveillance, control and resistance were expressed, and young people’s use of Coney Street was a process of negotiation as competing interests sought to secure access to public space. The young working class responded to and challenged regulations on their behaviour in Coney Street, and in doing so helped to negotiate a new understanding of the space. Space takes on the attributes of those who use and enjoy it, and the young working class of York were involved in the processes by which space acquired meaning.

1. Leisure, courtship and redefining public space

The streets at the heart of the city were spaces of social interaction, of display, of commerce; they were observed by the police and civic authorities, and experienced by pedestrians, shoppers and workers. Through both the management of the physical environment and the attempted regulation of behaviour, these public spaces at the heart of the city were the focus of much attention. As a space for socialising and courting, they were also the object of contestation and resistance. The city centre streets were physical locations, but they were also cultural spaces, framing social interaction. Streets could be sites for more or less dramatic acts of transgression, but challenges to regulation could be apparent in even the most mundane of routines.³

The young working class of York spent much of their time on the street. From socialising in Coney Street, walking through the Parliament Street market, using the street to travel to the dance hall or theatre, as well as travelling to work, or running errands, young people used the public spaces of the city for various reasons,

² Interview with Mary Barnes, born 1912, YOHP.

³ Dennis, *Cities in Modernity*, p. 114.

and they embraced the various leisure opportunities offered by the city. Working-class men and women found various ways to weave leisure through their day-to-day routines and they could take advantage of public spaces on the way home from work, on Sunday afternoons, or later in the evening, and the busy city centre streets in particular provided a space to meet up and walk with friends. Young courting couples were often referred to as ‘walking out’ or ‘stepping out’, illustrating how such relationships often played out in the streets and public spaces.⁴

Attempts to regulate public space demonstrate its importance to contemporaries, and various institutions attempted both to control space, and manage social relations within it. The ability of unruly crowds to threaten orderly public space is evident, and large-scale disturbances of public space, such as riots, or civic and royal celebrations, have received attention from historians.⁵ The power and potential of urban crowds to undermine the construction of public space as civil, clean and orderly has been well established. Mark Harrison argues that even ‘the self-confident solidity of Georgian squares became shaky when repeatedly occupied by shabby but sober political aspirants’.⁶ However, it was not just urban crowds or major events that were of concern to those who attempted to control public space; in contemporary descriptions the everyday social activity of young people gathering on Saturday and Sunday evenings was presented as both a disruption and pollution of orderly public space. Obstructing the street in any way could be perceived as a challenge to the order of public space, and it was not just large crowds or particularly ‘deviant’ behaviour that concerned the authorities. The young working class of the city were increasingly observed in their everyday use of public spaces.⁷ How they dressed, moved, talked and interacted with one another became more important.

⁴ See interviews with Stan and Lily Hall, born 1911 and 1912, Alice Hick, born 1901, and Mr and Mrs Allan, born 1917, YOHP. See also Langhamer, *Women’s Leisure in England* and Parratt, ‘*More Than Mere Amusement*’.

⁵ Fairs, riots, wakes and celebrations have all been the focus of individual studies. See for example Hugh Cunningham, ‘The Metropolitan Fairs: A case study in the social control of leisure’ in *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain*, ed. by A. P. Donajrodski (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp. 163-184; Bob Bushaway, *By Rite: Custom, Ceremony and Community in England, 1700-1800* (London: Junction, 1982) and R. Poole, J. K. Walton and J. Walvin, ‘Oldham Wakes’ in *Leisure in Britain, 1780 – 1939*, ed. by J. K. Walton and J. Walvin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p. 71-98.

⁶ Mark Harrison, ‘Symbolism, ritualism and the location of crowds in early nineteenth century towns’ in *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, ed. by Dennis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 194-213.

⁷ See in particular chapter five, p. 187.

While some disorderly behaviour amongst young people was tolerated, mostly in the working-class districts of Walmgate and Hungate, it was when such behaviour became a disruption of orderly public space that it became more problematic.

Attempts to manage public space were, however, resisted by the young people who used Coney Street to parade and socialise, and the repeated nature of their social activities helped to create new meanings of the space. While their socialising on Saturday and Sunday evenings may not have presented such an explicit threat as a large political gathering, or a group of prostitutes harassing respectable men, their presence in the street, and the authorities' responses to this, impacted on understandings of that space. Spaces are marked as particular kinds of place, they are gendered and classed, but the meanings of space are socially constructed, and therefore can be changed. Every society produces its own space,⁸ and the young working class of York were able to transform the way the space of Coney Street was understood. The public street actively structured the way young people behaved, even as it was itself shaped by their repeated social activities. The young working class of York, socialising and flirting on the 'monkey run', challenged the norms of conventional behaviour and consumed the space according to their own needs. Behaviour initially perceived as disorderly soon became routine, and by the opening years of the twentieth century Coney Street was seen as a relatively safe space to explore relationships and sociability. Young people played an active role in negotiating new spatial meanings, and this chapter will go on to consider the dynamic nature of the relationship between young people and their environment by closely examining both the experiences of participants in the Coney Street 'monkey run', and the criticisms levelled at them.

2. Coney Street in the late nineteenth century

As a central busy street at the heart of the city, Coney Street was invested with a variety of meanings and uses. It is important to place the street in context in order to

⁸ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.



Scale 1:1800

Figure 23. Map showing Coney Street, c.1900. The Mansion House and Guildhall can be seen on the top left of Coney Street. © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited 2014. All rights reserved. 1900.

understand how it was at the centre of debates about ownership and use of public space, and appropriate conduct in the city centre. From the old Norse *Kunungr* ‘King’ and old English *strate* ‘paved road, street’, running parallel to the River Ouse from Spurrergate to St Helen’s Square, Coney Street was at the very heart of the city and formed the main route from Ouse Bridge to the Museum Gardens area. Palliser notes that it was perhaps the first street in York to be paved and given a name that

later became a general word *via regia* ‘King’s highway’ for all the main York streets.⁹

York had a large, but not sprawling, population and there were particular parts of the city that more respectable residents would have taken care to avoid; the Water Lanes with their reputation for crime and prostitution, or the crowded yards and alleyways off the main Walmgate thoroughfare. Coney Street could not be defined as either a distinctly middle or working-class space, and was unusual in its lack of residential premises. As the site of the Mansion House and Guildhall, the *York Herald* offices and numerous banks and solicitors premises it was obviously frequented by respectable residents on legitimate business. Rowntree assigned Coney Street the light pink colour which identified it as one of ‘the main business streets’.¹⁰ It acted as the main thoroughfare between the Assize Courts and the Guildhall, Mansion House and Assembly Rooms, and the Judges’ Lodgings in Lendal, and as a central location the street was frequently used as a pedestrian route. For anyone walking the river bank on the east side it was a necessary detour as the bank was inaccessible between Lendal and the Ouse Bridge. It was well known as a centre of consumption, and local history studies have focused almost exclusively on its position as a commercial centre.¹¹ Street directories illustrate the variety available, from Winspear’s high class perfumery, the large department store Leak and Thorp’s, to smaller shops suitable for those with a more modest budget. The servants’ registry located at number 43 further demonstrates that it is difficult to limit the space to particular groups of users.¹² It was also located conveniently close to the Parliament Street Market, which on a Saturday evening provided a source of free entertainment as well as cheap food. Coney Street, then, was not limited in its use to particular social groups.

The young working class used the street for everyday purposes, such as shopping, or simply walking through. Their behaviour was much less problematic for observers when they used the street in this way, although for some even this level

⁹ Palliser, ‘The Medieval Street names of York’, p. 8.

¹⁰ Rowntree, ‘Plan of the City of York’, figure 14.

¹¹ Van Wilson, *York’s Golden Half Mile: The Story of Coney Street* (York: York Archaeological Trust, 2013).

¹² *Kelly’s Directory*, 1893, <www.historicaldirectories.org> [accessed 7 January 2012].



Figure 24. Leak and Thorp department store, Coney Street c.1910. Image courtesy of Imagine York [accessed 12 July 2013].

of interaction between the classes was undesirable.¹³ In *North and South* (1855) Elizabeth Gaskell's Margaret considers herself 'very unfortunate in constantly falling in with [the] streams of men and women' who poured out of the mills near her home in the fictional town of Milton.¹⁴ While it contained a diverse group of users, Coney Street was most commonly utilised by different groups at particular times of the day, night, or week.¹⁵ The working and middle classes both used Coney Street, but for different reasons, and at different times. Respectable shoppers and

¹³ Richard Dennis, 'The Social Geography of Towns and Cities, 1730-1914' in *An Historical Geography of England and Wales*, ed. by R. A. Dodgshon and R. A. Butlin (London: Academic, 1990), pp. 429-451 (p. 437).

¹⁴ Milton was of course a thinly disguised Manchester. Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

¹⁵ See also Jenny Birchall, "'The Carnival Revels of Manchester's Vagabonds': young working-class women and monkey parades in the 1870s' *Women's History Review* 15: 2 (2006), p. 235; Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty* and Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class*.

businessmen used Coney Street primarily during week days, and the magistrates and reform institutions were concerned with behaviour in the street in the evenings when the young working class claimed it as their own. It was on Saturday and Sunday evenings that the behaviour of the young working class threatened constructions of the city centre as a clean, moral, civic and commercial space.¹⁶ Concerns were centred around what might happen after the shops had closed and the streets were no longer populated by a majority of ‘respectable’ citizens. ‘You know, after the shops closing Coney Street was absolutely packed with people walking up and down’.¹⁷

3. The Sunday night ‘evil’: young people and the Coney Street ‘monkey run’

On Saturday and Sunday evenings, Coney Street was the location of the popular ‘monkey run’ in York, which involved young working-class men and women parading up and down the street, socialising with friends and showing off in front of the opposite sex: ‘they used to nick name Coney Street and along by the riverside and that was the monkey run. All the people that couldn’t afford to go anywhere used to get dressed up and simply walk up and down’. ‘Everybody used to do it, and it was crowded in Coney Street’.¹⁸ Young people would dress up in their Sunday best and parade along the street with a definite focus on ‘picking up’, although the ‘monkey run’ was about socialising with friends as much as ‘clicking’ with members of the opposite sex: ‘me sister and me, we used to meet one or two girls from Terry’s that we knew and we used to go down Coney Street’.¹⁹ However, it remained unrivalled in York at this period as a means of meeting a potential partner.²⁰ Unlike dance halls, participation was free, as long as a parader was already in possession of suitable clothes. The prevalence of unattached members of the opposite sex made it better for picking up than the cinema or markets and fairs, and it was a definite focus:

¹⁶ Birchall, ‘The Carnival Revels of Manchester’s Vagabonds’, pp. 99-111; Hill, ‘Thoroughly Embued with the spirit of Ancient Greece’, pp. 229-252 and Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class*.

¹⁷ Interview with Alice Hick, born 1901, YOHP.

¹⁸ Interview with Mr Allan, born 1912, and Alice Hick, born 1901, YOHP.

¹⁹ Interview with Mrs MG, born 1908, YOHP.

²⁰ Davies notes that in Manchester and Salford the ‘monkey parades’ were also without parallel as a means of meeting unattached members of the opposite sex. Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty*, p. 102.



Figure 25. Coney Street is pictured here in 1897 during the celebrations for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. Image courtesy of Imagine York [accessed 12 July 2013].

‘many a romance started from raiking’.²¹ For Matt Houlbrook, the ‘monkey parade’ was the heterosexual equivalent of homosexual cruising, predicated as it was on moving through defined city spaces, gazing and searching for contact.²² Many couples, once courting, drifted away from the ‘monkey run’ and walked out together around the city: ‘later on, when it sort of developed as something more serious than we used to meet and go to the pictures’.²³ Once paired off, Stan and Lily Hall courted under family supervision, and they walked out together around the city: ‘one night we walked all round Heslington, it was freezing and we stood canoodling’.²⁴

The ‘monkey run’ is first documented in York in the mid-nineteenth century and continued until the outbreak of the Second World War.²⁵ In the interwar period, the increase in road traffic contributed to the parade’s eventual demise, and Rowntree noted in his second social survey of York that ‘today [1941] the promenading of streets has almost ceased’.²⁶ The *OED* defines ‘monkey parade’; ‘an evening parade of young people, especially for the purpose of meeting members of the opposite sex’, and as a chiefly dismissive term.²⁷ While the use of ‘monkey’ certainly implies mischievous behaviour, and perhaps murkier connotations of young people behaving in a way that was seen as debasing or regressive, with hints towards racial degeneration, in York the term ‘monkey run’ was commonly used by the participants themselves, and very rarely by any of the parade’s critics. Perhaps the term itself can be seen as a form of spatial appropriation; naming their activities on Saturday and Sunday evenings in Coney Street as the ‘monkey run’ allowed the young working class to claim possession, of both the act of parading and the street itself. Rowntree highlighted the large numbers of young working people who, at the time of his first survey, spent their evenings promenading:

[In 1899] a large proportion of young working people spent their evenings lounging about in the neighbourhood of their houses or promenading up and down certain streets in the city. The main street was so thronged with them

²¹ Interview with Vera Tomlinson, born 1916, YOHP.

²² Houlbrook, p. 67.

²³ Interview with Alice Hick, born 1901, YOHP.

²⁴ Interview with Lily Hall, born 1912, YOHP.

²⁵ *York Herald*, 29 September 1860 and interview with Joan Sadler, born 1922, YOHP.

²⁶ ‘It went on until after motor traffic’. Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP; Rowntree, *Poverty and Progress*, p. 470.

²⁷ *OED*, ‘monkey parade’.

that it was difficult to make one's way through it and a number of policemen were required to keep people moving and to prevent the horseplay between youths and girls becoming too obstreperous. Youths used to boast about how many girls they had "got off with" during the evening.²⁸

Fred Milburn emphasized the dominance of the 'monkey run' in the working-class social calendar. As well as parading in his youth, he later observed the parades as a police constable and recalled with some surprise that one Sunday night 'Coney Street was deserted. Everybody'd gone to a band performance on the Knavesmire. Never seen it so deserted in walking hours than it was that day'.²⁹ Bertha Linfoot noted how 'you couldn't move down Coney Street at night time'.³⁰

Young people walked and gossiped in the streets of the city, and walking out could use outdoor space in particular ways, and at certain times and locations a casual walk around became a promenade. As was the case with the Coney Street 'monkey run', particular streets and spaces could gain semi-official recognition as a place for young people to gather and parade;

I was one of them, oh yes, as I say, until you were sixteen or eighteen or nineteen [Coney Street] was where everybody congregated. All the youths and lasses used to congregate there. That was, as I say, the main parade ground, especially on a Sunday.³¹

The young working-class of Liverpool gathered on the Landing Stages at George's Pier on the Mersey to promenade, much to the disgust of a local journalist who wrote of the 'permitted indecency and immorality on the Landing Stage'.³² In Bolton, Hannah Mitchell described the scenes of young people walking up and down the main streets as 'the working girls' equivalent to the London season'. While Mitchell and her friend Sallie enjoyed the weekend promenades, and were 'not averse to a

²⁸ Rowntree, *Poverty and Progress*, p. 469.

²⁹ Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP.

³⁰ Interview with Bertha Linfoot, born 1897, YOHP.

³¹ Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP.

³² Hugh Shimmin, 'Sunday Night on the Landing Stage', in *Low Life and Moral Improvement in mid-Victorian England: Liverpool through the journalism of Hugh Shimmin*, ed. by John K. Walton and Alistair Wilcox (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991), pp. 87-89 (p. 88).

mild flirtation', they did not 'adopt the custom of "picking up" that was common among the young people of the town at the time'.³³ In Manchester, the 'monkey parades' saw the young working class from surrounding areas gather in Oldham Street, where on Sunday nights the street was 'given up to the carnival revels of Manchester's vagabonds. Here scenes may be witnessed which, we venture to say, are unparalleled in any city or town in England'.³⁴ As part of his investigation into the life of workers in the north of England for the Christian Social Union, Charles Russell recorded the custom, noting that the 'footway and roadway are alike taken up, and crowds, on the whole merry, pass up and down for some two hours ... both sexes take part ... usually in little knots of three or four or more boys or girls'.³⁵ The 'monkey parades' in turn of the century Hackney witnessed London youths exchange winks and smirks, and in Coventry, the increase in 'rowdy parades' were deemed such a threat to public order that by-laws 'regulating the streets' were mooted.³⁶ As in Manchester where one police constable quipped; 'they call it the 'monkey parade' on Sunday evenings, and I am quite satisfied that it deserves that name',³⁷ the gatherings in York were subject to police attention, and criticism from middle-class observers concerned over working-class disorder spilling into city centre spaces. This chaotic gathering of young working-class men and women was a perversion of the orderly processions that were a performance of civic identity and communicated authority. That the 'monkey run' often took place on a Sunday made it appear particularly distasteful to many observers, with the York Penitentiary Committee warning of the dangers of 'getting into bad company on Sundays instead of attending a place of worship'.³⁸

Young people on the 'monkey run' were observed; by the policemen stationed to keep them moving, by middle-class commentators and by representatives of the civic authorities: 'in Coney Street at night time – between six and ten especially on a Sunday night – there were always three policemen on duty.

³³ Hannah Mitchell, 'Courting' in *The Hard Way Up: The Autobiography of Hannah Mitchell, Suffragette and Rebel*, ed. by Geoffrey Mitchell (London: Virago, 1977), p. 83.

³⁴ 'Oldham Street on a Saturday night', *Free Lance*, 6 August 1870 in Birchall, p. 229.

³⁵ Charles Russell, *Social Problems of the North* (London: Garland Publishers Inc., 1980 [1913]), p. 102.

³⁶ Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life 1860-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 206-214 and Beaven, p. 117.

³⁷ Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty*, p. 106.

³⁸ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.246.1, Address to Fathers and Mothers in York, Martinmas Fair, 1891.

They were needed to keep the people moving and allow access for people who wanted to move along the street. You had to keep them on the move, otherwise the street was blocked up'.³⁹ Concerns were expressed over young people obstructing the street, and the practice of walking up and down was dismissed as idle and senseless.⁴⁰ Middle-class 'citizens' and 'ratepayers' wrote to the local press complaining about the state of Coney Street on Saturday and Sunday nights and the activities of the young people gathered there.⁴¹ One correspondent wrote to the *York Herald* expressing his belief that the young people of the city indulged in 'loafing up and down Coney Street' on Sunday evenings because they were 'entirely at a loss to know what to do with themselves'.⁴² Another protested against the closure of the Bar Walls which provided 'one of the few clean walks' left in the city, unlike the 'frequent disorder' witnessed on Coney Street, and by 1900 a correspondent guessed that the young people who frequented Coney Street went 'for chaff and chatter, and some for something worse'.⁴³ These letters were not only class based, but also often heavily gendered, with concerned citizens hoping to protect 'respectable ladies' from the activities of the 'disorderly' working class, and expressing particular concern over the behaviour of the young working-class women attending the parades. While the letters themselves may have had little direct bearing on the young working class that paraded in Coney Street, the greater observation and police action they resulted in could certainly be felt by the young working class who participated in the parades.

In 1871, the *Gazette* reported the arrest of two young men for 'disorderly conduct' in Coney Street. PC Maude reported to the court how the 'lads were shouting and pushing each other about' and 'behaved with great rudeness to passersby'. The Lord Mayor gave a speech at the hearing, reporting on the 'disgraceful state' of Coney Street in the evenings. In closing he declared he 'believed York was the worst town in England, with one exception, for [disorderly conduct] offences'.⁴⁴ While it is not clear which other town kept York from reaching that number one spot, what is evident is that the use of Coney Street by young people

³⁹ Interview with Fred Milburn, born 1894, YOHP.

⁴⁰ One correspondent wrote to the *York Herald* to complain about 'the idle and senseless practice of loafing up and down Coney Street'. *York Herald*, 21 November 1890.

⁴¹ For example, 'An Old Citizen' wrote to the *Herald* complaining about the state of Coney Street on Sunday nights, 26 April 1882.

⁴² *York Herald*, 18 November 1890.

⁴³ *York Herald*, 11 November 1889 and 19 November 1900.

⁴⁴ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 14 October 1871.

was a matter of concern for magistrates and those involved with York's reformatories.

The *Herald* had reported the previous month on 'The Sunday Coney Street Nuisance' following the arrest of Charles Holliday for disorderly conduct in the street. The chief constable placed PC Denham on special duty in Coney Street on Sunday evenings 'in consequence of frequent complaints as to the disorderly state of [the street]'. He found a number of boys larking about, heard repeated disgraceful language and the chief constable summed up by declaring 'he should have to put the whole force [on Coney Street] if things did not alter'.⁴⁵ The noise and activity seemed all the more offensive due to its commencement on a Sunday.

Complaints such as these emphasized not only the perceived disruptive nature of the transgressions, but also concerns over access to and use of public space, and increasingly coercive measures were used to try and maintain the space. In 1882 the police and magistrates made explicit their intention to regulate it. The chief constable 'complained greatly' of the disorderly conduct 'of boys and girls in Coney Street', and 'hoped the Magistrate would assist the police in putting it down'. When sentencing, the magistrate intimated that 'similar offenders' would in future 'be more severely dealt with'.⁴⁶ One Sunday evening in May 1885 three young women were standing on the footpath in Coney Street and were asked to 'move on' by PC Hawkins. However, the girls 'only laughed at him' and were subsequently taken to the police station and charged with obstruction. In court, the chief constable noted how such behaviour by young girls on Coney Street had become a 'fearful nuisance' which the magistrates must put down. The girls were fined 1s, but told if they appeared again before the Bench they would be dealt with more severely.⁴⁷ When later that year the magistrate dismissed the case of two girls of 'about fifteen years of age' for being disorderly in Coney Street on account of their age, the chief constable forcibly replied that 'the disorderly conduct complained of was caused chiefly by juveniles the age of the defendants'. The magistrate noted that in future 'all would have to be punished'.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *York Herald*, 16 September 1871.

⁴⁶ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 25 March 1882.

⁴⁷ *York Herald*, 9 May 1885.

⁴⁸ *York Herald*, 3 October 1885.

In 1899, a number of lads were charged for their disorderly conduct in the street, for pushing each other and brawling. Again the Lord Mayor took this as an opportunity to comment on the use of Coney Street by young people, declaring that ‘everyone [in York] was crying out about the nuisance caused by disorderly lads in Coney Street, and the evil must be stopped’.⁴⁹ By 1900, the chief constable reported that ‘the York police are using every effort to put a stop to the nuisance caused every Sunday night in Coney Street ... by young people of both sexes’.⁵⁰

The appearance of young working-class people in these streets was evidently perceived as a threat to civilised city centre spaces. The public space of the ‘monkey run’ allowed young working-class women in particular to utilise a certain freedom away from the constraints of family supervision they may have had closer to home. Nell Fearn recalled that within the working-class district of Hungate ‘everyone knew who you were ... you were watched over by every family’.⁵¹ For some young women, movement away from these residential spaces could mean an opportunity to experiment with gender norms; they could be unrestrained as they laughed and joked with friends and young men on the parade. It was precisely the gendered and sexualised nature of the interactions between the young men and women which made the parades so threatening to observers.⁵² The apparent eagerness of young women to contribute to ribald jests in their interactions with young men were a particular worry to middle-class moralists. Concerns were expressed about girls gleefully embracing the bad language of boys, reflecting the opportunities the parades presented for ‘unladylike’ behaviour. Henriette Fogg was admitted to the York Penitentiary in July 1892 after the Care of Young Girls home in Petergate refused to house her because of her bad language. Henriette, who was 15, told the Ladies’ Committee she learnt such language on Sunday evenings in Coney Street.⁵³ The Penitentiary society warned of the ‘danger for young girls’ that was to be found in parading, noting that ‘a thirst for amusement and excitement out of doors’ led many a girl to ruin.⁵⁴ In a speech to the Penitentiary Society, York lawyer F. T. Munby declared ‘if the parents of the girls who were to be seen walking so much about Coney Street would do their

⁴⁹ *York Herald*, 18 October 1889.

⁵⁰ *York Herald*, 17 March 1900.

⁵¹ Interview with Nell Fearn, born 1918, YOHP.

⁵² This fear of openly sexualised behaviour and the particular condemnation of young women was also expressed by observers over the parades of Oldham St, Manchester. See Birchall, p. 235.

⁵³ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 27 July 1892.

⁵⁴ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Report, 1902.

duty and exercise more care over their children, there would be less for the Society to do'.⁵⁵ The Ladies' Committee produced a pamphlet listing the chief causes of the downfall of 'respectable' girls, urging parents 'never to allow your young people to go out after dark, nor to display themselves in a dressy manner, nor to stroll about on Sundays'.⁵⁶ Emily Bell, aged twenty, was admitted to the Penitentiary in 1897 after being led astray by Florence Leary, whom she met in Coney Street.⁵⁷

The parades were a form of performance; one which involved particularly gendered routines and displays. 'Girls used to walk down on one side ... then when you got t'General Post Office you'd come back again and walk on t'other side'.⁵⁸ While it was the young men who were expected to make the first approach, 'it was the women who determined they were going to be asked'.⁵⁹ It was the displays put on by young women and girls that provoked the harshest criticism. Records of what happened when girls 'turned bad' on the streets featured heavily in the York Penitentiary records. In Liverpool, Hugh Shimmin noted that the young women who were attracted by 'the game of the Landing Stage' with 'their gaudy dress, rude speeches and unseemly conduct' were not yet 'social evils', although were well on their way to becoming outcasts from decent society.⁶⁰ For young men, however, such offences could be overlooked, and were more likely to be put down to youthful high spirits. It seemed inevitable that boys would be 'a nuisance', but the behaviour of young women was seen as more subversive.⁶¹ In Manchester, Charles Russell described the young men who took part in the parades as merely adhering 'to what is the fashion of their kind', and that 'making an acquaintance' with a girl was 'a feather in their caps'.⁶² The moral consequences of public behaviour were much more greatly emphasized when talking about young women'.⁶³ Expectations and concerns about working-class use of space reflected the prevailing gender ideology, and gender relations played a part in determining spatial practices. The public

⁵⁵ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Report, 1887.

⁵⁶ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.246.1, Address to Fathers and Mothers in York, Martinmas Fair, 1891.

⁵⁷ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 30 June 1897.

⁵⁸ Interview with Mrs MG, born 1908, YOHP.

⁵⁹ Interview with Mr Allan, born 1911, YOHP.

⁶⁰ Shimmin, p. 88.

⁶¹ *York Herald*, 18 October 1889.

⁶² Charles Russell, *Manchester Boys: Sketches of Manchester Lads at Work and Play* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1905), p. 116.

⁶³ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 27 April 1886, 15 July 1897.

presence of women was persistently identified with disorderly sexuality, particularly in the evenings when the ‘monkey run’ took place.

The fact, then, that the ‘monkey run’ involved groups of mixed sexes was central to its condemnation. Much of the concern was related to the visible horseplay between young men and women. Young working-class men and women were openly displaying their interest in the other sex. As Lily Hall noted; ‘that’s what you did in your teens and that – looking for boyfriends’.⁶⁴ Vera Tomlinson remembered ‘the girls used to go showing off to the boys, walk about giggling and carrying on’.⁶⁵ It was a chance to flirt and socialise, in a way that was not taken altogether seriously; as Mrs Allan cheerfully recalled to the YOHP, she went ‘looking for some talent (laughs)!’⁶⁶ It was such free and easy associations that troubled the parades’ observers, such behaviour was bad enough in the working-class districts but in a city centre space it was highly problematic, with fears about the moral and sexual pollution of city centre spaces and other ‘respectable’ young women.⁶⁷ In New York, Kathy Peiss examined the way young people used the streets to explore sexual feelings, and how with ‘no supervision but the cop on the beat, young women could be unladylike and unrestrained on street corners and doorways’.⁶⁸ Young women were claiming public space in a way that challenged dominant constructions of an ordered moral and gendered space, and female paraders in particular became the focus of anxieties about the use of city centre public spaces by the young working class. Coney Street provided a spatial arena in which changing constructions of gendered behaviour were involved in very public contestations.⁶⁹ The young working-class taking part in these parades became representatives of a number of wider concerns about the uses of public space, and their leisure activities became more than just an inconvenience affecting people wishing to use the street.

⁶⁴ Interview with Lily Hall, born 1912, YOHP.

⁶⁵ Interview with Vera Tomlinson, born 1916, YOHP.

⁶⁶ Interview with Mrs Allan, born 1912, YOHP.

⁶⁷ The Penitentiary Society were particularly emphatic in their warnings to respectable girls and their parents of the dangers of strolling about on a Sunday or getting into company with ‘bad’ girls. See Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.246.1, Address to Fathers and Mothers in York, Martinmas Fair, 1891, and chapter five.

⁶⁸ Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements, Working Women and Leisure in Turn of the Century New York*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986). See also Alice Clements’ discussion of young working-class women and ‘treating’; Clement, *Love for Sale*.

⁶⁹ See also Birchall, “The Carnival Revels of Manchester’s Vagabonds”, Nan Enstand, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) and Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*.

4. 'There was no rowdiness or owt': the paraders' perspective

The condemnation of the parades expressed in newspaper correspondence, by the Penitentiary Society and heard at court was not the sole narrative of these social activities. Oral history respondents and those involved in the parades presented a much more positive view of the lively sociability of the promenade, and did not perceive their behaviour as particularly unruly; 'That's what you did when you were in your teens', 'Coney Street was known for picking girls up, you know, and we used to have a bit of a laugh and walk down Coney Street'.⁷⁰ While the behaviour of young people on the 'monkey run' evidently provoked criticism, a participant based viewpoint offered by oral history respondents gives an alternative version to the use of this space. A picture develops which does not involve an invasion of respectable space, with the possibility of prostitution and immorality around the corner. Paraders did not see the 'monkey run' as sensational or scandalous, but simply as an everyday social activity.

Far from the disorder envisaged by middle-class observers, many young women had strict home-times set by their parents, or like Lily Hall participated in the parade only after attending church; 'We'd come away from church, my friend and I, and then we'd go walking down Coney Street ... and I used to love to go to church, I loved that church.'⁷¹ The parade developed its own rules of participation and entry, and there was a certain amount of pride involved. Care was taken over appearance and dress. Perhaps to outsiders these attempts demonstrated a lack of modesty and taste; the Reverend Chancellor Austen addressed the annual meeting of the Penitentiary Society, noting 'some of the questionable new fashions were not in the direction of modesty, and must tend sooner or later to bring trouble and disgrace', and the Society warned about 'the love of dress, which is the cause of very much mischief, and leads many into temptations'.⁷² To the paraders, the 'monkey run' was a chance to engage with fashion. The young women involved would often make their own clothes, stretching a tight budget as far as possible. Margaret Hutchinson told the York Oral History Project 'I learned to make me own and I've always made me

⁷⁰ Interview with Lily Hall, born 1912, YOHP, and Interview with Ruth Redpath, born 1914, YOHP.

⁷¹ Interview with Lily Hall, born 1912, YOHP. Also see chapter three, p. 154.

⁷² Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212, Annual Report, 1920 and Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.246.1, Address to Fathers and Mothers in York, Martinmas Fair, 1891.

own ... You wanted better clothing. You didn't want hand-downs and re-makes you know'.⁷³ Clothes suitable for parading could be difficult to afford, yet they were an essential part of the Saturday and Sunday evening ritual. Participation in the parade became self-regulating – those without the suitable clothes to parade would not attend. Some pawned their clothes during the week, only to reclaim them on Saturday ready for church and social activities: 'There was very few people who could afford to dress ... you could make yourself look tidy. They [the paraders] would have the best suit on a Sunday, and by the Monday that suit would be in the pawn shop ... then they'd get dressed up again'.⁷⁴ 'Sunday Best' clothes were an indicator of social status and character, and while some young women like Margaret Hutchinson would make their own, others lacked the skills and resources. Ella Beswick was teased at school for her lack of needlework skills.⁷⁵ Clothing had a host of meanings associated with it. Albert Howard recalled being extremely anxious about being asked to sing in the church choir because '[he wasn't] dressed up enough ... I had patches in me trousers'.⁷⁶ The parish visiting books also recorded occasions when families did not send their young people to Sunday School because of a lack of suitable clothing.⁷⁷ Appearance in general was important, particularly for young women on the parade. Annie Pinder noted that just after the war young working-class girls 'had to have your face dead white and your lips thick', although much like her mother, this may have not been entirely appreciated by the parades' observers: 'Glory be to God, you're like a ghost. You'll frighten people. Will you wash your hands and face, and take that off your face'.⁷⁸ Alice Hick wasn't allowed to wear make-up when she went out in the evenings, 'we weren't allowed to really, it was out of order to use make-up or anything'.⁷⁹ Mary Barnes recalled that the young women on the parade 'used to take care of your appearance and you know get a pretty dress and that sort of thing and er ... bit of lipstick, bit of powder.'⁸⁰ Wearing 'Sunday Best', doing hair and wearing make-up were exceptional rather than daily

⁷³ Interview with Margaret Hutchinson, born 1897, YOHP.

⁷⁴ Interview with Mr Allan, born 1912, YOHP.

⁷⁵ Interview with Ella Beswick, born 1906, YOHP.

⁷⁶ Interview with Albert Howard, born 1913, YOHP.

⁷⁷ For example, the Aldarson family of Wilson's Yard were noted in the St Cuthbert visiting book for not sending their children to Sunday School because they did not have any 'Sunday Best' clothing. Borthwick, St Cuthbert's Visiting Book, 1907, PR/Y/CU51.

⁷⁸ Interview with Annie Pinder, born 1904, YOHP.

⁷⁹ Interview with Alice Hick, born 1901, YOHP.

⁸⁰ Interview with Mary Barnes, born 1912, YOHP.

events for young working-class women and men, and addressed the sense of performance of the ‘monkey run’.

The parade developed its own rules of participation; behaviour considered too rough was not accepted. Mr Kendrew told the York Oral History Project ‘there was no rowdiness or owt’.⁸¹ Despite the focus on ‘picking up’ and horseplay between young men and women, Coney Street remained almost free of commercial sex throughout this period. Unlike the nearby Parliament Street and St Sampson’s Square, which saw numerous arrests for solicitation, (particularly during busy market days when soliciting would appear to be more rewarding) there was only one arrest recorded in Coney Street over forty years in the available documentary evidence.⁸² In Preston, Derek Thompson’s oral history respondents recalled that specific parade venues related to the ‘monkey run’ were utilised by prostitutes and their clients, but that these areas were well known to the local youth, and ‘respectable’ young people avoided them.⁸³ The social activities of York’s ‘monkey run’ remained spatially separate from those areas in which prostitutes congregated and solicited. Behaviour on the parades became increasingly, if grudgingly, tolerated by the police, magistrates and middle-class observers. From calling the parade an ‘evil’, by the turn of the century there were fewer arrests and magistrates were allowing the majority of young people who were charged with obstructing the footpath off with a caution.⁸⁴ There was a definite move away from condemnation, letters of complaint were not as common, and attention moved to other debates and youth problems. Concerns over ‘rowdy’ young people on the ‘monkey run’ had taken a more ambiguous turn. With its rules of participation and entry, how far was the ‘monkey run’ from the more ordered civic processions and parades; ‘a self regulating urban community’, which policed itself through its own intrinsic codes of conduct?⁸⁵ As Charles Russell noted of the parades in Manchester, ‘sometimes there is an element of roughness, sometimes there is a measure of disorder, sometimes a considerable degree of coarseness in the remarks which are passed, on the other hand, there is much

⁸¹ Interview with Mr Kendrew, born, 1901, YOHP.

⁸² See chapter five for discussion on prostitution in Parliament Street and the city centre.

⁸³ Derek Thompson, ‘Courtship and Marriage in Preston between the wars’, *Oral History*, 3:2 (1975), 39-44 (p. 42).

⁸⁴ For example, two young men and a young woman appeared before the police court in one weekend charged with obstructing the footpath in Coney Street. All three were dismissed with a caution. *York Herald*, 24 February 1900.

⁸⁵ Gunn, ‘Ritual and Civic Culture’, p. 233. See also p. 162.

harmless enjoyment'.⁸⁶ Young women who had just a few years earlier been condemned for their immoral behaviour were increasingly seen as socialising in a relatively safe space. In his study of working-class men, Brad Beaven has argued that male youths demonstrated a remarkable propensity to manipulate and customise their surroundings, gathering in city centre spaces to flout moral codes.⁸⁷ Arguably, however, the behaviour of young women was seen as more subversive, and thus their ability to manipulate their surroundings must surely be highlighted.

Young people on the parade were subject to a degree of both peer-group and adult scrutiny, and the particular codes of behaviour developed by paraders meant Coney Street in particular became seen as a relatively safe place for young men and women to discover friendships and relationships. It became held up as a safe place for young men and women to interact, it was self-regulating, it took place in public. It was preferable for young people to meet in a public and somewhat regulated environment than a secret (and potentially dangerous) one. For some working-class parents, even cheap dances in which young people might socialise without adequate supervision were unthinkable.⁸⁸ The 'monkey run' came to be seen as acceptable by the turn of the century *because* it took place in public. It may have previously attracted condemnation because of its public nature, with the perception of working-class youth 'invading' public space, but it was precisely this public nature that made the mingling of the sexes increasingly acceptable. The young working class engaged in an on-going process of establishing claims to the use and enjoyment of public space, and challenged traditional interpretations of it. Outside of this geographical limit, horseplay with the opposite sex could have very different consequences.⁸⁹ Activities seen as increasingly acceptable in Coney Street were still unacceptable elsewhere, and young women could be susceptible to danger or accusations of immoral conduct. The particular codes of behaviour developed by paraders meant Coney Street was a relatively safe place for young men and women to discover friendships and relationships.

⁸⁶ Russell, *Social Problems of the North*, p. 102.

⁸⁷ Beaven, pp. 117-118.

⁸⁸ See chapter three, pp. 130-131.

⁸⁹ See for example the cases of Kate Newsbury and Annie Armitage in chapter five, p. 201.

5. The boundaries of social space: beyond the Coney Street ‘monkey run’

The young working class of York claimed Coney Street as their own on Saturday and Sunday evenings, and paraded up and down in their Sunday best, away from parental supervision, often under the watchful eye of a police constable or two – there to keep everybody moving – hoping to ‘click’ with a potential partner. How did these young people determine the boundaries of their social space? Some oral history respondents recalled parading down New Walk to the south and up to Scarborough Bridge to the north. Fred Millburn stated that young people congregated in Coney Street and New Walk ‘right the way from Mansion House to the crane near the Ordnance Works at the end of New Walk’. Vera Tomlinson recalled raking on the ‘monkey run’ ‘from Scarborough Bridge along the riverside into Coney Street’.⁹⁰ New Walk did not develop into a recognised safe space for promenading in the same way as Coney Street, however. It had traditionally been used as a place for the gentry to promenade, constructed in 1730 by the York Corporation it was conceived as a place for the respectable residents of York to take the air, see and be seen.⁹¹ However, evidence suggests that by the first half of the nineteenth century, New Walk – which had traditionally been used by the working class as a place to dry washing and bathe in the River – was not being used in the way the Corporation had envisaged. John Lister wrote to the Watch Committee in June 1842 to complain that ‘it is almost impossible for a Lady to walk upon the New Walk in an afternoon without being insulted and subject to every sort of personal abuse’.⁹² While Coney Street appeared relatively free of commercial sex, a number of women were arrested on New Walk for ‘indecent conduct’ or taken to the Penitentiary. Elizabeth Gardner, aged seventeen, was arrested by police for misconduct on the New Walk, although magistrates allowed her to go to the Penitentiary rather than serve a prison sentence.⁹³ Mary Ellen Robinson, admitted to the Penitentiary in 1891, had previously served a month long sentence for ‘indecent conduct with a man, while drunk, on the New Walk’.⁹⁴ In 1891, at an address to

⁹⁰ Fred Millburn, born 1894, YOHP and Vera Tomlinson, born 1916, YOHP.

⁹¹ See chapter one, pp. 58-60.

⁹² Watch Committee Minutes, Y/COU/5/8/3, vol. 1, June 1842.

⁹³ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books., 29 June 1892. See also p. 182.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29 July 1891.

fathers and mother in York at the Martinmas Fair, the Penitentiary Society warned of allowing young girls to parade on the New Walk. They recalled the case of one seventeen year old girl who was admitted to the Penitentiary after being persuaded by ‘bad’ companions to ‘go with them in the dark on the New Walk’.⁹⁵

Vera Tomlinson’s oral testimony hints at the potential dangers for young women if they moved out of the well observed promenade space; ‘but you never went under Scarborough Bridge, you kept out of the way ... it was pitch black, you don’t know who’d be there’.⁹⁶ Ethel Waiting, a young domestic servant aged twenty two, met Ernest Raine, a married man, on the public street but ‘had connections on the Railway Bridge ... there was nobody about at the time and we stood up’.⁹⁷ The ‘pitch black’ space under the railway bridge bordered the edge of promenade space and such marginal areas could hold uncertainties for young women in particular.

The boundaries of social space were not only defined by geographical limits, there could also be temporal restrictions. The blackout legislation that forbade the use of street lighting during the First World War could leave the streets ‘in utter darkness’, the result of which left Coney Street ‘far from being so full of people as it usually is’.⁹⁸ This darkness, and the lack of observation, could present uncertainties for young women. Hannah Malton remembered walking in Coney Street during the war and hearing footsteps behind her; ‘and it was a soldier, and he lifted me up, and I screamed, and he put me down and I ran’.⁹⁹ She told the York Oral History Project that ‘after that I never went out [in the evenings] unless I went with someone’.¹⁰⁰ Courting and socialising that took place in the shadowy evening spaces could place young women outside of the safe spaces in which to explore sociability and relationships. It was both the repeated nature of their social activities, and the responses of those who observed them, that allowed Coney Street to become an accepted space for young people to meet and socialise.

⁹⁵ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.246.1, Address to Fathers and Mothers in York, Martinmas Fair, 1891.

⁹⁶ Vera Tomlinson, born 1916, YOHP.

⁹⁷ York Poor Law Union, Board of Guardians, York Police Court, Acc. 2.10.2, Affiliation Summons.

⁹⁸ *York Herald*, 14 April 1915.

⁹⁹ Interview with Hannah Malton, born 1899, YOHP.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

When people act in a space, what they do is in part responsible for the meanings that space may have. Particular sites are left with the imprint of major events, but perhaps it is the everyday practices that are of significance. As Tim Cresswell notes, places are continuously enacted as people are going about their daily lives, and the sense of place that is expressed is heavily dependent on the reiteration of practice on a regular basis.¹⁰¹ The young working class who paraded up and down Coney Street on the ‘monkey run’ were not just socialising, they were confronting the meanings of that space. By socialising in this way they successfully negotiated a new understanding of the street. Concerns about the behaviour of working-class youth were spatially contextual and dependent, and Coney Street was at the forefront of on-going disputations about control and appropriate use of public space in York. The young people that paraded up and down Coney Street used the street in a particular way, and while the police and magistrates criticised behaviour in this space, for young women in particular, the ‘monkey run’ became seen a relatively safe space to explore relationships and sociability. In contrast, other central streets of the city could be dangerous for young women, and their use of these streets – particularly after dark or if they had been drinking – could leave them susceptible to danger or accusations of immoral conduct.¹⁰²

Coney Street was a contested area in which multiple uses and meanings of space clashed and co-existed as members of different groups sought to use this space in their own way. By demanding the street as their own on Saturday and Sunday evenings, and using the Coney Street parade as a venue to socialise with friends, display fashion and independence from parental authority, as well as search for a potential partner, young people made a claim on this space, and it was the repeated nature of their social activities that helped to challenge the way the space of Coney Street was understood. How much these young men and women knowingly attempted to re-define the space of Coney Street is perhaps less certain, although this arguably matters less than the fact that they did challenge the meaning of that space.

¹⁰¹ Cresswell, p 170.

¹⁰² See chapter five.

The young working class of York were able to manipulate their surroundings for their own use and successfully negotiate a new understanding of the street.

CONCLUSION

One Sunday evening in May 1885, sixteen year old Annie Carty and her friends Annie McHall and Annie Lofthouse were standing on the footpath in Coney Street, chatting and gossiping with other girls. When asked to ‘move on’ by PC Hawkins, they ‘laughed at him’, and were subsequently taken to the police station and charged with obstruction.¹ Eighteen year old Frederick Richmond and sixteen year olds James Brown and Henry Goodwin were summoned in 1893 for playing pitch and toss in Wesley Place. They denied gaming, and argued they were simply tossing to see who should pay for a packet of cigarettes.² Alice Pearson, Mary Cherry and Florence Dinsdale ran away from the Penitentiary in 1891, escaping over the garden wall by means of a ladder left behind by workmen, because they had heard about a dance at the barracks and wanted to go.³ The episodes and experiences examined in this thesis tell the story of the young working class of York as they gathered in, and moved through, the spaces of the city. Scrutinising the lives of the young working class through the prism of space provides valuable insights into everyday life, and reveals how spaces were both shaped by, and helped shape, the social interactions of the young working class of the city.

This thesis set out to explore how young people used the city to meet and socialise; how they engaged with their environment; their interactions with the spaces in the city and with those who wished to control or define them. Although historians have highlighted the significance of both leisure and courtship in young working-class life, and considered the spatial dimensions of class, race, and gender, the interactions of the young with space have been greatly neglected. Class, gender and generation all played significant roles in shaping young people’s experiences of leisure and courtship, and their use of, and engagement with, the city. The approach of this study has been to focus on a close reading of a range of documentary sources and oral history testimony, thickening the empirical evidence with space.⁴ As the

¹ *York Herald*, 9 May 1885. See also p. 217.

² *York Herald*, 30 January 1893. See also p. 113.

³ Penitentiary Society, Acc. 212.12.13, Ladies Committee Minute Books, 5 November 1891. See also p. 202.

⁴ Geertz, pp. 3-32.

preceding chapters have demonstrated, the beginnings of a distinct youth culture can be traced to the late nineteenth century, and the street and neighbourhood provided its forum. York's young people found space in the city to explore their desires and negotiate their identities; they shared city centre spaces with others, and just as the 'gay city' could function 'in the midst of, yet often invisible to, the dominant city', young people could pass largely unnoticed.⁵ Their use of the streets, markets and parks of York could also come into conflict with the intentions of other residents, and while many eluded adult control, other young people found themselves appearing before the magistrates, or placed in the penitentiary. Constraints on use of space were imposed by the police, magistrates, civic authorities and reform institutions, those who frequently determined both who was allowed to use space, and how it ought to be used. Young people had, on occasion, to confront these notions of ownership and control, and in their leisure and courtship activities they attempted to make some parts of the city their own; regarding the courts and yards of Hungate and Walmgate as territory, or staking a claim on the commercial space of Coney Street on Saturday and Sunday evenings. Some delighted in obstructing the passage of other pedestrians, disrupting the evening of other theatre-goers, or shocking the sensibilities of middle-class reformers with their rough language and tough attitude. They could be constrained by their home life, their employers and their financial situation, but also made decisions about commercial leisure opportunities and rational recreation provisions; young people were not passive consumers of leisure. Young women could be particularly vulnerable, but they continued to parade and flirt on the 'monkey run', walk out along the New Walk and gather with friends at the markets and fairs of the city, and it was their behaviour – seen as especially subversive – that demonstrated the remarkable abilities of the young working class to manipulate their surroundings. The meanings of space could be contested, and understandings of space and place could be changed or manipulated both overtly, and in more subtle ways. Young people used the neighbourhoods, streets and public spaces of the city to walk, meet, socialise, fight, drink and flirt. They used the city as a resource to meet their own needs, and played an active role in understanding and engaging with their environment.

⁵ Chauncy, pp. 179-180.

A series of important spaces have emerged from this study, and by examining what young people did on particular occasions, and in specific places, as well as the responses to this behaviour, this thesis has attempted to shed some light upon what O’Leary describes as ‘one of the more elusive aspects of urban history’; what actually went on in the streets.⁶ The sharp geographical focus of the research has made it possible to explore specific sites in detail, and impart something of York as a place and overlapping matrix of spaces. However, such a study has inevitably raised further questions than its scope allowed room to pursue, highlighting gaps in the evidence which could be considered for further study. In particular, setting the history of young people’s social interactions in urban space within a broader sociological context, and exploring the interconnections between sexuality and urban space would enable a consideration of the ways young men and women set the trajectory for modern sexual values and behaviours. Paying particular attention to the ways sexual experiences and identities of young people were inflected by urban life would further contribute to debates on young people and youth culture.

In studying the relationship between young working-class men and women and urban space, this thesis has argued for a sensitive reappraisal of working-class youth at the turn of the twentieth century. The processes and practices of young working-class leisure served to produce and reproduce urban space, and young people were a fundamental part of the cycle by which the meanings of the city were constantly negotiated. Analysing conventional documentary sources and oral testimony through the optic of space – relating the more abstract ideas about space and social relations with the realities of everyday life – this thesis has attempted to present a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the lives and agency of the young working class in this period.

⁶ O’Leary, p. 6.

Appendix 1

Pseudonyms have been used here and throughout where requested in the archive.

Oral History Sample

Name	Birth Year	Places Lived	Age began work	Occupation(s)	Interview Year
Miss Kirby	1891	Durham Tollerton Clifton	13	Domestic servant, factory worker at Rowntree's and a maternity nurse	1985 and 1986
Ada Cade	1893	Holgate Road Dove Street Viner Street	-	Office worker at Rowntree's	1987
Fred Milburn	1894	Hull Road Lawrence Street	14	Journalist and police constable, also served in WWI	1983
Mr Galtress	1895	Bishophill Hungate	14	Served in WWI then worked for the railways	1987
Leila Moore	1895	Leeman Road Sycamore Terrace	-	Worked in parents' shop then a factory worker at Rowntree's	1985 and 1986

Annie Butler	1896	Harrogate Ebor Street, York	-	Domestic servant	1997
Nell McTurk	1896	-	-	-	1984
Emily Fratsen	1897	Birmingham York	15	Nursery maid	1997
Gertrude Levi	1897	Chelmsford Place, Fulford	-	-	1984
Bertha Linfoot	1897	Huntington Road	15	Typist at Leetham's mill office	1997
Mr Sutcliffe	1897	Wakefield, moved to York at a year old	13	Errand boy in the Navy, then factory worker at Waddington's Piano Factory	1983
Ida Gault	1899	Acomb York	14	Part time cleaner and domestic servant	1998
Hannah Malton	1899	York	14	Factory worker at Rowntree's	1997
Edith Dunnington	1900	Palmer Lane, Hungate Dixon's Yard, Walmgate Lawrence Street	-	Factory worker at Rowntree's, moved to offices after machine injury	1996

Edith Harton	1901	Clifton The Groves	14	Domestic servant	1987
Alice Hick	1901	Walmgate	14	Factory worker at Rowntree's and Terry's	1987 and 1988
Mr Kendrew	1902	-	-	-	1983
George Thomas	1901	-	-	-	-
Mrs P	1902	Suffolk – came to York to go in service	14	Domestic servant and farm worker	1983
Arthur Everard	1903	Acomb The Groves	-	Painter and decorator, later worked in a sugar beet factory	-
Mrs Raynolds	1903	St Saviourgate	-	-	1995
Margaret (Gertie) Hutchinson	1904	Bishophill	-	Secretary for insurance company	1983
Hilda Beaumont	1904	-	-	-	1984
Mrs "S. H."	1904	-	-	-	-

Annie Pinder	1904	Hope Street, Walmgate Layerthorpe	-	-		1996
Alethea Asplinn	1905	Little Stonegate	14	Factory worker at Rowntree's		2002
Alice Butterworth	1906	Garden Street, Hungate	-	-		-
Ella Beswick	1906	Strensall	14	Potato Picker, caddy and later trained as a nurse		1986
Violet Taylor	1906	Darlington, family moved to Hungate to run the Leeds Arms	14	Worked in family pub, then left for a job in Marks and Spencers		2000
Mrs Lonsdale	1907	Brunswick Terrace Hungate	-	Factory worker at Rowntree's		1985
MG	1908	-	-	Worked at Yorkshire Printing Company		1987
Mr Slater	1908	Navigation Road, Walmgate	-	Builder and journeyman		1984
Ethel Smith	1908	Leeman Road	-	Nursed bed-ridden mother		1983
Rose Sturdy	1908	-	-	Helped her father run various public houses before becoming a nurse		1984

Mrs "C"	1909	Poppleton Road	15	Factory worker at Rowntree's	1984
Dick Calpin	1909	Rosemary Place, Walmgate	14	Labourer	1996
Stan Lea	1909	Dixons Yard, Walmgate	-	Factory worker at Rowntree's	1996
Olive Waudby	1909	George Street, Walmgate	-	Clerk	1996
Doreen Bolton	1910	Castle Inn, Clifford Street	-	Landlady	1994 and 1995
Mary Evelyn Booker	1910	Walmgate	-	Factory worker at Terry's	1996
James Cave	1910	St Saviourgate, Hungate	14	-	1992
Cissey Colley	1910	Victor Street, Bishophill Trinity Lane	14	Factory worker at Rowntree's and Terry's, washed pots at Dennison's Hotel	1983
Thomas Rhodes	1910	Willow Street Walmgate	-	Labourer	1996
Mr Allan	1911	York	-	Printer	1988

Stanley Hall	1911	Broom's Court, York	14	Apprentice blacksmith, and then factory worker at Rowntree's	1992
Rene Sheard	1911	Black Swan Inn, Peasholme Green	-	Worked in her father's pub	1995
Mrs Allan	1912	York	-	-	1988
Lily Hall	1912	Sawmill Lane, Hungate	14	Factory worker at Terry's	1992
Violet Quigley	1912	Long Close Lane, Walmgate Hope Street, Walmgate	-	Factory worker at Terry's	1996
Mary Alexander	1913	Albemarle Road	-	-	2003
Albert Howard	1913	Long Close Lane, Walmgate	14	Worked at Marks and Spencers	1996
Mary Barnes	1914	-	-	-	1987
Claire Graham	1914	Cavalry Barracks, Fulford	-	Delivered telegrams	1985
Eva Guyll	1914	York	14	Factory worker at Terry's, after marriage worked at the Rialto and then the Barracks	1985

Ruth Redpath	1914	Grew up in the York Union Workhouse Clifton	14	Domestic servant	1983
Vera Thomlinson	1916	Leeman Road	-	Factory worker at Rowntree's	1986
Nell Fearn	1918	Dundas Street, Hungate	-	-	1993
Thomas Abbot	1919	-	-	-	-
Louisa Aldrich	1919	Webster's Passage, St Saviourgate	-	Domestic servant	1993
Andy Waudby	1921	-	-	-	-
Ted Chittock	1922	St John's Place, Hungate	-	-	1993
Joan Sadler	1922	Aldwark	-	Factory worker at Rowntree's	1983
Audrey Peace	1927	-	-	-	1993
Owen Calpin	-	Long Close Lane, Walmgate	-	-	1996

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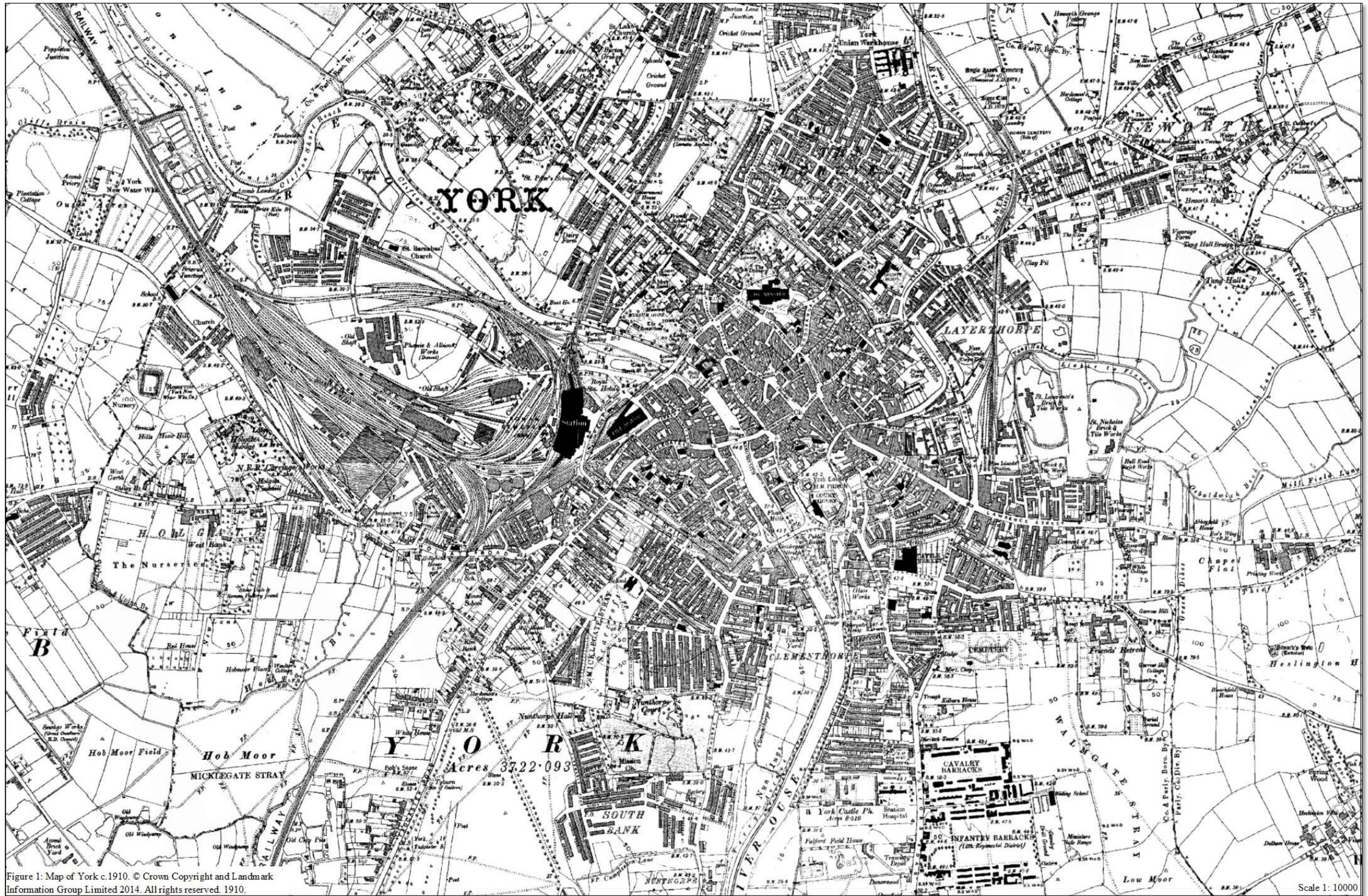


Figure 1: Map of York c.1910. © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited 2014. All rights reserved. 1910.

Scale 1: 10000

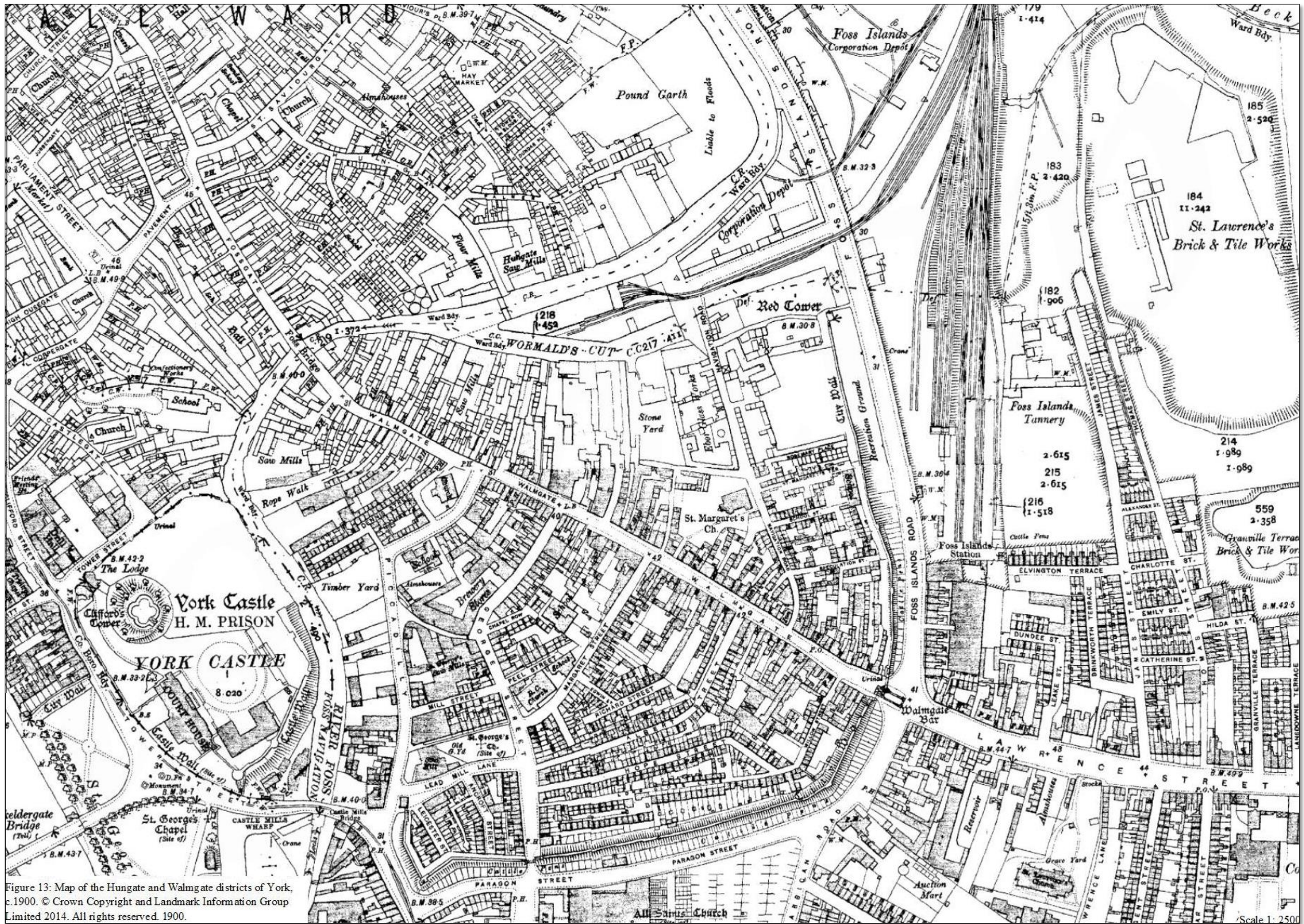


Figure 13: Map of the Hungate and Walmgate districts of York, c.1900. © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited 2014. All rights reserved. 1900.