The introduction and implementation of the New Poor Law in the Barrow upon Soar Union, Leicestershire, 1837-1860

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For Reference Only
THE INTRODUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW Poor LAW

IN THE BARROW-UPON-SOAR UNION, LEICESTERSHIRE,

1837 - 1860

by

MARGARET HENRY
B.A. (Sydney), Dip.Ed. (New England)

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Master of Arts

University of Technology, Loughborough

1978
"Local study may be myopic, but then it is possible to hold eternity in a grain of sand."

—Raphael Samuel
SYNOPSIS

The introduction of the New Poor Law was often violently opposed, especially in industrial areas. Research has indicated that it largely failed to solve the problems of unemployment and poverty. To a large extent continuity with the old system of poor relief was maintained and local autonomy remained virtually intact.

A study of the Barrow-upon-Soar Union in Leicestershire was undertaken to investigate whether there was opposition to the New Poor Law and to assess both the extent of state intervention and local autonomy. An attempt was also made to determine the extent to which the innovative features of the new system were applied to the special problems of the region. Its proximity to Loughborough and Leicester, both scenes of anti-Poor Law activity and the fact that a large proportion of its population was engaged in hosiery made Barrow-upon-Soar Union an interesting field for investigation.

The study revealed that the introduction of the New Poor Law was delayed because of problems in dissolving the Barrow-upon-Soar Gilbert Union and the opposition from Loughborough to inclusion in the new union. Although there was vigorous anti-Poor Law activity in the surrounding area, however, there was no evidence of the violent opposition common to largely industrial unions.

In spite of the large component of hosiery workers in the community,
the Barrow-upon-Soar Union displayed many of the characteristics attributed to rural unions. Hosiery was a domestic industry at this time, often supplementary to agriculture in which large numbers were also employed. The Board of Guardians was composed almost entirely of farmers and ex officio guardians ensured the continuation of the influence of the landed interest.

The innovative features of the New Poor Law, the elected board, the employment of salaried experts, central supervision and the less eligibility principle were not fully realised in this union. Continuity with the old system, in both personnel and policies was evident. In a depressed community such as this, it was difficult to implement less eligibility. As in other unions, the workhouse was under-utilised for much of the period and the more economical outdoor relief continued at a high level.

Relations with the central Poor Law authorities, especially in the early years, were mostly harmonious. The Board sought guidance and support and usually carried out instructions, if sometimes reluctantly. For the most part however, national legislation and instructions from the Poor Law authorities were acted on when neglect of problems or retention of traditional methods threatened to involve heavier expenditure than the action proposed. The administration of poor relief in the Barrow-upon-Soar Union supports the view that considerable local autonomy and continuity with the past were characteristic of the relief of the poor under the New Poor Law.
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<td>Ec.H.R.</td>
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INTRODUCTION

The study of Poor Law history, of value in itself, has acquired greater interest as modern society once more grapples with problems similar to those which confronted the governments and local communities in the nineteenth century. Widespread unemployment, depressed areas, declining trades and the high cost of social welfare are problems as perplexing in the twentieth century as they were in the earlier period. The nineteenth century reactions to these problems and the solutions proposed, laid the foundations of the modern welfare state. The machinery of social welfare, its institutions and personnel, to-day often display adherence to the traditional techniques. It is useful, perhaps even essential, to the understanding of the complex structures erected on those humble beginnings to consider their origins.

Dorothy Marshall, writing of the Old Poor Law, stressed the importance of studying the administration rather than the legislation if the law and its enforcement were to be understood. She also stressed the importance of regional studies to examine and correct generalisations. Only by a series of local studies could a complete picture be developed.¹

This advice on the Old Poor Law applies equally to the investigation of the New. A number of regional studies of the New Poor Law have been carried out. Michael Rose, in his examination of the West Riding of

Yorkshire, outlined the necessity for local studies to test the validity of generalisations made by writers of an earlier period. Local history, far from necessarily being antiquarian, could enable their generalisations to be "balanced, illuminated and even corrected".1

Studies such as those of Michael Rose and Rhodes Boyson2 of the New Poor Law in largely industrialised areas have shown that its introduction was vigorously opposed and its operation considerably hampered. The new system, developed to cope with underemployment in agricultural areas was little help in industrial regions experiencing cyclical unemployment. Poor Law administration was not drastically altered, the deterrent principles of the New Poor Law were not uniformly implemented. Centralisation was resisted and local autonomy remained almost unimpaired.

Anne Digby,3 summarising the findings of research into the rural Poor Law found that, while the introduction of the New Poor Law into rural areas appeared to proceed smoothly in comparison with the industrial areas, the transition was not without problems. The relief policies of the New Poor Law did not solve the problems of underemployment and surplus labour in rural communities. With boards composed largely of farmers and the continuation of the influence of the landed gentry as ex officio guardians, relief continued to be administered on the old pattern. Workhouses were under-utilised and did not implement the principle of less eligibility laid down by the central authority. As

3. Anne Digby, "The Rural Poor Law", from D. Fraser, (Ed.) The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 149-70.
with industrial unions, the boards of guardians retained substantial autonomy over the dispensation of relief. Only further local research could establish the extent of local variation.

It is the intention of this study to examine in some detail the operation of the New Poor Law between 1837 and 1860 in a rural Leicestershire union with a high proportion of its population engaged in hosiery manufacture. The proximity of this union, Barrow-upon-Soar, to Loughborough and Leicester, both areas of anti-Poor Law activity presents an opportunity to assess whether this union followed the pattern of vigorous opposition to the New Poor Law characteristic of urban unions or whether it resembled the qualified acceptance of most other rural unions.

The formation of the Barrow Union was an example of a tactless attempt to impose an artificial union in order to utilise a Gilbert Union house of industry. The resistance to this and the subsequent problems of disposing of the Gilbert Union property illustrate the developing relationship between the central authority and a local board.

This union also presents an opportunity to assess the continuing influence of a traditional establishment of squires and parsons in a community largely given over to manufacturing. A study of the Union in this period makes possible an examination of the way in which a board of guardians composed mainly of farmers dealt with the problems of this distressed community while attempting to satisfy the requirements of the Poor Law Commission and later the Poor Law Board. It also enables the

1. Subsequently referred to as Barrow, as distinct from the village, Barrow-upon-Soar.
way in which the guardians came to terms with the social problems related to poverty, notably public health, to be examined. That these were years of special difficulty makes the study of how the Barrow Board of Guardians coped with these problems all the more necessary.

An analysis of the relief offered by the Barrow Board makes some contribution to the debate over the extent to which the old system continued and how far local autonomy was maintained. Above all, by focussing on one union, it has been possible to reveal something of the recipients of relief, too often neglected in Poor Law history, with its administrative bias. An enquiry into the administration of the Barrow workhouse arising from questions in the House of Commons at the same time as the Andover scandal provides some valuable insights into the lives of the poor and the way their needs were met.

The minute books of the Barrow Union provided the basis of the study. These were supplemented with the correspondence between the Barrow Board of Guardians and the Poor Law Commission and later the Poor Law Board and between successive Assistant Commissioners and the central authority. The Leicester newspapers gave scant coverage of Barrow affairs but the Loughborough Telegraph and its successor recorded the activities of the early years when the Union was being formed and when anti-Poor Law and Chartist activity was rife in the area. Parliamentary papers and Annual Reports of the Poor Law Commission and the Poor Law Board were also consulted.

A detailed analysis of the census returns for 1851 and 1861 provided a basis for the study of the economic and social background of the Barrow Union in an attempt to identify whether its economy was predominantly rural, what its alternative sources of employment were and which groups
might be likely recipients of relief. This comprises the content of chapter one.

Chapter two is concerned with the chequered attempt by the Poor Law Commission to impose Loughborough on the Barrow Union and the Gilbert house of industry at Barrow-upon-Soar on Loughborough and the vigorous and successful campaign which opposed it. The proximity of anti-Poor Law activity in nearby Leicester and Loughborough and its influence on Barrow Union is assessed.

Chapter three analyses the composition of the Board of Guardians and the role of ex officio guardians. The problems involved in the disposal of the house of industry of the former Gilbert Union and the strains this placed on the developing relationship between the Board and the Poor Law Commission are discussed. The efficiency of the Guardians and their relations with the officers of the Union are studied.

Chapter four is concerned with the development of medical services in the Union and the Barrow Board of Guardians' increasing involvement in public health.

In chapter five, the results of a detailed analysis of the relief given for one year are used as part of an investigation of the relief pattern for the Barrow Board of Guardians. An examination is made of the extent to which outdoor relief continued, the role of the relieving officers who dispensed it and those who received it. The administration of the workhouse is studied to determine how far the principle of "less eligibility" was implemented.

Historians are still trying to come to terms with what happened in 1834. Did the New Poor Law constitute a revolution in government?
To what extent did the administration of social welfare change as a result of this attempt at national uniformity and how much did things go on as before at the local level? Was the New Poor Law retrogressive and to what extent were the repressive features of the Law actively implemented?

Although no union is typical, as continuing research into the Poor Law reveals, the examination of the administration of the New Poor Law in the Barrow Union throws further light on some of these questions. The necessity of such local studies is attested by historians in the field in order that the theses they advance may be verified or modified.


BARROW-UPON-SOAR UNION WORKHOUSE AT ROTHLEY,

LEICESTERSHIRE
CHAPTER ONE

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF THE BARROW UNION

The Barrow Union lay almost in the centre of Leicestershire, occupying the area between Loughborough and Leicester. It was mainly agricultural land, but contained a number of villages which have been described as industrial, although the hosiery trade which was most common in the area had not been transformed by steam power as had the textile trades. ¹

The population of the Barrow Union in 1841 was 19,695 and it remained fairly constant, rising slightly in 1851 to 20,059 and declining again slightly in 1861 to 19,778.² The geographical relationship of the Barrow Union to the other unions in Leicestershire is shown in Figure 1.1. In Figure 1.2 the villages comprising the Union are shown, together with the main rivers, canals, railway and the principal turnpike roads. The Union was almost bisected by the River Soar, made navigable in 1794. In 1840, the section of the line connecting Loughborough and Leicester, passing through the Barrow Union was completed by the Midland Counties Railway. A good turnpike road, connecting Loughborough and Leicester also passed through the Union. Many of the thirty villages of the Barrow Union were described as "satellite villages", with inhabitants working

2. Census returns.
Geographical Location and Subdivisions of LEICESTERSHIRE - Figure 1.1

1. Barrow-upon-Soar
2. Part of Ashby-de-la-Zouch
3. Part of Bingham
4. Part of Grantham
5. Part of Melton Mowbray
6. Loughborough
7. Market Bosworth
8. Part of Suterstone
9. Leicester
10. Part of Hinckley
11. Blaby
12. Billesdon
13. Part of Oakham
14. Part of Lutterworth
15. Part of Market Harborough
16. Part of Uppingham
17. Part of Sherdlow
Figure 1.2 – Map of Barrow-upon-Soar Union, showing principal turnpike roads, railways and waterways in 1851.
to both centres, but the inhabitants of the Union were largely dependent on the resources of the local region for employment.

An analysis of the economic and social structure of the region was undertaken to provide a background to the administration of the New Poor Law in the Barrow Union. The intention was to determine whether Barrow Union was predominantly rural and what its alternative sources of employment were.

Some assumptions about the economy of the region, that on the one hand it was a pastoral area with fewer opportunities for work and on the other that it was a high-wage area with plentiful alternatives to agriculture, needed to be tested. As a result of this study, groups at risk and likely to be recipients of relief might be identified. First a study was made of the wealthier sections of the community on whom the poorer people were dependent for land and housing and who were responsible for the dispensation of justice and relief.

The nineteenth century countryside was dominated by landowners. As Hobsbawm wrote, "the large landowners were rich and powerful and the rich and powerful were large landowners". Although they formed a very small proportion of the population, they exercised tremendous influence. The structure of village society was hierarchical, especially in closed parishes where one or two proprietors owned most of the land. The principal landowners commanded the highest status, followed by the gentry,

1. Ibid.
2. E.J. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire, p. 98.
3. Between one third and a half of the villages in Leicestershire were closed.
the Anglican parsons, the substantial farmers, the professionals, the rural craftsmen, shopkeepers and small holders with agricultural labourers at the bottom of the social scale.

The squire's importance in the community was all-pervasive. He determined the pattern of employment and housing and exercised a considerable influence on poor relief. The poorer classes were dominated by those who owned the land.1

"The axis of rural life was the country house and the estate ... (the) squires served as magistrates or guardians ... If a labourer poached ... the squire would judge him in the office of magistrate; if a farmer was behind in his rent the squire chided him as a landlord." 2

Much of the land in Barrow Union was concentrated in the hands of a small number of landholders. White's directory recorded the extent of their holdings. The Earl of Stamford and Warrington, for example, was lord of the manor of Anstey, Newton Linford, Swithland, Cropston and Syston. Earl Ferrers was lord of the manor of Sileby and owned much of the land at Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake.3

While not enjoying the status of the aristocracy, the gentry exercised considerable influence by virtue of their ownership of land.

3. Much of Seagrave was owned by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster and Oxford University owned most of the land at Syston.

Sir J.G. Palmer, G.J.D.B. Danvers\textsuperscript{1} and William Herrick\textsuperscript{2} were all substantial landowners and under the New Poor Law as magistrates became ex officio guardians on the Board of Guardians, Herrick serving as chairman from 1850. The ownership of land conferred great political power. The most substantial landowner in the Barrow Union, W.A. Pochin, was High Sheriff of the County while E.B. Faraham who owned much of Quorn, was a member of Parliament. At a time when the authority of the Church was being challenged in the cities, the influence of the Church of England clergy in the countryside remained considerable. They controlled the vestry and played a prominent part as guardians in the administration of poor relief and as magistrates in the administration of justice. They were often related to the gentry by birth.\textsuperscript{3} As G.M. Young wrote, "socially by their university education and their relations with the gentry, the clergy as a body stood in a class apart".\textsuperscript{4} In 1846, in Barrow Union clergymen were lords of the manor of several parishes and substantial landowners.\textsuperscript{5} Several were related to the gentry\textsuperscript{6} and three served as magistrates and played an active part as ex officio guardians of the Barrow Union.\textsuperscript{7} The larger farmers also played an influential role in the life of the community as substantial employers of labour.

\textsuperscript{1} Lord of the manor of Quorn, Swinland, Thurnaston and owner of most of Cropston.

\textsuperscript{2} Lord of the manor of Woodhouse and owner of most of the land.

\textsuperscript{3} Horn, \textit{Labouring Life}, op. cit., p. 164.

\textsuperscript{4} G.M. Young, \textit{Portrait of an Age}, p. 77.

\textsuperscript{5} At Ulverscroft and Nether Croxton.

\textsuperscript{6} Rev. Palmer owned land at Thurnaston, was related to Sir J.G. Palmer of Wanlip Hall and served as ex officio guardian.

\textsuperscript{7} Rev. Dudley, Acworth and Martin.
Some were wealthy enough to employ bailiffs, leaving them free for hunting or community activities. William Lee of Barrow-upon-Soar was recorded in the 1851 census as a farmer with one hundred and thirty-four acres, employing eight men. Lee was also a lime burner employing twenty men. The census records reveal the practice, common at the time, for some farmers to combine farming with another occupation. William Lee was also a guardian of the Union. A considerable proportion of the guardians of Barrow Union were substantial farmers like Lee. While not accepted into the gentry, prosperous farmers like Lee nevertheless exerted considerable influence over the lives of the poor.

Substantial landowners rented their land to tenant farmers who employed hired labourers to work the land. There had been a steady decline in small occupying owners in the nineteenth century. The most common form of tenure was an annual agreement or tenancy at will. White records that five farmers rented land from William Herrick, lord of the manor of Woodhouse. ¹

Caird wrote in 1851 that most of the land was held by tenants "from year to year". He noted that the land was "imperfectly cultivated" and explained that the tenants had "no assurance that they will reap the fruits of their improvements as they lacked confidence in the permanence of such tenure". He said of Leicestershire that there was "certainly less sympathy between the two classes of landlord and tenants ... than in any county we have yet visited". ²

Small farmers eked out a precarious existence at the mercy of their

¹. White, op. cit., p. 322.
landlords,\(^1\) working long hours and forced to undertake a variety of jobs. When times were bad, they swelled the ranks of the unemployed and those seeking relief from the guardians. It was common practice in the nineteenth century for wives and children to assist in the running of the farm. Many farms were worked only by the farmer and his family. The 1851 and 1861 censuses showed this was common in the Barrow Union except when the acreage was high or the domestic staff unusually large, indicating the sort of wealthy farmer despised by Cobbett.\(^2\) Wives and children supplemented the income of the farmer\(^3\) and once again the Barrow census records for 1851 and 1861 give many examples of farmers whose wives are described as seamers, binders, framework knitters and lace workers. Many more would not have been recorded.

In order to determine what the employment opportunities in the Union were, a study of the census returns for 1851 and 1861 was undertaken. The intention was also to test the assumption that the Barrow Union was a predominantly rural union and to determine to what extent the hosiery industry provided a source of alternative employment. An assessment was made of both declining and emerging occupations. This study helped to throw further light on the local social structure and the economy from which it derived much of its sustenance and gave some insights into the recipients of this relief, about whom so little is revealed in many studies of the Poor Law.

1. Tenancy at will meant a good market for owners and insecurity for tenants.
3. Wives and daughters took the produce of farms to markets in nearby towns and villages. Thousands of eggs and poultry were taken each week to Leicester from the surrounding villages. P. Horn, Labouring Life, op. cit., p. 2.
It was recognised that census material must be treated with caution. Much of the work performed in the countryside in the nineteenth century was of a seasonal or casual nature. Occupational boundaries moreover were comparatively fluid. With a shortage of employment opportunities, country dwellers had to be flexible about the trades they followed. A number of occupations were also too local or short-lived to be recognised.¹

These factors help to explain why the number of people listed in the 1851 census records for each village as having an occupation was between forty and sixty per cent of the total number in the village. It was also recognised that not all of those listed in an occupation could be assumed to be working in that occupation. Paupers² and children entered as scholars³ were excluded. Women and dependents listed, as for example, "baker's wife" or "farmer's son" were regarded as being employed in that occupation.

The entries were divided into a number of categories. In determining these, the following classification was used. Professionals included doctors, lawyers, Anglican clergymen, land agents and bankers. It also included school teachers although it was recognised that in this period they were barely on the fringe of being regarded as professional.⁴ Hosiery had come to mean almost anything that could be knitted on a machine.

2. There were very few pauper entries, which supports the view that usual, rather than actual employment was recorded.
3. The term is almost meaningless, see Horn, *Labouring Life*, op. cit., p. 109.
For the purposes of this study it was taken to include shirts, gloves as well as stockings and socks.

The distinction between tradesmen and craftsmen was not clear in the nineteenth century, but Mingay's description of the tradesman as having connotations of the dealer or middleman and the craftsman as a skilled worker\(^1\) has been adopted.

10,356 entries were classified and recorded for 1851. Of these, 6,622 were males and 3,734 were females. This data has been summarised in Table 1.1 for the various occupations in the Union. In order to determine whether there was any movement in the occupational structure of the Union, the same analysis was repeated for eighteen villages in 1861. The villages selected represented over three quarters of the total population of the Union. The comparison with the corresponding data for 1851 is given in Table 1.2.

An examination of the census material revealed that in 1851, almost a quarter of the total listed were employed in agriculture,\(^2\) over a third of them males but only a very small proportion of them women. Hosiery provided employment for a larger section of the population, over a third of the total listed, less than a third of the males, but almost forty per cent of the females. The dependence on hosiery at this time was apparent.

There were few other sources of alternative employment. Small numbers of men worked as craftsmen, quarry workers and domestic servants

\(^1\) Mingay, op. cit., p. 169.

\(^2\) The numbers of farmers and agricultural workers are combined: 27% of the males, 1,770 in all were agricultural workers.
TABLE 1.1.

OCCUPATION STRUCTURE OF BARROW UNION - 1851

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
<th>Males and Females</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Per Cent</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Per Cent</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Per Cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professions</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Work</td>
<td>1770</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1833</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosiery</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>1469</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>3472</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boots and Shoes</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labouring</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Service</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>1212</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Ownership</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafts</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lace Making</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarry Work</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>6622</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3734</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10356</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification</td>
<td>Males 1851</td>
<td>Males 1861</td>
<td>Males 1851</td>
<td>Males 1861</td>
<td>Females 1851</td>
<td>Females 1861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
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<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Per Cent</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Per Cent</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Per Cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professions</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Work</td>
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<td>22.7</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosiery</td>
<td>1624</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>1243</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>1175</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boots and Shoes</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labouring</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Service</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Ownership</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafts</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lace Making</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarry Work</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>4853</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4484</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2820</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and in transport, while many women were involved in clothing and lace manufacture and as domestic servants.

When a comparison between the villages examined was made, only quarrying and transport showed an increase in numbers of men employed while there were small increases in the number of women employed as domestic servants and in agriculture. The employment situation in agriculture appeared stagnant. There was a decline in hosiery especially for males. From this examination it may be concluded tentatively that far from providing alternative employment, the hosiery industry was a major employer but employment opportunities were declining. The other sources of alternative employment provided jobs for comparatively small numbers. Agriculture was a substantial employer of males and presumably females on a seasonal basis. The livelihood of the inhabitants of the Barrow Union then was bound up in the fortunes of hosiery and agriculture. (See Tables 1.3 and 1.4).

While there has been a vigorous debate between historians over the standard of living in the nineteenth century, there has been a similar, if less acrimonious debate about the state of agriculture in the same

---

1. There was an increase in women employed in agriculture, but these figures are probably unreliable.


### TABLE 1.3.

**MAJOR AGRICULTURAL VILLAGES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodhouse</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrow</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quorn</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rothley</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. Percentages refer to the village

### TABLE 1.4.

**MAJOR HOSIERY VILLAGES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurmaston S.</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syston</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sileby</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgrave</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrow</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rothley</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anstey</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quorn</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. The percentages refer to each village
Although many of the questions raised have not been resolved, there is some agreement that the agricultural worker experienced distress in the post-war period and began to improve only after the 1850's. Much of this distress has been attributed to the effects of enclosure.

To the Hammonds, the loss of common rights was the loss of "the patrimony of the poor". Enclosure meant "the anchorage of the poor was gone". To E.P. Thompson it was "class robbery". To others, enclosure brought only benefits, bringing more land under cultivation more efficiently and resulting in higher output and additional employment.

E.J. Hobsbawm criticised opponents of enclosure like the Hammonds for "confusing the specific device of the enclosure act with the general phenomenon of agricultural concentration of which it was one aspect". He conceded however, that small farmers, cottagers and agricultural labourers were adversely affected by the process and that where arable land was enclosed and converted to pasture, a marked decrease in

3. J.L. and Barbara Hammond, The Village Labourer, 1760 to 1832, p. 79.
4. Ibid., p. 73.
employment opportunities occurred.¹

Leicestershire was such an area. While wheat, barley and other grain were grown in the county, the system of cultivation had been changing progressively from tillage to pasturage.² White attributed this change to the rapid enclosure in the seventy years prior to 1846. Enclosure was recorded in the villages of the Union as early as 1654 and appears to have been complete by 1791, most taking place in the previous twenty years.³ Sir James Caird reported almost two-thirds under permanent pasture in 1850, although he found arable farms often in conjunction with grazing farms.⁴

Extra impetus may have been given to converting to pasture in Leicestershire especially by the success of breeds of stock developed by Robert Bakewell at Dishley, just north of Loughborough,⁵ but the conservatism of rural areas like Barrow cannot be underestimated. Certainly Caird was not impressed by the level of improvements. He also found rents high and most estates small in comparison with other counties.⁶

Of the 297 farms recorded in the 1851 census, 96 were between 6 and 50 acres, regarded as small farms suitable for dairying and mixed husbandry. Only 11 were over 300 acres, a situation common to west

1. Ibid.
2. White, p. 33.
3. Ibid.
5. White, p. 33.
and midland counties largely given over to pasture. Most were between 100 and 300 acres, the size most common throughout England. Mingay calculated the size of the average farm in England and Wales in 1851 as 111 acres, although he admitted it was "something of a statistical abstraction". The average size of the 297 farms recorded in the Barrow Union in 1851 was calculated and found to be 111.6 acres. A standard deviation of 95 about the mean however revealed how much a statistical abstraction the concept of the average farm size was.

White seemed in no doubt about the effects of enclosure that accompanied conversion to pasture. "A grazing farm is conducted with less cumbrance, requires less daily attention and much fewer labourers and implements than one in tillage", he stated. Conversion to pasture had had "an evident tendency to diminish human employment".

Agricultural activity was spread throughout the entire region, but the areas of highest concentration are given in Table 1.4.

Raphael Samuel described the agricultural labourer, especially between 1830 and 1872 as "a curiously anonymous figure in spite of the attention given to agriculture, Speenhamland and Captain Swing". Although they made up over a quarter of the males recorded in the 1851 census in Barrow Union, little is known of the agricultural labourers.

3. Ibid.
4. White, p. 34.
5. Samuel, op. cit., p. 3.
The census records show the custom of living-in continued in the area. An over-supply of labour had led to a decline in the practice, except for pastoral areas.¹ Skilled agricultural workers, for example, shepherds, carters and ploughmen and dairymaids frequently lived with their employers. They were often hired by the year and were paid for their skills.²

Day labourers led a more precarious existence. They could be employed by the day, week, month or merely by the task. Although conversion to pasture was regarded as reducing the demand for labour, the continued existence of arable farms provided employment especially at peak periods of haymaking and harvest time. There were also peak periods on pastoral farms with extra work required at, for example, lambing and shearing times. Although as Samuel claimed, the agricultural revolution demanded a "prodigious number of hands",³ the demand was erratic as the frequent reports in the Leicester press and appeals from the Barrow Union for permission to allow outdoor relief show. Day labourers were constantly at the mercy of the seasons, the weather, the unpredictable demands of landowners and their health.

Leicestershire did not witness the widespread disturbances such as those which took place in the southern and eastern counties⁴ and later Wales⁵ in the post-war period. Outbreaks of violence tended to occur

1. Ibid., p. 11.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. E.J. Hobsbawm and George Rudé, Captain Swing, passim.
5. D. Williams, The Rebecca Riots, passim.
in crop growing low-wage areas with no alternative employment.

The industrial northern and mainly pastoral midland counties were regarded as high wage areas and comparatively free of the widespread unemployment and poverty that had produced violence in the south among agricultural workers.\(^1\) The existence of alternative employment is claimed to have had the effect of raising wages. Nearby Nottinghamshire is quoted as an example of a semi-industrialised and therefore high wage county.\(^2\) Although the hosiery industry provided a source of alternative employment in the Barrow Union, it was over-crowded, largely domestic and in this period in a state of decline.

Because of the low and intermittent wages of agricultural labourers, the earnings of wives and children were essential. Earnings were built up by all members of the family group, rather than relying on a single wage, as records of relief in the Barrow Union minute books show. Some women were employed as live-in farm servants, working for the farmer's wife and helping out with haymaking and harvest. The census records show many of these were employed as dairy maids. Live-in servants, while working long hours, were probably better fed, housed and paid.

Most of the work done by women was of a casual seasonal nature, which helps to explain the small numbers of women recorded in agriculture in the census records. Piece work was a valuable addition to the family income, especially at harvest time.

---Women were employed in the roughest, if not the heaviest agricultural

\(^1\) Hobsbawm and Ruđē, op. cit., pp. 140-48.

\(^2\) Chambers and Mingay, op. cit., p. 137.
work, hoeing, spudding, stone gathering and, as Samuel describes it as "human weed killers". 1 Until the passing of the Gang Act of 1867, large groups of women and children carried out these tasks under the supervision of an overseer. 2 Hasbach wrote that "English agriculture only attained that peculiar stamp of neatness and cleanliness which used to strike the continental observer by annexing the underpaid labour of thousands of children". 3 The records of the Barrow Union show that children also contributed to the earnings of the family by working as ploughboys, cowboys, tending animals and as bird scarers. Schooling took a secondary place to adding a small increment to the family's income. 4

William White wrote in 1846, "If the ratio of persons employed constitute a ground of decision, Leicestershire is essentially a manufacturing county". 5 In the Barrow Union, the largest proportion involved in manufacturing was in the hosiery industry. The 1851 census shows over a third of those listed with an occupation were involved in the hosiery industry. 6 (See Table 1.1). White describes the "monotonous click clack of the stocking frame" 7 heard in the West Goscote Hundred


5. White, p. 269.

6. 3,472 people, 30% of the males, and 39% of the females listed.

7. Ibid., p. 3.
where many parishes of the Barrow Union were found. Occupations tended to be concentrated in certain areas. (See Fig. 1.3). Hosiery in the Barrow Union was found mainly in the largest villages, (see Table 1.4) closest to the main hosiery centres of Leicester and Loughborough.

In the period under consideration, the hosiery industry was undergoing severe difficulties. The loss of military contracts when war with France ended had led to widespread redundancy among framework knitters. The level of wages had been "practically stationary for about 30 years". In 1838 the wages of framework knitters in Leicester fell to an average of seven shillings for a full week's work. Framework knitting was conducted as a domestic industry, often merely supplementing meagre incomes from another source, usually agriculture. It was a simple skill to acquire, thus tempting the unskilled and unemployed into its ranks. The number of workers far exceeded the demand and the situation was aggravated further by the tendency of framework knitters to train their children in an attempt to boost the family income. Certainly the census records for the Barrow Union reveal whole families listed as framework knitters.

There were, moreover, a number of abuses endemic to the trade. The independence of the framework knitter was undermined by the widespread custom of frame-letting. By the middle of the nineteenth century personal ownership of frames was almost non-existent. Even those who owned frames

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2. A. Briggs, Chartist Studies, p. 100.
3. For conditions for female domestic workers, see I. Pinchbeck, op. cit., pp. 235-239.
were forced to rent in order to guarantee a supply of work.

The framework knitter thus was at the mercy of the middle men. These were of three types. The putter-out carried yarn to the knitters to be made up in their own homes or workshops. The knitters were paid warehouse rates, the putters-out "taking in charges". The undertaker or master stockinger contracted with the large hosiers to supply hose and then put out the work to a number of framework knitters. The bag hosier had his own yarn made up by knitters and marketed the finished goods himself.¹ Some villages in Barrow Union, like Mountsorrel, were dominated by middle men although some, including Anstey and Thurcaston, both close to the borough managed to remain independent.²

Abuses such as truck, stinting and price-cutting further increased the difficulties being experienced by the knitters.³ Felkin gives the example of a man who grew so rich of the proceeds of truck that he hunted with the Quorn hounds.⁴ Stinting kept the framework knitter paying rent for his frame even when his supply of work was restricted⁵ and price cutting had the effect of further depressing the physical conditions under which framework knitters worked and their own physical well-being in a way so graphically described in the Commission into the Condition

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2. Ibid.
5. V.C.H. Leics, p. 11.
of Framework Knitters.¹

The hosiery industry was susceptible to seasonal variations. There were frequent references in the local press to periods of special stress in the Leicestershire hosiery industry.² The winters of 1839 to 1842 were especially bad. It was also vulnerable to changes in fashion and the increasing demand for unfashioned stockings on wide frames eventually resulted in a gradual move away from the rural villages like those of the Barrow Union into the growing factories.

A comparison of the numbers engaged in the hosiery industry in eighteen villages in the Union in 1851 and 1861 revealed a decline for both males and females.³ These were the villages which had been most heavily involved in the hosiery industry in 1851.

A fruitful source of alternative employment for the inhabitants of the Union was domestic service. The nineteenth-century has been described as "the hey-day of the domestic servant".⁴ The employment of domestic staff was a sign of respectability and an indicator of social status. A stately home was also a symbol of status in Victorian times and there were many in the area. William Herrick, lord of the manor of Woodhouse had been rebuilding Beaumanor for the past six years "in the Elizabethan style" and on a much larger scale.⁵ It would be "one of

¹ Report of the Commissioner appointed to inquire into the condition of Framework Knitters, H.C. 1845, XV Appendix on Leicestershire (618).
³ From 34% to 27% for males and from 42% to 38% for females. The actual number of males employed was larger: 2,003 men and 1,469 women.
⁴ P. Horn, The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant, p. 1.
⁵ White, p. 324.
the most extensive and splendid mansions in the county when complete",\(^1\) White claimed. It was the third house on the site and was surrounded by an extensive park of oak, ash and elm. Sir George John Danvers had completed building Swithland Hall, "an elegant mansion on a commanding eminence in a well-wooded park"\(^2\) in 1839. Such substantial residences required a large staff of servants to maintain them. At Beaumanor, William Herrick employed a staff comprising a housekeeper, a lady's maid, three housemaids, a laundry maid, a dairy maid, two kitchen girls, two footmen, a coachman and two grooms.

The aristocracy and the gentry employed an extensive staff of domestic servants. The Anglican clergy who by virtue of their education, birth and connections were listed in directories like White's with the nobility and gentry as having "seats" often employed a considerable staff of domestic servants. The rector of Swithland, Mr. Edward Paget, employed a butler, a cook, a nurse, a nurserymaid, a housemaid and a gardener and his wife.

There was an increase in the numbers of those who could afford domestic staff. Domestic servants, both male and female were employed by substantial farmers, prosperous tradesmen and the small group of inhabitants of the Barrow Union who could be described as professional, mainly lawyers and doctors. The census records reveal many charwomen or laundresses who were often employed part-time. Girls were frequently recruited as servants from the workhouse and the minute books reveal that this practice was widely used in the Union.

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
Although domestic service was the preserve of women, there was an increase in employment of men as outdoor domestic servants. It was a mark of social distinction to employ a gardener and to own a carriage. The census records show many coachmen, grooms, as well as indoor servants in the more imposing stately homes.

Organised fox hunting had developed in Leicestershire in the 1770's. Its undulating pasture-land with few trees made it suitable for hunting and Quorn had become a popular centre of the sport, the basis of the famous Quorn hunt. Sir Richard Sutton captain in the Army and hunt master employed a large collection of servants at "The Hall" in Quorn: a cook, governess, housekeeper, a lady's maid, a butler, twelve general house servants, an under butler, three footmen and an usher as well as huntsmen, whippers-in, stable helpers, stud-grooms and kennel men. Quorndon Hall only occupied for the hunting season, had its large contingent of domestic servants. The census enumerators' books tell of the impact of the Quorn on the populace, but hunting like so many of the occupations available to the people of the Union was seasonal.

Quarrying was one industry where employment showed an increase in the Barrow Union. Granite, slate and lime were found in considerable quantities in a number of villages. (See Table 1.5). The presence of a good turnpike road, a river made navigable at the end of the eighteenth century, and after 1840, the Midland Counties Railway, guaranteed employment to some of the abundant supply of labour.

2. Census records.
3. White, p. 320.
### Table 1.5.

**Major Quarrying Villages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>1851 Number</th>
<th>1851 Per cent</th>
<th>1861 Number</th>
<th>1861 Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barrow-upon-Soar</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountsorrel North</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountsorrel South</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quorn</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rothley</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swithland</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. Percentages refer to the village

The quarrying of the granite of Mountsorrel was stimulated by the growing use of broken stone for macadam road surfaces.¹ The quarries supplied the Barrow workhouse with stone for breaking up by paupers. In 1830, a Scotsman, Jackson who had leased a number of Mountsorrel quarries, introduced a number of fellow Scots skilled in dressing granite and presumably able to work the "intractable" Mountsorrel variety.² There was a considerable increase in the use of dressed granite for building purposes and for the making of paving setts and kerb stones,³ many of

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1. V.C.H. Leics., p. 43.
2. Ibid.
3. Setts from Leicestershire were used widely in the manufacturing towns of the Midlands and the West Riding of Yorkshire and in London in the mid-nineteenth century.
which are still visible in the streets of Mountsorrel today. For many years, sett making was a highly skilled craft practised in the Mountsorrel and surrounding district. Considerable expansion occurred after John Martin took over Jackson's lease in 1844.¹ By 1851, one hundred and sixty-five men were employed by the Mountsorrel quarries.

Lime-stone was found at Barrow-upon-Soar, according to White "in great abundance" and "was extensively got and burnt".² It was greatly valued as a fertiliser and as a cement, being used in the building of docks, bridges and "in lining water cisterns instead of lead".³ Great quantities were exported to Holland. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the lime-stone quarries were owned and worked by a number of farmers.⁴ By 1851, sixty-seven of employed males in Barrow-upon-Soar Union were listed as quarry workers and by 1861, the number had increased considerably to one hundred and seven.⁵ The existence of a railway station and "a navigation" avoiding "by straight cut the circuitous reach of the Soar"⁶ helps to explain the continuation and growth in the numbers of those employed in the Barrow-upon-Soar lime quarries.

The quarrying of slate was another source of employment in the area. Slate was found in a limited area around Swithland and Woodhouse Eaves. It was used mainly for roofing but also for guttering, water troughs,

². White, p. 311.
³. Ibid., p. 312.
⁴. V.C.H. Leics., p. 43.
⁵. Census records.
⁶. White, p. 312.
weights for cheese presses and tomb stones. The rough stone was widely used in stone wailing.¹

The advent of the railway, making the transport of bulky goods like slate economical, had an adverse effect on the slate industry. Welsh slates, cheaper and lighter, replaced the Swithland variety.² The slate quarries only provided employment for eleven men in Swithland and Woodhouse Eaves in 1851. The number had not increased in 1861 and the quarries finally closed in 1887.³

Although not a substantial employer of labour, the presence of the quarrying industry in some of the villages of the Barrow Union provided an increasing number of males with an alternative to work in agriculture and the hosiery industry. It was one of the few industries in the Union to witness such a growth.

Transport was also responsible for an increasing number of jobs. The Soar Navigation was described as "almost phenomenally prosperous".⁴ The Soar had been made navigable to Loughborough in 1777 in the more inexpensive pre-war period.⁵ With the completion of the Leicester Navigation from Loughborough to Leicester in 1794 and its linking with the Union, Grand Union and Grand Junction Canals, it became "a main link in a great arterial chain of waterways".⁶ Leicestershire was linked

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2. Ibid.
3. V.C.H. Leics., p. 44.
6. Ibid.
with London and the productive areas of the country. Mathias claims the "local canal system was the most important single step in opening up the whole central industrial region and the Midland coalfield to the major ports on all sides of the island".¹ Heavy goods, coal, lime, granite and the raw materials and finished products from the hosiery industry could be easily transported.

The villages of Barrow Union, through many of which the Leicester Navigation flowed, benefited from the cheap and convenient transport of their own products and from the ancillary jobs the canal created. Boatmen and wharf hands appeared in census returns for canal side villages. A boat owner, a boat builder and a lock keeper are mentioned by White in Barrow-upon-Soar in 1846. Waggoners, carriers, carters and wheelwrights were also by-products of the canal system, the quarrying industry no doubt making heavy demands on their services.

With the opening of the Midland Counties Railway, canal-generated jobs inevitably declined as canals became less profitable. Similarly the growing preoccupation with railways appears to have contributed to the neglect of the once excellent turnpike road² which passed through Loughborough and the Barrow Union en route from the northern counties of Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire to Leicester and London. The "macadamising" process had been used on this road for fifty years and White claimed, "Mr. Macadam has no claim to the invention".³ The quarry workers of Mountsorrel, Quorn and Rothley, and the lime workers of

2. White, p. 33.
3. Ibid.
Barrow-upon-Soar who had supplied materials for the turnpike and the labourers who had constructed and maintained it were the casualties.

The numbers employed in transport in the Barrow Union showed a considerable increase from ninety-two in all the villages in 1851 to one hundred and eighty men in the eighteen villages surveyed in 1861.

The increase coincided with the introduction and development of the railway system in the Union. In 1833 the Midland Counties Railway was formed and in May 1840 the section of line from the Trent junction to Leicester was opened, bringing Leicester into rail connection with London, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and York.¹

Heavy freight such as granite, coal and limestone and the raw materials and finished products of the hosiery industry could be transported more quickly and economically. The railways served as major outlets for farm commodities and provided a means of obtaining supplies of fertiliser and farm equipment. Railways brought into the countryside cheaper coal, factory made goods, imported products and newspapers.²

The Midland Counties Railways Company was a pioneer in excursion trains; Thomas Cook, founder of the famous travel firm ran the first excursion train from Leicester to Loughborough in 1841 at a return fare of one shilling.³ The poorest class of villagers, the farm labourers however, only began to enjoy the benefits of such travel towards the end of the

2. White, p. 32. White gives an example of the heavy traffic on the line. In an eleven week period from July to September in 1840, the number of passengers was 117,218 and the takings were £19,737.16.10. Trains were at that time running six times a day between Nottingham and Derby.
century when wages had risen and fares had reduced.

Employment prospects were enhanced by the boom in railway construction. Many navvies were employed, and once the railways were built, railway staff was recruited and trained. There were railway stations at Barrow-upon-Soar, Sileby and Syston. In the census records are entered station masters, railway clerks and railway servants and "railway portsmen". Railway employees were among the better paid workers in the nineteenth century. While railways brought undeniable benefits to rural communities like Barrow, they also helped to bring about the collapse of old rural industries.

Several villages in the Barrow Union could be described as industrial villages, especially those concerned predominantly with quarrying and hosiery. There was evidence of specialisation in other trades, however. The presence in 1861 of twenty-nine butchers in Syston, some described as "tripe dressers" is one example. In Syston there were also a number of rope makers and netters. In Thurmaston North in 1861, whole families were engaged in glove making; in Barrow-upon-Soar, Mountsorrel South and Quorn there was a high concentration of women employed making lace. They were classified as lace makers, runners, wrappers, drawers and embroiderers. Some were specifically mentioned as being "at factory". The others no doubt were supplementing the family income at home.

A variety of crafts was still practised in the villages of the Union.

2. The census records show the factory at Quorn employed thirty-one men, sixteen boys, forty-one women and twenty-two girls.
Well into the nineteenth century villages like those in the Barrow Union were largely self-sufficient. An examination of the census records for 1851 for Quorn illustrates this. A number of males were employed in the building trade, including nine bricklayers, thirteen carpenters and several joiners. There were four saddlers, eight blacksmiths, five tanners, two wheelwrights and two waggoners. There were five bakers, ten butchers and nine tailors, twelve shoe-makers, five tramsmiths, eleven nailmakers and two wooden dish and bowl makers. In addition there was a miller, a sinker maker, an iron founder, a druggist, a maltster, a woolcomber, a needle maker, a watch and clock maker and one chair bottomer. Some craftsmen plied several trades, for example the maltster at Quorn was also an innkeeper. In Sileby the miller was a baker as well as a grocer. Some masters employed several craftsmen and a number of apprentices. Shoe-makers in Quorn employed several cordwainers; a tailor had four apprentices, a tanner employed two men and a boy. One of the nailmakers employed five men.

At a time when the decline of the English village is predicted and the lack of facilities is deplored, it is of interest to note that even the small village of Cossington had a butcher, a miller, a wheelwright, a blacksmith, a tailor, a dressmaker, a shoemaker and a straw bonnet maker.

There was a steady decline in the numbers of rural craftsmen, however, throughout the nineteenth century. Tradesmen showed an increase over the period. Trade was concentrated in the seven largest villages.²

1. 8% of the males recorded in the 1851 census could be described as craftsmen.

2. For an account of rural crafts, see P. Horn, Labouring Life, op. cit., pp. 90-104.
In 1851, Barrow-upon-Soar had several clothiers, grocers, drapers and coal dealers. By 1861 the number engaged in trade in Barrow-upon-Soar had increased at the apparent expense of all the other villages except Sileby.

The census records reveal a decline in the proportion of the population employed as craftsmen. The 1861 census records show new occupations appearing: at Syston some machinists, engineers, a gasman and a lamplighter. They could hardly compensate for the loss of the old-established and traditional crafts.

A social and economic study of the region revealed the existence in the Barrow Union of the traditional "establishment" of gentry and clergy. Their extensive ownership of land gave them control over the employment of the inhabitants of Barrow Union, especially in agriculture and domestic service. As rate-payers and often ex officio and elected guardians, their influence was paramount.

A considerable proportion of the inhabitants of the Union worked in agriculture, although the season and casual nature of the work, especially for women, made the exact proportion difficult to determine. Although there was some disagreement among contemporary observers about the results of enclosure and conversion to pasture, it was obvious that problems of underemployment and unemployment in agriculture existed, if not to the extent that had caused disturbances in the southern arable regions.

Most of the people of Barrow Union worked in hosiery, but it remained a domestic industry with its own problems and was both declining in the period studied and subject to recurrent crises. There were emerging
industries, like quarrying and transport, but the numbers involved were comparatively small.

Despite the unreliability of employment for the poorer section of the Barrow Union's population, there were open to them additional sources of sustenance. Payment in kind was common, although this was open to abuse. The cultivation of cottage gardens and the keeping of live-stock, especially a pig, may have provided a valuable addition to the family's meagre resources.

The reports in the local press of frequent appearances before the magistrates of the inhabitants of Barrow Union for poaching offences suggest another way in which attempts were made to supplement irregular incomes and inadequate diets.

Allotments were sometimes granted to compensate for the loss or lack of land and to supplement wages. Fifty-three acres in Belgrave had been allotted in 1654 at enclosure. In 1846, six acres were cultivated as small gardens rent free by the poor, with the rest used to graze their stock on payment of four shillings a year. At Rothley, Thomas Paget, Esq. let twenty acres in small allotments to the "industrious poor" at low rents while at Quorn an allotment society had been formed, renting garden plots at low rents. Allotment societies for the poor were supported by some land owners like Paget and sometimes the clergy.

Cobbett described these as "schemes for coaxing them by letting them have bits of land".

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1. See Flora Thompson, Lark Rise to Candleford, pp. 17-33.
2. White gives these details in his section on each village.
The minute books of the Union revealed the existence of sick and benefit societies. These were often unreliable and hardly worth the sacrifice involved in making payments. The payments received, usually about seven shillings per week can hardly have been adequate, judging by the numbers receiving payments who still applied for relief.

While not in any way approaching the savage criticisms made by Engels of living conditions in Manchester, Cobbett's description of housing in Leicestershire casts doubt on any illusion that rural life might be idyllic for most of the population. He was writing in his characteristically truculent vein before the formation of the Barrow Union, but his comments could apply equally to this period.

"See the Person's house, large and in the midst of pleasure gardens and then look at the miserable sheds in which the labourers reside", Cobbett wrote, "Our fore-fathers built abbeys, priories and churches ... gaols and treadmills and dungeons have now become the most striking edifices in every county". He could well have been describing the workhouse about to be erected in the Barrow Union.

While a majority of the inhabitants in the Barrow Union were employed in hosiery, this was largely a domestic industry often supplementary to agriculture in which a significant proportion of the population was employed, although the number was probably under-estimated because of the casual and seasonal nature of much of the work. A traditional establishment further underlined the rural nature of the Union. The most likely recipients of relief were those employed in agriculture and hosiery, both undergoing recession and recurrent crises.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RECEPTION OF THE NEW POOR LAW

There was considerable opposition to the New Poor Law especially in the industrialised north. In the West Riding of Yorkshire, opposition to the newly established central authority was "fiercest and most vocal". In Lancashire, while not as coherent or as violent, the opposition to the New Poor Law was nevertheless considerable. In none of the seven unions in the north-east of Lancashire was there "any general welcome".

While the Anti-Poor Law movement was strong in the industrialised West Riding of Yorkshire however, it was virtually non-existent in predominantly agricultural East Yorkshire. In comparison with the industrialised north, the introduction of the New Poor Law into rural areas proceeded relatively smoothly. There were some disturbances, but these usually occurred after the formation of the union.

5. N. Hopkin, The Old and the New Poor Law in East Yorkshire, M.Phil. 1968, pp. 413-515.
6. Digby, "The Rural Poor Law", in Fraser, op. cit., p. 151.
The introduction of the New Poor Law into Leicestershire in 1836 was cautious and opposition to it did not become in any way serious until the end of 1837. The campaign against the New Poor Law was never as violent as in the North. Anti-Poor feeling, however, was widely reported in the local press, the three Leicester papers, The Leicester Journal, the Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury, all giving extensive coverage to the petition sent to Parliament from Leicester and carrying frequent excerpts of Anti-Poor Law propaganda from other newspapers. Correspondence from John Markham, the most prominent of the Leicester Poor Law opponents and editorials hostile to the New Poor Law appeared regularly.

Little news of Loughborough and even less of the Barrow Union appeared in the Leicester press, apart from advertisements connected with the building and operation of their respective workhouses. As a rural Union, it might be assumed that Barrow resembled the pattern in other rural areas where there was little opposition, at least initially, to the introduction of the New Poor Law, rather than the industrialised north where opposition often preceded even the preliminary step of electing guardians. Barrow Union however, was largely concerned with hosiery manufacture as the census records revealed and the hosiery industry was undergoing a period of serious depression at the time when the New Poor

2. Leicester Chronicle 24/2/38.
3. Patterson, op. cit., p. 295.
4. Digby, "The Rural Poor Law", in Fraser, op. cit., p. 151.
Law was being introduced into the region. Both Leicester and Loughborough, like the West Riding of Yorkshire, had a "tradition of violence stretching back to the Luddite Riots of the early nineteenth century". Both of these towns witnessed anti-Poor Law activity. Asa Briggs, writing of the later considerable Chartist activity in both towns described "the ties of friendship and family and similar conditions of employment" between them and the geography which "conspired to further the alliance, for they were separated by only twelve miles of good turnpike". Several villages of the Barrow Union were found on this turnpike road or within reach of it. In spite of this, Barrow Union was still a rural area where "the word of the squire and the parson went virtually unchallenged". It is therefore of interest to investigate the extent of any anti-Poor Law activity in the Union.

Loughborough and surrounding districts had a voice during the period when the New Poor Law was being introduced into the area, in the Loughborough Telegraph. Certainly the Loughborough Telegraph reported on the activities of the inhabitants of the villages making up the Barrow Union.  

3. Ibid.  
5. The Loughborough Telegraph, full title the Loughborough Telegraph and Advertiser for Church and State, commenced publication on the 6th January, 1837 and ran until the 15th July, of that year. It then became known as the Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Telegraph in what appeared to be a bid for wider readership, although the content seemed much the same as before. It in turn ceased publication on 28th December, 1839.

The role of the provincial press in the nineteenth century is dealt with in Rose, D.Phil., op. cit., pp. 64-5. See also G.A. Cranfield, The Press and Society, from Caxton to Northcliffe, pp. 178-203.
Union. These activities mostly consisted of appearances of residents of the Union in the Loughborough Police reports, on charges of poaching, stealing or assault. Newspapers were expensive and few were able to read but it seems reasonable to assume that the Loughborough Telegraph circulated amongst the literate of the villages comprising the Barrow Union and may have both reflected and influenced public opinion on the New Poor Law.

Its conservative stance was immediately apparent. The Telegraph stated in its first editorial that it was an "organ for the promulgation of conservative opinions". Its attitude to the New Poor Law reflected these opinions. Extensive reports were published of the speeches of John Walter and John Fielden in the debate in the House of Commons on the appointment of a committee to inquire into the Poor Law Amendment Act. While commending the stance taken by Walter and Fielden against the New Poor Law, however, an editorial castigated Fielden for daring to say "he would encourage men to resist the law which has received the sanction of Parliament". This was a fairly typical Tory reaction, antipathy to the principle behind a law but an equal antipathy to those who sought to break the law, however much despised.

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1. Loughborough Telegraph 6/1/37.

2. John Walter, M.P. for Berkshire, proprietor of "The Times" and a consistent critic of the New Poor Law.

3. John Fielden of Todmorden, a magistrate and prominent opponent of the New Poor Law.


Its attitude to the New Poor Law, some two months later, was less equivocal. The Telegraph gave its reasons for having said "little or nothing"\(^1\) on the subject while the outcry throughout the land was loud and long. The editor had not been satisfied with the Old Poor Law and had wished to see if the new one worked better. While critical of the supreme power vested in the Government's Commissioners, the paper had placed great hope in the reserve powers of the guardians and the possibility of the repeal of the Poor Law Amendment Act. Now, however, the editorial declaimed, "the cloven foot is manifest".\(^2\) The justification for this change of heart was given; the numerous examples of the abuse of power of the Poor Law Commissioners appearing in The Times, and more to the point, the high handed manner on the part of Assistant Commissioner Stevens, that "creature in office"\(^3\) as he was described.

Barrow Union was part of Mr. Stevens' responsibility, as an Assistant Commissioner from the beginning of 1837 to the end of 1838.\(^4\) There had been difficulties from the outset in establishing the new Union. In a letter to the Poor Law Commission, he said of the guardians, "I consider them killed", but he added, "it is the most unpleasant board I have yet met in these parts, a very trifle would put them into a state of fixed passive resistance or rather it takes a great deal of labour to get them out of that state".\(^5\)

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. For an account of the Assistant Commissioner's initial procedures, see Edsall, op. cit., p. 26.
5. MH 32/68, 31/1/37.
It had been proposed that Loughborough should be included in the new Barrow Union, with the workhouse at Barrow-upon-Soar. Barrow had refused to form a union with Loughborough unless the old poor house at Barrow was purchased. As Mr. Paget, the chairman at the meeting called to discuss the proposal put it, Barrow, was "independent of the Poor Law Commissioners", whereas the Commissioners "had a compulsory power over Loughborough". The problem was that Barrow was a Gilbert Union and the Poor Law Amendment Act had "given no power to the Poor Law Commission to dissolve Incorporations of parishes formed under Gilbert's Act".

The Commissioners had, in the words of the Loughborough Telegraph, "resorted to the expedient of giving Loughborough in as a bonus without the knowledge or consent of its parish authorities". To make the "rising town" of Loughborough, containing 10,800 inhabitants "an attache to a little village some three mile distant (was) incongruous and utterly absurd" the Telegraph complained.

It was common practice for rural unions to include an urban element and for a market town like Loughborough to be included in such a rural union. The formation of these new and artificial units however, frequently provoked local hostility such as occurred in the formation of

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. The population of Barrow-upon-Soar in 1841 was 1,841.
the Barrow Union. The extent of the ill feeling aroused by this high-handedness was evident from the lengthy report of a meeting convened by the parish officers and Select Vestry of Loughborough to discuss the proposal. There was unanimous opposition from Conservatives, Whigs and Radicals.

At this meeting, further objections were raised. First, there was no surgeon at Barrow to attend to the poor. Barrow was at the extreme point of the Union and if the Poor Law Commissioners' plan were to be implemented, it would involve dragging paupers from outlying villages through Loughborough. It was claimed that there had been several cases of the poor dying of starvation rather than enter "those bastilles".

The meeting decided to petition the House of Commons to direct the Poor Law Commission to allow the workhouse for Loughborough Union to be in a separate Union of Loughborough.

It was obvious that the Assistant Commissioner had mishandled the situation. The "overbearing tactlessness of the officials" was a frequent cause of Anti-Poor Law feeling and in this respect, Mr. Stevens appeared guilty.

The parish of Loughborough, upon protesting, had been told by Mr. Stevens that "they had no choice, as the Union had been determined

2. Ward, J.T., Chartism, p. 68 describes the Anti-Poor Law movement as "a curious alliance at once Tory, Anglican and traditionalist and proletarian".
upon". On another occasion Mr. Stevens was reported to have stated, "I can't help it; if all the twenty six parishes concurred in petitioning, it would not alter my opinion one iota". The Assistant Commissioner was also accused of deliberately excluding Loughborough from a meeting of overseers of parishes to discuss the issue.

It was small wonder that Mr. Pochin, Esq. elicited "loud and continued applause" from his audience when he reminded them that Mr. Stevens "had out of the pockets of the people 700 shillings a year besides travelling expenses", that he was "only a servant of the Government" and that he was not to "sway over or trample upon the rights and liberties of the honest people of Loughborough".

This brush with the central authority in the person of Mr. Stevens, the Assistant Commissioner, gave rise to some expressions of dislike for the New Poor Law. The Poor Law Amendment Act was described as "anything but an English one" and "the most disgraceful and villainous law that ever was passed in this country". The Poor Law Commissioners were described as "the masters of misrule".

The problem of dissolving the Gilbert Union continued. Parishes incorporated under Gilbert's Act could not be regrouped into new unions without the consent of a majority of the guardians. Some of the Barrow

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
Guardians still refused to dissolve the Union voluntarily and although all but three eventually agreed to the dissolution, an atmosphere of mistrust prevailed. "Mr. Hall's promises never came true", the Board had complained to Mr. Stevens, "no more will yours. He told us that we should be dissolved by Act of Parliament in three monthly but the Act has not passed yet and never will."\(^1\)

Mr. Stevens resorted to a combination of threats and cajolery in an attempt to win the Guardians over. "I will engage to keep them in good humour with myself all the time and make them work to some purpose",\(^2\) he wrote to the Poor Law Commission. He obviously had similar problems with other unions. "Pray give me clear directions about such cases", he later urged, "I fear I have several of them in the North".\(^3\) He enclosed a copy of a letter which he had had printed for the Barrow Union and which he now sought permission to use for other troublesome unions. "It has the effect", he wrote, "of exciting a sort of indefinite apprehension in the minds of the stupid Guardians before a meeting and makes them more manageable at the meeting".\(^4\)

Mr. Stevens found the rules invaluable, especially the fifteenth Clause, requiring the Commission to supply statistical information to the Government\(^5\) and therefore making necessary the imposition on all Unions

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1. MH 32/68 8/2/37. Mr. Hall was the previous Assistant Commissioner.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 10/2/37.
4. Ibid.
5. The boards of guardians were responsible for putting into operation the Act for the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages. T. Mackay, Vol. III, G. Nicholls, A History of the English Poor Law, p. 250.
of "as nearly similar forms of accounts as their differing cases will allow".\(^1\) This, he wrote, "takes off the spiteful appearance of the 'Pulverizer' and by digressing from the subject a little to show them how such statistical information may be brought to bear upon future legislation, the guardians are to be persuaded that the ends desired are great and national and not as they would first imagine, the demolition of their own particular fabric by a side blow".\(^2\)

The Assistant Commissioner had followed the procedures which had been found successful in introducing the New Poor Law in the South. He had met the "respectable" inhabitants of the proposed Union to test local feeling, but his attempts to incorporate Loughborough, the judicial centre and market town of the area into the new union while using the old Gilbert Union poorhouse at Barrow-upon-Soar had foundered in the face of opposition from the local populace. He had also found the existence of the Gilbert Union an impediment to his work, as had been the case in so many other unions.\(^3\) As a result, Loughborough and Barrow were the last of the unions to be formed in Leicestershire.\(^4\)

When the Barrow Union was formed, it was without the "rising town" of Loughborough, which had its own union and workhouse. The Barrow Union was left with the old poorhouse, which in a very short time was found to be inadequate for the purposes of the Union and had to be replaced. It

\(^1\) MH32/68 31/1/37.

\(^2\) Ibid.


\(^4\) Loughborough Union was formed on 16th August, 1837 and Barrow Union 17th August, 1837.
took until 1845 to dispose of it.

It is obvious from a study of the local press and the Assistant Commissioner's correspondence with the Poor Law Commission that, if there was not the opposition found in the industrial north, there was at least considerable difficulty in introducing the New Poor Law into the Barrow Union. Loughborough's concern for its status as a "rising town", Barrow's resistance to the dissolution of its Gilbert Union and Mr. Stevens' tactlessness strained relations with the Poor Law Commission and forced Mr. Stevens and the Poor Law Commission to proceed with caution.

Any opposition to the New Poor Law so far reported in the local press had been from those responsible ultimately for the introduction, financing or administering of the New Poor Law. Working class opposition to the New Poor Law broke out in the newly formed Loughborough Union at the end of 1837. A riot had occurred at Shepshed on the 5th December, 1837. At the trial of those involved, the counsel for the prosecution stated that the riot "arose from some discontent in the minds of the individuals assembled with respect to the New Poor Law or rather its operation".

The Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Telegraph and Advertiser for the Midland counties had superseded the Loughborough Telegraph. An editorial published in the Leicestershire Telegraph soon after the riot had, while lamenting the "unhappy occurrences" at Shepshed, conceded that the New Poor Law had commenced "in a trying time".

1. The Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Telegraph and Advertiser for the Midland counties, 24/3/38.
2. Subsequently referred to as the Leicestershire Telegraph.
3. Ibid., 9/12/37.
expressing sympathy with the destitute and unemployed, the editorial warned against lawlessness and violence, "no good can possibly result from these foolish and lawless proceedings", it counselled in a familiar Tory tone. While the new act pressed "too heavily upon the poor", it was not so "radically bad as not to be made good and effective by the amendments of some of its provisions".  

The guardians of Loughborough Union and neighbouring districts should therefore exercise what little discretionary power remained to them, "though we are convinced not half sufficient", leniently in this time of distress. "Petitions should be sent to both Houses of Parliament for a reconsideration of the objectionable portions of the Act".  

A petition was sent to the House of Commons from the inhabitants of Loughborough and neighbourhood, drawing attention to the "present unsettled state of those places, arising from the operation of the New Poor Law Act" and calling for its amendment or repeal. 

Throughout 1838, articles critical of the New Poor Law, reprinted from the provincial as well as national press, appeared in the Leicestershire Telegraph. Anti-Poor Law meetings and the activities of the leading protagonists in the Anti-Poor Law movement and accounts of abuses and scandals were also widely reported. 

1. Ibid. 

2. Ibid. 

3. Leicestershire Telegraph, 20/10/38. 

4. Ibid., 20/1/38, 20/2/38, 22/10/38. 

5. Ibid., 6/1/38, 17/2/38, 3/3/38. 

6. John Fielden 14/7/38, 1/9/38, Peargus O'Connor, 29/9/38.
The reports of abuses and scandals invariably appeared under the heading "New Poor Law", although it has been suggested abuses were more likely to occur in the small workhouses operating in areas which had either resisted the introduction of the New Poor Law or the building of a new workhouse. Many scandals and abuses, reported in "The Times" or the infamous "Book of Bastilles" were subsequently found to be either apocryphal or exaggerated. The Leicestershire Telegraph, however, continued to cast its net wide, reporting scandals and instances of opposition to the New Poor Law.

But the real attitude of the Leicestershire Telegraph was expressed in an editorial early in 1838 commenting on John Fielden's motion for repeal of the Poor Law Amendment Act. "Such a motion could be productive of no good. It would not only repel all who wish the New Law to have a fair trial by way of experiment, and all those (among whom we number ourselves) who think it may be usefully modified; but by inciting a firmer opposition, be more likely to perpetuate those things most complained of, than lead to any beneficial result". The Leicestershire Telegraph expressed its regret that "Radicalism should be carried into everything".

From September, 1838, reports of Anti-Poor Law meetings were replaced by reports of meetings of Radicals, "Radical Propagandists or Chartists,

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1. Roberts, "How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?", H.J., op. cit., p. 104.
4. Leicestershire Telegraph, 24/2/38.
as they term themselves", the Telegraph reported sourly. The reports and editorials henceforth adopted an increasingly censorious tone. It was obvious that while the Leicestershire Telegraph gave qualified support to Anti-Poor Law sentiments, it felt no sympathy for the ideals of the Chartists, although a constantly recurring theme was the part dissatisfaction with the New Poor Law played in giving rise to radical beliefs and Chartist principles. An example was the editorial of 6th October, 1838, which stated "the Radical sowers of disaffection have used these measures (the New Poor Law) chiefly as the fulcrum on which to fix that bearer by which they hope to move from its base the British Constitution".

The hostility of the Telegraph to the Radicals obviously did not pass unnoticed. An editorial claimed as proof that "their labours had not been in vain", that a Radical gathering at Loughborough had called for "three groans for the Telegraph".

Throughout 1839, editorials hostile to the New Poor Law continued. Commenting on the arrest of Rev. Stephens, the Leicestershire Telegraph claimed, "the chief cause of this present excitement will be found to exist in the general odium in which the New Poor Law is held. So long as laws exist which violate the social feelings of the community, so long will violent agitators be found and people to listen to them with

1. Leicestershire Telegraph 8/9/38. The inaugural meeting of the Loughborough Radical Association. Meetings were reported also 8/9/38, 10/11/38.
2. Ibid., 4/10/38.
3. Ibid., 19/10/38.
4. Ibid.
Opposition to the New Poor Law, however, must be as a later editorial put it, "agitated in a proper way. Had Oastler, Stephens and Co. thought proper to keep their opposition within proper bounds, they would, before this time, have effected some good, instead of bringing us to the verge of evil." 2

Other editorials 3 continued in this vein, critical of the severities of the New Poor Law and calling for amendment. Increasingly, however, it was Chartism that claimed the attention of the editorials with the National Petition and the local Chartist leader, John Skevington, 4 a Primitive Methodist lay preacher being singled out for most scathing comment.

Barrow Union was surrounded by Chartist activity. There were frequent reports of meetings at Leicester and Nottingham. The Leicestershire Telegraph described John Skevington who addressed meetings in both centres, "hurrying like Napoleon from one field of glory to another". 5

Loughborough itself was a scene of much Chartist agitation. Troops had to be called 6 and the Leicestershire Telegraph reported Chartist

1. Ibid., 12/1/39.
2. Ibid., 27/4/39.
6. Ibid., 20/7/39.
meetings in great detail and with growing concern. It is obvious from these reports that villages between Loughborough and Leicester were caught up in this activity. There were frequent references to meetings held in the neighbourhood or in the vicinity of Loughborough. Two were specifically mentioned at Barrow-upon-Soar and Mountsorrel, two of the most industrialised villages in the Union. The involvement of the villages surrounding Loughborough in Chartist activity tempts speculation that they were similarly caught up in whatever Anti-Poor Law activity occurred in the district.

Too much, however, cannot be made of opposition to the New Poor Law in this Union. The local Tory newspapers waged a vigorous campaign against the new law, as did most of the northern press. Both Loughborough newspapers shared the "humanitarian-paternalistic" point of view of their northern counterparts, and their opposition to the invasion of liberty and the challenge to local autonomy which the New Poor Law represented to them. They were no doubt also concerned to attack the new law on partisan grounds, in spite of their party's vote in Parliament. Overall the local press evinced an overriding concern for the preservation of law and order. Ultimately it was more anxious, for all its protestations, about the growth of Chartism than the New Poor Law.

1. Ibid., 20/7/39, 17/8/39.
2. Ibid., 20/7/39, 17/8/39.
3. Ibid., 17/8/39.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
The local press gave expression to the "respectable"\(^1\) opposition to the New Poor Law and expressed the substantial ratepaying classes' point of view. The more prosperous section of Loughborough's populace, for all the assertions about their "rising town" no doubt feared being swamped with the distressed framework knitters and unemployed agricultural labourers of the Barrow Union to add to their own considerable problems. Neither the opposition to an ineptly structured union, nor the reluctance to dissolve a Gilbert Union as at Barrow was unusual. Mr. Stevens, the Assistant Commissioner's handling of the difficulties, however, appears to have compounded the problems. His peremptory manner alienated the Loughborough contingent and he was forced to give way to their demands for a separate union and their own workhouse.

He was more successful with the "stupid" Guardians of Barrow Union, about whom he could say in 1838, "a new Board, but they began their duties with great spirit, I think very well of this union".\(^2\)

Mark Hovell wrote of the Anti-Poor Law movement, that it was both "a conservative opposition to a radical measure and .... a popular outburst against what was conceived as a wanton act of oppression".\(^3\) There were popular outbursts in Loughborough and Leicester against this oppression reported in the local press. Asa Briggs described these towns as working in "double harness"\(^4\) in the Chartist period. They collaborated too, in anti-Poor Law activity. They shared the problems

\(^1\) Rose, D.Phil., op. cit., p. 70.

\(^2\) MH 32/68 6/1/38.

\(^3\) Mark Hovell, The Chartist Movement, p. 79.

\(^4\) Briggs, Chartist Studies, op. cit., p. 100.
of depressed trade and massive unemployment among the hosiery workers. The villages of the Barrow Union which lay between them shared these problems and the fear of the "disgraceful stigma on the genuinely unemployed and their families"¹ and may have been involved in their anti-Poor Law activity. More cannot be said.

It was important to the Poor Law Commission that the New Poor Law should operate smoothly in the Midlands. The southern rural areas had been unionised without too much difficulty. The largely industrialised north remained. Conditions in the Midlands most closely resembled those in the textile districts of the north where the recession in late 1836 turned to severe depression in 1837.² The machinery of the New Poor Law was functioning effectively in Nottinghamshire³ and the Poor Law Commission was anxious that it should do so in Leicestershire as well.

The problems resulting in the delay in implementing the New Poor Law in Loughborough and Barrow came at an inopportune time for the Poor Law Commission and far from providing propaganda for the smooth introduction of the New Poor Law into the north, added to the problems not yet appreciated of applying the rigorous principles of the new law to inappropriate conditions.

¹ S.E. Finer, The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick, quoted ibid., p. 11.
CHAPTER THREE

THE GUARDIANS OF THE BARROW UNION

Although an analysis of the socio-economic structure of the Barrow Union revealed a large proportion of the population employed in agriculture and the existence of a traditional establishment of squires and parsons, it also revealed that most of the population was employed in hosiery. It is of interest, therefore, to investigate whether this socio-economic pattern was reflected in the composition of the Barrow Board of Guardians.

A study of the composition of the Barrow Board revealed that the proportion of farmers elected was consistently high. In 1854, the first time occupations were recorded, they made up eighty per cent of those elected to the Board. In that year of the thirty members of the Board, there were twenty farmers, two graziers, two millers, one maltster, one surveyor and three "clerks in holy orders". It is likely that the millers and the maltster were also farmers, as this was fairly common practice at the time. The clergymen who were related to large land holders in the district and could be expected to uphold their interests and the chairman, Mr. Herrick, a member of the landed gentry and a

1. In rural unions in the West Riding of Yorkshire, farmers made up between 70% and 80% of boards. Rose, D.Phil., op. cit., p. 141.
2. With these included, the percentage would rise to 90.
substantial landowner were ex officio guardian. Only the election of one hosier in 1858 reflected in any way the presence of hosiery in the economy of the Union and reinforced the domestic character of the hosiery trade.

The composition of the Board remained fairly constant throughout the period. Most parishes returned the same guardians year after year. In most parishes, the same guardians were elected for from five to seven years consecutively, while in ten parishes, the same guardians remained in office for between ten to fourteen years. In several cases, guardians represented the same parish for the twenty years under consideration. One family, the Nuttalls, shared the guardianship of two parishes between father and two sons from 1837 to 1860, Mr. William Nuttall Senior being chairman of the Board from 1837 until his death in 1850. On many occasions, the guardians for the previous year were elected in spite of the fact that they were not in attendance and that no returns had been furnished. Every parish in the Union went unrepresented for at least one year in the period 1837 to 1860 and several had no guardian for several successive years; Mountsorrel South being without a guardian recorded for six years. As Michael Rose found in the case of the rural parishes in the West Riding of Yorkshire, "continuity was assured despite the system of annual elections".

The Barrow Board of Guardians then, in terms of its composition, could be described as rural. It is pertinent, therefore, to determine whether it exhibited the characteristics that have been attributed to

1. Mountsorrel South continually exhibited the characteristics of the open parish.
2. Rose, D.Phil., op. cit., p. 139.
many rural boards or whether the high concentration of hosiery workers in the Union threw up different problems requiring solutions which might make the Barrow Board resemble the boards in industrial areas.

The elections for the Barrow Board of Guardians followed the pattern of most rural unions in that they were regarded apathetically. In some unions, notably the West Riding of Yorkshire, elections were contested and there were allegations of corruption. In the Barrow Union, there were few contested elections. It was difficult to find someone willing to serve in rural parishes. On only two occasions were allegations of corruption recorded. Both concerned a contentious figure, Major-General Gray, who as a large property owner and ratepayer, contested the elections for the guardian of Barrow-upon-Soar. He had served for some years as Visitor of the Gilbert Union and according to the Clerk was "noticed of an active disposition".

In 1839 he wrote to the Poor Law Commission accusing the Clerk of "a fabrication of gross falsehoods". He denied that he had assembled a mob for the purpose of influencing the election. "I should blush was I capable of encouraging any act of lawlessness" he wrote. The Clerk's letter of explanation to the Commissioners accused Gray of "calling together twice by the public Bellman large bodies of men (who) proceeded to insult and violence and to overawe the election ... The different parts of the empire", the Clerk warned darkly, "are threatened with

2. Ibid., p. 134.
3. MH 12 6398 26/4/42.
5. Ibid.
resistance to the law by similar bodies under the name of Physical
Force men". He asked the Commissioners how far the Major-General was
justified in encouraging such acts.

A note on the correspondence read, "I do not see that this letter
requires any reply beyond an acknowledgement of its having been received
by the Commissioners".  

In 1842, another election was contested. Again Major-General Gray
was involved. This time the Clerk wrote at great length defending
himself against charges of corruption. The election for Barrow-upon-Soar
had been contested by four candidates and had caused "more ill feeling
than any other circumstance since Major-General Gray's attempts to
influence the elections three years previously", when he had assembled
a mob of railway excavators and lime-quarry men and had made promises
which he could not have fulfilled if he had been elected. Ever since,
the Clerk complained, Gray had used every means to bring the elected
guardian for Barrow-upon-Soar and the Clerk himself into disrespect.
He insisted that Major-General Gray had been honestly defeated in the
election.

The Clerk also refuted charges of corruption made by other candidates.
The election had been conducted in strict accordance with the rules and
he denied the charge that he had interfered in parish business. He
enclosed thirty-nine voting papers, obviously filled in by one man "who
was, as I am informed paid by General Gray" and disclosed evidence of a

1. Ibid., a reference to Chartist activity in the area.
2. Ibid.
3. MH 12 6398 26/4/42.
further "little bribery". 1 He had witnessed one complainant buying votes "at the low price of a glass of gin and water" 2 openly at a public house. "I have acted fearless of threats and calumny", 3 the Clerk wrote. The Board had declared its satisfaction with the return made by him and he enclosed the rate books and papers which had been endorsed by the Registrar and the Relieving officer. He coursed an open enquiry into the matter and expressed the belief that several of the complainants had conspired to deprive him of his situation, Major-General Gray "having declared so to do .... from the commencement of the election". 4

The Poor Law Commission this time took the matter more seriously and a flurry of letters passed between the Clerk and the Poor Law Commission. When Gray complained that the Clerk had been exonerated by the Commission, it was arranged that Mr. Weale should conduct an enquiry into his allegations at the Workhouse.

Following on this enquiry, the Poor Law Commission wrote in a somewhat placatory manner, that "it was from no mistrust of your statements that the Guardians expressed their view of your actions, but, .... with every feeling of respect, .... they certainly arrived at a somewhat different conclusion from that which you appeared to expect". 5 There were no grounds, in the opinion of the Poor Law Commission for altering their previous opinion. The Commissioners, as was usually the case, refused to become embroiled in a local feud. For the rest of the period

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. MH 12 6398 28/5/42.
studied for the most part the elections of the boards of guardians proceeded apparently without incident.

Under the Poor Law Amendment Act, magistrates resident in the union, were given the status of ex officio guardians with the same voting powers and rights as elected members. The influence of these ex officio guardians has been the subject of much discussion. It has been shown that especially in rural unions, this perpetuated the influence of the landed gentry who often held high office and continued to wield great influence.

In the Barrow Union, William Herrick Esq. of Beaumanor, lord of the manor of Woodhouse and magistrate of the East Goscote Hundred played an active role in the business of the Barrow Union. As a magistrate, he was automatically an ex officio guardian, but he served as the guardian of Woodhouse for the entire period under consideration and as Vice Chairman from 1845 until his election as Chairman of the Board of Guardians in 1850.

William Herrick was present at the inaugural meeting of the Board on September 12, 1837. He was a member of the committee formed at that time.

1. M.B. 29/3/46. There were contested elections at Barrow-upon-Soar and Mountsorrel South.


meeting to dissolve the old Incorporation. From 1837 to the end of 1844 he attended the Board on a fairly regular basis, usually being present on four to six successive occasions whenever, it seems apparent, he was in residence at Beaumanor. He acted as chairman at many of the meetings.

There can be little doubt of his continuing influence. He was present when a number of the most important decisions involving considerable expenditure were made. When it was unanimously decided that relief to the able-bodied poor should be henceforth given only in the workhouse, Mr. Herrick was present. He was also present when the decision to build a new workhouse was taken. In 1839, a year of economic depression and unusual difficulties and the year when the new workhouse was being planned and built, he attended regularly. Mr. Herrick was present when the Assistant Commissioner attended the Board meeting at which the death of a pauper, James Jarvis, a matter for a subsequent parliamentary enquiry was discussed. The presence of the Assistant Commissioner did not always result in Herrick's attendance. He was absent as often as he was present when the Assistant Commissioner made his periodic visits to the Barrow Union. From 1844 to 1854 his attendance appeared to be irregular and less frequent, although the Clerk's failure to record the chairman's name in this period makes the task of making an exact assessment of his attendance difficult.

When the Clerk resumed the practice of recording the chairman's name

2. Ibid., 30/1/38.
3. Ibid., 12/5/46.
after 1854, Herrick's attendance returned almost to its earlier level. This strengthens the conviction that the infrequent appearance of Herrick's name in these years may be explained by the Clerk's recording procedure.

On a number of occasions when there was a crisis in the Barrow Union, Mr. Herrick's presence was not recorded, for example, when the Board reluctantly agreed to a Poor Law Commission's order to dismiss the master and matron of the workhouse and when the relieving officer, Will Bail's suicide was discussed. In 1847, another year of depression, when the Board battled with the problem of vagrancy and public health and the pressure on the workhouse was so great that a decision had to be made to relieve the able-bodied poor out of the workhouse, there was no record of Mr. Herrick's having attended a single meeting. In other years, 1840, 1842 and 1843 which were uneventful, he made fairly frequent appearances.

His large estate, his programme of rebuilding "Beaumanor" on a lavish scale and his judicial duties as a magistrate were no doubt time-consuming. The Leicestershire Telegraph also recorded his active involvement in Conservative politics and several other aspects of the life of the community. There can be little doubt, however, that William Herrick, as Rose observed of the landed gentry in the West Riding of

2. Ibid., 19/6/55.
3. White, p. 324.
4. He was a Vice-President of the Conservative Association and active in the Protestant Tract Society, Leicestershire Telegraph, 18/11/37.
Yorkshire "exercised an influence disproportionate to the frequency of his attendance".  

None of the other ex officio Guardians appears to have played such an active part as William Herrick in the operation of the Barrow Board. G.J.D.B. Danvers, Esq., attended irregularly from 1837 to 1845 while Sir G. Palmer of Wanlip Hall after going to a quarter of the meetings in 1838, attended spasmodically until 1842, then only once in 1850 and again in 1856. Reverend Charles Palmer, rector of Wanlip, regularly present at meetings from 1842 onwards no doubt looked after the family interests.

Reverends John Dudley of Sileby and William Acworth of Rothley as magistrates also served as ex officio guardians, Rev. Dudley after 1837 making very infrequent appearances, Rev. Acworth attending regularly until 1848.

The Anglican clergy attended meetings most frequently, often acting as chairmen. Until 1852, three and often four members of the clergy were listed apart, in the manner of ex officio guardians, although the Clerk ceased to identify ex officio guardians. Educated, often landholders themselves and connected to the landed gentry, these "clerks in holy orders" could be expected to uphold the landed interest and to wield considerable influence by virtue of their education, wealth, social standing, frequently judicial power as magistrates, and still at this time, spiritual authority.


It may be seen that it was the landed gentry, a "closely knit
\textit{corrie} of squires\textsuperscript{1} and well connected clergy rather than peers who
acted as ex officio guardians on the Barrow Board. Certainly as
Dunkley points out, magistrates had always exercised power in the
administration of poor law relief and as ex officio guardians, they now
shared this power with elected guardians, rather than monopolised it.
Dunkley concedes, however, that in agricultural communities with a well
defined social hierarchy, the control of the landed interest over the
administration of poor relief may have increased under the New Poor Law.\textsuperscript{2}
Barrow Union was such a community and there is little doubt of the
influence exercised by the landed gentry as substantial landowners,
magistrates and ex officio guardians. Irregular attendance did not
necessarily indicate lack of interest or influence. As in other rural
unions, a number of the elected guardians were no doubt tenants of the
ex officio guardians and consequently sensitive to the wishes of their
landlords, whose control of the voting system increased the tenants'
responsiveness.\textsuperscript{3} Over representation of sparsely populated rural
parishes further strengthened the position of the ex officio guardians.\textsuperscript{4}
In Barrow Union, the continuity of the predominance of the landed
interest was assured.

The elected guardians of the unions established under the New Poor
Law have been accused of being apathetic about their new tasks and except

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} Brundage, "A Reply", \textit{EHR}, op. cit., p. 350.
  \item Brundage, "A Reappraisal", \textit{EHR}, op. cit., p. 29.
  \item In 1851 both Barrow-upon-Soar with a population of 1,736 and Ratcliffe-
on-the-Wreake with a population of 128 had one guardian each.
\end{itemize}
for occasions when major expenditure was proposed, displaying a characteristic lack of enthusiasm for attending meetings.¹

An examination was made of the attendance of the Barrow Guardians throughout the period to establish whether their attendance pattern suggested apathy or lack of commitment to the new regime. The results are summarised in Table 3.1 which shows the average attendance for each year and the variations in the attendance.² It can be seen that the overall attendance of the Barrow Guardians was low. Before 1850, the average percentage attendance varied between only thirty-two and thirty-eight per cent. This is a surprisingly low average when it is considered that these were years of crisis and heavy expenditure. The new Board was coming to terms with the requirements of the newly-established Poor Law Commission at a time of depression in the hosiery trade, upon which such a large section of the community depended. The Board was also involved in disposing of the Gilbert Union poor house and building and fitting out the new workhouse.

In one year, 1847, the average percentage attendance rose to forty-one per cent. This was a particularly taxing time for the Union, with problems of vagrancy, depression in the hosiery trade and such pressure on the workhouse³ that additions were planned and outdoor relief was given to the able-bodied poor.

After 1850, the average attendance increased to between forty-one

¹ Rose, D.Phil., op. cit., pp. 147-152, discusses the attendance pattern in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

² The variation in attendance has been expressed in terms of the standard deviation of the mean.

³ There were 302 in the workhouse at one time.
**TABLE 3.1.**

**YEARLY ATTENDANCE PATTERN OF BARROW BOARD OF GUARDIANS, 1838-59**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Overall Attendance</th>
<th>Number of Meetings with Attendance between</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>0-25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>1844</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>1846</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>41.4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1857</td>
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<tr>
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<td>58.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and forty-eight per cent, rising considerably in 1858 and 1859. This increased attendance after 1850 is difficult to explain. Although several crises occurred in this period, the Union did not undergo the economic strains of the earlier period. In the years of the third cholera epidemic, 1853 and 1854 when the Board was heavily concerned with public health, the attendance of the guardians was somewhat lower than average for that period.

The general increase in attendance after 1850 may be explained by the fact that meetings were held fortnightly instead of weekly on a regular basis from this time. The routine and habit of attending meetings of the Board may also have become established by this time.

While the average percentage attendance gives an overall picture of the level of attendance, it does not give a clear view of the fluctuation in attendance. The highly irregular pattern of attendance can be observed in Table 3.1 where the standard deviation of the average percentage attendances is included. In 1839 for example, the average attendance at all meetings was thirty-three per cent. A standard deviation of eighteen however, meant that the attendance at two-thirds of the meetings of that year was between fifteen and fifty-one per cent. This variation is further illustrated in Table 3.1 by the inclusion of the number of meetings with the attendance between nought and twenty-five, twenty-six and fifty and greater than fifty per cent. This showed that there were very few meetings at which more than half the guardians were

1. Especially problems connected with relieving officers in 1855, 1858 and 1859.

2. There is no obvious explanation for the high attendance in Autumn, 1850. (See Figure 3.1).
present. Between a quarter and a half of the guardians attended most meetings.

While the attendance of the Barrow Board of Guardians was highly irregular, an analysis of the seasonal variation showed that the highest attendance was in Spring while the lowest was in Summer. This was as might be expected of a board composed almost entirely of farmers, involved in haymaking and harvest at this time. The results of this seasonal analysis are given in Table 3.2 and Figure 3.1.

The first meeting with almost a full complement of guardians and with Assistant Commissioner Stevens in the chair was fully and favourably reported in the Leicestershire Telegraph. The newspaper had been banned from the Loughborough Board and sought to "acknowledge the courtesy of some of the principals of Barrow" who had permitted them to attend. At this meeting the chairman and vice-chairman were elected, the treasurers selected, the districts for outdoor relief decided on and the salaries for the relieving officers, medical officers and auditor were determined. A committee was also established to settle the accounts between the old Incorporation and the new Union.

The Board was adjourned for three weeks to enable applications for the posts advertised to be dealt with at the next meeting. In the ensuing month, the attendance was consistently high as relieving officers, medical officers and an auditor were appointed, the district was divided for registration, the master, matron and the porter were appointed, salaries determined and the size of the calls for each parish laid down.

1. 12/9/37.
2. Leicestershire Telegraph, 16/9/37. The press was subsequently banned from meetings.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Winter n</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>σn-1</th>
<th>Spring n</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>σn-1</th>
<th>Summer n</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>σn-1</th>
<th>Autumn n</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>σn-1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>13</td>
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OVERALL 42.2 7.5 46.1 6.5 35.7 9.1 40.3 11.2
FIGURE 3.1. SEASONAL ATTENDANCE PATTERN OF BARROW BOARD OF GUARDIANS, 1838-1859.
The first of the long processions of paupers was granted relief, only three in this first group being sent to the workhouse. From that time on, as the guardians got down to more mundane and less expensive matters, they settled into a routine for the relief of the poor and the numbers of guardians at meetings dropped to fourteen or fifteen for the rest of that first year, except when the granting of outdoor relief for widows and proposed alterations to the old poor house to accommodate the large numbers applying for relief were discussed.

In 1838, when the guardians were involved in making decisions concerned with building the new workhouse, the attendance at meetings often reached the level of the first few months of the Board’s operation. In 1839, there was a large attendance at the meetings when tenders for the new workhouse were called and then decided on. After 1839, the number of meetings attended by over sixty per cent of the guardians declined with few exceptions, until the end of the period studied.

They turned out in the early days when items of major expenditure were discussed and fairly consistently at elections, wishing no doubt to retain control over the cost of poor relief, and when some aspect of the Board’s administration threatened to attract unfavourable publicity such as the inquests into the deaths of paupers either in the workhouse or receiving outdoor relief or the replacement of relieving officers.

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2. Ibid., 25/11/37.
3. Ibid., 14/7/46.
5. Ibid., 19/6/55, 7/9/58.
The years of activity in public health also witnessed an increase in attendance. In 1858 and 1859 there were recurrent problems with relieving and medical officers which attracted the guardians' attention. While the long distances and poor roads, should not be forgotten, the original enthusiasm of the Board seemed to evaporate, as it settled down to the dull routine of day-to-day business.

The first few years of the newly formed Barrow Union were spent coming to terms with the new requirements of the Poor Law Commission. At the first meeting of the Board¹ a committee was formed, comprising the guardians who subsequently played an active part in the Board's affairs, to settle the accounts of the old Incorporation, and to ascertain the value of the Barrow poor house and its equipment and "to settle the amount to be received or paid by the parties affected by the new arrangements".²

The Barrow Union appeared only too willing to implement the provisions of the Poor Law Commission and to rationalise its capital equipment in the interests of economy and efficiency.

Within a month of the first meeting of the Board, the need to repair the old poor house and adapt it to the requirements of the Poor Law Commission was recognised. It was resolved that a wall should be built and that proper doors should be provided "for the better separation of the wards".³ The inadequacy of the old poor house was soon apparent, however, and a committee of guardians recommended further extensive alterations and repairs "to afford indoor relief to numerous paupers requiring the

1. 12/9/37.
3. Ibid., 31/10/37.
By the end of the first year, Mr. Flint of Leicester was asked to survey the poor house and report to the Board on the probable cost of rebuilding, altering and enlarging the poor house "on the plan generally adopted for the Union workhouses and of sufficient dimensions to afford every necessary accommodation for the classified employment and instruction of three hundred and fifty paupers according to the direction of the Poor Law Commission".  

Finally at a meeting of the Board on the 30th January, 1838, it was resolved that "the workhouse was totally inapplicable for the wants of the Union and that a new House must be erected". It was resolved that Mr. Flint inform the Board as early as possible of the difference in the cost of building a new workhouse on the existing site or "within three miles of the present and near the canal". It was acknowledged that it would be nearly two years before the new house would be ready. The old Incorporation poor house would then be sold. This was to prove more difficult than the guardians anticipated. The process of disposing of the old poor house stretched on into 1843, involving the Board, anxious to get on with implementing the new system in its new workhouse, with the problem of ridding itself of an albatross-like reminder of the old regime. Much of the correspondence between the new Board of Guardians and the Poor Law Commission in 1839 was concerned with the disposal of the old poor houses of Syston, Anstey and Birstall parishes. This proceeded

1. Ibid., 25/11/37.
2. Ibid., 26/12/37.
3. Ibid., 30/1/38.
4. Ibid.
relatively smoothly. From September of 1839, the Board tried with no
evident success to settle the problem of the old Incorporation poor house.

The whole complicated process provides an illustration of the
problems encountered by an inexperienced group, mainly composed of
farmers grappling with complex legal and financial arrangements and the
pedestrian persistence of the central bureaucracy also feeling its way.
For that reason the course of the transactions is followed in some detail.

Some explanation of the difficulty was revealed by a letter from
Edward Senior who had replaced Mr. Stevens as Assistant Poor Law
Commissioner, expressing his concern at possible delay because the late
Incorporation owed the balance of a law bill to Mr. Beaumont Barnaby
who therefore refused to give up the title deeds of the Incorporation
property which he held as security for the debt.¹

"The Guardians have requested me", wrote Senior, "to apply to you
for advice and have desired me to express their wish that Barnaby's bill
may be settled if there exists any legal way of doing so".² On the
fifteenth of November the Clerk conveyed to the Poor Law Commission, the
consent of the guardians to purchase the old poor house with the furniture
and fixtures. The Commissioners duly authorised the guardians to make
the purchase and requested "that a draft conveyance of the property from
a majority of the persons who were visitors of the Incorporation at the
time of its dissolution be forwarded for the approval of the Commissioners".³

1. MH 12 6398 19/7/39.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 30/11/39.
In January 1840 as a result of a report from Senior, the Commissioners suspended for three months the Order prohibiting relief to able-bodied paupers "in the present crowded state of the Barrow workhouse".\(^1\) Senior assured the Commissioners that the guardians were "extremely desirous to carry out the law strictly and confidence may be placed in their disposition to return to the workhouse principle at the earliest possible period".\(^2\) The guardians' anxiety to effect a rapid transfer to a more commodious workhouse and their desire to settle the legal problems involved in the disposal of the old poor house cannot be doubted.

In April, the Board expressed its concern in wordy prose at the lengthy delay in settling the affairs of the old Incorporation. The Clerk was directed to present to the Board an account of the circumstances preventing settlement "in regard to the payment from those parishes which were added to the Union, of their share also why those parishes who had been taken away from this Union had not received the amount of their portion of the property of the present workhouse, likewise whether any difficulties exist as to making a title to the property of the old workhouse and to state explicitly as possible the nature of them".\(^3\)

In a long letter to the Poor Law Commission the difficulties were stated explicitly. The new workhouse would in the course of a few weeks be in a fit state to be occupied and the guardians were anxious "to avoid the expenses attending making two conveyances of the old workhouse".\(^4\)

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1. Ibid., 16/1/40.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 2/4/40.
Barnaby's bill had been paid as the Poor Law Commission had instructed and the deeds had been secured, but "in as much as Mr. Barnaby, when the conveyance was made was constituted sole Trustee for the Visitor and Guardians of the late Incorporation, is now imbecile and incapable of executing a conveyance it will occasion a little delay". The guardians feared the old poor house would be useless. Assistant Commissioner Senior, who attended a meeting was requested to "forward and expedite business relating to the sale of the old workhouse". Senior wrote to the Poor Law Commission immediately, stating that the new workhouse was now in operation and that the guardians had requested him to state that they would "much prefer that the sale of the old workhouse should now take place without a transfer from the dissolved Incorporation to the present Guardians as they conceive that this will require a considerable sacrifice of both time and money".

November still saw the guardians wrestling with the problem of the disposal of the old workhouse. The Clerk was directed to write to the Poor Law Commission requesting them to allow the late Incorporation to sell the old workhouse to persons other than the Board.

The Poor Law Commission was adamant that there was "no course which could be legally adopted by the Barrow-upon-Soar Union other than their purchase of the property and subsequently sale of it. By this course alone", the Poor Law Commission insisted, could the guardians "charge upon the Union the cost which is expected to ensue upon that sale".

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1. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 20/10/40.
4. MH 12 6398 6/1/41.
The guardians duly instructed the Clerk to take the necessary steps to have the old poor house conveyed to the guardians of the present Union and to employ a solicitor. The conveyance of the old poor house from the late Incorporation to the present Union was produced on the sixth of April.  

The exasperation of the guardians almost penetrated the formal prose of the minute books, when they requested the Poor Law Commission that "in consequence of the refusal of some of the late Guardians of the late Barrow-upon-Soar Incorporation to sign the conveyance of the old house of industry and premises there unto belonging to the new Union .... that the new Union should be freed from the obligations of taking the aforesaid property at the valuation and that it remain in the hands of the old Incorporation, they refusing to make good the title".  

The guardians seemed resigned to a long wait. The Clerk was ordered by the Board to "cultivate the gardens of the old poor house and was assured that if it should be sold before the crop could be gathered, he could be repaid the expenses of cultivation".  

The Poor Law Commission appeared to be losing patience with the dilatory behaviour of the guardians. "The continued delays are productive of loss to the parishes interested therein", a letter from the Commissioners complained tersely. The Board did not need to be reminded of the price of delay. They complained that the old Barrow

2. Ibid., 27/4/41.  
3. Ibid., 6/7/41.  
workhouse, being unoccupied, was being damaged and repeated they were anxious to effect the sale of the same as soon as possible.\(^1\)

In 1843 when the running of the new workhouse had settled into a routine, the Board addressed itself again to the disposal of the old Incorporation poor house. It was to be offered for sale by public auction in four lots. Three lots were subsequently disposed of, the fourth being bought by the Board when the reserve price was not reached.\(^2\)

A cheque for £1,500, the amount at which the old poor house was valued was given to the Treasurers.\(^3\) The matter at last appeared to have concluded. In fact through the rest of 1843 and 1844, correspondence flowed back and forth between the Barrow Union and the Poor Law Commission, mainly concerned with discharging claims of parishes inside and outside the Union on the proceeds of the sale of the poor house. As late as 1845 the Poor Law Commission was still corresponding with the Board about the disposal of the Gilbert Union property.

The dissolving of the Gilbert Union revealed much about the Barrow Board and its relations with the Poor Law Commission. The Barrow Guardians displayed a willingness to implement the provisions of the Poor Law Commission. Once it was recognised that the old Gilbert poor house was inadequate, they set about disposing of it and made plans to replace it with a "well regulated workhouse as recommended in the Report of 1834".\(^4\)

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1. Ibid., 31/11/41.
2. M.B. 27/9/43.
3. Ibid., 29/11/43.
The long laborious process of ridding itself of this encumbrance showed the problems experienced by an inexperienced board comprised mainly of farmers of limited education trying to cope with complex legal and financial problems. The continuing influence of the more experienced and better educated ex officio guardians is in no doubt. The prevailing impression is of the mundane nature of the correspondence between the Board and the Commission, as Eric Midwinter described it, "a voluminous correspondence of an earnest, solemn and verbose variety". ¹ The Barrow Board in these early days displayed an almost filial relationship to the Poor Law Commission, referring the most minor details for the Commission's opinion and using the Assistant Commissioner as a mediator and sometimes advocate. The Commission displayed a smothering attention to detail, doggedly insisting on adherence to regulations and with this Board, at least at this time, obtaining acquiescence, however inconvenient.

The guardians in this early stage were enthusiastic supporters of the New Poor Law. In 1839, while still grappling with problems of disposing of the Gilbert property, the guardians "belonging to the late Incorporation" stated that they were "fully satisfied that the parochial affairs of the Union, so far as it relates to the parishes forming the late Incorporation are much better conducted under the Rules and Regulations of the Poor Law Commission than they were previous to being united under the Poor Law Amendment Act and (that) they are fully satisfied with the working of the Act". ²

Many unions especially in the north resisted the provision of new

² M.B. 26/2/39.
workhouses recommended by the Poor Law Report of 1834. The Barrow Guardians however, having decided a new workhouse was necessary, approached the task of building it with apparent enthusiasm and some efficiency. A committee consisting of the chairman, vice-chairman, the ex officio guardians and the elected guardians henceforth most active in the Board's affairs, was formed to enquire into the most suitable site. The composition of the committee lends weight to the view that the landed gentry maintained an overriding influence on major expenditure and made sure they attended meetings where crucial and expensive decisions were taken.

There was some dissension about the site of the new workhouse. Six guardians opposed the suggestion that the new workhouse should be built at Barrow-upon-Soar, but when the decision was made to build on a "more central situation relative to the Union" they lent their support.

A decision was finally made in favour of two and a half acres of land in the parish of Rothley near the turnpike road. This piece of land was described by the committee as "elevated and of salubrious character" but the main advantage seemed to be its proximity to the stone quarries of Mountsorrel. "If it be material that the new Union workhouse should be erected in a situation where stone may be procured with the least inconvenience, this appears a desirable situation for the purpose", the committee reported. "To go further north .... would be too much out of the centre of the Union". It was their unanimous decision that this

1. Roberts, "How Cruel was the Poor Law?" H.r.l., op. cit., p. 104.
4. Ibid., 5/6/38.
The site was "the most eligible".  

The guardians expected that it would be nearly two years before the new House would be ready. They were remarkably accurate in their forecast. The new workhouse was not occupied until the 2nd July, 1840. The Clerk was directed to advertise for plans for the new workhouse and to "adopt the form used by the Loughborough Union". The Guardians of Barrow Union often followed the lead of the larger market town and surveyed the practices of other Unions before embarking on a new undertaking.

Advertisements were placed in the usual Leicester newspaper, The Times, The Morning Chronicle and in newspapers of adjoining counties. The outcome of this extensive advertising was that thirteen designs were submitted. A building committee was formed, once again heavily weighted with ex officio guardians, to examine the plans. In spite of the response to the extensive advertising, the plans of a local man, Mr. Flint were accepted and duly approved by the Poor Law Commission.

An application had been made to the Commissioners for the issue of Exchequer Bills for £6,000, the "amount authorised by the Poor Law Commission to be expended .... to be paid in twenty years".
Guardians committed themselves to this expensive piece of real estate without any apparent misgivings and with none of the reluctance or hostility of so many of their counterparts. The Poor Law Commission, for their part, rewarded their compliance with the requisite Exchequer Bills. Compared with the drawn-out process involved in disposing of the old Gilbert poor house, the building of the new workhouse proceeded relatively smoothly. In this, at least, the Board displayed a degree of efficiency not always attributed to rural boards.

From the start, the guardians monitored the cost with exemplary assiduity, resolving not to spend more than £4,545 except "for any alternations recommended by the Poor Law Commission". Advertisements for tenders for erecting the new workhouse were placed in newspapers in Leicester, The Times, Nottingham, Derby and as far afield as Hull. As was so often the case, the lowest tenders were accepted.

Not only the cost was monitored. The Board kept a close watch on the quality of materials and workmanship. Permission was refused the architect who had applied, on behalf of the builders to be allowed to make bricks from clay excavated from the site. The quality of the bricks being used was challenged and instructions were issued to have the rejected bricks removed. The building committee made regular inspections and reported back to the Board on June 8th that they had examined the building of the new workhouse and the materials used and found that everything was satisfactory.

2. Ibid., 12/3/39.
4. Ibid., 8/6/39.
When the architect complained to the Board that the number of men employed in building the workhouse was insufficient to enable the completion of the building within the time required by the terms of the contract, he was urged to ensure that sufficient carpenters and bricklayers were employed to complete the workhouse on time. The reason for the haste was the "unusual and extreme pressure of trade". The Poor Law Commission was asked for discretion to give outdoor relief to able-bodied paupers. The need for the new house was pressing.

The months leading up to the transfer into the new house were a flurry of activity. Accounts were settled, the house was fitted out and painted, ironmongery was bought, drainage and the lay-out of the grounds was discussed and much attention was given to the iron gates and granite pillars that are still a prominent and forbidding aspect of the workhouse, now a mental hospital at Rothley.

Iron bedsteads were bought "equal in quality with bedsteads in the probationary ward of the old workhouse". The Clerk was instructed to write to Melton Mowbray Union for details of the cost of stuffing beds with "Captain Wildey's Coconut Fibre" and to Loughborough Union for the cost of stuffing their beds with "Messrs. Warner's Waste". Ultimately, however, as on previous occasions, parsimony won the day. It was unanimously decided that the Barrow Union's beds should be filled with straw.

1. Ibid., 20/8/39.
2. Ibid.
3. M.B. 14/4/39
4. Ibid., 11/5/39.
5. Ibid., 19/5/39.
Twenty four Windsor chairs with arms for the Board room and an arm chair of oak for the chairman were the last purchases before the first meeting of the Board was held in the new workhouse on the 2nd June, 1840. In the months leading up to the change-over the Board had been drafting a petition to present to Parliament "praying that whatever alteration may be made in the Poor Law Amendment Act, the fundamental principles on which that law is carried into execution may not be changed". The transition from dealing with concrete and soluble problems of planning and building to the more insoluble problems of running the new establishment were about to begin. The Barrow Board's enthusiasm for the New Poor Law was about to be put to the test.

The Guardians of Barrow Union kept a watchful eye on expenditure. Several decisions illustrate their parsimony. Very early in the Board's operations, the necessity for paying clergy for pauper's funerals was questioned and in 1841, the decision was taken for the workhouse to retain the "effects of dead paupers". Shoes worn out by paupers were sold and "deceased potatoes" and swill and refuse from the workhouse and manure from the stables were regularly offered for sale to the highest bidder. The guardians' overriding concern for economy if not downright parsimony, is nowhere better illustrated than in its constant battle for cheap bread. They displayed a consistent concern that the bread supplied to the Union should be of correct weight and quality, but above all, that

1. Ibid., 11/5/40. The guardians displayed no parsimony in fitting out the Board room.
2. Ibid., 11/2/40.
3. M.B. 30/10/38.
4. Ibid., 9/11/41.
it should be cheap. Recalcitrant bakers were frequently summoned before the Board to be chastised for bread of deficient weight or quality. The relieving officers were ordered to weigh sample loaves in the presence of the contractors and bread was often returned. On one occasion a baker was threatened with legal action if the quality of the bread did not improve.

Bread, like other supplies, was tendered for, and the lowest tender was always accepted. Second and sometimes third grade bread was bought. Although between 1830 and 1850 bread was relatively dear and in 1841 absolutely dearer, the cost of bread supplied to the Barrow Union showed a steady decline, except it should be noted, in 1841.

**TABLE 3.3.**

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<td>1849</td>
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The price in Table 3.3 refers to a four pound loaf.

1. Ibid., 6/8/44.
2. Ibid., 1/10/50.
Wheat flour in the nineteenth century was of poor quality and “unattractive” rye and barley bread was common in the north and midlands. Excessive competition, moreover, made the bakery trade “one of the most depressed overcrowded and unremunerative trades of the day.” Bread was sold at or below the cost of the flour and it was “all but impossible for bakers to remain honest men.” The result was adulteration and poor quality. The inevitable corollary of the Board’s parsimony was bread of inferior quality.

Their parsimony was demonstrated in their recruitment and payment of staff. The desire to reduce expenditure to the minimum was dominant. As a result, the history of the Barrow Union was fraught with staffing problems, in the case of some officers a rapid turn-over, in others, an obvious lack of training or experience. In the building of the workhouse, the payment of its officers, the close scrutiny over the expenditure of its staff, especially the relieving and medical officers and in the running of the workhouse, and above all in its relief of the poor, the Barrow Board displayed a consistently parsimonious attitude.

While the parsimony of the Board may not be condoned, it can be in part understood when the financial problems of running the Union are examined. The members of the Barrow Board applied themselves dutifully to the difficult and tedious task with some show of efficiency. There were strict rules for the conduct of meetings. All the guardians made up a visiting committee, with some having a special responsibility for visiting the workhouse. A financial committee kept a close watch on all

2. Ibid., pp. 112-13.
3. Ibid., p. 113.
Although the responsibility for relieving the poor rested with the boards of guardians, the poor rate was still levied in the parish and collected by parish officers. The Barrow Board kept a close watch on the overseers responsible for collecting the rates, demanding bonds and sureties as required by the central authority. The work load in a scattered rural union like Barrow was considerable and salaried collectors of rates were appointed for several parishes. They too were closely scrutinised.

There were constant problems in raising the poor rates and parishes were continually threatened with legal action, in the period from 1837 to 1850, on no less than twenty-two occasions. The steady stream of applications to the central authority for revaluation of rateable property suggests that many parishes were inequitably rated. The high cost, £55 for Belgrave in 1847 must have discouraged others. Several parishes begged to be spared the expense of a survey of rateable property, Sileby expressing itself satisfied with the survey done in 1808. The Clerk surveyed Mountsorrel with the approval of the Poor Law Commission, for fifteen pence per acre a fraction of what it cost Belgrave.

In a community like Barrow Union, undergoing periods of distress in the hosiery industry and with the burden of raising the rates falling mainly on small farmers, the problem of meeting the call for funds was

considerable. Not surprisingly the Barrow Board joined in the pressure for a national poor rate.  

In their dealings with their officers the Guardians of the Barrow Union displayed a certain amount of loyalty to those who proved their efficiency and probity. The Clerk, Mr. Fewkes, had been clerk to the old Gilbert Union at Barrow-upon-Soar and remained as clerk to the new Union for the period 1837 to 1860. His duties were considerable, being required to advertise for officers, tender for provisions, attend the magistrates on the business of the Union including an increasing number of public health matters, issue summonses for non-payment of calls, and to resolve settlement cases. The administrative work alone must have been onerous. He appeared to perform his job with efficiency and honesty. Only once was he accused of dishonesty and he was cleared of the charge by the Poor Law Commission. The Board supported him in this challenge to his probity. He was the only officer to remain at his post for the entire period.  

The relations of the Board with the masters and matrons of the workhouse were fairly harmonious. The first master, Joshua Derry was appointed at a salary of £38 per year with double the rations of an inmate. His wife, Elizabeth, was appointed as matron, with a salary of £20 and with double rations also. Derry and his wife had held similar situations for some years in the House of Industry of the Barrow

1. Ibid., 5/1/47. The Board supported an approach from Norwich.  
2. MH 12/6398 26/2/39.  
3. His salary was increased twice in the period, from £50 to £75 in 1838 and to £90 per year in 1845.  
Incorporation, an illustration of the continuity with the old regime, so often a feature of the administration of the New Poor Law. Mr. Weale the Assistant Commissioner described them in 1846 as "advanced in years and ... of plain and simple habits".2

Until 1846, they appeared for the most part to have satisfied the Board. Additional help was provided when this seemed necessary. During the winter of 1843, an assistant to the master was appointed to help him in superintending able-bodied paupers3 and further assistance was granted in 1844 during a depression of trade.4

On a number of occasions, the matron was also allowed assistance. The Derry's daughter was given £5 and rations to help her mother in the workhouse in 18375 and female paupers were regularly employed. The master was reprimanded once for not acquainting the Board of the porter's misbehaviour with a woman6 and was warned, with the relieving officers that he should not "receive anything by way of a treat or a present in any manner whatever from any contractor furnishing articles for the use of the Union on pain of instant dismissal",7 by a Board ever alert to the dangers of corruption.

Relations between the master and matron and the Board however

1. MH 12/6399 22/5/46.
2. Ibid.
3. M.B. 7/2/43.
4. Ibid., 24/12/44.
5. Ibid., 28/11/37.
6. Ibid., 29/5/37.
7. Ibid., 15/6/41.
appeared amicable. When the Clerk at a meeting of the Board on the 26th April, 1846, reported that the Poor Law Commission had requested that the Master tender his resignation, the Board decreed unanimously that "the single instance of misconstruction of the rules unattended by any bad consequence to the pauper does not call for so severe a punishment as the resignation of the Master (followed as it would necessarily be by that of the Matron, his wife) who had been distinguished during fifteen years service for their humanity and their uniform attendance to the duties of their office". ¹

The inquest into the death of an aged inmate of the workhouse, ² James Jarvis revealed that the master had broken the stringent rules governing punishment of paupers and the Board reluctantly agreed to the Poor Law Commission's demand that the master and matron be dismissed. The internal problems of the Poor Law Commission and the adverse publicity attracted by the case at a time of the Andover scandal ³ no doubt influenced the Commissioners.

When the new master and matron, John and Mary Dear, were appointed, the only requirement specifically mentioned was the ability to keep accounts. In 1851 the duties of the master were spelled out. Prior to each meeting, the master was to make out a list of necessaries for the workhouse for the approval of the Board. This was to be signed by the Chairman. The master was to keep books in which should be entered the particulars of all the articles received from tradesmen and also the

¹. Ibid., 26/5/46.
². See chapter 5.
³. I. Anstruther, The Scandal of the Andover Workhouse, passim.
length of time tradesmen were employed in the workhouse. He was to preserve among his stores the clothes of deceased paupers whose friends had refused or neglected to bury them, for the use and benefit of the parishes to which the paupers were chargeable at the time of their death.¹ The Board’s priorities were thus clearly stated.

There were no further problems with masters of the workhouse. A pauper inmate who made a complaint against the master was given short shrift. The Board found the complaint without cause, and the language and demeanour of the pauper before the Board highly improper. The master was directed to "take such steps as he may be disposed as will enforce his authority and prevent any disturbance which the pauper was disposed to make in the workhouse".² The master applied for an increase in salary in 1857 and increases to £40 for the master and £25 for the matron with double rations were approved by the Poor Law Board.³

The Barrow Board of Guardians had trouble with porters in the early years of the Union. There were seven porters between 1837 and 1850. The first, William Garner, was summoned before the Board after he had "taken undue liberties with a female inmate".⁴ It was his second offence and the minute book records that he was dealt with severely. The master was reprimanded for not acquainting the Board with Garner’s conduct. Three months later, the porter tendered his resignation.⁵ His successor

2. Ibid., 6/1/52.
3. Ibid., 29/12/57.
4. Ibid., 29/5/38.
5. Ibid., 7/8/38.
was discharged after only eight months after complaints were made of his conduct.\(^1\) Another was discharged after the Clerk reported that Mary Pegg, a pauper was "pregnant by William Wilmore, the porter".\(^2\)

The porter's duties laid down in 1837 were to superintend the labour of male paupers and "to any duty required of him by the Master".\(^3\) That these duties were unpleasant and onerous seems obvious from the high turnover of porters in the period. One left soon after two paupers had been locked up for twenty-four hours and put on a refractory diet for forty-eight hours for abusing him.\(^4\) Discipline was obviously a problem and although one porter was a former master of a workhouse,\(^5\) the quality of applicants cannot have been high. The guardians at last appear to have recognised the need to pay higher salary when they raised the porter's salary from eighteen to twenty pounds per year.\(^6\)

Relations with its relieving officers were turbulent (see chapter 5). Eric Midwinter saw them as the "most important group of officials, with the power to make or break the scheme. They carried the burden of the day-to-day running of the Union".\(^7\) Their responsibility for payment of relief, keeping accounts and supervising rate collections kept them under the watchful eye of the guardians. There were numerous examples of the

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1. Ibid., 6/8/39.
2. Ibid., 1/4/45.
3. Ibid., 28/11/37.
4. Ibid., 9/8/42.
5. Ibid., 10/12/39.
6. Ibid., 20/2/44.
relieving officers being summoned before the Board to account for apparent inconsistencies in their book-keeping.

The Board showed little of the loyalty to these officers that they displayed to the Clerk or the master. When Will Eail who had previously been an overseer with the Gilbert Union grew old in the service he was forced to resign and when he suicided immediately afterwards he went un lamented at least as far as the minute books, always taciturn, revealed. He was replaced somewhat callously by his son. Thomas Padmore who got into financial difficulties was similarly disposed of. A running battle was conducted between the Board and his subsequent replacements. The relieving officers in Lancashire were paid "less than £100 per year". Their counterparts in Barrow Union were paid considerably less than that figure, their salaries being increased only in 1846 from £65 to £70 per year.

The relations of the Barrow Board with its medical officers are dealt with fully in Chapter 4. There were continual clashes between the guardians and the medical men, invariably over contested claims; the Board's desire to secure adequate medical care for the poor under their charge and increasingly, satisfactory public health standards, being exceeded only by their anxiety to keep expenses down.

In its relations with its officers the Board showed a wish to uphold standards of efficiency and probity. They monitored their activities

2. Ibid., 27/7/58.
closely, checking up on the performance of their duties while insisting, for the most part, on standards laid down by the central authority. Above all they carefully scrutinised expenditure. Honesty and efficiency were expected of them, but economy was demanded and the Board's preoccupation throughout was to obtain good service for as little outlay as possible.

In spite of the large number in the Barrow Union employed in hosiery, the Board of Guardians was composed almost entirely of farmers. For the most part, they reflected the characteristics attributed to rural boards. Ex officio guardians ensured the continuation of the influence of the landed interest.

The implementation of the most innovative features of the administration of the New Poor Law, the elective board principle, salaried experts and the supervision of the central authority was limited. In the lack of contested elections and their attendance pattern, the Barrow Guardians reflected the apathy common especially to rural boards. Conduct of the board's business was concentrated in the hands of a concerned minority. The guardians appeared to have displayed an unaccustomed efficiency in the building of the new workhouse and to have insisted on high standards of efficiency and honesty from their officers, although paying them salaries unlikely to attract outstanding applicants. The officers employed by the Board hardly amounted to the expertise envisaged by the Poor Law Commission. The Board's dependence on parishes for finance was a continuing problem. Continuity with the old system both of personnel and methods was apparent.

The Board showed its willingness to implement the Poor Law Commission's instructions on outdoor relief. Contact with the central authority became largely formal however and visits from Assistant Commissioners and Poor Law Inspectors were so infrequent as to cast serious doubts on the claim to centralised inspection.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE ADMINISTRATION OF HEALTH IN THE BARROW UNION

M.W. Flinn writes that "in spite of the importance of sickness as a cause of poverty and as a drain on the poor rates, the problems associated with it drew surprisingly little comment in the report that led to the Poor Law Amendment Act". Moreover, he adds, the 1834 Act did little to repair the omission. A study of the administration of health of the Barrow Union provides an opportunity to observe the way the guardians came to terms with the policy towards health which gradually evolved and how it met the increasing demands of the community while satisfying the requirements of the central authorities which gradually assumed the responsibility for health.

The guardians' apparent willingness to implement the policies of the central authority frequently led to clashes between them and the officers responsible for carrying out the Board's instructions. Their appeals to the Poor Law Board and the General Board of Health and the intervention of these bodies gives some idea of the problems encountered by both the Barrow Board and its officers in applying new administrative procedures to old problems of destitution and ill health. The losers in this period of adjustment were often the officers and invariably the poor. Although

1. M.W. Flinn, "Medical Services under the New Poor Law", in Fraser, ed., op. cit., p. 47.

2. Ibid., p. 48.
both the minute books and the correspondence between the central authorities and the guardians are primarily concerned with the administrative and financial problems of dispensing medical relief, something of the recipients of this relief, their identity, their problems and the efficacy of the new system and the surviving remnants of the old to deal with their problems emerges.

A resident of the Union, R.B. Swinfen, claiming he was "actuated by a desire to see the intentions of the Commissioners carried out .... in protecting the sick poor from the neglect and malpractice of medical practitioners", wrote to the Poor Law Commission in 1841 complaining of the medical services of the Barrow Union and suggesting that although "many estimable and talented men are chosen, it is equally well known that others without the required professional skill are too often selected by country guardians either by favouritism or economy's sake".  

In fact, the Board displayed throughout, a willingness to secure medical practitioners who were qualified. The Barrow Board's intention to employ trained officers was apparent from the advertisement in its first year of operation, for "medical gentlemen duly qualified to be medical officers". They were no doubt guided in their policy by Assistant Commissioner Stevens, who presided over the birth of the Union and supervised its progress in the early years. Mr. Stevens, reporting to the Poor Law Commission, wrote of his district, "All medical officers are required to act as surgeons as well as apothecaries and the statutes of their profession require that for this they should be members of the

1. MH 12 6398 15/1/41.
2. Ibid.
College of Surgeons as well as Licentiate of the Apothecaries Hall". 1
Conceding that medical men generally complained that the Commission had
helped to "degrade their profession", he asked, "under these circumstances, is it right that the Commission should be satisfied with a lower test of an officer's ability to undertake a medical and surgical appointment than prescribed by the rules of his profession?" 2

In 1842, when the General Medical Order laid down the requirements that medical practitioners should be registered as surgeons and apothecaries, two of the three Barrow medical officers satisfied those requirements, the third being licensed only as an apothecary. Subsequently all appointments possessed the double qualifications. In 1849 when the Board was advertising for a new medical officer, it was resolved "if the candidates do not forward their testimonials and proofs of qualifications to the Clerk on the previous day they would be returned unopened". 3 When it was suspected that one of the recently appointed medical officers had falsely claimed to be a member of the College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, he was ordered to produce his apothecaries' licence and "his diploma constituting him a surgeon". 4 He resigned a week later "owing to ill health", 5 a casualty of the Board's insistence on accredited qualifications.

This stringent attitude caused one doctor, Patrick Downey, to

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1. MH 32/68, 18/9/37.
2. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 19/3/50.
5. Ibid., 26/3/50.
protest to a fellow member of the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, that his qualifications from that body had not been recognised by the Barrow Board. He complained that the certificate he had given a fellow medical officer stating the necessity for an amputation, as required under article 178 of the Poor Law Board, had not been accepted by the Barrow Board, as Dowley was not a member of the Royal College of London or a Fellow or Licentiate of the College of Physicians of London. It was anomalous, he claimed, that although he was eligible to be a union medical officer, he could not give a certificate to his brother officer. "My certificate being refused by the Board of Guardians of which I am one of the medical officers, tends to lower me and the value of the diploma of the college to which I belong and also in the estimation of the Public", he wrote. He called on his colleague to send a memorial to the Poor Law Board from the Council of the College of Surgeons to have the order rescinded.

There was a great deal of confusion about qualifications at this time. Before the passing of the Medical Act in 1858 there was a multiplicity of qualifications and standards. Irish and Scottish qualifications were not universally accepted and at a time when the state was assuming much of the responsibility for the health of the nation, the need for rationalisation was essential.

In spite of the Board's apparent insistence on qualifications, the only medical officer who lacked the requisite double qualification

1. MH 12/6401 4/6/59.
2. Ibid.
continued in the service of the Board until 1855, when the Board expressed its regret that "the regulations of the Poor Law Board placed them in the position that they were required to accept his resignation".  

The Barrow Board's desire to employ qualified men was matched only by its desire to pay them as little as possible. Until 1842, the Board advertised in the local press and medical officers were appointed by tender. The first medical officers received £100 and £75 per year and 10/- and 10/6 for midwifery cases "as per tender". In 1842 the Poor Law Commission issued a General Order abolishing the system of tender and requiring salaries to be fixed and stated in advertisements. The Clerk of the Barrow Board wrote to the Commission expressing the Board's preference for the system of tender and stating that "it has worked well in this Union, there being a sufficient number of practitioners in every district to ensure tenders from very respectable gentlemen". He informed the Commission that "they do not bind themselves to accept the lowest tender but elect persons of both character and ability". Since they had not experienced any inconvenience from the system of tender, they had resolved that "the plan of appointment and payment of medical officers be the same as hitherto".

At the next meeting, however, having considered the General Order

2. Ibid., 3/10/37.
4. MH 12/6398 14/3/42.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
from the Poor Law Commission, the Board resolved that the appointment of medical officers should be postponed for one month. Tenders received from several medical gentlemen were to be returned to them.\(^1\)

Henceforth, in accordance with the requirements of the Poor Law Commission, salaries were fixed. The Rothley and workhouse medical officer was to receive £90 per year, the Quorn officer £45 and Syston and Barrow-upon-Soar £50 each. They were to be paid a standard rate for midwifery cases and for each successful vaccination.\(^2\) Although the Board obviously would have preferred to continue with the old system and despite the fact that evasion of the General Order was widespread,\(^3\) the Poor Law Commission was nevertheless somewhat reluctantly obeyed.

The prevailing concern of the Barrow Board throughout was to hold medical expenses down. Salaries were re-adjusted only in 1845 to make allowance for a further change in the size of the medical districts.\(^4\) When the new district of Belgrave was created, the medical officer was paid only £25.\(^5\) It was obvious that this was merely a part-time position and Mr. Derrington, the medical officer, was constantly in trouble with the Board for neglecting his duties until his resignation was forced in 1850.\(^6\) There were frequent altercations between the guardians and the medical practitioners over the use of assistants common among Poor Law medical officers who invariably kept up private practice.\(^7\)

1. M.B. 22/3/42.
2. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 16/3/47.
6. Ibid., 22/1/50.
The Chesterfield Union had communicated its anxiety to the Barrow Union about the "combination of medical officers for the purposes of obtaining an increase in salary". The Barrow Board stood firm against any increase, rejecting an application from one of its medical officers in 1856. His salary, it was claimed, compared favourably with other similar unions.

In the matter of salaries, as elsewhere, conflicting tendencies were apparent, the overriding wish of the guardians to reduce the cost of poor relief, the reluctance of a conservative hierarchy to accept the ruling of a central authority challenging local autonomy and a grudging acceptance of their duty to obey the law. Caught up in these conflicting tendencies were the medical officers, called on to implement the new regime. The guardians tried to provide medical care "on the cheap". Not only did they expect the medical officers to work for low salaries, they constantly monitored their keeping of records and challenged claims allowed by the central authority for extra services. The guardians' enthusiasm for adequate health provision was invariably exceeded by its zeal to save money.

The relations of the Barrow Board with its medical officers were uneasy and often acrimonious. Throughout the entire period, the medical officers were continually reprimanded by the Board for some aspect of their conduct. In the early years, it was usually because they had not observed correct book-keeping procedures or had failed to forward their weekly medical returns. The medical officers appeared unwilling or

1. Ibid., 4/1/48.
2. Ibid., 11/3/56.
incapable of fulfilling the increasingly complex bureaucratic requirements of the Board and ultimately the central authority. In 1841 they were constantly rebuked for failing to keep accurate records of contagious diseases, in 1845 for issuing medical certificates to paupers claimed by the Board not to be ill. In 1846 medical officers were reminded that orders for relief were to be "strictly confined to medical relief" and that they were not authorised to order bread, flour and groceries.

The reprimands of the Barrow Board show its changing preoccupations and those of the central authority. The prevailing preoccupation throughout however, was to monitor the cost of medical relief. As with the case of relieving officers, the Barrow Board kept a watchful eye on the activities of the medical officers for evidence of corruption and inefficiency. On numerous occasions they were reproached for having failed to attend the sick when required to do so or for having dishonestly claimed to have attended.

Assistant Commissioner Stevens wrote to the Poor Law Commission in 1837 enthusiastically claiming that medical relief was far more efficient in his district than had previously been the case and claiming that this "constant supervision maintained over the medical officers by their weekly reports is the best possible security for the diligent discharge of their duties". 2

Relations between the Barrow Board and its medical officers were

1. M.B. 28/7/46.

Recognition that lack of food was the cause of ill health may explain their actions, but the necessity of paying for medicines out of their own resources is a more likely explanation.

2. MH 32/68 18/9/37.
soured by recurrent disputes over claims made by the "medical gentlemen". The minute books contain brief records of these clashes while in the correspondence between the Board and the central authority are a number of lengthy letters from the medical officers contesting the Board's decisions, some from the Union defending their position and others from the Poor Law Commission or the Poor Board arbitrating in the disputes.

The Barrow medical officers continually had their claims, especially for midwifery, challenged by the Board of Guardians. The Board and sometimes the officer wrote to the central authority seeking clarification of the conditions under which claims were to be paid. On several occasions the guardians' objections to paying claims for midwifery cases were dismissed by the central authority. Mostly the guardians' decisions were upheld. After 1842, medical officers were entitled to be paid for each midwifery case.¹ In April 1842, the Clerk asked the Poor Law Commission on behalf of the Board whether a medical officer was entitled to make a midwifery charge when he attended a woman suffering from a post-natal disease when "no particular danger or difficulty" had occurred at childbirth and the woman was not a pauper at the time of delivery.² The Commission requested to be informed as to whether the question related to "the terms of the Commission's Medical Order of the twelfth of March or .... a contract existing before the Order came into force".³ When the Clerk replied that it related to the Commission's Order, the official ruling was that the medical officer must have "actually attended at the delivery or immediately after it. Attendance upon the woman at

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1. — Hodgkinson, op. cit., p. 312.
2. MH 12/6398 25/5/42. A similar case occurred in 1857.
3. Ibid., 30/5/42.
a considerable period subsequent to the delivery would not entitle the medical officer to the additional payment. Such attention should be paid for as an ordinary case". 1

Although extra charges were granted for cases of special difficulty, a claim for two pounds for the difficult delivery of "a bastard child" was rejected by the Barrow Board, which ruled that only the customary fee of 10/- would be paid. The claim was subsequently forwarded to the Poor Law Commission with the guardians' comment that they did not support it although the difficulty of the birth was borne out by the matron of the workhouse. 2 In 1847 the Poor Law Commission informed the Board that the medical officers were not entitled to receive a fee in cases of abortion "except when the child either was or could have been born alive". 3

The number of contested claims for midwifery gradually declined. Both the Barrow Board and the medical officers appear to have clarified the situation to their own satisfaction. What the feelings of the women concerned were, neither the minute books nor the correspondence with the central authority reveal. A medical officer, Mr. Wood, writing to the Poor Law Commission of the difficulty he encountered with midwifery cases wrote "Day or night I go when sent for, the order from the overseer sometimes refused and often given with such remarks and evident grudging as excites disgust in the poor applicants' minds as well as my own". He asked, "Cannot this be remedied? What is the law? How may I

1. Ibid., 16/6/42.
3. Ibid., 23/2/47.
The parsimony of the Barrow Board is illustrated by a disagreement with one of its medical officers, Mr. Downey. This incident also reveals the extent of the guardians' knowledge of the community and of the poor in their charge and the use to which this knowledge was put. The Board refused to pay a claim for a visit to a woman, Jane Kettle, who, Downey claimed, was "of unsound mind". In a letter to the Poor Law Board, the Clerk wrote that one of the guardians who lived near the woman in Barrow-upon-Soar stated that she was "as sane as her neighbours" and that she had worked for some years as a housekeeper for her son-in-law and a charwoman for her sister. Downey's claim that the woman's insanity was hereditary was contested by the Clerk, who had found after making enquiries among the "ancient acquaintances" of the woman's father that there was no history of insanity in the family. Jane Kettle had not been admitted to Leicester Lunatic Asylum after several attempts at suicide, as Downey claimed. The pauper records showed that she had received outrelief weekly from 1842 to 1856, first as a widow with a child and then because of infirmity. She had spent only a short period in the Leicester Asylum when she was "affected by religious mania". The Clerk's concluding remark gives some insight into the mental state of the poor. "With respect to the statement that Jane Kettle is sometimes unhappy and low, the guardians are not aware that she is more so than

1. MH 12/6400 21/2/54,
2. Ibid., 17/9/56.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
many others who receive relief both in and out of the workhouse". 1

The case of Jane Kettle shows to what lengths the Board was prepared to

go to secure evidence to prevent payment of a claim however small.

The Board also challenged medical officers' claims for surgery and

for vaccination, when it became the responsibility of medical officers

in 1840. In 1854 the fee was raised from 1/6 to 2/6 for successful cases

more than two miles from the surgeon's residence. Wood, medical officer

for Quorn wrote to the Poor Law Board in 1854 pointing out that the

Barrow Board of Guardians refused to pay the new rate allowed for

vaccination. He complained of the injustice, since "the new regulation
gives extra trouble especially as regards distant patients". 2

While their major preoccupation was with efficiency and keeping costs
down, the Barrow Board revealed a concern about the standard of medical

care. A woman's complaint about inattention to her child, 3 the complaints

that medical officers had failed to send medicine or officers' infrequent

attendance drew the Board's disapproval. A medical officer was reproached

for making only one visit to a man who had been suffering for more than
two months from a lame arm. 4 The Guardian for Sileby complained that

the medical officer for the Barrow district had refused to accept an order

when at Sileby to attend a child suffering from a burn, insisting that he

would only accept the order at Barrow. The child had died as result of

the burns and while the guardians conceded that the child's death could

1. Ibid.
2. MH 12/6400 23/2/54.
4. Ibid., 19/12/43.
not have been prevented, they charged the medical officer when he appeared before them with having "committed a serious breach of duty in not visiting the child at the time the application was made". They impressed on the medical officer the disastrous consequences which might result from such neglect.

In 1850, when a newly appointed medical officer, Mr. Conway, reported he was unable to find a suitable residence in the village, the Clerk was instructed not to notify the Poor Law Board that Conway had been elected. When he still refused to comply with the Board's residential requirement, the Board advertised for a replacement and another medical officer was duly appointed. The importance of medical and relieving officers living in the areas they serviced, to spare those seeking relief the frequent time-consuming and exhausting search for help, was recognised by the Board. The minute books contain many examples of people travelling long distances in a fruitless attempt to secure relief for themselves or their relatives.

The action taken by the Board against erring medical officers varied. Often a letter was sent to him expressing disapproval, for more serious offences the medical officer was summoned before the Board to defend himself. Sometimes he was able to give an account which satisfied the Board; mostly he did not. The most common action taken by the Board was merely to admonish. The effectiveness of these constant rebukes must be seriously doubted. Some medical officers were more regular

1. Ibid., 23/1/49.
2. Ibid.
4. The examples are too numerous to record, but are found throughout the entire period.
offenders than others. Mr. Hodges, medical officer for Syston was reprimanded in 1839\(^1\) and after promising he would regularly submit his books, was continually hauled before the Board to be admonished for various omissions. The Board finally failed to re-employ him,\(^2\) but did not demur when he sought a testimonial for another position.\(^3\)

Officers were sometimes forced to apologise for having been outspoken. The medical officer for Barrow district, attending a Board meeting after an inquest had found he had not given proper attention to a child, was admonished and then "having expressed himself in the presence of the Board in disrespectful terms towards one of the guardians and having declined to make an apology when appealed by the Chair", he was warned that he would be reported to the Poor Law Board.\(^4\) This threat was sufficient to produce the apology which the Board grudgingly accepted.\(^5\) The willingness of medical officers to seek conciliation with the Board may be explained by a letter of apology from Mr. Wood, medical officer of Quorn which also contained an application to be reappointed.\(^6\) Ultimately the Board, as the employing authority, had the upper hand. As in the case of the first master of the workhouse, however, guardians preferred not to dispose of their officers. They appeared prepared to put up with small misdemeanours and sometimes serious ones and to rely on chastisement rather than go to the trouble and expense of advertising

2. Ibid., 12/11/44.
3. Ibid., 3/6/45.
4. Ibid., 8/1/50.
5. Ibid., 22/1/50.
for replacements.

There is evidence of the discontent of the medical officers of the Union with their situation. A memorial was sent to the Poor Law Board in 1856 stating that a meeting of medical officers representing numerous unions had assembled in London on the 30th October, 1856 and had resolved that a "petition from the meeting should be presented to Parliament and a memorial to the (Poor Law) Board, praying for a redress of those grievances by which they have been for so long oppressed". It had been signed by one hundred medical practitioners. The memorial to the Poor Law Board was signed by the four medical officers of the Barrow Union.

There can be little doubt that those grievances included the low salaries paid to the medical officers. The determination of salaries remained the prerogative of the guardians. The constant quibbling over midwifery, surgical and vaccination claims was another cause for concern as the letters from the medical officers to the central authority revealed. The necessity to provide medicines at their expense was a financial strain on the medical officers. Lack of tenure in office constituted another problem. Although the Poor Law Board had decreed in 1842 that medical officers were henceforth to be appointed permanently, the medical officers of Barrow Union continued to be employed on an annual basis until 1855. That this was a serious limitation on their independence was revealed by their frequent apologies to the Board when they had incurred its displeasure, as well as the relatively high turn-over of medical officers.

The constant clashes over the medical officers' records were another source of antagonism. Mr. Swinfen, in his letter to the Poor Law Commission complained of the records kept by the Barrow Union medical
A note attached to this letter recorded the opinion of the Commission that "the present medical officers already complained of the amount of labour involved in keeping books and making returns".  

The responsibility of attending the "indoor" sick in the workhouse devolved on one of the medical officers of the Union. From 1847 their involvement with the public health programme imposed further demands on the already overworked medical officers of the Barrow Union. Mr. Wood, medical officer for Quorn, complained of the heavy workload in his letters to the central authority. Writing of the failure of a poor family to summon medical aid, "The poor have a right to my attention but they are often too exacting and zealous of their rights, while they neglect their own duties".

The heavy workload seems to have been recognised by the guardians when they subdivided the two districts set up in the first days of the Union, into four, with Mr. Wright, the medical officer for Quorn also serving the Rothley district and the workhouse. The Clerk writing to the Poor Law Commissioners informed them that the two districts had each been about thirty-six square miles and had contained 10,000 inhabitants in each. In the Board's opinion these had been "too large to give that facility for administering medical relief which is really necessary".

1. MH 12/6398 15/1/41.
2. Ibid.
6. For an account of the role of the medical officer in the workhouse, see Flinn, "Medical Services", Fraser, op. cit., pp. 55-6.
The growing concern over public health and the incidence of disease prompted the creation of another district with the appointment of a medical officer to service Belgrave, Birstall and Anstey, significantly parishes close to Leicester which was struggling with problems of public health and at the same time dispensing pollution into the Soar, much to the annoyance of the villages affected in the Barrow district.

While the evidence suggests that most medical officers were primarily concerned with securing their just financial deserts, there were some indications that some at least were also concerned with the standard of medical care in the Union. Some of the problems experienced by conscientious medical officers are shown in a letter Mr. Wood, medical officer for Quorn, sent to the Poor Law Board. He complained to the Poor Law Board of the "niggardly conduct" of the overseers, giving an example of the case of a boy with a fractured collar bone whom he had treated "in common humanity" before a certificate had been issued by the overseer. The boy had been sent by one overseer to another, "the sleeping one", who had also refused, saying that "they may give orders to everyone if they give to such as he". The guardians had directed that the boy should be attended to but could not give an order. This had taken place in the recent severe weather when the boy's father had been employed only one day in the month and his sister was out of work. If the mother had not been "engaged during some festivities at a gentleman's house the family would have starved". Wood asked the Board, "Must I refuse to

1. MH 12/6400 21/3/54.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
attend such cases or attend them for nothing when it seems to me both
right and just both in a legal and moral point of view?"¹

The same officer in a letter to the Poor Law Commission explaining
why he had neglected to visit a boy who had subsequently died, admitted
his error, unlike many of his colleagues, "I regret this omission
especially if the boy sustained any injury from it. The poorer and more
helpless the case, the more seriously should I feel sorry for it", he
wrote. He ended his letter, "I have held my appointment for eighteen
years. A sufficient proof of my attention to its various duties and I
can with truth affirm that I never intentionally neglected a patient in
my life".²

Mr. Swinfen's letter of complaint to the Poor Law Commission
advanced as proof of the poor medical treatment being offered, that "not
a single leech had been applied since the Board's inception".³ He
questioned whether in a place where so many children were gathered, there
should not occur inflammatory diseases requiring "in their subduction the
topical abstraction of blood".⁴ His criticisms of the treatment given
by the medical officers are more of a commentary on the primitive medical
care of the nineteenth century than the Barrow officers' neglect.
Contemporary medical writers such as Dr. Jonathan Miller⁵ have said that
the ills in the nineteenth century were often better without the medical

¹. Ibid.
². MH 12/6401 27/4/59.
³. MH 12/6398 15/1/41.
⁴. Ibid.
care available at the time. M.W. Flinn disagrees, claiming that "not everything offered by doctors was useless".¹

On neither occasion when the Barrow Union's administration was exposed to the close scrutiny of the press and the central authority arising from the death of paupers was the medical officer found to be culpable. The first was the case of James Jarvis (see Chapter 5). The second in 1858 concerned the death of Thomas Hatherley (see Appendix). Although one of Hatherley's neighbours, a medical practitioner, himself, had testified that Hatherley's medical treatment should have been "of a more energetic character",² it was the familiar anxiety of the overseer and relieving officers to save expense, as well as bureaucratic bungling, which was mainly responsible for Hatherley's death. In both cases, it was the surviving remnants of the old system, the former master of the old house of industry in the Jarvis case and the parish overseer in the case of Hatherley, who were responsible, rather than the medical officers operating in the new system.

The attitude of the Barrow Board to the mentally ill showed a progression over the years that matched the changes in the policies of the central bodies which came to assume responsibility for their care. The Poor Law Amendment Act made only one mention of the insane, refusing to authorise "the detention in any workhouse of any dangerous lunatic or insane person or idiot for any longer period than fourteen days".³

2. MH 12/6401 1/4/58.
A Poor Law Commission directive to the boards of guardians in 1842 stated that the primary aim should be to cure lunatics and that they should be sent to a well-regulated workhouse for proper medical treatment. It was neither humane nor economical to retain lunatics in the workhouse. ¹

The Barrow minute books recorded a number of "dangerous lunatics" who "disturbed inmates in the workhouse" ² and who were consigned to the Leicester Lunatic Asylum. An Assistant Commissioner in 1846, however, reported that two inmates were "improper persons to be in the workhouse" and a Commissioner of Lunacy found similar cases. The master's request for "strait waistcoats" for restricting "ungovernable" inmates in the workhouse ³ suggests the Poor Law Commission's directive was ignored.

The cost of maintenance in the Asylum was greater than the cost in the workhouse and it is at least as likely to have been on economic as on humanitarian or medical grounds that the Barrow Board opted for the retention of lunatics in the workhouse. In 1844, when records were available for the first time, there were ten "lunatics and idiots" in the Lunatic Asylum, nine in the workhouse and fourteen with friends or "elsewhere". The average weekly cost in the Asylum was 10/- compared with 2/4 "elsewhere".

As in all fields, the administrative requirements became increasingly more precise and complex. The guardians were required to send lists of paupers regarded as mentally ill to the central authority so that it could be decided whether any cases in the workhouse should have been in

1. Ibid., p. 175.
3. Ibid., 8/7/51.
the Lunatic Asylum. Medical officers experienced much difficulty attempting to define idiots and lunatics to compile these lists. One medical officer complained in 1846 that "the law relating to pauper lunatics and idiots required him to return every idiot as a lunatic". Since medical officers were liable to prosecution for false certification under the 1845 Lunacy Act, his anxiety is understandable. Diagnosis, especially in the workhouse, was undoubtedly faulty.

These lists were sent to the Clerk of Peace, the Clerk of the Lunatic Asylum, the Poor Law Board, the Commissioners of Lunacy and the Visitors of the Lunatic Asylum. The administrative burden in the days before the typewriter and the copying machine must have been considerable.

Some protection of the mentally ill was safeguarded by the Lunacy Act of 1845 which provided for the creation of a permanent board of salaried commissioners whose duty it was to visit all asylums, hospitals and workhouses where lunatics were kept.

A Commissioner of Lunacy visiting the workhouse in 1856, reported that there were "six imbecile idiotic paupers" in the House. The medical officer visited them three or four times a week. There were no special wards for lunatics, and their bedding, clothing and diet were the same as for other paupers. Several were employed in household work. He concluded that they "were all quiet and apparently well taken care of".

3. Ibid.
4. Asylums were superintended by a committee of visitors.
The Commissioner who inspected the workhouse in 1858 was less impressed. He recommended that "two inmates be transferred to the Lunatic Asylum and concluded his report by saying, "This workhouse is not at all adapted for patients who are at all troublesome or excited and only the most quiet class of weak-minded persons should be allowed to be sent to or detained in it". 1

The medical officers of the Union visited "lunatics and idiots" receiving outdoor relief once a quarter, as required by the Poor Law Board. They were paid 2/6 for each case. The Clerk complained in a letter to the Poor Law Board that differences of opinion occurred between the Board of Guardians and its medical officers over these cases. The guardians believed people should not be classified as lunatics and idiots if they were "competent to manage their own affairs by taking charge and care of their house and family" and if they were not "subject to the control of any person or appear to require one". The medical officers, he wrote, believed that anyone who exhibited a "defect in their intellectual powers or .... at any time any peculiarities of conduct" should be visited as an idiot or lunatic. 2 The guardians obviously wanted to save money, the medical officers to make it.

If there was little evidence of cruelty in the Board's care for the mentally ill, there was little evidence of humanity either. The Board was preoccupied throughout with holding down expense. The minute books recorded many examples of "pauper lunatics" being removed from lunatic asylums in other unions and then being certified as harmless enough to

2. Ibid., 16/2/58.
remain in the workhouse. A man was summoned and then convicted for refusing to pay 3/- per week towards the maintenance of his wife in the Lunatic Asylum.¹

In spite of the Board's avowed intention to provide the best means for the care and recovery of the mentally ill in the Union, it was more often the cheapest.

Throughout the period, the relations of the Guardians of the Barrow Union with the Poor Law Commission were mostly cordial. Circulars and General Orders were politely received, usually implemented, and sometimes as politely ignored. Their relations with its successor, the Poor Law Board also appeared harmonious, but the absence of the correspondence between the Barrow Board and the Poor Law Board during the important early period of the Poor Law Board's operation makes it difficult to be certain.²

Much of the contact between the central bodies and the Barrow Board, like the submission of appointments for approval, was purely formal. In the first few years of the Barrow Board's operation, conflicts with its medical officers were resolved by the Board itself, without reference to a higher authority. From 1842, the Board made frequent recourse to the central body for arbitration in disputes over claims submitted by the medical officers or cases of neglect or inefficiency. Undoubtedly the guardians were strongly motivated by the desire to hold down costs. They were also seeking a definition of the limits of new regulations and the scope for local autonomous interpretation. They may also have been coming to terms with the growing self confidence of the medical officers,

¹ M.B. 11/9/49.
² The MH 12 documents are missing for the years 1847 to 1853 inclusively.
influenced by the growth of the concept of self-governing professionalism\(^1\) and the issuing of the General Medical Order of 1842, foreshadowing if not enforcing, permanent tenure, fixed salaries and minimum qualifications.

The guardians could also be fairly sure that the central body would arbitrate in their favour. Confident of the outcome, they suggested more than once that disgruntled medical officers should take their cases to the central authority. If as Mr. Senior, Assistant Commissioner responsible for the Union claimed, the medical officers were "generally on the side of the pauper"\(^2\), then both the Poor Law Commission and Poor Law Board were generally on the side of the guardians.

Typically it is more difficult to evaluate the effect of this evolving and complex relationship between the central authority, the local board and its officers, on the poor. The minute books, mainly concerned with disputed claims and charges against the officers are almost completely silent about the prime cause of all this activity. They identify some vulnerable groups, infants, women in childbirth, victims of accidents and the aged. The day-to-day routine medical care is glimpsed only fitfully in the letters from concerned medical officers or those who felt cheated, and from the Clerk of the Barrow Union to the central authority.

Most revealing are the inquests. The poor assumed a great importance when they died in circumstances apparently implicating Union officers. Fear of exposure in the press or response to such exposure, fear of a scandal like Andover and perhaps humanitarian motives spurred the central authority to ensure that justice would at least be seen to be done.

2. MH 32/66 5/2/40.
The lives of the poor were dissected and examined tangentially by everyone concerned with them. The inquest into Thomas Hatherley\(^1\) in 1858 revealed a combination of all too familiar circumstances in the medical life of the poor—obstructive parish officers, bureaucratic obfuscation by the guardians, an elusive medical officer, inadequate treatment and poverty. Hatherley's wish to "lie and die rather than go into the house"\(^2\) was also a common sentiment. His neighbour, a surgeon called Dalton claimed he had died of "gross neglect" and accused the Poor Law Board of taking a "superficial view" of the case.\(^3\) Hatherley had been supported by neighbours and friends while the officers of the Union fought a bureaucratic battle over demarcation. Dalton, wrote "as proof of the excitement it caused in this place, (Mountsorrel) out of a population of about two thousand the greater proportion of whom (hard pinched by poverty during the winter, for want of work and every deprivation attendant thereon) ... a thousand in order and decorum attended poor Hatherley's funeral".\(^4\)

In the debate between historians about the revolution in government, the legislative and administrative changes in public health are used by the protagonists to support views that the changes, initially in response to intolerable conditions became self-generating,\(^5\) or on the contrary, were not immune to the influence of current thought, notably

1. MH 32/68 17/3/58.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. MH 12/6401 28/5/58.
utilitarianism, involving both laissez-faire and state intervention.\textsuperscript{1}

It has been suggested that investigations of the local effects of this legislation could throw some light on the controversy.\textsuperscript{2}

As a mainly rural union, it might be expected that Barrow would not be greatly concerned with the problem of public health. The conditions which generated these problems are usually associated with urban areas. The Barrow Board of Guardians was, however, involved in matters of public health intermittently over almost the entire period and heavily for some of that time. To what extent this involvement was a response to intolerable conditions, public opinion or pressure from the central authorities, the nature of that response and its effectiveness are the subjects of this section.

There were problems in some of the small mainly agricultural villages like Seagrave and Rearsby, but significantly it was in connection with the larger industrial villages that most public health activity took place. Mountsorrel was most troublesome. Bounded by the River Soar and Mountsorrel Hill, the two villages of which it was composed stretched along the turnpike road, a source of much of the concern. Most of the men were engaged in quarrying. It was, as Raphael Samuel described Headington Quarry, "singularly free of gentlemen"\textsuperscript{3} and exhibited, like Headington Quarry, the problem of the "plebian open village",\textsuperscript{4} unchecked growth, unsatisfactory housing and more than its share of nuisances.

\textsuperscript{1} Parris, "A Reappraisal Reappraised", H.J., op. cit., pp. 17-37.

\textsuperscript{2} Midwinter, "A Tory Interpretation of History", P. and P. op. cit., pp. 130-133.

\textsuperscript{3} Samuel, op. cit., p. 14.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid.
Other populous villages with a significant proportion of their population engaged in hosiery like Barrow-upon-Soar, Sileby and Quorn, also featured prominently.

Proximity of Leicester or the River Soar was another predisposing factor. The Report of the Royal Commission on the State of Large Towns revealed that only three of the fifty large towns studied exceeded Leicester's death rate. Special mention was made of Leicester's bad drainage. Sewerage and refuse were carried into the River Soar and the Leicester Navigation which flowed through several of the Barrow Union villages. The Barrow Board's heaviest involvement in public health occurred in the years 1849 and 1850 with two other years, 1853 and 1854 also witnessing considerable activity. These were also the years of two of the four pandemics of cholera which spread from Bengal to Britain. The Barrow Board's activities in the field of public health in these years can to a great extent be explained by this fact.

The Board's first incursion into public health showed the difficulties of a rural board using unfamiliar methods to deal with old problems assuming a new urgency. The Clerk was instructed to procure a sufficient number of copies of the Act of Parliament "relating to the removal of nuisances" and six dozen circulars on the subject of the removal of nuisances. A month later at a meeting of the Board two guardians, Rev. Pritchard and Mr. Adderley, reporting nuisances in Mountsorrel South

1. Patterson, op. cit., p. 337.
3. The Nuisance Removal and Diseases Prevention Act, 1846.
stated that two "duly qualified medical practitioners" had issued medical certificates showing that the nuisances were offensive, and should be removed. The Board threatened to commence legal proceedings if they were not removed within fourteen days.¹

Mr. Adderley subsequently reported that the nuisances were in the course of removal and requested that additional time should be granted to allow for their removal. The Board had obviously followed up its instructions and had revealed an apparent anxiety both to act on the provisions of the legislation and to remedy the problem.

Four months later, however, the Clerk reported that the nuisances in Mountsorrel had been reported to the Justices of the Petty Sessions.² The Clerk's report at the next meeting that he applied to the Magistrates' Clerk respecting the nuisances in Mountsorrel "but was unable to take any steps respecting the same"³ indicated both the weakness of the Act and the problems faced by the local authority pioneering in a new field with which it was ill-equipped to cope.

When the second Nuisances Act was passed,⁴ copies were again printed and displayed in public places in all parishes of the Union.⁵ This Act is sometimes called "The Cholera Act"⁶ and the Barrow Board's activities in the field of public health in the next few years can to a great extent

¹. Ibid., 1/12/46.
². Ibid., 13/4/47.
³. Ibid., 20/4/47.
⁴. 4th September, 1848.
be explained by this fact. The 1848 Act guaranteed that the "numerous
brood of Trustees, Commissions, Highway Surveyors and Poor Law Guardians" maintained responsibility for public health, with the guardians having the power to superintend and take action if the other authorities failed to do so.

The Act also granted extraordinary powers to the General Board of Health "on the approach of an epidemic". The General Board of Health had been gazetted on the 23rd September, 1848 under the provisions of the Public Health Bill of the same year, to be confronted almost immediately with the outbreak of the second cholera epidemic to strike Britain in the nineteenth century. Because of the opposition to the Public Health Act, the anti-cholera clauses were "relegated to the Nuisances Removal Bill".

When the Barrow Board received an Order from the Board of Health, the guardians were immediately requested to inspect the nuisances in their parishes in conjunction with the Surveyors of Highways and to procure their removal or abatement. For the next eight months the Clerk continued to issue notices on offending parties.

At a meeting in the summer of 1849, the Board discussed the advisability of appointing a person for a limited period to examine every

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
5. In Anstey, Birstall and Thurmaston, near Leicester and in Barrow-upon-Soar and Rearsby.
parish in the Union for the presence of nuisances so that the Board could take the proper steps for their eradication. ¹

At the next meeting the existence of nuisances, an offensive public drain in Queniborough, swine kept too close to a house and a filthy gutter and cesspool in Barrow-upon-Soar were reported. Medical practitioners were to be employed to examine them, but the problems were obviously becoming too great for solution by traditional means using the traditional personnel. It was decided to appoint an inspector of nuisances. ²

1849 was the high point of the cholera epidemic. An examination of the books of the Registrar revealed the prevalence of disease in the Union. Five deaths from cholera were recorded at Anstey as well as four from diarrhoea and cases of "English cholera" and a "bowel complaint", ³ illustrating the problem of diagnosis at the time. Cholera was often not recognised and was registered under various descriptions. At the same time several cases of typhus fever, scarlet fever and "scarlatena fever" were recorded. ⁴

The need for additional help was all too apparent. The duties of the inspector of nuisances were designated as visiting the parishes in the Union to examine all nuisances complained of and to report them to the Board. If they were not removed in the time allowed, he should deliver forms to the offender. He was to attend before the magistrates when the offenders were summoned and give evidence to support the charges

¹ M.B. 10/7/49.
² Ibid., 17/7/49.
³ Ibid., 9/10/49.
⁴ Ibid.
against them. The medical officers were to be given notices when it was necessary for them to inspect any nuisance and the inspector was to revisit offending parishes until the nuisances were removed. He was to report to the Board each week on the progress made. He was provided with a report book and the necessary forms.\(^1\)

For the remainder of the year the Inspector brought back to the Board reports of open gutters in Mountsorrel, unclean streets in Quorn and many other instances of nuisances in other villages.\(^2\) He reported threats of legal action, legal notices served and nuisances abated. His services were retained for an additional six weeks and twenty-seven nuisances were reported in various parishes, seventeen of these being in Thurmaston. Public health problems continued to be concentrated in the larger industrial villages.

In December the position of the inspector of nuisances was terminated. The inspector was given a testimonial of good conduct and efficiency, and payment for his services.\(^3\) The Board from that time on reverted to its traditional methods, using the services of the Clerk, the medical officers and the relieving officers. That this was an onerous task was obvious from medical officer, Wright's requests after reporting on seventy-three cases of fever in Anstey and many other nuisances to be paid for the time it had taken him to obtain the necessary information to enable him to make a report to the Board. As was so often the case, the Board attempted to transfer the burden of payment to the Surveyors of Highways.\(^4\)

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1. M.B. 24/7/49.
3. Ibid., 4/12/49.
4. Ibid., 12/1/50.
The summer of 1849 has been described as the "high noon of the miasma theory". The Barrow Board's programme of nuisance abatement, a medical officer's complaint that a nuisance was "the cause of fever in the neighbourhood" and that another nuisance was "very likely to spread widely in a malignant form in consequence of an offensive watercourse" are evidence that the miasma theory was held.

A petition on the Leicester Sewerage Bill was sent to the Sanitary Commissioners by the Board and another petition was presented to the House of Commons and the Board of Health by the Member of Parliament, E.B. Farnham.

A letter from the Board of Health reassured the Barrow Guardians that they "need be under no apprehension that the Board of Health will exempt the local Board of Health of Leicester from any evil consequences that might follow from their discharging the sewage of their district into the river Soar".

The Soar, dammed for mills and the canal, was prone to flooding. Refuse and effluent from choked sewers discharged into the river and made the water filthy for miles downstream. There had been no municipal regulations for drainage and no local authority with adequate powers to

2. M.B. 21/5/50.
3. Ibid.
5. M.B. 24/12/41.
6. Ibid., 1/4/51.
7. Ibid., 29/4/51.
enforce sanitation.\textsuperscript{1} Under the Public Health Act of 1848 Leicester Council became the local Board of Health, and it was the Leicester Sewerage Act proposed by this Board which had prompted the petition of the Barrow Union. The guardians feared Leicester's public health problem would be merely transferred downstream.

While the guardians closely monitored the progress of public health in Leicester, they also kept a watchful eye on their other neighbouring union, Loughborough. A Report to the General Board of Health on the Sanitary Condition of Loughborough by William Lee in 1849 had revealed a public health problem of considerable dimensions.\textsuperscript{2} Lee claimed the town's sickness and mortality was excessive when compared with towns of equal size. Following on Lee's report, a local Board of Health had been formed in 1850 and in 1852 a drainage scheme commenced.\textsuperscript{3}

1853 and 1854 witnessed another burst of activity from the Barrow Board. These were the years of the third great epidemic of cholera in Britain and the Barrow Board was once again vigilant in searching out nuisances and parishes liable to disease. The increasing work load without the services of a paid inspector obviously proved too much for the Union officers. The relieving officers presenting reports of the parishes they had visited, complained that they had "not near completed their visitation".\textsuperscript{4} The Board's solution was to appoint the relieving officers as "Inspectors of Nuisances". They were exhorted to be vigilant

\begin{enumerate}
\item Patterson, op. cit., p. 337.
\item Ibid.
\item M.B. 22/11/53.
\end{enumerate}
in their task, "it being the earnest desire of the Board that the Sanitary Regulations be fully carried out". They duly reported nuisances, abated or in progress of abatement. This arrangement however lasted only one month. The Finance Committee met to consider the time devoted by the paid officers of the Union on duties laid down by the Sanitary Regulations. They reported that Bail had been employed two days per week and Padmore for three since the eleventh of October. They were paid for their services and the Board sanguinely reported that "the remunerative services of the inspectors be discontinued but the relieving officers were to exercise due diligence in inspecting the several parishes within the districts whilst attending to the poor".

The medical officers were required by the Board, under instructions from the Poor Law Board to report on the state of health of the Union. Allowing for the well-known optimism of such reports, the health in the Union does appear to have improved. The waning of epidemics after 1854 was undoubtedly partly responsible, but the Board's activities in the public health field must be given some credit. The Board had shown an early recognition of contagious diseases and the need for isolation. Sufferers of infectious diseases like measles of which there were recurrent outbreaks, were treated in the workhouse infirmary but from 1840 the minute books record fever cases being sent to the Fever Institution at Leicester. The Board considered making an annual subscription to the Fever Institution in 1840, but it was only after a report in 1843 that the Fever Institution would be closed if it were not better supported that an annual subscription of £15 was paid. The minute books recorded

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., 17/1/54.
at the time that several persons from the workhouse and many from most parishes in the Union had been sent there. Payments were also made to the Liverpool Blind Asylum and later the Midland Institution for the Maintenance of the Blind of the Union.

The Board displayed a growing tendency towards a concept of preventive medicine. Medical officers were required to notify the Board instantly on the outbreak of any disease which "in their judgement may be likely to lead to cholera". The medical officers reported frequently on the state of health in the workhouse and the Union and the reports became increasingly favourable. The medical officer for the workhouse and Rothley reported that the health in both "was better than usual in this season of the year and that they were free from diarrhoea",¹ a verdict that was shared by other medical offices reporting on their districts.

These years saw the Board's interest widening into the area of housing as a cause of disease. The medical officer reported houses in Sileby that were overcrowded and "in a filthy state", and houses in Belgrave in a "filthy and unwholesome state from want of lime washing".² The occupiers were threatened with legal proceedings. The workhouse was also exposed to close scrutiny. The workhouse medical officer was directed to make any alterations in the dietary of the workhouse he should regard as necessary "from the appearance of any disease among the inmates or for any precautionary reason".³

Some problems remained. Smallpox and several cases of "malaria"

¹. M.B. 26/9/54.
². Ibid., 21/11/54.
³. Ibid., 28/3/54.
were recorded in the Barrow Union as late as 1858. Smallpox was one of the most infectious of all communicable diseases, a fertile source of death and disfigurement and an object of universal dread. In its severest forms, it was fatal to a large proportion of its victims. Like cholera it struck all classes. The Vaccination Act of 1840 provided for vaccination at public expense to be administered locally by the Boards of Guardians. The 1853 Act made it obligatory for parents and guardians to arrange vaccinations of infants within four months of birth but this had proved impossible to enforce. There had been severe epidemics between 1837 and 1840 and although the incidence was lessened and the number of vaccinations remained high, smallpox remained one of the major killers. The need to revaccinate was not recognised until the 1870's.

Tuberculosis, "the most effective killer of large numbers"\(^1\) although not as "swift or dramatic as cholera nor as closely linked to poverty as typhus nor to environmental filth as enteric fevers"\(^2\) went largely unrecognised. It was described as phthisis, scrofula or consumption and entries were recorded of these diseases intermittently throughout the period. As a mainly urban disease, it may not have affected the inhabitants of Barrow Union to any degree, but the difficulty of diagnosis and the fact that it was not officially reported until 1908 make its incidence difficult to detect.

There were similar problems with scarlet fever and diphtheria which were often confused or labelled under the portmanteau term "fever".

There were epidemics of both diseases in 1840, 1844 and 1848 and Barrow

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2. Ibid.
Union is unlikely to have escaped unscathed.

There can be little doubt that the Barrow Board of Guardians' actions in the field of public health were prompted largely by fear. The conditions which became intolerable in the forties and fifties, an inadequate water supply, primitive sewerage disposal and accumulated refuse had always existed in the union. Jennifer Hart's comments that "actual conditions alone constitute no problem"¹ is relevant here. The fear of disease induced by the insanitary conditions in the Union stimulated the Board's activities in public health. Typhus, "the poor man's disease", struck in 1849 and cholera which could attack the middle class through the water supply in the same year. Loughborough and Leicester, both subjects of critical enquiries were fertile sources of infection.

The legislation emanating from Parliament was itself in part a response to the fear of widespread epidemic. The influence of this legislation and the General Board of Health on boards such as Barrow is difficult to gauge. The guardians gave the impression of being willing to publicise and implement the provisions of The Nuisances Removal Acts. The Union's contact with the General Board of Health were fairly limited at first but in the 1853-54 period, the second cholera epidemic, the guardians were deluged with circulars, directions, regulations and orders from the Board of Health.

The activity of the Poor Law authorities in public health was very limited. The guardians referred to them to arbitrate in disputes between

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them and the Surveyors of Highways over payment for the removal of nuisances. The guardians showed a preference for making do with the old machinery and personnel. The inspector of nuisances was employed only briefly at the height of the cholera epidemic and was replaced by relieving officers working part-time. Except in times of crisis, the old problems were dealt with in the old ways, albeit with a new urgency. The Board went through the formality of centralisation while retaining its autonomy.

Most decisions were made ultimately on economic grounds. The Board's actions in public health show a recognition that the costs of action, however much regretted, would be exceeded by the costs of widespread disease.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE ADMINISTRATION OF RELIEF IN THE BARROW UNION

The first Assistant Commissioner, Mr. Stevens, wrote in 1839 "I will not fail to report wherever I see that any ground can be safely gained towards what should always be considered as the great end of our exertions, the utter extinction of outdoor relief to the able-bodied at the earliest possible period. I am more and more of the opinion", he stated, "that the workhouse is the best, the only tolerable description of relief for all paupers and I anxiously hope that the time may come when a surgeon's certificate that a pauper cannot safely be moved may be considered the only sufficient plea for outdoor relief, believing most firmly that this would ensure the happiest condition of the lower classes".¹

He disagreed with the relaxation of the general rule for widows with children. "One prize in the pauper lottery renders many careless or improvident through hope of equal success",² he warned. He urged restricting relief to the able-bodied poor "not as a means of reducing poor rates but .... towards increasing the comforts and raising the moral condition of the poor and those immediately above them".³ His experiences

¹MH 32/68 14/9/37.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
as a magistrate, chairman of the Bradfield vestry, vice-chairman of the Bradfield Union and more recently as Assistant Commissioner had confirmed his belief that "when the door is left open ever so little (the poor) are made restless and uncomfortable and .... their attention is directed towards inducing the best means of inducing the guardians to increase their relief than to obtain independent subsistence for themselves". ¹

Throughout his period of office, Mr. Stevens continued to rail against outdoor relief for the able-bodied. Barrow Union received his warmest praise for their concurrence with his views. "Outdoor relief was refused at once to all able-bodied males and (as long as they could afford the room) to able-bodied females". ² Compared with Leicester, which was admitting reporters to meetings where "speeches were made for the purposes of being reported" and Loughborough, "a difficult board to manage" ³ Barrow's behaviour was exemplary. His quarterly report applauded the Barrow Board's determination to give "very little outdoor relief indeed!!" ⁴ (his exclamation marks) once their new workhouse was complete. He had attended seven meetings and had "lost his voice completely". There had been "political excitement .... unfavourable to our cause" in Loughborough and the Leicester Guardians were "sadly influenced by political feeling", so much so that he had avoided attending meetings as his presence "was only annoying without being of service". ⁵ In these circumstances his praise for the Barrow Board was fulsome.

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1. Ibid.
2. MH 32/68 18/9/37.
3. Ibid., 13/1/38.
5. Ibid.
"Great parts of the Union were heavily pauperised before, but had been much improved already".¹

Mr. Senior, his successor in a report on the Midlands wrote with evident satisfaction that the allowance system was extinct. "An able-bodied male applicant is never seen at the different boards, excepting on account of the sickness of some member of the family which is generally refused excepting under peculiar circumstances".² Outdoor relief was granted to widows with children and the aged and infirm and occasionally to non-resident paupers, although he assured the commissioners that much of his attention had been directed to checking this practice. "Experience in effecting a considerable change in the convictions of the guardians", he wrote, "and the lapse of a few years will see nearly the total extinction of the outdoor relief system except in cases of sickness".³

Reporting to the Poor Law Commission in 1839 during a severe depression of trade the Assistant Commissioner, Mr. Senior, described the desperate condition of the region.⁴ Stocking makers were dispersed and intermingled with the agricultural population throughout the county, although the majority were employed as agricultural labourers. Their hours of labour were long, rarely less than sixteen hours per day; the physical exertion required being small, a boy of eleven or twelve years frequently earned almost as much as an adult. The wages earned by an

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¹. Ibid., 30/9/38.
². MH 32/66 28/12/39.
³. Ibid.
⁴. Ibid.
operative were "miserably low", although the collective income of a family, where there were several children past the age of infancy was "considerable". From the nature of their employment and long hours of labour in small badly ventilated and frequently overheated apartments, they were "deficient of physical strength. The pallid face and emaciated figure of the stocking maker (usually little more than half clothed) formed the strangest possible contrast to the weather-beaten appearance of the outdoor labourer. Stocking-makers as a class were probably the most pauperised part of the population". From their "previously fluctuating high wages and dependence on the rates", they had become "improvident, riotous and intemperate". The county was "beset with gangs of importunate beggars". The poor in the neighbouring unions were "without doubt in deplorable distress". Even the most skilled operatives were "generally found penniless the moment employment ceased".

The impoverished stocking makers generally refused the workhouse and rarely accepted the offer of outdoor employment when offered by unions within walking distance from their residence. In Barrow Union, employment was found by the road surveyors where the population of stocking makers was large. The workhouse was almost full but he was heartened to report that the guardians had shown firmness in administering the law at a time of the year most unfavourable to agricultural employment and at a time when the price of provisions was unusually high. By their actions work had been found for the operatives, whereas under the former administration they might have been "thrown on the rates and supported in idleness". No request by the guardians for a relaxation of the rule prohibiting outdoor relief had been refused by the Commissioners, however, and no complaints about the policies pursued by the Boards had been made
to him.

A report on Barrow Union in 1840, however stated that "from the general want of employment among the stocking makers, the prohibitory order had been suspended". The workhouse was full and outdoor relief much increased. In no instance however, had relief been given in aid of wages to the partially employed. Loughborough and Leicester were undergoing similar distress and Mr. Senior believed that the situation was on the whole satisfactory "considering the severity of the manufacturing distress .... the long time it has prevailed, the high price of provisions and the season of the year .... where half the agricultural population were under the previous system out of employment and relieved from the rates". The result had been achieved, moreover, not by the authority of the Commissioners in opposition to the wishes of the Guardians but with "their full and willing concurrence".

In the ensuing years, the Assistant Commissioner's reports due no doubt to the large area he was forced to cover, were cursory, and comments on the Barrow Union as on others, merely recorded that the workhouse was "under regulations and effective as a test".

The Barrow Guardians had acted promptly to implement the instructions issued by the Poor Law Commission for the granting of relief to the able-bodied poor. At the first meeting of the Board, the Union was divided into two districts for the administration of outdoor relief and after considering proposals for £60 and £70 as the salary for the relieving

officers a compromise salary of £65\textsuperscript{1} was arrived at. It was proposed that the relieving officers be required to find "sureties to join them in a Bond of £200 for the due and faithful performance of their duties".\textsuperscript{2} Advertisements for the relieving officers were placed in The Times, Morning Chronicle, the Leicester Journal and Chronicle and the Loughborough Telegraph. As was so often the case, local applicants were appointed.\textsuperscript{3} William Bail and Thomas More Padmore remained as relieving officers throughout most of the period, constantly under the surveillance of the Board. Both however were to end their terms in dramatic circumstances, Bail by suicide\textsuperscript{4} and Padmore by arrest.\textsuperscript{5}

A meeting on the seventh of November, 1837 resolved that Bail and Padmore should supersede "the churchwardens and overseers of the parishes in the Union in relieving outdoor paupers\textsuperscript{6} and the procedure was laid down whereby money for out relief was debited to the relieving officers, usually £30 or £40 and credited to the Treasurer.

The Board appeared anxious to abide by the rules laid down by the Poor Law Commission for the conduct of relieving officers. Journals issued to them, were to be forwarded regularly to the Board for inspection at each meeting.\textsuperscript{7} Relieving officers were to place upon their returns

\begin{enumerate}
\item Relieving officers usually received between £60 and £80 per year, Rose, D.Phil., op. cit., p. 192.
\item M.B. 12/9/37.
\item Ibid., 3/10/37.
\item Ibid., 19/6/55.
\item Ibid., 27/7/58.
\item Parish officers were allowed to administer relief only in cases of sudden and urgent necessity and were required to notify the relieving officer on their first subsequent visit. M.B. 10/12/38.
\item M.B. 23/10/38, 30/3/41.
\end{enumerate}
the weekly expenditure and the balance remaining. Stringent rules were
laid down by the Board for their conduct. They were to administer relief
to paupers within their respective parishes at regular stated times,¹
bills were to be printed with these times and the length of time the
relieving officer was to stay in each parish and copies were to be
displayed in every parish in the Union. Lists bearing names of paupers
supplied with bread were to be affixed to the church door each quarter.
Both relieving officers were required by the Board to live in places
deemed to be convenient for their work.²

The relieving officers were not allowed to communicate with inmates
of the workhouse except on Board days³ or to be admitted into any ward
of the workhouse. The Board constantly sought a foolproof system of
administering out relief, satisfying the requirements of the Poor Law
Commission and guaranteeing against the peculation they appeared to
expect or suspect from their relieving officers.

No erasures were permitted in the books of the relieving officers.
A line was to be drawn through any error and the correction should be
shown.⁴ Padmore was compelled to make up the difference in relief to
paupers in several places where the time for relief had been changed.
Bail was warned that if any more erasures occurred in his books against
the rule, his conduct would be reported to the Poor Law Commission.⁵

1. Ibid., 20/2/38, 14/7/40.
2. Ibid., 29/9/40.
3. Ibid., 21/4/40.
4. Ibid., 20/7/41.
In 1846 the Board refused Padmore's application for the position of Assistant Overseer for Mountsorrel South, claiming it was contrary to the rules and regulations for relieving officers, although some relieving officers did continue to act as assistant overseers in other Unions. When Padmore applied for an increase in salary, the salaries of both relieving officers were raised to £70 and the Poor Law Commission approved the increase.

Bail's competence to perform his duties was questioned in 1851 but the Board decided he was competent to perform his duties, informing him that it was necessary for him to visit the paupers in their respective parishes in person. A complaint was made by Rev. Pritchard that Padmore had caused a child to be buried in the burial grounds of the General Baptists against the will of the parents. The Board stated firmly that the officers were not permitted to "interfere with parties who received parochial assistance to enable them to bury their relatives by compelling them to bury at any particular place either on account of the cost or otherwise but (that) every person should be buried where their relatives may decide".

No further complaint was made against either relieving officer until 1855 when the Board resolved to set up a committee to consider the duties.

1. Ibid., 7/4/46.
2. M.B. 30/6/46.
3. Ibid., 14/7/46.
4. Ibid., 25/8/46.
5. Ibid., 29/4/51.
of relieving officers and the manner in which these duties had been performed. The reason for this enquiry was revealed, when at a meeting attended by Poor Law Inspector Weale, Mr. Bail informed the Board that "from infirmity (the result of his age) he was not able to perform all the duties of his office and that part of them were done by his son". Mr. Weale stated that this was contrary to the rules and regulations of the Poor Law Commission and requested Bail to tender his resignation. Bail could only concur. The Board instructed the Clerk to advertise for a replacement in the Leicester, Nottingham and Birmingham newspapers.

On the 19th June the Board was informed that Will Bail had committed suicide. Without further comment, the minute book records that Will Bail's son was requested to act as relieving officer for the Syston district until a replacement was made and had agreed to do so.

The committee appointed to consider the duties of relieving officers proceeded to report its findings. The committee found that the most important duties requested by the Poor Law Board had not been fulfilled and that it was impossible for the relieving officers to carry out their duties under the system which the Board had allowed them to adopt. In the Barrow District relief had been administered in one day, in Syston in two. This demonstrated the desirability of making a strict order as to the amount of time the relieving officers should devote to each parish so that not only should they give the relief allowed by the Board but also that personal inspection which the law demanded should be carried out.

2. Ibid., 5/6/55.
3. Ibid.
The committee expressed the opinion that "this great evil" had arisen because the Board had allowed the relieving officer to ride with the bread cart from village to village, "leading to neglect of duty on the part of the relieving officer and taking away the independence that should be maintained between the relieving officer and the bread contractor".  

This practice should stop immediately and the whole system of ordering and distributing bread was to be tightened up. The committee found that the work was unequally divided, outdoor relief for the Syston district amounting to £1,264.13.4. and in Barrow £688.18.4. Will Bail had obviously been over-extended. It was obvious that it was framework knitters who were most vulnerable and had made heavy demands on outdoor relief. The districts were accordingly adjusted and to ensure the proper attendance at each parish by the relieving officer, the committee drew up a schedule setting out the route and the time of arrival and departure at each distribution point in the Union.

There were forty-two applicants for Bail's post and after carefully considering their testimonials, the choice was narrowed to four. These included a police officer from Gainsborough, a school teacher from Birmingham, an assistant relieving officer from Leicester and William Bail, the temporary relieving officer. The treatment accorded to his father after eighteen years of service did not apparently discourage his son from applying and Bail was duly elected. The absence of his name in the remaining period indicates that he must have met with the Board's approval.

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., 17/7/55.
The other relieving officer, Thomas Padmore, however was not so fortunate. In 1856 he was censured for making irregular entries in the book "tending to cover his own irregularities ..., which had the effect of making the conduct of the Board appear reprehensible".¹

In 1858 the Clerk reported to the Board that Mr. Padmore had applied to the County Court for protection from arrest as an insolvent stating that his sureties were good and that the sum owing by him to the Board was only £5.2.3. The Board wrote to the sureties of Padmore asking them to pay to the treasurer of the Union £18.18.0., the balance due from Padmore and resolved that in consequence of Padmore's insolvency, "not having the protection of the Court from legal powers, he be suspended from office".² The Clerk was instructed to report his suspension to the Poor Law Board and to make temporary arrangements for the relief of the poor in the Barrow District. Padmore was ordered to pay the money owed by him to the Board.³ On the 24th August Padmore's resignation was accepted by the Board. The Board demonstrated once again its resoluteness in dealing with its officers, no matter how long their service when their efficiency or their probity was found to be unsatisfactory. There were fifty-six candidates for the position of relieving officer and John White of Birmingham was elected.⁴

John White's career as relieving officer was brief and unsatisfactory. Only seven months later⁵ a committee appointed to enquire into complaints

1. Ibid., 12/2/56.
2. Ibid., 27/7/58.
3. Ibid., 10/8/58.
4. Ibid., 21/9/58.
5. Ibid., 5/4/59.
about his conduct found that some of the charges made against him were "not groundless"¹ and he was admonished. Two months later² the Board investigated "the matter of the falsification of his accounts and non-payment of the tradesmen's bills" and resolved unanimously that White was unfit to perform the "responsible" duties of relieving officer.

On this occasion the relieving officer put up a battle for his position and the Poor Law Board seemed reluctant to act summarily in dealing with him. White complained to the Poor Law Board that he was ignorant of the charges made against him.³ The Poor Law Board furnished him with a list of the charges.⁴ The Barrow Board suspended White pending the Poor Law Board's decision and appointed the Clerk as a temporary replacement. The Board was currently corresponding with the central authority about the dismissal of a medical officer whose conduct had been deemed unsatisfactory and expressed their view that their opinions had not received consideration from the Poor Law Board which "an unpaid Board of Guardians had a perfect right to expect".⁵ White was ordered to surrender his books and papers to the Clerk while he was under suspension.⁶

Mr. Weale attended the next meeting of the Barrow Board to enquire into the charges against White who admitted the charges against him were true, tendering his resignation at last. William Riley was elected from a field of twenty candidates.⁷

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., 14/6/59.
3. Ibid., 12/7/59.
4. Ibid., 28/6/59.
5. Ibid., 26/7/59.
Throughout the period studied, the Barrow Board kept a watchful eye on the relieving officers. Stringent regulations were laid down for the distribution of relief and the Board continually changed the system in an attempt to plug loop-holes. When the relieving officers were found wanting, they were dealt with ruthlessly. When Bail became inefficient and unequal to the task, he was summarily dismissed. When Padmore got into financial difficulties he was seen as risk to the system and was similarly disposed of. White's misconduct brought his career to sudden end.

Eric Midwinter has said that "much stress was laid on the replacement of amateurish parochial workers by competent salaried officials". The relieving officers were the lynch-pin of the system, responsible for the day-to-day running of the Union. In the Barrow Union, as in so many others, they proved unworthy of the task, and placed the Board's stringent economic management at risk.

The Barrow Board's apparent willingness to abide by the instructions issued by the Poor Law Commission on outdoor relief can be seen by its unanimous resolution in the early days of the Union that "except in cases of sickness or accident, no relief shall be given to any able person nor to any part of his or her family for whose support he or she may be liable except in the workhouse so long as there shall continue to be sufficient accommodation for paupers in the workhouse". 2

Almost immediately however, the decision was made to reconsider the general rule on outdoor relief. 3 It was resolved that able-bodied

3. Ibid., 21/11/37.
widows should be relieved out of the workhouse at the direction of the Board.¹ In early 1838 it was decided that the able-bodied paupers out of employment should be allowed daily relief in the workhouse and were to be employed in the usual manner.² A decision had been made that stone should be bought from the Mountsorrel and Quorn quarries and broken on the premises of the workhouse by able-bodied paupers.³

The Quarterly Abstracts in 1838 revealed that during the previous seven weeks 232 paupers had been relieved in the workhouse including 53 females and 57 children at a cost of £117.14.10½ and that 1,157 had received out relief at a cost of £453.14.8.⁴ The Board resolved that persons refusing relief in the workhouse should not be relieved in any other way by the relieving officer.⁵ But it was obvious that the old House of Industry which the Board was still using could not accommodate the vast hoards of paupers requiring relief.

Because of a depression in trade, the Board applied for permission to the Poor Law Commission to give outdoor relief to all able-bodied paupers at the end of 1839. At the same time it was resolved that relief to the able-bodied should not exceed one shilling per head per week.⁶ The Barrow Board resembled other boards in using out relief as a mere subsistence allowance to help tide paupers over a short period of

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1. Ibid., 5/12/37.
2. Ibid., 20/2/38.
3. Ibid., 14/11/37.
4. Ibid., 6/2/38.
5. Ibid., 13/3/38.
6. Ibid., 10/12/39, 31/12/39.
The Board at this stage kept in close touch with the Poor Law Commission, notifying the central authority of its every decision and seeking approval and receiving in turn the advice and approbation of the Commission. An order authorised the guardians to grant outdoor relief to the able-bodied for three months. The Barrow Board appeared anxious to conform, the Commission anxious to encourage sound practice.

The professed policy of the Barrow Board was to abide by the rules laid down by the Poor Law Commission for the relief of the able-bodied poor. What of the practice? The records in the Barrow minute books of the paupers applying for relief and the relief granted to them were examined in detail for 1838 in order to attempt to determine which groups in the community were at risk and the nature of the relief offered, and whether the Barrow Board was as assiduously law-abiding as its communications with the central authority made it appear.

1838 was the first full year of operation of the Barrow Union. It was a year when full records were kept and a year of economic depression with maximum pressure on the workhouse. It was also before the new workhouse had been built. It was therefore not a typical year, although typical of the early years of the Board's operations.

From the records in the minute books for 1838 of paupers seeking relief from the Barrow Board, the details of sex, age, marital status, number of children in the family, health, employment and the relief offered to each pauper were recorded. This material was classified into categories. Because of the large numbers involved, the material was

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collated by computer. It was intended initially to carry out a statistical analysis to test possible correlations. This was not done however, because of the number of incomplete entries in each classification, see Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1.**

**Incomplete Entries for Those Seeking Relief in 1838**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number seeking relief</th>
<th>1223</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of entries with incomplete details in the following categories:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Age</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Marital status</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Children</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) Illness</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) Employment</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vi) All of above</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purposes of this study, paupers were divided into three categories by age: 0-10, 11-60 and over 60 years.

There were a number of problems in dealing with the records. While paupers who were ill appeared to have been entered, often with their specific illnesses, there were very few specifically described as able-bodied. The method of recording the occupations of paupers created problems. There seemed to be no consistent pattern and it could not be determined with any degree of certainty whether the entry of a pauper's occupation meant he was currently employed in that trade or whether he was unemployed. Often only the pauper's income or potential income was
entered. Few trades other than framework knitter and labourer were recorded and comparatively few were specifically described as unemployed, see Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework knitters</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A majority of those seeking relief were clearly framework knitters.

A further problem in identifying those seeking relief arose from the phenomenon described by Rose as "constructive pauperism".¹ This meant that if the head of the family received relief, the entire family were registered as paupers and if his wife or children received relief, the head of the family was again designated as a pauper. This may help to explain the pattern that emerged of those in the Barrow Union who sought relief. It was obvious that males between the ages of eleven and sixty made up the largest proportion of those seeking relief and almost twice as many men as women over sixty applied for relief, see Table 5.3.

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TABLE 5.3.

AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION OF THOSE SEEKING RELIEF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age distribution</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 60</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>626</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>1001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the marital status of the paupers was examined, see Table 5.4, the number of married women recorded appeared very low in comparison with the number of married men applying for relief. This overwhelming preponderance of males seeking relief may be attributable to the recording practice of the Board in line with the concept of "constructive pauperism".

TABLE 5.4.

MARITAL STATUS OF THOSE SEEKING RELIEF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Marriage</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of married females</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of married males</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of widowed females</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of widowed males</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of deserted females</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of females with transported husbands</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly when examining the number of children, a much greater number of married men with children applied for assistance than women. All three hundred and twenty-seven applying had children, a majority, more than four
children. By comparison, only one hundred and eighty women with children were listed. It should be noted that the ages of children were not shown.

**TABLE 5.5.**

**NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER FAMILY SEEKING RELIEF**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Parents seeking relief</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>228</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>305</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen that the use of these records is limited when the number of incomplete entries and the inexactitude of recording and classifying is considered.

Similar qualifications must be made when the pattern of relief is examined. No indication was given in the minute books of how long paupers were in receipt of relief. A close examination of the records revealed the same individuals appearing at frequent intervals before the Board for relief. Elizabeth Glover, a widow aged forty-six appeared before the Board five times in 1838. Inigo Squires, framework knitter aged fifty with six children was given medical relief for his wife's confinement in March and was relieved with bread at meetings in April and September.

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1. The Board sometimes as here, rates that this is a reconsidered case.
2. Various members of the Squires family appear at frequent intervals throughout 1838.
It may be more accurate to speak in terms of the number of occasions when relief was required rather than the number of individuals wanting relief unless a painstaking body-count, identifying each pauper on each occasion were to be made.

It would seem from the records that very few paupers were refused relief and that the numbers relieved in other Unions were small in 1838 (see Table 5.6).

**TABLE 5.6.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number refused relief</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number to other Unions</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While acknowledging the difficulties carrying out a sophisticated analysis because of the problems outlined, a number of observations may be made about the pattern of relief, see Table 5.7.

**TABLE 5.7.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relief</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workhouse</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor relief</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funeral expenses</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Barrow Union showed an overriding tendency in 1838 towards granting outdoor relief. Once again the number of males greatly exceeded females.

That paupers teetered on the brink of destitution was apparent from the numbers receiving assistance for the expenses incurred in burying relatives and often themselves. Others required clothes to enable them to leave the workhouse. Applications were made frequently for the purchase of shoes, always a problem with the poor.

An overwhelming proportion of those seeking medical relief, see Table 5.8, were granted outdoor relief for the duration of their illness.

TABLE 5.8.

ANALYSIS OF RELIEF TO THE ILL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relief</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workhouse</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor relief</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funeral expenses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused relief</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other unions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Outdoor relief was often given in conjunction with medical relief.

1. The cost of a coffin was usually between 24/- and 30/-.

The records of the Union show quite plainly that men applied for relief on behalf of wives who had been confined and for their sick children and were more likely than women to obtain outdoor relief. A high number of ill paupers obtained outdoor rather than medical relief. Outdoor relief was almost invariably given to those with children seeking relief (see Table 5.9).

**TABLE 5.9.**

**ANALYSIS OF RELIEF FOR THE POOR WITH CHILDREN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relief</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workhouse</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor relief</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funeral expenses</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Unions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Special note was taken of the relief granted to several groups of women to test the hypothesis that they were singled out for punitive treatment. These were single women with children,\(^1\) deserted wives and wives of prisoners or transported felons, see Table 5.10.*

---

1. For an account of the treatment of this group, see V. Henriques, "Bastardy and the New Poor Law", *P. and P.*, 1976, pp. 103-29.
TABLE 5.10.

ANALYSIS OF RELIEF FOR CERTAIN CATEGORIES OF WOMEN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Workhouse</th>
<th>Outdoor Relief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Widows</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single women with children</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deserted wives</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives of prisoners</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The guardians obviously took a firm stand with these women. Although there were few of them in 1838, more than half were admitted to the workhouse. Their treatment contrasted with that of widows.

There are considerable difficulties in using Poor Law statistics. Some of these difficulties were obvious in this attempt to make a detailed analysis of the relief pattern for Barrow Union for 1838. The number of incomplete entries, the anomalies of classification, the difficulty of identifying constantly recurring applicants and the length of time relief was granted made interpreting the material extremely difficult.

Nevertheless some tentative conclusions may be drawn. Males between the ages of eleven and sixty undoubtedly made up the largest group seeking relief. The preponderance of men and the numbers of men seeking relief on behalf of their wives and families suggests the practice of

2. Under eleven years is somewhat arbitrarily taken as denoting childhood, although there is evidence of children under that age working. Sixty years is similarly tentatively regarded as "old".
"constructive pauperism" as does the larger number of men than women over sixty years of age seeking relief. Framework knitters made up the largest occupational group of those recorded applying for relief. On the other hand, since almost all the women applying for relief were widows, this study confirms the view that widows were a vulnerable group.

In 1838 the Barrow Union showed an overriding tendency to grant outdoor relief. Mostly the poor were assigned a small amount of money, usually one or two shillings and an allowance of bread each week. Eight pounds of bread appeared to be the standard rate for individuals, but the amount granted seemed quite arbitrary. It was obvious that outdoor relief was granted as a temporary measure often during severe weather or during a depression of trade at a rate likely to sustain the recipients at barely subsistence level. The need for other forms of outdoor relief, such as clothes, shoes and of course funeral expenses merely reinforces the vulnerability of the poor.

In 1846 the Board reprimanded the medical officers for supplying provisions instead of medical care but in 1838 the sick poor were almost entirely given outdoor relief in the form of bread and cash. This may have been in part a recognition by medical officers of the real needs of the poor but was no doubt also attributable to the medical officers having to pay for the cost of medicine.

Mr. Senior wrote in 1839 that he was gradually introducing the system of sending sick persons to the infirmaries of workhouses where "recoveries were more frequent and more rapid". But in 1838 in Barrow Union, the

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1. M.B. 28/7/46.
guardians were making do with the old house of industry and had little choice.

It is difficult to assess whether the guardians' early protestations of orthodoxy about outdoor relief to the able-bodied were carried into effect. The term "able-bodied" was never clearly defined by the Poor Law authorities. Although Michael Rose points out that most unions regarded all paupers between the ages of sixteen and seventy as able-bodied if they were not permanently incapacitated,\(^1\) the Barrow Board failed to make its interpretation of "able-bodied" clear. "Adult" males made up the largest number of those consigned to the workhouse, a third of the total, followed by females in the same age group, but there is no way of knowing whether they were able-bodied.

Once the new workhouse was completed, the guardians were in a position to implement the Poor Law Commission's requirements on outdoor relief. 1844, the year when the Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order\(^2\) the most stringent of the orders of the Poor Law Commission was issued, was a year of severe depression and large numbers presented themselves for relief. This general order stipulated that relief to the able-bodied should only be given in the workhouse subject to certain exceptions. Barrow Union seemed at this time to be operating under the earlier Outdoor Labour Test Order\(^3\) of 1842 which required the able-bodied to qualify for relief by performing a task of work.

The Board's decision to build the workhouse near the Mountsorrel

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3. Ibid., p. 145.
quarries was vindicated. Very rarely did the situation arise as in other Unions in periods of stress, that there was insufficient work. In December, 1844, the Master was given permission to employ an assistant during the depression in trade to superintend the able-bodied men working in the yard.

1847 was another year of crisis. The Union's resources were under pressure from vagrants and the guardians sought permission from the central authority to provide additional accommodation in the workhouse "they being apprehensive of a greater influx for a short time of able-bodied paupers in consequence of the depression of the usual trade". A committee was formed to see whether some paupers in the workhouse could be given outdoor relief so that needy cases could be admitted. A decision was made to erect a shed for the able-bodied men receiving outdoor relief and to employ a superintendent temporarily at 16/- per week. A scale for the relief of the able-bodied was laid down, see Table 5.11.

When it appeared that there was insufficient work to occupy the able-bodied, Rev. Acworth, ex officio guardian was requested to visit the labour yard with another guardian to give directions on how the men should be employed.

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3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 18/5/47.
5. Ibid., 25/5/47.
### Table 5.11.

**Scale of Outdoor Relief for the Able-Bodied**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pauper Description</th>
<th>Cash May</th>
<th>Cash November</th>
<th>Bread May</th>
<th>Bread November</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single man per week</td>
<td>2/-</td>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>8 lb</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single woman per week</td>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man and wife without children</td>
<td>3/-</td>
<td>2/-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man and wife with one child</td>
<td>4/-</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man and wife with two children</td>
<td>5/-</td>
<td>3/-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man and wife with three children</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man and wife with four children</td>
<td>6/-</td>
<td>4/-</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man and wife with five children</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man and wife with six children</td>
<td>7/-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Poor Law Commission approved relief to the able-bodied in return for work done, but requested that each case should be reported to them for approval. The extent of the depression and large numbers in distress are demonstrated by the fact that the Board at this time sought authorisation from the central authority\(^1\) to increase the capacity of the workhouse to 342\(^2\) and that the able-bodied men were employed not at the workhouse but at the Mountsorrel quarries. Stringent rules governing the hours of work were laid down, see Table 5.12. Any man not at the quarry at the proper time was to be dismissed for the day. An hour and a half was allowed for meals.

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1. The P.L.C. was replaced by the Poor Law Board in May, 1947.
2. M.B. 11/6/47.
TABLE 5.12.

HOURS OF WORK FOR OUTDOOR RELIEF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance from Quarry</th>
<th>Starting Time</th>
<th>Finishing Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two miles</td>
<td>7 a.m.</td>
<td>5 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-five miles</td>
<td>8 a.m.</td>
<td>4 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than eight miles</td>
<td>9 a.m.</td>
<td>3 p.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The whole operation was watched closely by the Board. The quarries were visited, the work done by the men inspected, the superintendent's efficiency was assessed. He was ordered to produce his Book of Labour to the Board to show whether the able-bodied men had other employment and to check with the keeper of the weighing machine on the quantity of granite broken and carried away. Enquiries were made as to whether the "price given for the work was adequate". The list of the able-bodied paupers receiving relief was to be revised at regular intervals.

Throughout June, the Board kept in constant contact with the central authority, receiving its approval to grant relief to the able-bodied "without employment in their respective calling".

The superintendent complained that "parties who supplied labour at the granite quarry had requested the assistance of men employed under the labour test as independent workmen for single days "and that men had been sent to him by the relieving officer in the middle of the week".

1. Ibid.
2. M.B. 22/6/47.
3. Ibid., 29/6/47.
He was advised by the Board to employ only those men under the labour test who were wholly unemployed.

In July the crisis appeared to be over. There was now room in the workhouse for the able-bodied men and as there were no men working in the quarries, the Board requested to be allowed to suspend the superintendent. The harvest no doubt gave employment to many of the men who formerly broke granite in return for relief.

In November, however, pressure on the workhouse built up again and the relieving officers were instructed to procure work for the unemployed or give them temporary relief. The Clerk was to report to the Board cases that could be legally relieved out of the workhouse and to make enquiries among the inmates of the workhouse as to who "may be allowed out of the house and if they will be satisfied with temporary relief".

It was back to the quarry at the end of November when the master informed the Board that he had only room at the workhouse for three able-bodied men. A new scale of relief was drawn up with an increased amount of bread but less money. Thirty-two inmates of the workhouse were given outdoor relief.

After 1848 when the Board requested the Poor Law Board to authorise outdoor relief to the able-bodied on leaving the workhouse, the question was barely mentioned. From 1850 to 1860, the numbers in the workhouse

1. Ibid., 13/7/47.
2. Ibid., 16/11/47.
3. Ibid., 23/11/47.
4. Ibid., 26/11/47.
fluctuated widely, but the numbers receiving outdoor relief remained fairly constant.¹ When the number of inmates in 1855 was sixty-five, the number receiving outdoor relief was 875. And in 1856 when the inmates numbered 132, outdoor relief was given to 866 persons.² This pattern seems fairly consistent.³

Until 1848, the Board's avowed intentions and apparent practice were to implement the policy of the Poor Law Commission on outdoor relief (see Table 5.13).

**TABLE 5.13.**

**WEEKLY EXPENDITURE OF CASH ON OUTDOOR RELIEF BY RELIEVING OFFICERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of weeks recorded each year</th>
<th>Relief given in pounds mean</th>
<th>std. dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-1838</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>85.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>108.7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table records only cash expenditure. It does not include expenditure on bread, which in the early stages was recorded as loaves. The system of outdoor relief changed constantly. These figures show that a constant amount was spent on outdoor relief except in 1847 when expenditure rose.

¹ Ibid., 25/9/55.
² Ibid., 15/1/56.
³ Ibid., 27/9/53, 31/1/54, 1/8/55, 10/5/56.
After 1848 outdoor relief continued at a high level regardless of pressure on the workhouse. The Poor Law Board's strictures on the granting of outdoor relief left the boards of guardians with much greater latitude. This may have encouraged the Barrow Board to be more flexible. It is more likely however, that after ten years experience of administering the Union, the advantages of outdoor relief have become apparent. Above all it was more economical. After 1848 moreover there were none of the periods of exceptional depression which had produced the flurry of correspondence that had occurred between the central authority and the local Board in the early days of the Union.

In its preoccupation with reducing the costs of poor relief, the Poor Law Report of 1834 was most concerned with ensuring that the relief offered to the able-bodied poor was at a level which would guarantee that their standard of living was kept below that of the poorest independent labourer who did not seek relief. This principle of "less eligibility" was to be applied by denying outdoor relief to the able-bodied and ensuring that the alternative indoor relief impressed on the able-bodied poor the desirability of an independent existence. Anne Digby has described this workhouse test as a "self acting test of destitution".

Although the correspondence between the Barrow Board of Guardians and the Poor Law Commission in the early years at least, indicated the Board's enthusiasm for the phasing out of outdoor relief and the embracing of the workhouse test, an examination of the utilisation of the workhouse suggests a steady waning of this enthusiasm.

1. Rose, English Poor Law, op. cit., p. 141.
The workhouse at Rothley was consistently under utilised. The original intention was to build a workhouse with a capacity for three hundred and fifty inmates. The number fixed by the guardians and approved by the Poor Law Commission was in fact two hundred and fifty. The erratic recording of the numbers in the workhouse before 1847 makes it difficult to assess the workhouse population. The figures available before 1847 however, certainly do not approach the two hundred and fifty limit, ranging as they do between 129 and 204 per week. It was possible to record the number of inmates in the workhouse each week from 1847 to 1859, since after 1847, the Clerk was increasingly more methodical about recording the numbers. The yearly mean of these figures is given in Table 5.14.

TABLE 5.14.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN WORKHOUSE PER WEEK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of entries</th>
<th>Mean number</th>
<th>Standard deviation of mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. MH 32/56 16/8/42.
In 1847, it was proposed to increase the accommodation to 342 by making fuller use of existing sleeping apartments and a certificate giving permission to do so was granted by the central authority.¹ For much of 1847, the numbers exceeded 250 and in November and the beginning of December rose to over three hundred. In 1848, the occupancy of the workhouse also reached a high level but in both years there was a wide variation, as indicated by the large value of the standard deviation. These were years of severe economic depression compounded with public health and vagrancy problems.²

After 1848, the utilisation declined, ranging between sixty-one and ninety-nine per week with the exception of the winter period of 1855 and the comparatively low value of the standard deviation in those years, again with the exception of 1855 indicates that the numbers remained fairly constant. This represented an approximate utilisation of thirty per cent.³

It may be seen that mainly with the exception of the years of crisis in 1847 and 1848, the workhouse was under-utilised. Having committed themselves to this large capital outlay of a new workhouse and the considerable expense of maintaining it, the Board continued with the practice of outdoor relief.

The figures for outdoor relief were also erratically recorded, the

¹ M.B. 11/5/47.
² In the Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Board in 1849, Mr. Weale reported that 1,430 vagrants had been relieved in the Barrow workhouse in the half year ending at Michaelmas, 1848. The number dropped to 611 in the next half year.
³ Low utilisation of workhouses was common, for example, see Digby, Ph.D. Thesis, op. cit., and Caplan, op. cit.
method continually changing throughout the period. From 1853, a fairly consistent practice was evolved, making it possible to study movements in expenditure on outdoor relief. (See Table 5.15). Figure 5.1, for example, shows 1855 was an exceptional year.

**TABLE 5.15.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of entries in year</th>
<th>Mean amount</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>£69</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>£77</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>£84</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>£77</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>£66</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>£65</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>£67</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These revealed that the expenditure on outdoor relief remained fairly constant. In spite of the fact that there was room in the workhouse, the guardians continued to offer outdoor relief. The inescapable conclusion is that they found it more convenient and more economical to do so.

For those who were admitted to the workhouse, conditions under the New Poor Law were to be less eligible. In the food eaten, the standard of accommodation offered and the restrictions on liberty imposed, it was intended that the pauper should be disadvantaged in comparison with the poorest independent labourer.

The Fifth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission in 1840 claimed that the six dietaries submitted to the boards of guardians "not
FIGURE 5.1. OUTDOOR RELIEF GIVEN IN 1855

MONTH
authoritatively, but suggestively" were intended to guarantee an adequate supply of wholesome food, not superior in quantity or quality to that which the labouring classes in the respective neighbourhoods provided for themselves". The possibility was conceded that the Commissioners may have provided for the inmates of workhouses "more amply than the hard-working labourer with a family could accomplish for himself by his own exertions".

The dietary selected by the Barrow Board, although comprising mainly bread, gruel, potatoes and suet pudding also included small quantities of meat and cheese. This diet, while undoubtedly monotonous and deficient in nutrition was nevertheless probably superior to that of the average labourer, and almost certainly to that of the poorer independent labourer.

In later years, eggs appeared on the list of provisions together with pork and vegetables raised in the workhouse gardens. At Christmas and at Queen Victoria's coronation the inmates were, as was the experience in other workhouses, "regaled" with beef and Christmas pudding.

Modifications in the diet offered in the Barrow workhouse were rarely made on the initiative of the guardians. The special dietary concessions for the old and children and the addition to the diet of, for example,

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Anne Digby found the diet of the indoor pauper in Norfolk superior to that of the average independent labourer. A. Digby, Ph.D. Thesis, op. cit., p. 80. See also, J. Burnett, Plenty and Want, pp. 38-47.
5. They were allowed one ounce of tea, five ounces of butter and seven ounces of sugar each per week instead of gruel for breakfast. MH 12/6398 26/9/40.
6. See Children's Dietary, see p. 192.
"hominy" during the potato famine\(^1\) were made at the suggestion of the central authorities. The able-bodied paupers in the workhouse were successful in petitioning for an increase in the amount of food on one occasion\(^2\) and the aged, on another occasion, reminded the Board of the customary Christmas fare.\(^3\)

While they lacked initiative and certainly generosity in the food offered, the guardians exhibited a consistent concern about the quality of the provisions bought for the workhouse, especially the meat, bread and flour. This was probably more in keeping with their desire to obtain value for money than to guarantee the nutrition of the inmates. The food supplied to the inmates was dull, monotonous, inadequate and lacking in nutrition. It was, for all that, not necessarily a guarantee of less eligibility.

The same could well be said of the labour required of the inmates. The Webbs described stone-breaking as "combining the characteristics of monotony, absence of initiative, toilsomeness and inutility".\(^4\) The site of the Barrow workhouse had been selected at Rothley largely because of its proximity to the quarries of Mountsorrel renowned for "one of the hardest and most durable granites in the kingdom".\(^5\) Able-bodied males in the workhouse and vagrants were employed breaking this granite, as well as pumping water, tending the vegetable garden or assisting in the

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2. M.B. 13/2/44.
3. Ibid., 18/12/44.
5. White, op. cit., p. 25.
Women and girls were fully engaged in domestic work, as the continual purchase of cleaning equipment testifies.

The principle of "less eligibility" was intended to discourage all but the most desperate from becoming a burden on the ratepayers. It was difficult to make the material conditions inferior to those outside the workhouse, but the restraints on freedom and the strict discipline must have helped to "induce (the poor) to prefer to it a life of independent labour".¹

There is no evidence that the Barrow workhouse operated an especially harsh regime, but the Board in the early years of its operation at least showed an anxiety to put into practice some of the remedial measures which received approval in the Poor Law Report.²

The freedom of the inmates was circumscribed in a number of ways. No paupers were allowed leave of absence from the workhouse without a satisfactory reason being given to the Board. If inmates wished to visit sick relatives, medical certificates had to be produced.³ One woman was allowed to be absent from the workhouse for one day provided, the minute book stated suspiciously, "her daughter is as ill as she stated".⁴ Permission was given to be absent to find employment,⁵ on one occasion only, for three days. It was more frequently for one day only,

2. Ibid., pp. 337-41. This applied especially to the measures adopted at Southwell.
4. Ibid.
5. M.B. 19/12/37, 8/5/38.
which gave a pauper little opportunity to go far afield for a job.

No food was to be brought into the workhouse by visitors except for the aged or infirm and only they could have visitors on Sundays.\(^1\) Spikes were fixed to the outer wall of the workhouse\(^2\) although paupers were theoretically free to leave for good at any time\(^3\) and there were several instances of paupers absconding taking the Union clothes with them.\(^4\) The freedom to leave was somewhat apocryphal given the precarious financial state of the inmates\(^5\) and certainly while the pauper was in the House his freedom was severely limited.

The fact that a husband and wife admitted in 1838 described as "being of excellent character" were rewarded by having the rule requiring the complete separation of sexes waived, shows the Board usually separated husbands and wives.\(^6\) The Poor Law Commission's permission was sought first. Those who broke the rules displayed prominently throughout the workhouse were put on a "refractory diet"\(^7\) for from two to six days or were confined in a "refractory cell". The purchase of a belt for "refractory paupers"\(^8\) is evidence of corporal punishment.

\(^1\) M.B. 12/1/41.  
\(^2\) Ibid., 5/10/41.  
\(^3\) David Roberts, How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law? H.J., p. 106.  
\(^4\) M.B. 9/7/39, 10/12/39, 31/12/39, 25/8/39, 28/6/42.  
\(^6\) M.B. 26/6/38.  
\(^7\) Ibid., 17/4/38.  
\(^8\) Ibid., 12/1/39.
In spite of this, there seems to have been a considerable amount of insubordination and indiscipline, with the authority of the porter, the schoolmaster and the master recorded as being challenged on several occasions. Some paupers ended, like James Jarvis, in the House of Correction. The case of Jarvis may not have been typical, but it demonstrated the repressive nature of the workhouse as well as the constraints placed on the exercise of this repression, both by the central authority and the fear of publicity. The death of James Jarvis hardly compares with a scandal such as Andover. The report of the inquest in the Leicester Mercury and the lengthy report submitted by Assistant Commissioner Weale to the Poor Law Commission disclose an incident much less horrific than those which featured in Baxter's *Book of Bastilles* or for that matter regularly appeared in The Times and the provincial press. It occurred, however, at the time of the enquiry into the Andover Union and was the subject of questions in the House of Commons and was featured at length in the Twelfth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission.

James Jarvis, aged seventy-five, a former framework knitter of Quorn, had been an inmate of the workhouse from the commencement of the Union and before that, an occasional inmate of the House of Industry of the old Barrow Incorporation. He had died at the Leicester House of Correction where he had been committed on the twenty-sixth of March. The report of

1. Ibid., 9/8/46.
the inquest in the Leicester Mercury revealed he had been committed to
the House of Correction for twenty-one days hard labour but after an
examination by the surgeon, he had been set to pick oakum rather than
"to the wheel" on account of his age. He had been taken to the infirmary
cell after he developed "erysipelas". He had died there on the sixteenth
of April.

Enough was said by witnesses and relatives of Jarvis at the inquest
to suggest the implication of the Barrow workhouse in Jarvis's death, in
spite of the coroner's efforts to suppress them. A turnkey at the gaol
testified that Jarvis had told him, "my living is better here than where
I came from" and that he had been kept on bread and water for ten days at
the workhouse.

The assistant surgeon who had examined Jarvis at the gaol, attributed
death "entirely to erysipelas (which was) not at all attributable to any
hard or improper usage in the gaol" but he refused to be drawn by Jarvis's
relatives into an admission that the refractory diet which Jarvis had been
placed on at the workhouse had been responsible for his death. According
to the Leicester Mercury, Jarvis's son-in-law said, looking pointedly in
the direction of Mr. Fewkes, the Clerk of the Union, "There are one or
two individuals in the room who could say whether such a change of diet
did take place". Although the Coroner admonished the son-in-law, reminding
him that the inquest was confined to determining whether Jarvis's death
was the result of treatment he had received in the House of Correction,
he nevertheless asked the surgeon himself whether placing Jarvis on a

2. Local inflammation caused by streptococcus.
restricted diet could have brought on the erysipelas that caused his death. The son-in-law capitalised on the grudging admission that it might by declaring, "Thank you, sir. That laid the foundation of his disease I am sure". He impressed the reporter from the Leicester Mercury as "a very decent, hard-working man .... who had put his questions in a very careful and respectful manner".

The other members of Jarvis's family had by innuendo and interjection reinforced the impression that their father's death was the result of treatment he had received at the Barrow workhouse, but the son-in-law had the last word. He expressed his thanks to the Governor of the House of Correction and the assistant surgeon for their kindness to his father-in-law and concluded meaningfully, "I wish I could say as much for ---- I mean as to another quarter. But I won't say more, Sir". The coroner could only protest lamely, "No we have nothing to do with that". But the harm was done. On the tenth of May Mr. Weale wrote to the Barrow Board of Guardians informing them that he had been directed by the Poor Law Commission to institute an enquiry into the treatment the late James Jarvis had received while an inmate of the workhouse. The jury at the inquest into Jarvis's death had found that he had died by "visitation of God". The Poor Law Commission obviously had their doubts.

The Leicester Mercury's account of the inquest closed with the statement that Rev. W. Acworth, the committing magistrate was ex officio guardian of the Barrow Union and that he had acted as chairman of the Board "on the very day it was resolved that the deceased should be sent before him as one of the Loughborough bench". This veiled charge of overlapping functions with a suggestion of improper conduct prompted a defensive reaction from Weale. His report to the Poor Law Commission
concluded by denying that Acworth was the chairman, vice-chairman or acting chairman on either of the occasions when the Board dealt with Jarvis. The Mercury report of the inquest however underlined the extent of the power exercised by individuals such as Rev. Acworth and showed how the establishment closed ranks when their authority was questioned.

One of the problems of Poor Law history is the dependence on the point of view of the power wielders. We rarely hear from the objects of Poor Law policy, the poor themselves. Paupers normally appear as lists of names or statistics, identified only by their problems and their cost to the Union. The inquest of James Jarvis revealed something of these faceless people, as well as those placed in authority over them. At the inquest, the relatives of James Jarvis displayed a shrewdness and a certain audacity even bravery in persisting in drawing attention to the suspicious circumstances of Jarvis's death in spite of the protective wall of silence thrown up by the establishment.

The report submitted to the Poor Law Commission throws further light on the poor and the conduct of the workhouse as well as the Board of Guardians and the officers of the Union. For this reason, it is discussed in some detail.

The master, Derry, reported Jarvis to the Board for having refused his direction to pump water with eight other old men, insisting that this direction was not punishment for Jarvis's earlier assault on another pauper inmate. The Board ordered that Jarvis should be put on a refractory diet if he continued to refuse to pump.

Jarvis was described by all those who testified, as being of
"irritable temper" but they agreed he was not insane. He had previously been employed as a wardsman to the sick in the workhouse and had objected to pumping on earlier occasions. The vehemence with which he defied this order must have been unusual enough amongst the pauper inmates for his sanity to be questioned. He told the master he would not pump for him or anyone else and "that no law would force him." He resisted continuous pressure from the master and blandishments from the matron who "with good words" tried to persuade him to pump for a token quarter of an hour a day. He rejected the surgeon’s attempts to persuade him to pump by promising him protection if he proved unable to do so, asserting that he would not do any work but his own trade, "he never had and he never would for anybody". The surgeon reported that Jarvis had said with great emphasis, striking his hand on the desk, "Mr. Wright, you may think I am in a passion, but it's death or glory for me". He had repeated these words "death or glory", when the Board of Guardians with William Herrick as chairman, endeavoured to persuade him to change his mind. In spite of pressure from the Board, the master and matron, the medical officer and over a week on a refractory diet, Jarvis refused to pump until his committal to the House of Correction.

The treatment Jarvis received at the hands of the Board of Guardians and its agent, the master of the workhouse may be considered in the context of the debate over the cruelty of the Victorian Poor Law. According to the master’s testimony, in spite of Jarvis’s irritable

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1. MH 12/6399 22/5/46.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
temperament, he had not previously punished him by confinement or refractory diet during their long association at the House of Industry and at the workhouse. "I used to manage him the best way I could", the master told Weale. He claimed he had carried out the Board's instructions to have Jarvis examined by the medical officer before putting him on a refractory diet.

There were a number of inconsistencies in Derry's evidence, however. He claimed Jarvis was on "spare rations" for six or seven days, while the porter, the medical officer and Jarvis himself stated it was for nine or ten days. Derry also claimed that the Board ordered that Jarvis should be put on the refractory diet "for as long a time as he refused to work". 2 This Herrick adamantly denied, drawing Weale's attention to the order entered in the minute book; "that James Jarvis shall obey the master's direction to pump as far as he is able unless the medical officer direct to the contrary and that if he refuses, to be placed upon refractory diet". 3

Derry admitted he had acted illegally in withholding food for longer than forty-eight hours and that the regulations of the Commission regarding the punishment of paupers were hung in the workhouse and that Mr. Weale had drawn his attention to them on his previous visit.

Mr. Weale in his report to the Commissioners described how some old inmates, in the absence of the master and matron spoke of the uniform kindness with which they had been treated and how Jarvis's daughter-in-law,

1. MH 12/6399 22/5/46.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
also an inmate, had stated in the presence of her relations that she had no fault to find with the master and matron, although it seems unlikely that the inmates would feel free to criticise the master and matron, especially to an Assistant Commissioner.

Weale himself offered some faint praise for the Derrys. He outlined the length of their service with the Gilbert and Barrow Unions, stressing their advanced years and "simple habits". He concluded, however, "I have thought it right to say thus much of them, but I do not wish to be understood as offering these remarks as an apology for the illegal course Mr. Derry had pursued on this occasion".  

Whatever the verbal instructions given the master by the Board, what mattered was the careful phrasing of the minute book. When it came to choosing between the testimony of that eminent body of worthies, the Barrow Board of Guardians and Joshua Derry, workhouse master, Assistant Commissioner Weale settled for the Board. "I feel quite assured that the master is solely responsible for the illegal action he pursued".

The Board was exonerated from all blame; indeed there was never any suggestion they were on trial. The Barrow Board of Guardians originally stood by the master, describing Derry's action as "a single instance of misconstruction of the rules", and claiming it was "unattended by any bad consequence to the pauper". On the ninth of June, however, in compliance with a letter from the Poor Law Commission, the Board, while expressing extreme regret, recommended the master and matron resign their

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1. MH 12/6399 22/5/46.
2. Ibid.
offices. At the same time, they requested that sufficient notice of removal should be given "as testimony in favour of their long meritorious services". ¹

If there was cruelty in Jarvis's case, it was perpetuated by the master with perhaps the connivance of the Board. The master, however, was a survivor of the old regime. It was the new Poor Law Commission which had insisted on the regulations restricting the time a pauper could be placed on a refractory diet. It is difficult not to agree with Ursula Henrique's criticism of the administration of the New Poor Law as being insensitive rather than cruel.² Jarvis for all that he was a pauper, and an irascible one at that, was demanding to be treated as a human being, even with dignity. The institution in which he lived and the people responsible for its administration could not accept a pauper's claim to either.

The Poor Law Commission had acted promptly in the affair. Weale, acting for the Commission seemed anxious that justice was seen to be done. The fact that the Commission had been under attack in The Times and in the provincial press and that the Parliamentary Select Committee had been established in 1846 to investigate the scandal of Andover obviously made the Commission sensitive to criticism and anxious to avoid further adverse publicity.

The low incidence of disciplinary measures after 1846 may not be unconnected with the prompt action by the central authority, the adverse publicity and the parliamentary enquiry that followed on Jarvis's death.

The replacement of Joshua Derry, former master of the House of Industry with another master may also help to explain the emergence of a less severe regime. It is possible that the harshness of those early years had less to do with the New Poor Law than the survival of the old. If the workhouse became a less severe place in later years, it was still formidable enough in 1858 to cause another old man Thomas Hatherley to say "he would sooner lie and die than go into the house".¹

The original intention of the New Poor Law was to have separate workhouses to deal with different categories of paupers according to their needs. This intention was not realised, however, the result being that the aged, children and the infirm were exposed to the blanket application of the less eligibility principle in mixed workhouses. The treatment of these groups in the Barrow workhouse has been examined to determine whether the Board made an effort to exempt them from the harshness of the workhouse regime.

The treatment of the aged by the guardians of the Barrow Union showed a comparative humanity not always apparent in its attitude towards the poor. Only the aged were allowed visitors on Sundays and were permitted to receive food from these visitors.² They were allowed tea with their meals, although an anonymous correspondent to the Poor Law Commission in 1843, who had "had the misfortune to be placed in such a position", complained that "you would not know it from warm water as there is no taste of tea in it".³ He claimed the old and infirm were treated worse

¹ MI 12/6401 28/5/58.
² MB 2/2/41.
³ MI 12/6399 7/11/43.
than the able-bodied, having only six ounces of cheese for supper for the week and being given bread so bad they could not eat it.¹

Recreation in the workhouse garden was permitted twice a week, in the morning for males, in the afternoon for females. The separation of the sexes was practised until 1860, when sufficient room became available in the workhouse "for the use of aged persons who (were) man and wife, which would not interfere with the classification of inmates of the house".²

The concessions made to the aged were invariably laid down by the central authority rather than made on the initiative of the Barrow Board.

The aged were sometimes the objects of private charity. A lengthy correspondence took place between the guardians and the Poor Law Commission over Mrs. Babington's offer to supply backs for the chairs of aged paupers. The Poor Law Commission welcomed the offer, but suggested if the guardians thought the additional comfort desirable, the cost might be borne by the Union. The guardians predictably did not agree and an expression of thanks was conveyed in due course to Mrs. Babington for her generosity.³

Although Charles Booth believed that little should be expected of children, who once married, had families of their own to provide for,⁴ the Barrow Guardians consistently attempted to compel children to bear the cost of the maintenance of their aged parents. They applied to the

1. Ibid.
3. Ibid.; 14/9/41. The Babington family were local gentry.
Justices of the Peace to compel William Clarke, a butcher of Syston to maintain his mother, a "poor, old and incompetent person not able to work for her own maintenance and therefore chargeable on the common fund". The Board's investigations had revealed that Clarke was "of sufficient ability to contribute to her maintenance".1 There were numerous examples similar to this.

In spite of its comparative generosity to the aged, the only occasion when the Barrow Board was the subject of questions in Parliament was on the treatment of aged paupers, rising out of the case of James Jarvis. While the ill-treatment of Jarvis may not have been typical of the Barrow Guardians' care of the aged, there is no denying that consignment to the workhouse was for old people a distressing experience. Evidence given to the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor described the "extreme dulness of workhouse life with its necessary discipline and monotonous regularity .... accentuated by separation from friends and relatives (and) uncongenial companionship .... with persons having no common interest and soured by misfortune and suffering".2 While conceding that for the mentally and physically infirm aged or those poorly housed, the workhouse provided the best refuge, the exclusive association of the old with the old tended to "accentuate their defects ... and make them more conscious of their infirmities and destroy their interest in the future".3

Children in the Barrow workhouse were similarly at the mercy of the less eligibility principle. As in the case of the aged, the Board's record in the care of children was no worse, if no better than its

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1. M.B. 12/2/56.
2. The Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, op. cit., p. 141.
3. Ibid., p. 142.
counterparts. The Board's activities in the field of education and industrial training were examined in the light of national provision for the care of children.

The Poor Law Report of 1834 made little mention of education and yet the achievements of Poor Law education have been described as impressive and having transformed a situation of chaos and neglect within twenty years. Rural boards however, were renowned for their emphasis on economy and their suspicion of education as an unsettling experience for poor children. The Barrow Board's achievements in education have been examined in the light of these statements.

The Poor Law Commission required that each union should establish a properly constituted school with a salaried schoolmaster and schoolmistress. A minimum of three hours schooling in basic skills and religion were required and children were to receive industrial training to "fit them for service and train them to habits of usefulness, industry and virtue".

Barrow Board was typical in incorporating its school in the general workhouse rather than on a separate site. An incorporated school was more economical and simpler to administer. The records available indicate that the numbers of children in the workhouse were insufficient to justify the establishment of a separate school. Assistant Commissioner Weale in 1847 reported that the average number of boys was between twenty-three and thirty-nine while the average number of girls was thirty-five.

1. F. Duke, "Pauper Education", in Fraser, ed., op. cit., p. 86.
2. Ibid., p. 72.
4. MH 32/87 1/4/47.
1847 was a year of crisis, however, and the numbers were probably unusually high; a total number of twenty-two in 1845 and sixteen in 1854 were more usual.

There was no mention of a school until the transfer to the new workhouse in 1840. The first schoolteachers appointed were the master's daughter and a pauper, William Leake, who had recurrent problems with discipline. When he was finally forced to resign in 1844, the Poor Law Commission directed that he should not be replaced by a pauper, but his successor, a framework knitter, seems to have been no better qualified. The Clerk had applied unsuccessfully to the Central Schools at Leicester and Westminster for a replacement. Their reply that there was "no person there who would accept the office" is hardly surprising, given the unpopularity of workhouse schools. A later school teacher was described as a former "job gardener" with some teaching experience at the Mutual Improvement Society and a parochial school at Norfolk. The qualifications demanded of school mistresses were even lower. For half the period from 1840 to 1860, the daughters of the current workhouse masters were employed. Only the school mistress appointed in 1858 had had any teaching experience.

1. MH 12/6399 1/9/45.
2. MH 12/6400 7/6/54.
3. M.B. 16/7/44.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 23/7/44.
6. Ibid., 5/6/58.
7. Ibid.
The salaries paid by the Board were not likely to attract highly qualified candidates. In 1844-45 when the average wage paid to school masters was £26 and for school mistresses, £16.12.0. the Barrow Union paid its staff £20 and £15 respectively. The creation of a central fund in 1846 to pay the salaries of teachers in pauper schools produced little change in the Barrow Union. Salaries increased only marginally. In spite of Assistant Commissioner Weale's recommendation that the salaries should be £25 and £20 respectively for the schoolmaster and mistress, their salaries never rose beyond £23 and £15. The high turnover of staff was not surprising. The provision of free board, washing and lodging can hardly have compensated for the low salaries, lack of holidays and extra duties expected of workhouse teachers.

The reports of the workhouse school submitted by the inspectors responsible to the Committee of the Council on Education were never complimentary to the teachers employed by the Barrow Union. Their comments varied from "slightly retrograde" to "pretty fair" and certificates higher than "Probation" or "Permission" were never awarded. Similarly their reports on the conduct of the school were unenthusiastic. In 1845 the school was regarded as satisfactory but as late as 1859 the inspector noted that the school "had not improved". These reports were

3. MH 32/87 1/4/47.
5. MH 12/6401 16/7/56.
6. Ibid., 12/6/57.
hardly more than a formality however and told little of the standards and practices of the workhouse school.

In the early days of the school's operation, the children could only have been minded. Later in the period, basic skills, reading, writing and spelling appear to have been taught. In 1848, an application of the Poor Law Board to allow the girls in the workhouse to receive instruction in arithmetic from the schoolmaster with the boys in the boys' school, as recommended by the school inspector was rejected. This incident illustrates the friction which so often arose between the education inspectors and the Poor Law authorities. The school remained strictly segregated until 1860 with the emphasis on needlework and household work for girls. The emphasis on religion is evident from the frequent mention of instruction in psalmody and religion and the continued responsibility of the chaplain for the purchase of books.

The treatment of children in the workhouse does not appear to have been unduly harsh. Recreation was allowed three times a week and there was a day's outing on Mountsorrel Hill prompted by a similar excursion by the children of Leicester workhouse. The children's food was the usual monotonous workhouse fare, mainly bread, gruel and suet pudding but with some meat and cheese included. A suggested dietary for children submitted in 1856 had to be revised on the recommendation of the Poor Law Board to include more bread and milk instead of oatmeal gruel.

### DIETARY FOR CHILDREN FROM TWO TO FIVE YEARS

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### DIETARY FOR CHILDREN FROM FIVE TO NINE YEARS

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Although committees were formed to investigate how "youths of both sexes" in the workhouse could be employed "more beneficially and industrially" when not in school,¹ scant attention was paid to the industrial training advised by the Poor Law Commission. The guardians devoted a lot of their energy and time however, to securing apprenticeships for poor children, both from the workhouse and the community. Their activities were largely concentrated in the ten years after 1844.

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1844² attempted to eradicate some of the worst abuses of the apprenticeship system. By this Act, guardians were made directly responsible for apprenticeship and the Barrow Guardians assumed this responsibility with a degree of conscientiousness. They superintended the conduct of masters and apprentices as required by the Act, investigating the suitability of masters (although rarely finding them unsuitable) before consigning apprentices to them. Apprentices were often sent to masters for a trial period. The Poor Law Commission issued a General Order forbidding premiums³ which had been subject to abuse, but the Barrow Board's practice of advancing half the premium and withholding the remainder until the end of the first year of the apprenticeship, was permitted. The premium was usually £10 and apprentices were given two suits of clothing as allowed by the General Order. At the end of the first year, the master and the apprentice appeared before the Board and if both expressed satisfaction, the remainder of the premium was paid.

1. M.B. 26/10/47, 10/5/57 the committee decided the best way to employ boys in the workhouse was in the workhouse garden.

2. 7 and 8 Victoria cap. 101.

Most masters and apprentices were satisfied, but on a number of occasions when either or both parties complained, the indentures were cancelled. It has been suggested that such action was sometimes deliberately provoked by a master anxious to rid himself of an unwanted apprentice.\(^1\) There was little redress against an errant master. In 1852, the magistrates refused to compel a master to maintain his apprentice.\(^2\) On only one occasion was a conviction obtained against a master for having failed to fulfil his obligations.\(^3\)

Most boys were apprenticed to tailors or shoe-makers,\(^4\) usually for seven or eight years, but the records show others apprenticed to a wheelwright, a sinkermaker and a plumber and glazier. Girls were usually supplied with clothes to enable them to go into service. There were few cases of physical abuse recorded. In only one when a girl in service was severely beaten by her master was the master dealt with by the magistrate.\(^5\) After the passing of the Poor Law (Apprentices) Act of \(1851^6\) relieving officers reported back to the Barrow Guardians on the condition of apprentices and hired servants as required by the Act.

Apprenticeship was increasingly replaced by hiring out for a weekly wage. When the Board heard from the clerk of Leicester Union that a number of girls were wanted in a factory in Mayfield near Ashbourne,

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1. Ibid., p. 297.
3. Ibid., 10/7/57.
4. Both were depressed trades.
5. M.B. 11/5/52. The master was fined.
6. 14 and 15 Victoria cap. 11.
Derbyshire, the Clerk was directed to write to the owner of the factory for the terms on which he engaged girls.\(^1\) It was proposed to send five girls in the workhouse between the ages of ten and twelve, but negotiations with the factory owner resulted in a number of boys being sent. Boys were also recruited to work for a brickmaker, the guardians insisting however that they should lodge with him and be paid one shilling a week.\(^2\)

A belief that pauperism was hereditary and that continued residence in the workhouse would encourage slothful habits in the young who would then become a permanent drain on the rates (as well as the usual motive of being spared the cost of their relief) helps to explain the activities of the Barrow Board in the field of apprenticeship. The guardians revealed throughout however, a willingness to comply with the changing requirements of national legislation.

The Poor Law in its role as the "omnibus social service of the Victorian age"\(^3\) assumed responsibility for the care of the sick poor. Preoccupied as it was with the problems of the able-bodied poor, there was little consideration for the care of the infirm. While the Poor Law authorities were rarely guilty of cruelty, there was evidence of neglect in the care of the sick poor. The harsh conditions which were a corollary of the less eligibility principle were not intended to apply to sick inmates of the workhouse. Both the Commissioners and Chadwick had intended that they should be subject to more favourable treatment in

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2. Ibid., 7/4/57.
separate accommodation. The New Poor Law authorities, however, constantly criticised by Parliament and the press and resented by local authorities, fearful both of additional expense and centralisation, found themselves as in other fields, unable to implement their intentions. Most medical relief was granted outside the workhouse but some of the harshness, intended as a test of genuine destitution was brought to bear on the sick confined in the workhouse.¹

Although a General Order of 1847 outlined a scheme for the classification of inmates according to age and sex, there was no provision for the segregation of the sick in workhouses. The separation of the sick was left to the discretion of the guardians.² The Barrow Guardians had ensured the segregation of inmates with infectious diseases in the first year of operation.³ Special precautions were taken during outbreaks of measles. Families with children who had not contracted measles were relieved out of the House and rooms where children suffering from measles had lain were whitewashed.⁴ Rooms were later set aside as itch wards and no healthy persons except "nurses" were allowed in those rooms.⁵

A sick ward was first mentioned in 1842 and there were later references to infirm men's rooms⁶ and sick women's wards.⁷ Lying-in

1. Ibid., pp. 265-68.
2. Ibid., p. 267.
4. Ibid., 8/3/42.
5. Ibid., 12/4/42.
6. Ibid., 18/5/47.
7. Ibid., 18/8/46.
8. Ibid., 5/10/47.
wards were also provided, although the Board's request that the master investigate the pregnant women in the workhouse so that the Board could judge "whether they should continue therein",¹ indicates that they were not welcome as a potential double burden on the poor rates.

The care of the sick inmates cannot have been of a high standard. Female paupers were employed to tend the sick in return for the addition of tea and sugar to their usual rations.² As late as 1856 the Chairman reported that no females in the workhouse were suitable for training as workhouse nurses. Paupers who attended at the death of inmates through the night or cared for patients suffering from contagious diseases were rewarded with a stimulating drink "as ale, wine or spirits as the medical officer may deem most proper".³

The duties of the medical officer of the workhouse were laid down in the Eighth Annual Report to the Poor Law Commission.⁴ He was to attend the workhouse at times fixed by the Board and also when sent for in the case of sudden illness, accident or other emergencies and "at all other times as the state of the sick or insane patients of the workhouse may render it necessary".⁵ He was to examine the state of paupers on admission to the House and the paupers in sick wards. He was also to give directions on the diet of sick paupers and declare those of unsound mind whom he regarded as too dangerous to be kept in the workhouse. He

¹. Ibid., 13/3/49.
². Ibid., 1/5/42.
³. Ibid., 8/2/48.
⁵. Ibid.
was required to report any defect in "diet, drainage, ventilation, warmth or any other arrangement of the workhouse or any excess in the number of any class of inmates .... detrimental to the health of inmates".¹ He was responsible for vaccinating children in the workhouse and for their special dietary needs.

The medical officer of the Barrow workhouse appeared to carry out all of these duties, as well as determining whether paupers were capable of the tasks set. The Board required its medical officer to attend daily between two and six in the afternoon and to send a substitute at that time if he was unable to attend.²

The Barrow Board appeared to do what was required of it, offering a level of medical care commensurate with its studied avoidance of spending more than it needed on trained staff. In this it was by no means exceptional.

The guardians were as careful to avoid unnecessary expense in providing spiritual care. A chaplain was employed at £30 per year,³ mentioned only in the minute books when directed to buy books for the school and on one occasion reprimanded for providing an abbreviated version of the morning service for the inmates.⁴ The salary for the chaplain, reduced to £20 per year in 1857 failed to attract an applicant. The Board, ever mindful of cutting costs, directed that Church of England inmates should attend divine service at the nearest church to the

¹. Ibid.
². M.B. 12/10/47.
³. Ibid., 27/3/38.
⁴. Ibid., 18/4/43.
workhouse and that Dissenting ministers approved by the Board should be granted the "privilege of visiting, preaching and examining inmates".\textsuperscript{1} When the Poor Law Board enquired how the inmates had been "attended for the purposes of having spiritual instruction"\textsuperscript{2}, the guardians answered that their spiritual wants would continue to be supplied in the manner they had been during the last twelve months by the voluntary services of ministers resident in the neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{3} In the conduct of the workhouse, then, the Barrow Guardians stand accused more of insensitivity than deliberate cruelty. They reflected the characteristically moralistic view of their age to the poor. This, coupled with their parsimonious attitude meant that the aged, the sick and the young were subjected to the indignity of being treated as less than human. This is not to deny the problems that faced this body of part-time administrators trying to interpret complex legislative requirements.

In 1850, one of the guardians of the Barrow Board moved that a petition should be sent to the House of Lords to support the Bill introduced by Lord Brougham to "shorten the language of all acts of Parliament and to omit all formal and abstract words".\textsuperscript{4} The matter of the petition was raised after a period when the guardians had wrestled with the complicated problem of settlement. The Barrow Board's attempts to understand and apply the laws of settlement illustrate the problems of a rural board grappling with complex legal and financial arrangements.

Reciprocal arrangements for non-resident relief were made early with

\begin{itemize}
  \item 1. Ibid., 2/11/57.
  \item 2. Ibid., 18/10/59.
  \item 3. Ibid., 1/11/59.
  \item 4. Ibid., 19/2/50.
\end{itemize}
Loughborough Union and large payments were made to Loughborough throughout the period. Smaller payments were also made to a number of other unions, mostly in Leicestershire.¹ Non-resident relief was a constant source of tension between the Barrow and Leicester Unions. In 1845, the Barrow Guardians refused to reimburse Leicester Union for relief given to the able-bodied poor of the Barrow Union resident in Leicester.² The largest payments for non-resident relief continued to be paid to Leicester for the entire period.

The Act of 1846, introducing the new concept of irremovability into the "already tangled law of settlement"³ added to the Barrow Guardians' problems. For the ensuing three years, the Clerk wrote long anguished letters to the Poor Law Commission, then the Poor Law Board, seeking clarification on complex points of settlement, receiving in turn pain-staking and equally complex letters which could have only added to the guardians' perplexity.

These years coincided with the crisis years of vagrancy. The failure of the Irish potato crop⁴ and the influx of disease-ridden impoverished Irish immigrants placed great strains on the resources of unions. The Barrow Guardians wrote to the Poor Law Commission in 1847, objecting to the practice of charging the cost of the relief of vagrants to the parish where they became destitute. This charge, they complained, fell heaviest on the parish where the workhouse was located. The

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¹ These usually included Blaby, Market Bosworth, Ashby.
³ M.E. Rose, "Settlement, Removal and the New Poor Law", in Fraser, op. cit., p. 29.
guardians sought the introduction of a Bill making vagrants a common charge on all parishes in the Union. Relations with neighbouring unions were strained when vagrants were suspected of being foisted on Barrow. An official communication was sent to Market Harborough Union about Richard Johnson, a vagrant who had died after being forced to leave Market Harborough workhouse. He had stated before his death at the Barrow workhouse that he had been too ill to return to his place of settlement. Vagrants were frequently moved on to the Barrow workhouse from Loughborough, much to Barrow's annoyance.

Like most other boards, the Barrow Board was most reluctant to admit vagrants to the workhouse. In the years when vagrants posed the greatest problems, the workhouse was already overcrowded, see Table 5.14. In 1847, the mean number of inmates per week was 239, rising to 314 and never falling below 167. It was proposed in that year to increase the workhouse to accommodate 342 paupers. The Board accordingly sought permission from the central authority for the relieving officers to give relief to vagrants out of the workhouse. The guardians wrote that the cost incurred in relieving vagrants was increasing daily and there was not room to accommodate the numbers of vagrants seeking relief in the workhouse.

In 1848 the number of vagrants relieved in the Barrow workhouse in the half year ending at Michaelmas was 1,430. In 1849 the number had dropped to 611 for an equivalent period.

1. M.B. 19/1/47.
2. Ibid., 15/11/46.
3. Ibid., 7/5/47.
4. Ibid., 9/2/47.
5. P.L.B. 2nd Annual Report, 1849, Vol. XXVII, p. 120.
The health risk posed by the vagrants was considerable and they threatened to become part of the residue of permanent paupers. They were, moreover, a threat to the already limited employment prospects of the inhabitants of the Union, being well known for taking up semi-skilled crafts like framework knitting and being prepared to work for even lower returns than the native workforce.

For those vagrants who were admitted to the workhouse, separate rooms were set aside and a "fumigating apparatus" was bought. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1842 gave the guardians the right to prescribe work for vagrants. In the Barrow workhouse able-bodied male vagrants were each required to break one hundredweight of granite a day.

The Board showed a similar reluctance to be burdened with the expense of illegitimate children. The Board consistently proceeded against the "putative father", first collecting evidence before applying to the petty sessions for orders of maintenance. Orders of maintenance were regularly sought against father who deserted their families, leaving them a charge on the Union. The guardians displayed a consistently censorious attitude to the mothers of "bastard" children.

In dealing with specially vulnerable groups, the aged, children, vagrants and bastards, the boards showed an anxiety to shift the burden elsewhere, to the children of the aged, to masters or employers in the

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1. M.B. 16/3/47.
case of children and to other unions with vagrants and mothers of illegitimate children.

In 1848, 1851, 1852 and 1853, emigration was seen as one solution to disposing of the poor. In those years there were a number of applications from residents of the Union for assistance to enable them to emigrate to Canada and Australia. Females emigrating to Australia out-numbered males in response to the demand of the colony which had a chronic imbalance of the sexes. In a typical entry, the minute book for 1852 recorded that Francis Walton, his wife Hannah and four daughters aged between four and sixteen, "poor persons belonging to Syston", were "desirous of emigrating to Australia under the sanction of Her Majesty's Emigration Commissioners". It was resolved that a sum not exceeding £1.14. be expended for each person, to be charged to each parish "in pursuance of Statutes 12th and 13th Victoria, cap 100, Sec. 20.1

Emigration could, however, only be a solution for a small proportion of the poor. The problem the guardians were trying to deal with resembled a hydra. At every turn of policy, another problem loomed. Neither the punitive approach of denying relief to the able-bodied poor, attempting a rigorous application of less eligibility in outdoor relief or in the workhouse nor the tentative attempts at the curative approach in health, education, apprenticeship or emigration, seemed to work. As for the poor, the sick, the aged, vagrants, unmarried mothers, orphans, widows as well as the unemployed able-bodied, the problem of survival was just as challenging. When the problems began to lessen and the cost of relief at last began to fall, it was less because of the efforts of the Poor Law

authorities, the boards of guardians or a change of heart in the indigent poor, than the gradual improvement in the economic climate, which was out of their control.
CONCLUSION

Raphael Samuel has drawn attention to the way in which the sources available incline research in a certain direction. 1 Certainly the administrative bias of the Poor Law records predispose research into those responsible for the care of the poor rather than the poor themselves. This study has attempted to identify the poor and to assess the quality of relief given to them in the context of the debate on the New Poor Law.

The census records indicated that the poor in the Barrow Union were likely to be small farmers, plunged easily into the ranks of the importunate, agricultural labourers, denied the security of regular employment, framework knitters clinging desperately to an obsolescent and overcrowded domestic craft, women and children employed spasmodically in seasonal work and domestic servants dependent for their livelihood on the gentry and clergy. The records of relief underlined the vulnerability of the aged, the sick, vagrants and the groups of women especially in need, widows, unmarried mothers and deserted wives as well as unemployed men, especially those with large families.

This study has also attempted to define those charged with the responsibility of ministering to the needs of the poor. The continuation of the influence of the landed gentry as ex officio guardians over the lives of the poor was apparent. The traditional establishment of gentry

1. Samuel, op. cit., p. XV.
and clergy were their landlords, employers, judges and as guardians were influential in determining the response to their appeals for help. In spite of the high incidence of employment in hosiery in the community, the Barrow Board was composed almost entirely of farmers who, as the employers of a significant proportion of the population and substantial ratepayers, had a vested interest in keeping the cost of relief down to a minimum.

The areas in which the New Poor Law promised the most radical changes were "the elective board principle, the use of salaried experts, the techniques of centralization and inspection and the workhouse system". These, together, were intended to guarantee both adequate treatment for the genuinely poor and a means of reducing inefficiency and unnecessary expense.

The elective principle as practised in the Barrow Union as in so many unions, was somewhat spurious. Elections were rarely contested, the business of the board being conducted by a few of the more conscientious guardians, attendance mounting only when heavy expenditure was contemplated or when crises threatened the board's reputation. The Barrow Board's constant membership and the surveillance of the ex officio guardians ensured continuity both of personnel and policies.

The Barrow Board for all this, demonstrated a degree of efficiency in its approach to some of the problems it confronted, applying itself to providing a suitable workhouse unlike so many of its counterparts and administering it with an apparent concern for efficiency and probity. The tortuous process of disposing of the Gilbert Union property and the

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challenges of recurrent crises in the hosiery industry, public health and bad seasons in agriculture, and the influx of vagrants as well as the perplexing problem of settlement made heavy demands on the board, unaccustomed to having to cope with problems of such severity. The continuation of the old system of rating posed a perpetual problem of financing new initiatives and helps to explain the guardians' overriding concern for tight economic management and consistent parsimony.

For all its protestations of support for the principles of the New Poor Law, the Barrow Board showed a preference for the old methods of granting relief, finding increasingly that outdoor relief was a more economic alternative to indoor relief, especially when confronted with exceptional demands occasioned by bad weather or economic crises. The poor of the Barrow Union continued for the most part to be relieved in much the same way as under the old Gilbert Incorporation.

Just as the elected board continued with the old methods, the salaried experts reinforced continuity. Many were in fact survivors of the old regime. The poor continued to have relief dispensed by relieving officers or overseers in the same arbitrary and insensitive manner. The guardians' anxiety to keep expenditure down discouraged them from enlisting the services of paid personnel in public health and frustrated the effective provision of medical care.

It is generally agreed that the inspection and centralisation of the Poor Law Commission and later the Poor Law Board were not realised in practice. Certainly the Barrow Board retained much of its autonomy. However in the early and most trying years, the Board displayed a willingness to accept the guidance of the Poor Law Commission and to attempt to implement its principles, hoping no doubt that the promised
reduction in costs would follow. While much of the contact with the central authorities was merely formal, the Barrow Board frequently found it expedient to appeal to an independent authority to arbitrate in disputes with its officers and to seek guidance in coping with unaccustomed problems. As the cost of implementing the central authorities' strictures on relief became apparent, the Board, as was the custom in other unions, reverted to the old ways. The continuing dissension in the Poor Law Commission, the infrequency of visits from the Assistant Commissioners, the chorus of criticism directed at the Poor Law Commission and the comparative quiescence of the Poor Law Board facilitated the emergence of a modus vivendi, leaving the Board to respond to needs in line with its resources and less in accordance with the principles enunciated in 1834. The actions of the Barrow Board support the view that local autonomy remained virtually intact. The Board responded, when its needs were pressing, to both national legislation and to instructions from the Poor Law authorities. The response was invariably to its fear of additional expense as the price of neglect.

In a depressed community like the Barrow Union, it was difficult to implement the principles of less eligibility. There can be little doubt that the meagre allowances granted to those on outdoor relief kept them at subsistence level or below. The provision of material comforts in the workhouse cannot have matched the poverty of the poorest framework knitter or agricultural labourer outside the workhouse. The psychological deterrent was a different matter and there is some evidence that the poor of Barrow Union endured much deprivation rather than surrender even the limited freedoms they possessed. For the aged, the sick and children, the Board for the most part, did what was required of it by law and the Poor Law authorities. If there was cruelty, it was more
likely to be as result of survival either of the personnel or practices of the old system.

Loughborough's rejection of the inept attempt to burden it with the poor of the Barrow Union and the old Gilbert poor house and the obstruction of the guardians of the Barrow Gilbert Union delayed the introduction of the New Poor Law into the area. If the poor of the Barrow Union resisted the New Poor Law, their protests were unreported in the local press.

A regional study such as this throws some light on a number of questions of concern in the debate on the New Poor Law. The contention that the influence of the landed gentry continued under the New Poor Law and that continuity with the old system was maintained was borne out by this study. The view that in spite of the complex superstructure erected to superintend the administration of relief, the vital decisions were still made at the local level was also verified by this study. The revolution in government, if it occurred at all, was modified, ignored or resisted by those like the Barrow Guardians responsible for the administration of the national legislation. Changes were made in accordance with this national legislation, providing they did not conflict with more pressing local needs and above all did not increase the burden on those responsible for financing national policies. Changes were also made if neglect of intolerable problems posed a threat to the health and welfare of the community and if perseverance with the traditional methods threatened to involve those responsible for the administration of relief with heavier expenditure.

H.L. Beales described the New Poor Law as an "institutional microcosm of the English people and ... a history of the country's social
conscience". At the same time he emphasised the role of expediency in the shaping of the New Poor Law. "Expedience", he wrote, "played a greater part than political and social theory in the shaping of the Poor Law".¹ The implementation of the New Poor Law into the Barrow Union, above all, demonstrated this expediency.

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APPENDIX

Informations of Witnesses taken at Sileby in the County of Leicester the 17th day of March 1858 at an Inquisition on view of the body of Thomas Hatherley then and there lying dead.

Mary Ann Walker - sworn - says,

I am Housekeeper to Mr. John Hayward Dalton of Sileby Surgeon - I knew the deceased Thomas Hatherley - he had been a Drover but had not followed his occupation since sometime before last Christmas - he lived alone in a house in a yard close to Mr. Dalton's house - he told me lately that he was 76 years old - he was taken ill before Christmas - I used to go in to see him every day and sometimes many times a day - At first he used to lie down a bit and then sit up a bit but a fortnight since last Friday he took to his bed altogether though he tried to get up a time or two - At first his bed was upstairs but a little more than a fortnight ago when the snow fell and the weather became very inclement he made himself a bed by the side of the fireplace in the lower room - he placed a door on some bricks and then the bed upon the door - he had only some old clothes to cover himself with and a piece of a blanket and I gave him two old sacks and part of an old blanket - After he came downstairs he got gradually worse and died on Monday morning last the 15th ins. between 10 and 11 - Before he came downstairs he used to complain of his feet being so perished with cold - they looked green and darkcolored but there were no wounds - they got rather worse after he came down - I never let him want if I knew to it - I used to take
him coal, bread and other things and a dinner from our table every day by direction of Mr. Dalton - Before Christmas he used to have a shilling and a loaf weekly from the parish - that was before he was taken ill - but after he was taken ill he had two shillings and a loaf - he used to send someone to Mr. Padmore the Relieving Officer of the District for it after he was unable to fetch it himself - he never made any application either himself or by anyone else for further relief but a week since last Sunday in consequence of the deceased's wretched state Mr. Dalton wrote to Mr. Dakin the Guardian of the parish - On the Friday before then my mother told Mr. Padmore to call and see him and he did. I was there at the time - Mr. Padmore wanted him to go in the Union Workhouse but the deceased said he would sooner lie and die - I don't think he was fit to be removed at that time - I told Mr. Padmore that if he would buy a piece of harden (coarse linen) the Doctor would fill it with Straw for a bed and I also wished him to find him a pair of blankets and sheets and said Mr. Dalton would take care he did not want food - Mr. Padmore said he would mention it to the Board the next Board day which would be the Tuesday following - when deceased said he would sooner lie and die than go into the House Mr. Padmore said he must take him by force as he did a man from Barrow - After Mr. Dalton wrote to Mr. Dakin on the Sunday he with Mr. Cart (the Overseer) and Mr. Downey, Surgeon called together at the deceased's but I was not present at the time - On Friday last Mr. Padmore called again at the deceased's and I went in and again made the same proposal to him about the bed when he said it must stand over till the next Board day when he said he knew what they would do -
They would order him into the house - he told deceased he thought he looked better - he had just then taken his dinner and a glass of gin both which Mr. Dalton had sent him - I told Mr. Padmore that deceased had not got any brandy when he said he must send to the Doctor and get an Order - Mr. Padmore gave him his two shillings and loaf and then went - no one of the Union Officers saw him afterwards but Mr. Downey - The deceased had never wanted for food at all because Mr. Dalton has supplied him but what I principally complain of is the state of his bed and bedding - the want of which I think has hastened his death - Before he kept his bed he told me that the reason he did not apply for better bed and clothing was that he knew they would put him into the House - he had never been in in his life and he seemed to have such a great dislike to go in and he said that at the age of 76 he thought he ought not be put in - I was in his house 20 times to see him on Sunday last and tho' I tried to give him food he was unable to swallow and said it was all over with him - When I went in the next morning he had rolled off his bed and lay on the floor and I got him on the bed myself - he was quite sensible and asked for water but he could not swallow - Mr. Downey came in and saw him before he died and after his death he came again with Mr. Cart and Mr. Padmore - The deceased had had a swollen leg for a long time but it was not caused by his last illness - The deceased had a bedstead upstairs but there was not room for it by the fireplace below - There was no fireplace in his bedroom - he always complained of cold so very much in the morning both when he was upstairs and below he used to shake very much.

Mary Ann Walker
William Walker - sworn, says

I live in King Street Sileby and am brother to the last Witness - I knew the deceased and have seen him most days since he was taken so ill - Last Sunday week I went in to see him and found him much worse and unable to stand and I went in to Mr. Dalton's and told him the state he was in and he gave me a letter to take to Mr. Dakin the Guardian of Sileby which I did and he called after tea that day with Mr. Cart the Overseer and I went in to them with Mr. Harriman who was taking tea with Mr. Dalton. Mr. Harriman said to Mr. Dakin that he did not think there had been such a case in the parish and that he was ashamed of it - Mr. Dakin made no answer - The deceased seemed in great pain - Mr. Cart went and fetched Mr. Downey Surgeon and they were all three there together. Mr. Cart asked Mr. Downey whether deceased was removable to the House - Mr. Downey said Yes - Mr. Cart at first said he had had no orders to attend to the deceased but afterwards said that he had intended to come in the next (Monday) morning - he also asked Mr. Downey what the deceased might have and he said Half a pint of brandy. Mr. Harriman said it was not right he should be left alone as the bellows were then on fire close to his bed and he asked John Smalley who was in The House whether he would stop with him that night - deceased was then sitting in a chair before the fire - Mr. Cart said he thought there was no need for any one to stop with him and that he would see to the case the next morning - I went in that day (Monday) and found that nothing more had been done except that Smalley had been ordered to attend deceased - I saw him every day after during the week - Smalley only used to be there at meal times
and not regularly with him or at night. On the Friday before the Sunday above spoken of Mr. Padmore had told me that he had desired Mr. Cart to attend to the deceased's case and that he thought he (Padmore) had done his duty - After the death of the deceased Padmore went into Mr. Dalton's Surgery where Mr. Dalton charged him with having said he would take deceased by force to the House on the previous Wednesday in spite of any Doctors and when deceased was not removable - Padmore denied it and said he never did as he had no occasion to do so because he had got two papers from Mr. Downey to say he was removable - Mr. Dalton said he should not remove him without a warrant from a Magistrate.

The mark of
X
William Walker

John Smalley - sworn - says,

I live at Sileby - Last Sunday night week I went in to see how the deceased was when Mr. Downey and Mr. Cart came in. Mr. Harriman and the last Witness Walker were there also - deceased was then very ill - Mr. Downey said deceased's foot must be fomented and have a linseed poultice to it and that he must have some pills and I went to his Surgery and fetched two - one of which I gave him directly and the other at 10 that night. I also boiled some poppy heads and bathed his foot that night for a long time - Mr. Cart and Mr. Downey wished me to attend to him - Mr. Harriman also very much pressed me to stop with him and attend to him and remain all night but I did not promise that I would remain all night - I remained with him
till near 11 and then left him. There was a table standing close to him with some coffee on it - he had brandy two or three times that night - I attended upon him every day afterwards several times a day and sometimes gave him his meals when Mary Ann Walker did not and I made his bed every night and poulticed his foot every morning till Friday when the swelling was down and deceased did not wish to have it done - Mr. Downey did not see his foot from the Sunday above mentioned till the next (last) Sunday but he inquired of me how it was going on - The deceased was in no want of food but what he most wanted was comfortable bedding - what he had was deplorable and used to smell very bad indeed when I made his bed - he had two bits of sheets - two pieces of blanket, one of which Mary Ann Walker brought him one day last week because he was so starved - and he had his own two Coats and two bags belonging to Mr. Dalton - I saw Mr. Padmore last Wednesday and I told him that he must have some bedding when he said "I can't do anything in this case at all - I shall remove him on Friday whether he be willing or not and in spite of Doctor or Doctors" - On Friday last when Mr. Padmore came to Sileby to pay I went to him and received deceased's pay and he told me to remain with deceased till he called and he came with Mr. Cart. The Overseer - Mary Ann Walker was there and we both complained about his bedding and told them how wet he then was as he could not hold his water altho' he had a bed tin with him which Mr. Dalton had lent him - Mr. Padmore said he could not do anything in it but must take it to the Board - I told him that the Board day wanted almost a fortnight and I asked him whether he was to remain in that state all that time as I was sure if he did there would be something worse attending it - Mr. Padmore
went away with Mr. Cart into Mr. Dalton's - Mr. Cart said he could not do anything in it - I was there last Sunday when Mr. Downey came in to see him - Mary Ann Walker was there and we mentioned to Mr. Downey about his bedding and pressed him very much indeed when he said he would see Mr. Cart and that I was to go down to his Surgery at one o'clock which I did when he gave me a note to take to Mr. Padmore at Mountsorrel - I went over that evening but could not find him and I took it to him early the next morning - he opened and read it and said "I can do nothing with this note - it is of no use bringing it to me unless Mr. Downey will give me a Certificate to say that he is not removable and then I can provide him with bedding and that which is necessary - but if Mr. Downey certifies that he is removable all I can do is to get a Conveyance and remove him to the house" - he then asked me what time Mr. Downey went out and I told him about 10 when he said he would come and meet him about that time and he asked me to let Mr. Cart know to meet him also and I took the note to Mr. Cart - all three came together at that time to the deceased's but he was then dying and he died about half an hour afterwards - they seemed surprised to find him in that state as he seemed better when Padmore saw him on Friday.

The mark of X

John Smalley
John Dickins - sworn - says

I am a County Police Constable stationed at Sileby - On Sunday last the 14th inst. I was sent to by Mr. Dalton with the information that the deceased was in a most wretched state and I went to his house with Mr. Dalton's Servant who asked him whether Mr. Downey had been when he said he had called but had turned himself round and gone away again - I found the deceased very ill and his bed which was close to the fire and in danger of catching was in a most deplorable state - I went back to Mr. Dalton who asked me to see Mr. Cart and acquaint him with deceased's state which I did when he said that if any neighbour would take him in and make him comfortable he had no doubt he parish would see them recompensed - I went back and informed Mr. Dalton what Mr. Cart said when he said deceased was not fit to be removed and should not be without proper authority.

John Dickins
P.C. No.77

Thomas Macaulay - sworn - says,

I am a Surgeon at Leicester - I received a Telegraphic message this morning a little before 11 from Mr. Dalton of Sileby requesting me to attend a Coroner's Inquest which was to be held at Sileby and I came down accordingly and since I have been here I have seen the body of the deceased in the presence of Mr. Dalton and Mr. Downey - I examined it externally as it was lying on a species of bed and on which I was told he
had been lying for the last fortnight - the body considering it was that of a man of 76 does not present an emaciated appearance and I should say that he had not died from want of food. There was incipient mortification of the toes of both feet - that might be caused by exposure to cold and it might arise in a man of his age without exposure to cold - but in this case as both feet appear to have been attacked at the same time I think it did proceed from frostbite in the late severe weather - I have seen another case in which there was much more comfort than the deceased appears to have had where an elderly man and his wife were both attacked with frost bites of the feet in the same night - There is an appearance of old chronic dropsy in the left leg - There were no bedsores on the body. The bedding was in a very bad state altho' I have seen worse - That would undoubtedly act as a depressent in consequence of there not being sufficient warmth in it but I dont find that it has caused any direct mischief by exciting sores - As the case now stands I dont entertain any doubt at all but that the deceased died from exhaustion consequent on a worn out constitution and that his death was accelerated by the mortification of the feet caused by frostbite as before mentioned - Not having seen the man during his life it is quite impossible for me to give any opinion as to the quantity of medicine required by him - it is quite possible that he might not have required any medicine at all.

Thos. Macaulay
Ellen Garner - sworn - says,

I am the wife of Robert Garner and live next door to the deceased's - Last Friday week Mr. Dalton sent me to Mr. Downey to come and see the deceased as he was very ill indeed and I went and found he was gone to Seagrave and I told his Servant to request him to go and see the deceased as soon as he came home - he did not however come till Sunday when I saw him and the Parish Officers there - we have sat up in our house many nights during the last week because there was no one with the deceased and for fear we should be burnt in our beds.

The mark of
X
Ellen Garner

John Hayward Dalton sworn - says,

I am a Surgeon at Sileby - the deceased had lived in the yard in question for the last 8 or 10 months and he had occasionally been relieved by me previously to his last illness - I never saw him after his illness commenced till last Sunday morning when from the representations made to me I went in and saw him. I found him in the state described by Mr. Macaulay as to his feet - he was then as I thought in a dying state but he was sensible - he died the next morning - my opinion as to the cause of his death is the same as Mr. Macaulay's with the exception that I think his medical treatment ought to have been of a more energetic character. I have caused him to be supplied with food from my own table during his last illness but I had no idea that he was in so bad a state till my
attention was called to him on Sunday last - my only reason for sending for Mr. Macaulay was that I might have an independent opinion on the case besides my own - On Wednesday last Smalley told me that Mr. Padmore had said that he should attend on Friday and removed deceased with or without his leave and in spite of any Doctors when I said he should not without some lawful authority - I saw Mr. Cart on Sunday last when I told him that it was of no use his attempting to carry the threat about removing him into execution - he replied It shall be seen into tomorrow and my own opinion is that it would be best to get him a lodging with somebody in the place - I said You shall not remove him by force without a proper authority - he said I shall provide him as comfortable quarters as I can and I shall then wipe my hands of it and he must lie there and die just as he is.

J.H. Dalton

Thomas Moore Padmore - sworn - says,

I am Relieving Officer of the Barrow District in which Sileby is situate - The deceased had been in the weekly relief of a shilling and a loaf for a long time before his last illness - and about the 8th or 9th of January last Mr. Dakin the Guardian of Sileby wished to take his case again before the Board and to give him something there and then - I gave him 4 pounds extra bread at once and on the following Board day which I believe was the following Tuesday the case was brought before the Board when it was ordered that two shillings and four pounds of bread
should be the weekly allowance till the end of the quarter and that relief was continued up to and including Friday last - On Friday the 5th inst. I visited him at the request of Mrs. Walker and found him in such a state, without anyone to attend him and his bed against the fire that I begged of him to consent to go into the house - I reasoned with him and told him it was neither a Lunatic Asylum or a Prison and that he could come out when he got better and that his relief should be continued or I would bring it before the Board - The deceased said he would rather stay where he was - I told him I would provide a proper Conveyance and everything to make him comfortable - As he still refused I waited on Mr. Cart the Overseer and told him in my absence to pay attention to the case as I thought it one which required it and that whatever he or the Medical Officer might see necessary for the deceased to provide it - which he promised to do - I heard no more of the case till last Friday when I called to see him with Mr. Cart - Mr. Cart had previously told me what he had done, that he had given on his own responsibility some butter and linseed for a poultice and likewise by the medical officer's direction, half a pint of brandy - I thought the deceased much better but I afterwards found that it might be owing to some refreshment he had just had, such as gin and water, furnished by the generosity of Mr. Dalton - I never saw him again alive - On the Monday morning I received a note from Mr. Downey respecting deceased which I forwarded to Mr. Cart and told the Bearer that I would be there as near 10 as I possibly could - I first went to Mr. Cart and when he and I and Mr. Downey got to deceased's house he had just expired - I am not aware that any application was ever made to me respecting his bedding. I saw Mary Ann Walker both times I went but I dont
recollect that she said anything to me about providing some harden or coarse linen - some conversation might have taken place but I don't recollect the particulars - but it was about the bedding - I remember that Smalley called my attention to the bedding - I received the two Medical Certificates now produced and signed by Mr. Downey from Mr. Newball of the Horse and Trumpet Inn this morning. I never received any information or Certificate as to whether the deceased was removable or not and I never said that I would remove him to the Workhouse whether he was willing or not - if I had had such an intention I should never have called on the Overseer to relieve him for me - if a man is not removable and I visit him and find him in a deplorable state as regards his bedding and comforts of that kind and I receive a Certificate for a Doctor that those comforts are necessary for the man's life I should be bound to comply with it - I did see the deceased's bedding but I felt more afraid of fire than thought that the bedding was insufficient and so did others as well as myself - I did not examine or turn the bedclothes down - the deceased never made a complaint or application of any description himself - I considered that I had done my duty in offering him the House and a Conveyance to it.

T.N. Padmore

Patrick Downey - sworn - says,

I am Surgeon of the Barrow District - On Sunday the 7th inst. Mr. Cart called on me about 5 in the evening to go and see the deceased - I went with him directly and found Mr. Harriman and William Walker there - the first thing that attracted my attention was the deceased lying with his head near the fire - a pair of
beilows only intervening between the bed and fire - I remarked that he was lying in a dangerous position and entreated those of his friends who were present to have him removed to the opposite side where he would not be so near the fire - during this time my attention was directed to the bellows being on fire - I examined him and asked him what was the matter when he complained of pain in his left foot - on looking at it I found 4 of his toes of a dark red color - and knowing his age I said "This is a case of gangrene from old age" - I then directed a linseed poultice to be applied and someone to come to my Surgery and I sent some poppy heads and pills - whilst I was there some remarks were made about his bedding but I could not perceive any offensive odour then - I ordered brandy gruel to be given him and a Nurse to attend him and I said that he ought not to be left alone and be in the destitute state in which he was - I said to deceased that it would be better if he would go either into the House or the Infirmary at Leicester knowing he had no relations. I then considered that his case would terminate fatally. I saw him again the next morning and I asked Smalley how he was - he said he was free from pain and he thought he was better - I desired him to continue giving him brandy and go on with the fomentations - I mentioned to Smalley that he might come for some medicine although at the same time I did not consider it necessary as brandy was the best stimulant he could have - I called again either on Wednesday or Thursday and found him up in a chair - I called another day and found him easy in bed and he made no complaint to me - he was smoking a pipe in bed which I told him was very wrong. I saw Mr. Cart twice during the week and spoke to him about the bedding and
he told me he could not provide it as Mr. Padmore had stated that the case must go before the Board. I called on Sunday morning last and saw the deceased. Smalley was there and I asked him how he was - he said he was very poorly or something of the kind. I asked whether the bedding was in the same state and found nothing had been done and I left and went to Mr. Cart and told him I considered it ought to have been provided - he said he could not do it but thought if I would write to Mr. Padmore it might cause it to be provided. I said I would do so directly and I returned to the deceased and found Smalley had gone. I then turned quickly upon my heel as a Witness described and went to Smalley's house but he was not at home - his wife said he had gone to get shaved and I told her to send him to me and he came about one and I then gave him an order for half a pint of brandy and a bottle of medicine and also a note for Mr. Padmore which he was to take directly - I called at deceased's the next morning and found he was dying and I went to Mr. Cart and told him and he and I and Mr. Padmore went soon afterwards to the deceased's but he was then dead. The Certificates now produced by Mr. Padmore are what I issued - the first on the 7th of March stating that he was incapable of work but capable of being removed and also stating that he required half a pint of brandy and a Nurse by which I meant a person to attend him day and night - the second Certificate was given by me on the 14th instt. to the same effect as the former and stating that he required half a pint of brandy only - the deceased had stated that he would not go into the Workhouse and I therefore certified as to his capability of being removed
in order that he might go either to the Infirmary or to some lodging to be taken care of - I attended the deceased for about a month a year and a half ago - his leg was then swollen from deficiency of circulation and he was then very ill and as badly off as he was before his death - I also attended him in January 1857 when he had varicose veins - Judging from my previous knowledge of him I am of the opinion that he died from exhaustion caused by disease of the heart and arteries and gangrene of one foot as a consequence of that disease - I dont recollect ever mentioning the bedding to Mr. Padmore - only to Mr. Cart.

Patrick Downey.

James Cart - sworn - says,

I am one of the Overseers of Sileby and acting for this half year - I did not know that the deceased was ill till last Friday week when Mr. Padmore called on me and told me deceased was ill and in a very poor state and he wished me to look after him - he said he had just given him his weekly relief and that if he wanted anything I was to supply him with it - I was engaged on Saturday and did not call on deceased but Mr. Dalton having written to Mr. Dakin the Guardian on Sunday respecting him I and he went to see deceased and I asked how it was he had not had the Doctor - deceased complained of his leg and his toes looked black - I immediately went myself to Mr. Downey and requested him to come and see him and he went back with me at once and examined him and told him he must have his foot fomented and half a pint of brandy and I went and ordered it - I went in again either on Monday or Tuesday - he was alone - Mr. Dalton's Servant followed me in - deceased was
very deaf - I asked him whether he wanted anything but the young man said he could not hear and I told him to ask him and deceased said No - the next day Smalley who was employed to take care of him came to my house and said he had plenty of bread - that he could not eat meat and that he wanted a little butter for him - I asked him how much and he said half a quareen but I gave him an order for a quarter of a pound and a pound of linseed for a poultice. I told him when he wanted anything else to come to me and I would let him have it - he mentioned that his bedding was bad and that he should like fresh sheets and blankets for him but I told him I had not the power to order those things - I met Mr. Padmore on Friday and I believe I mentioned to him that he wanted bedding and sheets - we went to deceased's together and after enquiring how he was I believe the first thing that was done was Padmore paid Smalley half a crown for five days attendance on deceased - I am quite certain that some one I believe Smalley then mentioned about deceased's bedding when Mr. Padmore said "I will not take the responsibility upon myself but I will bring the case before the Board on the next Board day" - we came away soon afterwards - On Sunday morning Mr. Downey called on me respecting deceased and said it was necessary he should have half a pint more brandy and I told him I had not had the Order for the other from him when he said he would furnish me with both and I did receive them the same day - I ordered the Brandy and Mr. Downey wished Mr. Padmore to be written to respecting deceased and asked him whether he would and he undertook to do it and to get Smalley to go over to Mountsorrel with it in the afternoon but I believe he did not go with it till Monday
morning - The Policeman called on me at dinner time on Sunday and said deceased was dying from want and I said if he was it was their own fault as whatever they wanted in reason I would give an Order for - The Policeman also complained about his bedding and I said I knew it was very bad but that I had not the power to order any - I went into Mr. Dalton's in the afternoon and we had a good deal of conversation respecting him - I told Mr. Dalton if deceased refused to go into the house I proposed getting a lodging for him the next day (Monday) and that if I could meet with a suitable one and he would not go to it he must lie where he was - It was then that I received from Smalley Mr. Downey's Certificates for the two half pints of brandy and I wrote an Order for them on the back of each to Mr. Newball and delivered them myself at his house and I told Smalley he could have it - On Monday morning I went to Mr. Dakin the Guardian and had some conversation with him and told him that I expected Mr. Padmore coming over and I wished him to go and meet him and have some arrangement made as to what was to be done in deceased's case - Mr. Dakin was then at work in the field and he said he wants to come as soon as his son arrived to take his place - I returned home and Mr. Downey came between 9 and 10 and told me deceased was dying - In a few minutes Mr. Padmore came in and we all went to deceased's and found that he was dead. The note I now produce is the one written by Mr. Downey to Mr. Padmore on Sunday and left at my house on Monday morning by Smalley.

James Cart

Before me

John Gregory

Coroner
Gentlemen,

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your Letter of the 25th instant, enclosing a copy of the Letter addressed to the Guardians of the Barrow upon Soar Union respecting the case of Thomas Hetterley.

Permit me to say that I consider that Letter extremely unsatisfactory. It states that "After carefully perusing the depositions, the Board are not prepared to say, that any substantial neglect of this case, can properly be attributed to Mr. Padmore" as he appears to have visited the deceased frequently, "and given the regular weekly relief".

And then, with what appears to me, strangely inconsistent with the foregoing, the Letter adds -

"At the same time, there seems to be no doubt that the Poor Man stood greatly in need of proper Bedding, and that though Mr. Padmore's attention was repeatedly directed to the circumstances, this want was not attended to. Why this was not done, does not distinctly appear, but looking at the "very peculiar circumstances of the case, the Board think" that the omission is much to be regretted".

Gentlemen,

I have given on Oath my opinion of the cause of poor neglected Hetterley's death, and having transmitted to your Honourable Board, a Copy of the Evidence taken at the Inquest, as well as a local newspaper containing an accurate report, I need not reiterate what I then said, but I will say, that the manner in which the

1. For Hetterley, read Hatherley
Board appears at once to condemn and acquit Mr. Padmore, is in my view open to strong animadversion.

From a very deep conviction in my own mind, formed by opportunities of thoroughly knowing the case, I feel certain that Thomas Hetterley was lost through gross neglect.

Feeling this, I was at the trouble of procuring the Inquest, and at the expense of sending for a Medical Man from Leicester (Mr. Macaulay) in order that the Jurors might have the benefit of an Eminent Practitioners opinion in the case, as well as my own.

To that Evidence, I beg to refer you, as well as to the other depositions, and I at once ask you, Gentlemen, whether your Letter of the 25th May, is a sufficient reprimand of the relieving officer, for the gross and culpable treatment of Hetterley? If you consider it so, then my duty to my poor destitute neighbour becomes plain. I will with the cooperation of others, bring the whole case before another Tribune. It shall not be said that a fellow Creature's life can be lost in this shameful way, without some effort on the part of the humane, to prevent the recurrence of an event, that filled the whole of this Populous Village, with feelings of disgust, and indignation.

Your honourable Board, seems, if I may be permitted to say so, to take only a superficial view of the circumstances of this most distressing case. As a proof of the excitement it caused in this place, and neighbourhood, I may state out of a population of about 2000 the greater portion of whom (hard pinched by Poverty, during the winter, for want of work, and every deprivation attendant thereon), it has been estimated that a thousand,
in order and decorum - attended Poor Hetterleys Funeral, by my own exertions, and sole advice. I beg most respectfully further to call the Boards attention to two orders of removal of the deceased - by the Medical Officer. Mr. Patrick Downey, one given to the relieving officer on the 7th day of March last when the poor fellow was totally unfit to be removed, and the other on the 14th of the same month, in the afternoon of the same day, after Mr. Downey had visited the Patient twice that morning. On the 15th of March about 10 O'clock in the morning, Mr. James Cart the Overseer, Mr. Patrick Downey, with Mr. Padmore the relieving officer, arrived at Hetterleys Den for the purpose of removing him and found to their great surprise, the hand of Death had done so.

On Sunday the 14th of March I saw the poor Creature about 1 O'clock in the day. He had then lost the power of deglutition, I look'd at his feet, the first time, I had seen them (having been confined myself by long illness) I saw at a glance he was dying - from Gangrene and Exhaustion. I strongly expressed this, to those about him, and in the Evening of the same day - sent to Mr. James Cart Overseer then in this place. On the 7th of March - I addressed a note to Mr. John Dakin - who was then Guardian, He attended personally - saw the condition the man was in - both as to Bedding - and every comfort. I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, your most obedient Servant,

John Hayward Dalton Surgeon.