NINETEENTH CENTURY CO-OPERATIVE RETAILING IN ENGLAND AND WALES: A GEOGRAPHICAL APPROACH.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis reconstructs and analyses the changing geographical strength of co-operative retailing in England and Wales c1820-1901. It charts the spatial and temporal distribution of all recorded society foundations during this period. From 1862 onwards the changing pattern of co-operative membership is presented. The distribution of society foundations by settlement size is investigated. The analysis of the pattern of co-operative growth - including the setbacks suffered as some societies failed to establish themselves permanently - draws ideas from and extends upon the existing literature on the geographical diffusion of innovations. The importance of the circulation of information - distinguishing basic awareness of the idea of co-operation and the practical knowledge necessary for its execution - is studied. This suggests the importance of printed sources in rapidly and widely extending awareness but their limitations in providing the knowledge necessary for practical operations.

Factors deriving from the relative location of adopting centres and their access to information must be supplemented by consideration of the specific character of these places. In particular the significance of local conditions of retail trade is asserted together with the importance of wider social and economic circumstances as an influence on the potential for the development of collective working class initiative. Variations in the conditions of work and residence are examined as forces underlying the development attitudes amongst workers, the internal cohesion of the working class and its relationship with the middle and upper class establishment; all of which had a bearing on the extent to which co-operation was seen as a desirable and practical exercise within individual settlements.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The thesis reconstructs and analyses the changing geographical strength of co-operative retailing in England and Wales ⊆1820-1901. Study of the spatial and temporal pattern of the proliferation of societies demonstrates the importance of several periods of particular enthusiasm for the foundation of new co-operatives: ⊆1828-32, ⊆1839-42, and ⊆1857-62. In intervening years there was often stagnation and during the eighteen thirties retreat, but it is suggested that the decline of co-operation in this latter period has been overstated in previous accounts.

The years ⊆1830, ⊆1860 and to a slightly lesser extent ⊆1840 saw not only a sharp increase in society numbers but also the wideranging geographical spread of experimentation with co-operative trading. In the late twenties and early thirties co-operation spread from London and the south coast to the Midlands and took firm root in the industrial North-West and West Riding. It was principally from a base in these northern areas that the pace of expansion was temporarily increased ⊆1840 with a larger and more enduring resurgence of

interest from the later eighteen fifties.

The rapid and widespread proliferation of societies is a testimony to the activities of co-operative propagandists in supplementing the normal circulation of information to spread awareness of the idea, and the interest that their message aroused. Less impressive was the failure of many societies to prosper in a particular settlement once established. Returns of society membership totals available from 1862 onwards confirm that even after the last wave of foundations when the national co-operative membership grew consistently, progress in many localities was halting. A substantial number of societies failed completely while still small and young. Those in southern England, the West Midlands and Wales were generally more prone to failure than their counterparts elsewhere. Although societies were founded in all regions during the late fifties and sixties the translation of this framework into a substantial and enduring co-operative body was a lengthy process in these southern districts. By contrast in the North and the South-East Midlands where the foundations of $\subseteq$1860 were also the effective start of regional co-operative development, success was more readily achieved with many of the earliest societies enjoying a long life and consistent growth.

Consideration of the geography of co-operative membership during the last four decades of the nineteenth century confirms the general strength of societies in the industrial north. Although all other regions also saw overall expansion

of membership during this period their growth was both lesser and less consistent. Expansion was especially erratic in Wales and the West Midlands which suffered years of absolute loss of membership particularly during the general economic depression of the later seventies and eighties. London was also distinguished by its limited advance despite numerous attempts to establish societies.

Examination at a finer spatial scale reveals intra-regional variations in co-operative strength. Individual societies performed well in locations geographically removed and rather different in social and economic character from the industrial districts with which co-operation is chiefly associated. Not that there was a uniformity of success in areas with an industrial base. Within the textile districts there was local variation in co-operative strength. Elsewhere in Lancashire there was limited westward extension of interest into mining communities or onto Merseyside. Of the country's other coalfields the North-East was distinctive in the high degree of co-operative success. Progress was much more modest in Staffordshire and South Wales.

Brief analysis of the localities establishing co-operatives shows a degree of variety in the course of co-operative spread. Although all major towns and cities saw early attempts at co-operation it was not necessarily the case that the first introduction of the innovation to a new area was found in its largest urban centre. Societies commonly proliferated rapidly amongst medium-sized and smaller industrial settlements. Indeed it was in these last

types of centre that co-operation often achieved its greatest success.

Cities, particularly some of those in the north - Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle - were the home of several of the county's largest societies in absolute terms. However, the relative success of such societies measured by their share of total retail trade within their cities or the proportion of the local population recruited as co-operators, was much less than in many of their smaller neighbours. In these terms co-operation was weak in the larger centres, especially so in London, Birmingham and Liverpool.

Presentation of the geographical pattern of co-operative development is followed by an explanatory analysis. The structure of this derives from and extends upon ideas contained in the literature on the spatial diffusion of innovations. Contemporary descriptions of the stimulation of co-operative spread by knowledge of previous examples accords with the stress placed in theoretical writings on the rôle of information diffusion in the process of innovation adoption. The case of co-operation also confirms the need for a disaggregated view of information flow involving consideration of its content as well as its overall spatial pattern. It is useful to distinguish between basic awareness of an idea and the practical knowledge required to attempt its execution; differentiating the sources which convey particular types of information. Moreover, it must be remembered that information availability is only a part of a

more complex and extended process of innovation adoption. Where co-operative progress was frustrated it commonly reflected a combination of inadequate information and practical difficulties.

The early upsurges of co-operative experimentation were times when the circulation of information increased considerably with the growing number of foundations and the greater publicity having a mutually reinforcing effect. Particularly important was notice in newspapers and journals - some of them specifically co-operative - and in the later eighteen fifties interest was aroused by the publication of Holyoake's history of the Rochdale Pioneers' society. Such printed sources could be rapidly and widely distributed to supplement the circulation of information through the movement of population in the course of everyday activity.

While it is difficult to reconstruct the pattern of circulation of co-operative information individual instances do confirm the general impression that awareness of the idea would have been spread more quickly and widely than the distribution of co-operative foundations might suggest. Reaction to the idea might be belated, non-existant or end in failure. In part the absence of an automatic transition from awareness of co-operation to a successful and enduring store reflected inadequate knowledge of the technicalities of the operation of a retail business. The necessary detailed information was not initially readily available from widely circulated printed information sources. It is suggested that such information was most easily acquired by societies

developing close to established stores which acted as examples and sources of locally specific and appropriate advice. Isolated attempts were disadvantaged by reliance on advice from more distant or general sources which did not always directly address their particular situation. Attempts made later in the century to improve guidance could not offer a complete solution to the information needs of infant societies. Measures adopted included both the increased production of printed material and efforts to develop a co-ordinated service of propaganda and advice. Such attempts to ease co-operative expansion generally found it difficult to ensure provision in areas of weakness where they were most needed. Co-operative societies were in the main pre-occupied with strengthening their own local position and were without enthusiasm for the devotion of funds to wider schemes of extension. Thus initiative in the development of propaganda and advisory bodies sometimes passed to middle class liberals and working class groups such as agricultural trades unions outside the co-operative mainstream.

The geography of co-operative development is not wholly explicable in terms of access to information. Local responses reflected differing perceptions of the advantage it would bestow. It was potentially particularly attractive in circumstances where existing private retail provision was unsatisfactory. It was sometimes a specific decline of standards in private retailing leading to the application of existing knowledge about co-operation, not the receipt of

fresh information which determined the time of developments.

In areas with a steady growth of working class population an expanding consumer demand often inadequately met by existing shopkeepers created not only an incentive to establish co-operatives but also a degree of freedom to permit their consolidation and success. Expanding societies achieved some influence over the local conduct of retail trade. Their rôle in the setting of prices and profit margins allowed them to offer a combination of prices and dividends on purchases which was most likely to attract new members who often, of financial necessity, judged co-operative performance in practical terms. As the level of dividends rose during the the period 1862-1901 there was increasing divergence between rates paid by weak and strong societies. The geographical pattern of differentials in the level of profits and dividends echoed that of co-operative strength. Low dividends reflected both past failure of a society to establish itself and its future difficulties in changing this position of weakness. The lack of a generous dividend deprived a society of one of its chief means of attracting new members.

In many of the towns of southern England scope for new entrants into the retail market was limited as population and consumer demand were relatively stable. In the largest cities fierce competition in retail markets produced a high casualty rate amongst individual enterprises, both private and co-operative. All retailers in larger centres faced high operating costs and the squeezing of profit margins,

conditions making it difficult for co-operatives to offer attractive dividends. The organisational structure of co-operatives also caused problems in larger centres; as independent local ventures societies invariably started with modest resources and so found it difficult to establish themselves in large or competitive markets. Efforts to overcome this problem by collective subscriptions of capital from retail societies throughout the country to establish new stores were unsuccessful. They drew half-hearted support from co-operators unwilling to abandon their tradition of local independence.

This independence reflected the nature of co-operation as not simply a commercial venture but also an exercise in working class self-help. The strength of societies was also a reflection of working class communality; its internal cohesion and collective will to resist those who opposed its interest. Opposition to co-operative came chiefly from shopkeepers who sometimes went beyond straightforward competition in their attempts to discredit and break societies financially. Some employers were also hostile to co-operation.

Co-operation helped to reinforce working class collective identity but itself needed a base from which to spring. There was no automatic transfer of initiative in popular institutions from one sphere to another. Earlier small and unstable working class bodies were not a good foundation for co-operatives and there were also fears of competition for

attention between different types of activity. Individual examples do, however, show existing working class institutions as providing the nucleus for co-operatives. Also important were groupings formed within larger individual workplaces, perhaps reinforced by an overlap of community of work and residence. Strong and relatively enduring communal ties did not guarantee co-operative success but they were the conditions under which it was most commonly achieved.

The expansion of societies was more difficult where there was a high rate of residential mobility outside the framework of the cohesive workgroup formed in large factories and mines. Such circumstances partly underlay co-operative weakness in London. Although men from workshop trades successfully supported societies in some lesser centres, particularly the shoemaking villages of the East Midlands, the small-scale workshop groupings were swamped in the largest cities. Moreover, the economic diversity of trades in a centre of the size of London or Birmingham tended to engender a divisive trade particularism. In addition to workshop trades London's employment structure included substantial numbers of casual workers, including dockers, those in the sweated trades and domestic servants; all groups which were difficult to incorporate within collective working class activity. In part this reflected their geographical scattering by contrast with the grouping of the large workplace but the circumstances of work also had wider consequences for the development of attitudes including those about expenditure and saving which directly impinged on co-

operation. Regularity of work and of income, commonly linked with employment in the mechanised factories, are suggested as encouraging attitudes sympathetic towards co-operation by contrast with the erratic incomes and opportunism that was particularly associated with the survival of pre-industrial practices and with casual work. Those employed under the truck system and some schemes with long intervals between payments also found the development of co-operation difficult.

The scale of economic units influenced that of the workers' response. Where smaller units were common ideas of individual material and social advance were pursued. By contrast collective attempts at advancement - including co-operation - were a more practical response where substantial factories and mines were the norm.

The changing geography of co-operative strength can be analysed satisfactorily only within a multi-faceted explanatory framework. This takes account of factors which relate to both an individual adopting centre's relative location in space - thus the likely pattern of its receipt of various types of information - and to the character of the place itself. Place characteristics reflect both the commercial circumstances within which co-operative stores were operating and the social and economic conditions which determined the degree of internal cohesion of the working class, the attitudes of workers to immediate matters such as expenditure and consumption, and their longer term view of

the potential for their advancement; and the balance of power between workers and the upper and middle class establishment. It is only by combining all these strands that a complete explanation can be attempted of the strength of co-operation in the clusters of smaller and medium-sized settlements in northern industrial districts, its lesser success in the largest cities, in parts of the Midlands and South Wales, in most market towns and ports and in much of the countryside.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND THE STUDY OF CO-OPERATIVE RETAILING.

I

In their study of the consumers' co-operative movement published in 1921 Sidney and Beatrice Webb wrote

> A hundred years hence ... school textbooks and learned treatises will give more space to consumers' co-operation, its constitution and ramifications, than to the rise and fall of political parties or the personalities of successive Prime Ministers.[1]

Some sixty five years later there appears very little sign of movement towards the fulfilment of this prediction. The Webbs expected increased academic interest to parallel expansion of the co-operative sector of the economy, a process which itself shows no prospect of yet achieving the replacement of the capitalist system for which they hoped. The current status of co-operation and its progress since the nineteen twenties are not really a concern of the present work which deals with expansion during the nineteenth century. It is interesting to note, however, that the growth of the Victorian period continued during the first half of the present century. In the nineteen fifties and sixties the pace of expansion of co-operative retailing was slower and by the end of the latter decade national membership of consumers' societies was in decline.[2]

During the period since World War Two there has been expansion of interest in co-operation in other sectors which were previously of much lesser importance than the mainstay

of retailing. The number of societies involved with the supply of agricultural materials, the harvesting and marketing of agricultural produce, manufacturing, and housing associations have increased significantly.[3] However, the co-operative sector remains only a small proportion of the total economy. In some cases, moreover, progress has had more to do with the general weakness of the economy than with any upsurge of faith in co-operative principles. As with many previous productive ventures the new workers' co-operatives have frequently been started only as a last resort in trades that are already experiencing difficulties, as an often all too brief alternative to closure and unemployment. Such a record suggests co-operative advance by default; any threat to prevailing capitalism comes from its own fragility rather than the dynamism of the co-operative alternative.

As with its implementation in practice the Webbs' expectations of a greatly enlarged scholarly interest in either the present state of the co-operative sector or its history have not been fully realised. Contemporary developments are receiving increasing attention but with specific regard to the study of nineteenth century growth which is the concern here, co-operation has not been a major beneficiary of the expansion of interest in labour history and the wider social and economic conditions of workers. The various discussions of working class culture invariably and rightly note the importance of co-operation amongst their listings of the institutional expressions of popular

initiative. It is present, for example, in Raymond Williams' well known identification of working class culture with

> the basic collective idea, and the institutions, manners and habits of thought and intentions which proceed from this.[4]

Yet within any overall discussion of working class activities co-operation has the status of a poor relation: a presence to be acknowledged rather than an acquaintance worth cultivating.

Scholars requiring published material on the development of the nineteenth century movement still have to rely on a small number of basic sources, few of them now particularly recent. The most useful remains G.D.H. Cole's 1944 book A Century of Co-operation.[5] Bonner's subsequent work British Co-operation adds little to existing knowledge of nineteenth century progress being principally a textbook for co-operation's own educational activities rather than a presentation of detailed research.[6] The coverage given in these books of developments during the eighteen twenties and thirties may be supplemented by the work of Musson, Pollard and Garnett.[7] There are also several studies of the involvement of the Christian Socialists with co-operation during the early eighteen fifties.[8] Some attention has been given to various manifestations of co-operation in the work of historians such as Thompson, Foster, Tholfsen and Kirk, which helps to set them in the wider context of the changing currents of working class radicalism and reformism.[9] Inevitably, however, such studies can give only limited

notice to co-operation per se and tell us more about the ideological motivation of the vociferous minority of its leaders than they do about the operations of local societies in practice or the attractions they exercised for ordinary people.

The handful of post-war references can be increased by a return to the older staples of co-operative history. The earliest of these is G.J. Holyoake's two volume History of Co-operation. The record it presents is, however, to be approached with more than usual caution.[10] Rather less controversial is The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain by Beatrice Potter (Webb).[11] Other studies deal more specifically with productive activities and wholesaling.[12]

These selected works contain important information but even collectively they do not give a clear and balanced picture of the development of the movement. There is little attention to its routine expansion: the proliferation of societies, the mechanics of their foundation and the local impact of their activities. Rather, attention has been given to institutional development at the highest levels, the establishment of new co-operative sectors of business and the histories of a few specific operations. There has been only limited attempt to outline statistically the dimensions of co-operation and the absence of a full system of referencing in many of the older works makes it difficult to establish the basis of some of the general statements offered as an alternative. Moreover, as will be shown later, in some

respects the standard accounts are misleading as records of co-operative progress. It would seem a profitable advance to correct such misapprehensions and to attempt to balance the standard narrative approach with some analytical examination of the varying degrees of success which the movement achieved over space and time.

Much has already been written about co-operation within particular localities. Hundreds of studies of individual societies have been produced for distribution amongst their membership as part of celebrations to mark the achievement of a milestone such as the fiftieth anniversary of a society's foundation.[13] While such studies all doubtless pleased the original local audience for which they were intended their competence as pieces of historical writing varied considerably. Some were rather disorganised presentations of only the sketchiest details of a society's progress, but the best are valuable early examples of local history, often drawing on sources which are no longer available. Even the latter suffer, however, from the lack of contextual material; the progress of the individual society is charted with little reference to the experience of other consumers' co-operatives, the development of the movement as a whole or wider changes in the social and economic position of workers.

It is this last point which is perhaps the chief limitation of published co-operative history. As a consequence of the restricted academic, as opposed to popular, attention to the movement, the very local focus and the relative age of much of the work there has been little

interaction between historical writing on co-operation and developments in disciplines such as history, geography and economics. The study of co-operation would gain from a view informed by wider historical debate. There would also be a beneficial feedback in the refinement of the now rather hackneyed picture of the movement presented in many textbooks which still perforce draw on elderly specialist studies, repeating generalisations which have gone unexamined for decades. Against such a background there are some signs of discontent with the present state of knowledge about nineteenth century co-operation.[14] However, the substantive result of this interest has been limited. It remains true that

> We still need a rounded account of co-operation and the co-operative movement.[15]

In part the limited interest in the study of co-operation may reflect the absence of any dramatic progress in its practical execution; the Webbs saw the two developments as linked. Their enthusiasm for the subject perhaps led to an overoptimistic view of co-operation's prospects as an agency of social and economic change. By contrast the rather prosaic nature of the routine activity of shopkeeping may have contributed to the relative neglect of the movement. As a topic it perhaps lacks the immediate impact or appeal of battles fought by labour leaders in the political and industrial spheres which are the focus of much historical study. But this runs the risk of undervaluing the importance

of co-operation for many ordinary people.

Although their opinions were rather differently articulated and were frequently more rooted in the practicalities of family budgeting many of the Webbs' working class contemporaries identified strongly with their local co-operative societies. At its most basic this was displayed in a loyalty to the stores in purchasing

> My father used to come in and say "Who bought that ...?" jam or whatever it was on the table. And it wasn't co-op see.... He said "I want nothing on my table but co-op."[16]

Most consumers who chose to shop at a co-operative did so for primarily financial reasons: their links to the movement were cemented by the advantage of the dividend and a feeling that the stores provided a better service than did private retailers. This was reinforced by an identification with co-operation as the peoples' "own" shop, a concern in which the individual worker had a stake in ownership and management in addition to being a customer. One tangible expression of such associations was the society histories noted above. These were usually quite handsomely produced and serve as a reminder of local pride in a society's achievements.

A proportion of the membership became more actively involved in the affairs of their society, a minority through election to official posts, a larger number by participation in the various enterprises and events developed by the more dynamic societies as a complement to their primary role in retailing. In some cases this involved co-operative provision

in other areas such as housing and welfare which accounted for much of working class expenditure beyond the basics of food, household goods and clothing. The most common extension of co-operation was into the areas of education and entertainment, collective activities which reinforced bonds between members as well as strengthening the tie between the individual and the institution of the local society. Co-operatives organised tea parties, concerts and outings in addition to more serious lectures and classes. The foundation of the Women's Co-operative Guild in 1883 provided one of the earliest forums for the meeting of working class women which went beyond simple sociability to discussion and campaigning on issues of reform both within co-operation itself and on wider matters such as suffrage, divorce and health care.[17] For some individuals the Guild had a transforming influence on their lives

> It is impossible to say how much I owe to the Guild. It gave me education and recreation.... From a shy, nervous woman, the Guild made me a fighter.[18]

The foundation and principal operations of co-operatives arose from the immediate concerns of working people; most obviously the quality and quantity of the return they received for the spending on food which formed a major part of most working class budgets.[19] The disparity between general living standards in the late twentieth century and those of the nineteenth make it difficult to appreciate fully the former importance of food as a popular social and

political issue, particularly during the earlier decades of the nineteenth century. The campaign for the repeal of the Corn Laws was one of the major political concerns of the second quarter of the century. Amongst ordinary workers more widely cast reform movements seem to have acquired much of their popularity because in the new society which they promised there would be an abundance of cheap food. One street ballard anticipated very down to earth advantages from the passage of the Charter

> And when that the Charter, Old England has got,
> We'll have stunning good beer at three half pence a pot:
> A loaf for a penny, a pig for a crown
> And gunpowder tea at 5 farthings a pound:
> Instead of red herrings, we'll live on fat geese,
> And lots of young women at two pence a piece.

With the probable exception of the last of these co-operative storekeeping offered a means of achieving similar ends directly without the need to attempt the wider social transformation which consistently eluded working class campaigners.

Indeed the disillusionment resulting from the setbacks experienced by popular radicalism, particularly Chartism, in the eighteen thirties and forties has been suggested as contributing to the creation of a favourable climate for the growth of more limited reformist movements including co-operation.[21] But other aspects of the wider changes in the social and economic condition of the working class have been invoked to account for the transition from radicalism to

reformism around mid century. Some of these had a particularly direct bearing on food supply, consumption and thus the growth of co-operation. As the material reward of workers generally improved - Figs. 1.1 and 1.2 show the falling trend of retail prices and the rise in wages during the second half of the century - their concern became less with ensuring a simple sufficiency of food and more with its quality. The overall composition of the diet changed as demand for grain and potatoes remained stable while
22
consumption of meat and other animal products increased. Moreover, workers became increasingly reluctant to see any advance of wages negated by malpractice in private trade, particularly adulteration and the selling of short weight.
This, it has been suggested, was an important part of the
23
appeal of co-operation for more prosperous workers. Thus the foundation of co-operatives reflected different circumstances in different locales; they were sometimes a response to the immediate pressures of poverty and the need to cut expenditure, and elsewhere a consequence of increased prosperity and a desire to improve living standards.

In the longer term the expansion of co-operation was chiefly associated with the improved material conditions of large sections of the working class. Indeed the geography of co-operative development during the second half of the nineteenth century perhaps offers some rough guidance to that of working class living standards. The national growth of co-operative membership and sales in England and Wales charted

Fig. 1.1. Retail Price Index, 1855-99.

Source: Feinstein 1972, T140.

Fig. 1.2. Earnings Index, 1855-99.

Source: Feinstein 1972, T140.

on Figs. 1.3 and 1.4 should be set against the background of the general increase in consumer demand. This reflected not just population expansion but also per capita growth as earnings improved.[24] The pace of co-operative growth, however, outstripped that of overall consumption as the movement increased its share of the national retail market. In the absence of statistics for overall retail trade before the present century it is impossible to indicate in detail the extent or growth of co-operation's market share. Jefferys has suggested that it rose from ≤2-3 per cent of total sales in 1875 to ≤6-7 per cent by 1900.[25] A comparison of the pace of growth of co-operative sales against that of total consumer expenditure 1870-99 confirms the more rapid expansion of the former (Fig. 1.5), although the differences may be slightly exaggerated by a possible overestimation of consumer expenditure in the early years of the series.[26]

II

Having introduced the general topic of the nineteenth century co-operative movement there is now a need to define more precisely the issues to be addressed by the present work and the manner in which it will be structured. What follows is not and makes no claim to be the rounded account of co-operation that Hollis sought, but it does attempt to present a more detailed and analytical account of the expansion of the co-operative movement than previously available, within a framework that is informed by recent studies in history and geography. Attention is largely restricted to the

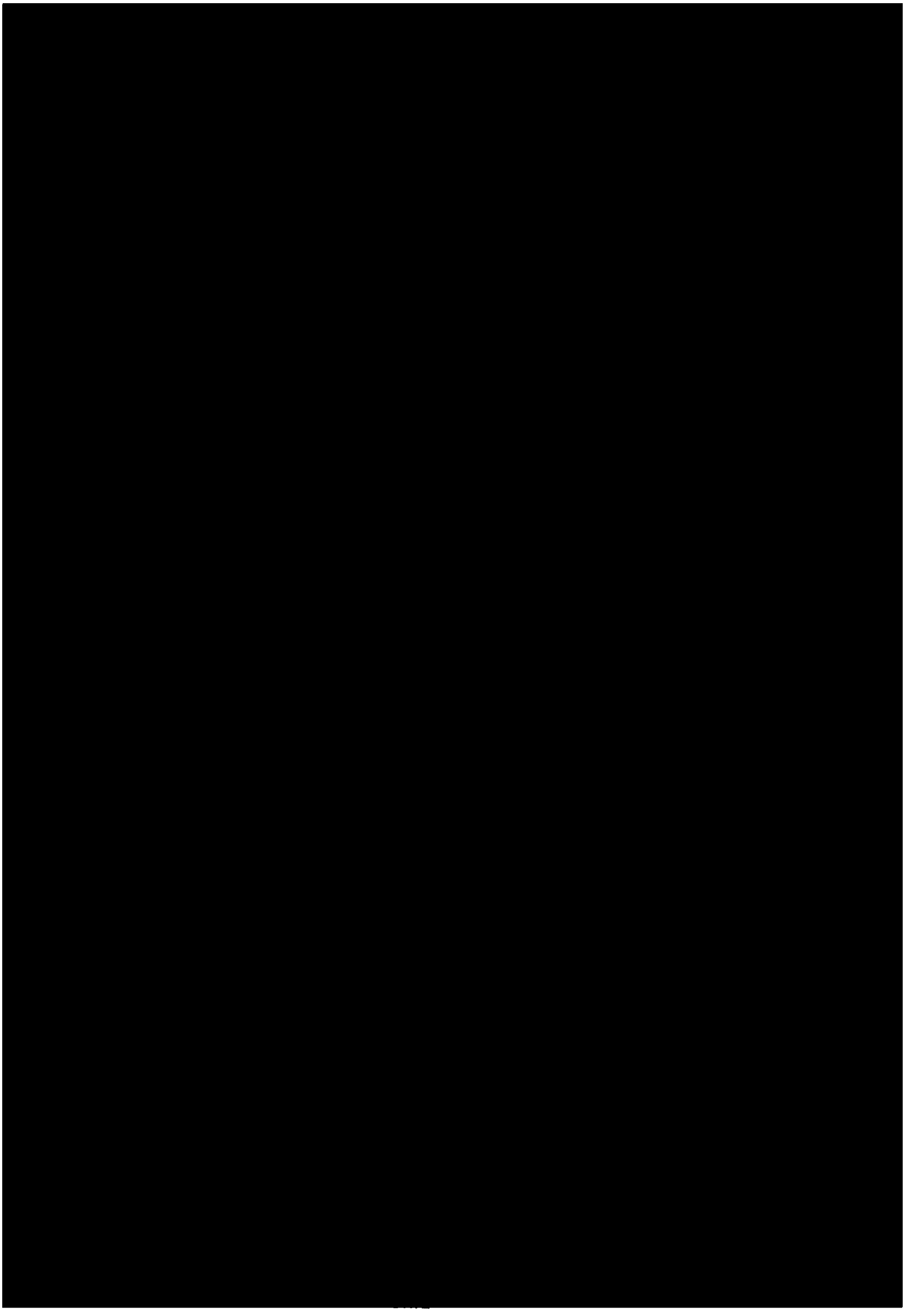

Fig. 1.3. Co-operative Retail Society Membership in England and Wales, 1862-99.

Source: Annual Returns of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67 & 1870-99. See bibliography for full details and Appendix One for a discussion of this source material.

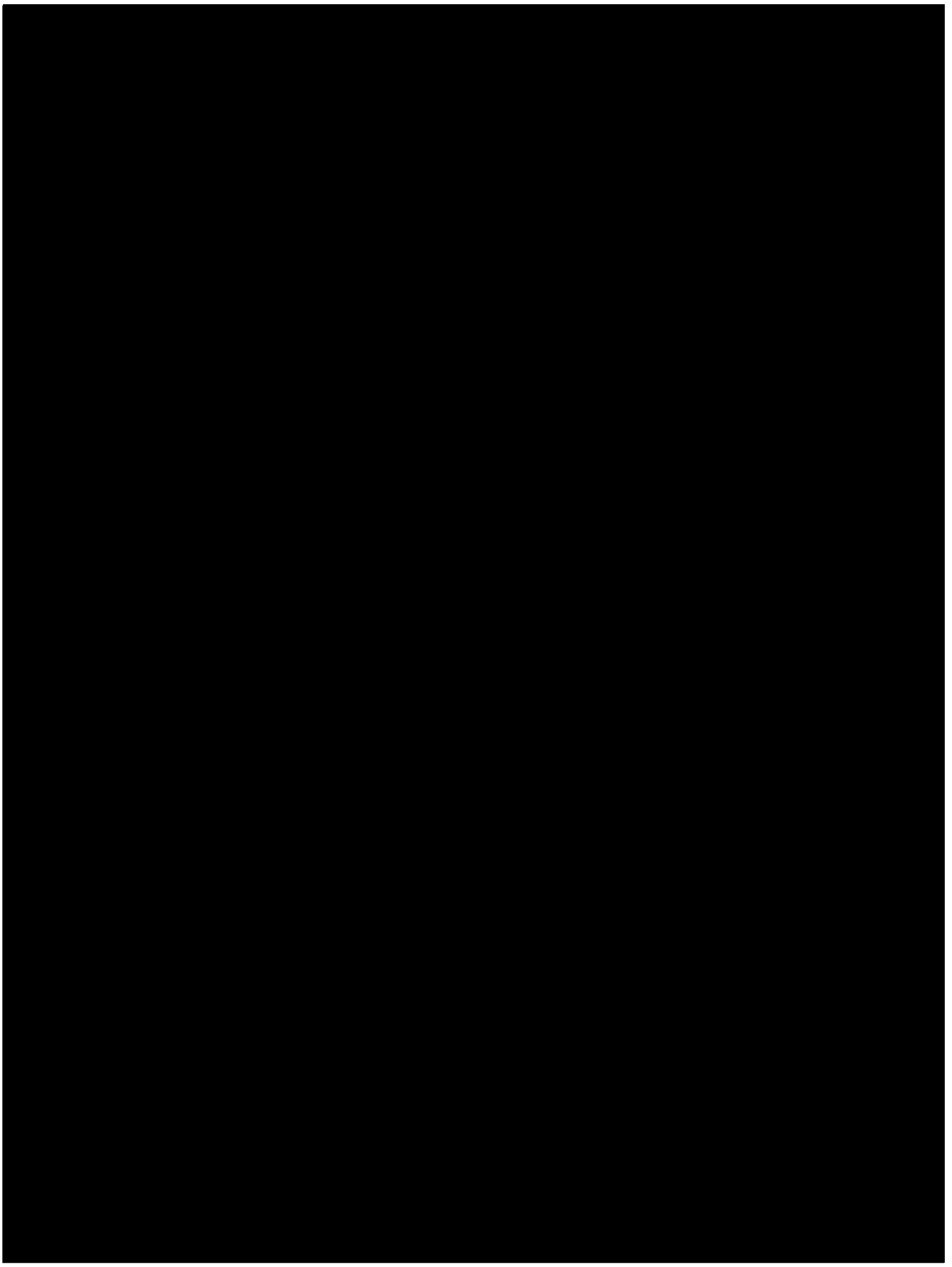

Fig. 1.4. Co-operative Retail Society Annual Sales for England and Wales, 1862-99.

Source: As Fig. 1.3

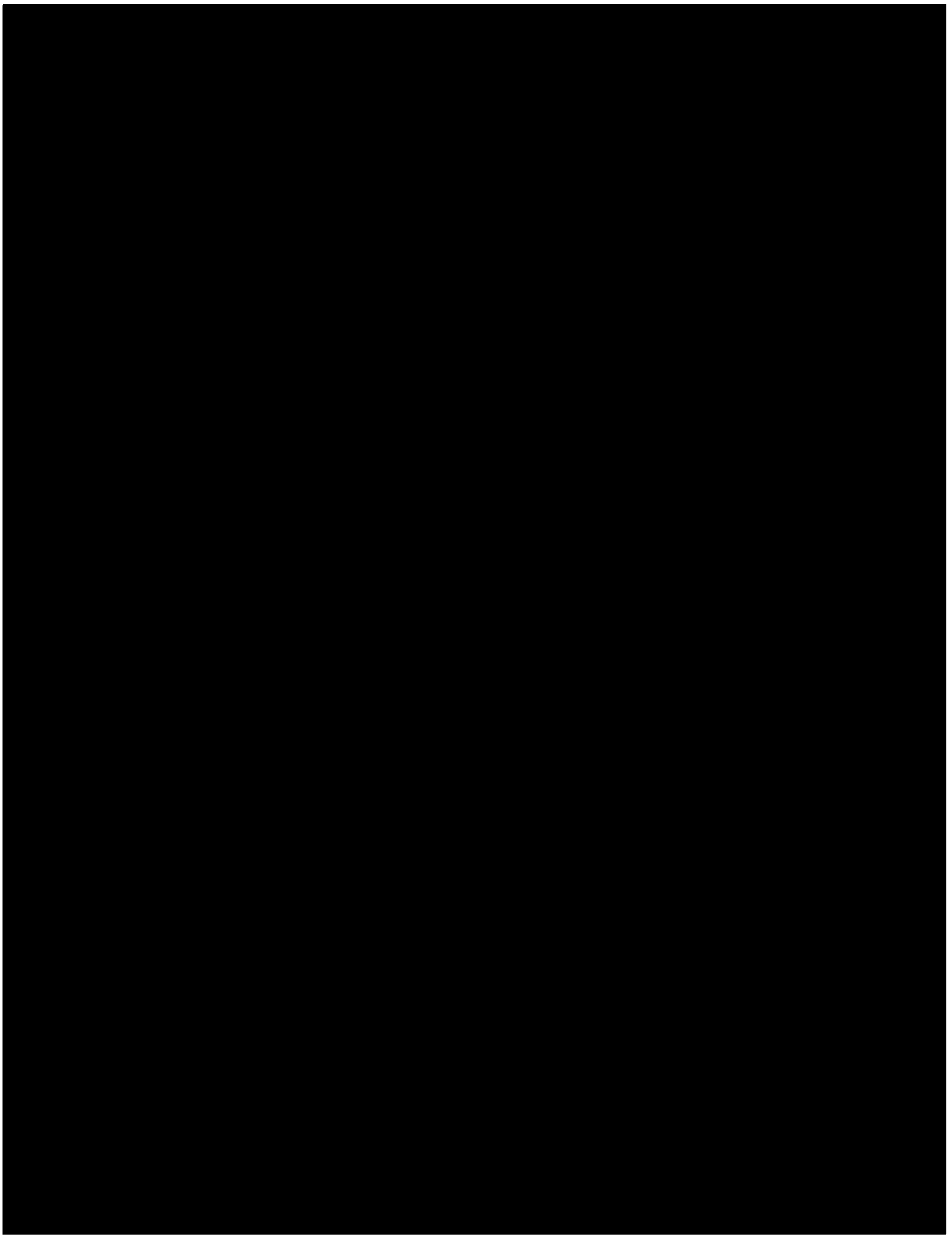

Fig. 1.5. Indices of Growth of Co-operative Sales in England and Wales, 1862-99, and of Consumer Expenditure in the UK, 1870-99.

Source: Co-operative Sales Index calculated from data presented on Fig. 1.4; Consumer Expenditure Index from Feinstein 1972, T14.

consumers' societies; co-operatives formed for other purposes, mainly productive, are treated only where they impinge on the main theme. In this focus the present work echoes the bias of British co-operation in practice. Independent producers societies have rarely proved large or enduring.[27] It is not without a certain appropriateness that their number briefly included the London-based Co-operative Millstone Manufacturers. It was the consumers' societies, through federal organisations such as the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS), which developed the most successful productive operations to supply their own stock. These, however, were usually organised on lines little different from conventional joint-stock companies and lacked the features of profit sharing and industrial democracy which characterise true workers' co-operatives.

The focus then is very much on societies whose chief function was in retailing, indeed principally on the work of these societies as retailers. It is not possible within the confines of the present work to make any detailed use of the local records of the social, educational, welfare, housing and investment activities of individual societies. This is a matter of some regret as there is clearly much interesting material that could and should be presented to a wider audience. It would be shortsighted to pretend that the study which follows is not the poorer for its enforced exclusion. It seems important, however, that some sense of priorities should be introduced into any consideration of a topic as

potentially diverse as co-operation. A knowledge of its basic dimensions, an outline of its expansion across time and space, are first essentials providing the platform on which to base subsequent more detailed treatments of particular aspects of co-operative operations. It is the provision of this platform which is a major task of the present thesis.

There is a need for a study of co-operation that is national in scope - here defined as England and Wales [28] - thus breaking away from the particularism of the host of existing local studies, and even the impression created by some of the more wideranging work by academics which tends to consider co-operation only in the context of industrial northern England. While societies were undoubtedly strongest in such districts they were by no means so spatially confined. At the same time it is important to concentrate attention on co-operative growth through the foundation and expansion of ordinary societies. Hollis' prescription for future studies of the movement included a call for work which would give

> a stronger sense of what co-operation meant to those who were not luminaries of the central board or directors of the CWS; the regional strength and loyalties of co-operation, the nature of its membership, its links with other styles of self-help.... [29]

It appears in effect that a request is being made for a social geographical treatment of co-operation and this is substantially the approach adopted here.

The thesis presents a reconstruction of the changing

geographical strength of consumers' co-operation; attention is chiefly focussed on the last four decades of the nineteenth century. However, the delimitation of this period is largely a matter of convenience rather than reflecting any decisive events within co-operation itself. The starting point for detailed study is determined by the first availability of the series of annual collected statistics of membership and sales in 1862, but a particular effort is made to stress the continuity of co-operative ideas and activity in certain areas over the previous forty years. Thus the material in Chapter Two which examines the scale and character of co-operative retailing in the first half of the century is an important part of the work as a whole. The termination of the study is perhaps more a matter of convention; 1901 marks the end of the century and of the Victorian era. In the case of co-operation it also saw the publication of an investigation of the movement by the Board of Trade which proved a useful initial information source for the present work and which provides a cross-sectional view against which to measure the growth of the previous decades.[30]

Chapters Three and Four are chiefly concerned with the presentation of the pattern of co-operative growth, firstly by the foundation of individual societies and secondly by a consideration of the changing distribution of co-operative membership which reflected also the varying degrees of success achieved by societies in local recruitment. In part

this work is presented within a regional framework, the outlines of which are indicated on Fig. 1.6. In many respects the units adopted here conform to the widely used standard economic regions; some modifications were, however, felt to be necessary to present a more accurate picture of the geography of co-operation, a consideration which outweighed that of direct comparability with other work.

The remainder of the thesis is concerned with the investigation of forces which help explain the changing distribution of co-operation. In part the approach adopted reflects past thinking within geography on the diffusion of innovations. Thus the expansion of the movement is treated first in relation to the spread of information about co-operation in principle. This is a study which has some wider relevance as a contribution to an understanding of the circulation of popular information within nineteenth century England and Wales. The means of creating awareness of the idea and practice of co-operation are matched against the spatial distribution and chronology of its growth in Chapter Five. The present case, however, confirms that such an approach cannot alone provide a satisfactory understanding of the pattern and process of innovation diffusion. Thus in Chapters Six to Ten attention is turned to the popular response to the idea of co-operation in the variety of local contexts within which opinion and practical action were shaped, and the changing balance between forces which promoted and retarded the latter. In this attack is made on other of the issues raised by Hollis; to understand the

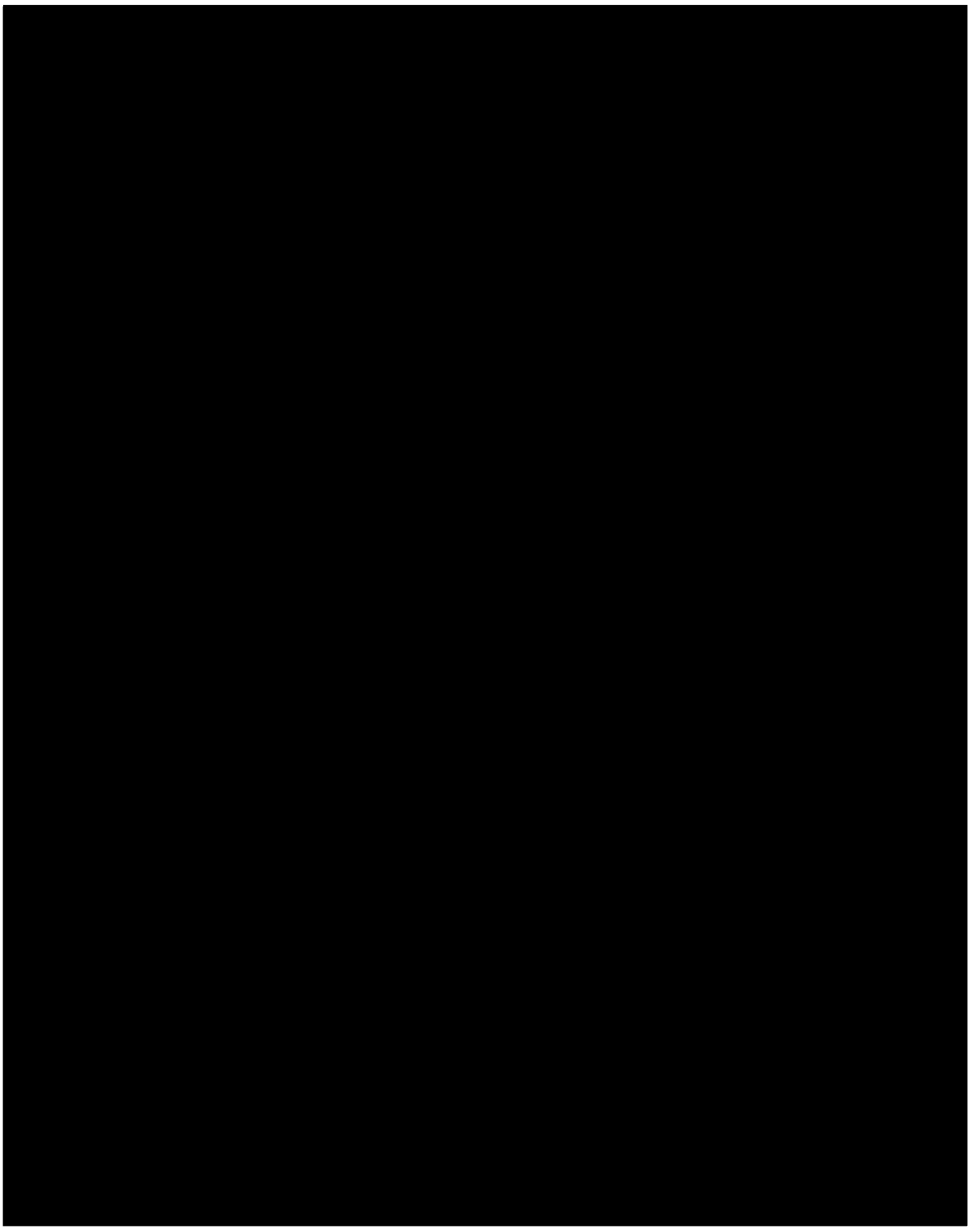

Fig. 1.6. Regional Divisions of England and Wales.

spatial pattern of co-operative development some indication needs to be given of why, how and by whom it is being attempted. This produces a study with concerns that are more practical than ideological.[31]

The geography of co-operation was a reflection of its mass appeal rather than the motivation of its leadership. The two forces were not necessarily at odds but the former was generally more rooted in the immediate advantages of retailing rather than any clearly defined image of co-operation as an agent of social or economic change. However it was conceived by its instigators the success of the individual local society could not be divorced from the commercial survival and prosperity of the store which was its focus. As some co-operative leaders found to their regret no amount of enthusiasm on their part could sustain a society which lacked a store that was attractive and economically viable. Chapters Six to Eight stress the commercial aspects of co-operative operations and the varying degree to which the state of private retailing encouraged or permitted the development of an alternative.

It is important not to lose sight of co-operation as a manifestation of working class self-help. In Chapters Nine and Ten an attempt is made to outline the economic and social conditions which underlay the development of such initiative amongst workers. This involves consideration of the social structure within settlements which allowed and encouraged working class organisation: the degree of control and

influence of one class upon another and the extent of identification and communality between the inhabitants of a particular locale. Examination of the collective base is complemented by attention to the material conditions and attitudes of particular groups of workers which were an influence on their ability and desire to embark on the development of co-operation as a specific type of popular initiative.

A principal aim of this study is, of course, the presentation of an account of the development of co-operative retailing during the nineteenth century: to discover more precisely where co-operation succeeded and where it failed, why groups in different locations and thus different social and economic circumstances adopted or rejected the innovation of co-operative trading is to begin to examine more analytically the appeal of co-operation to the mass of ordinary working people and its place within the wider Victorian economy and society. The intention is that the present work should also make a contribution in more general terms to understanding of the interlinked social and economic geography of England and Wales during this period. It is, moreover, an illustration of the value of a geographical approach to aspects of nineteenth century life which have previously been the preserve of more conventional history, allowing a means of treating more adequately the diversity of working class culture and initiative.

NOTES

1. Webb & Webb 1921, 383-84.
2. In 1900 the UK membership of consumers' co-operatives totalled 1.7 million, this had risen to 10.2 million by 1948 and 12.6 million ten years later. In 1968 the figure was still only 12.8 million and subsequent decline produced a total of 8.7 million in 1983: Cole 1944, 371; Bonner 1970, 250; European Community. Economic and Social Committee 1986, 86.
3. European Community. Economic and Social Committee 1986, 665-70, 674-80. The number of workers' co-operatives in Britain increased from 305, employing 5,300 in 1980 to 911 by June 1984. Subsequent foundations have increased the total to 1,400 with a workforce of 12,000: Guardian 24 Sept. 1984, 7 May 1986.
4. Williams 1958, 327.
5. Cole 1944.
6. Bonner 1970.
7. Musson 1958, Pollard 1960, Garnett 1972.
8. Backstrom 1974, Masterman 1963. Raven's 1920 study has been reprinted and the manuscript autobiography of J.M. Ludlow one of the leading Christian Socialists has been published: Raven 1968, Ludlow 1981.
9. Thompson 1968, Foster 1974, Tholfsen 1976, Kirk 1985.
10. Holyoake 1875 & 1879. See the comments of Garnett 1972, 221-22; there was also criticism by contemporaries, for example Lloyd Jones writing in Co-operative News 6 Dec. 1879.

11. Potter 1891.

12. Jones 1894, Redfern 1913.

13. The fullest listings of these histories, although not wholly comprehensive are Smith 1981, 213-19 and Smethurst 1974.

14. E.g. Smith & Walton 1985.

15. Hollis 1976, 402.

16. Age Exchange Theatre Company 1983, 35.

17. Gaffin & Thoms 1983.

18. Llewelyn Davies 1931, 48-49.

19. Nield's study of expenditure amongst nineteen families in Manchester and Dukinfield in 1836 and 1841 showed that in only one case was less than half of income spent on food. In ten of the budgets over 75 per cent of income was devoted to this and indeed during a period of depression the spending of four families on food alone exceeded their income. The proportion of total expenditure accounted for by food tended to fall as total income per person rose. The general improvement in the material condition of workers during the century did produce some decline in the proportion of income devoted to food but it still retained considerable importance in most family budgets. Of twenty one budgets for English working men reproduced as part of a study published in 1889 eleven show food expenditure as 40-60 per cent of the total; three families spent less than this and in one instance amongst the remaining seven over 80 per cent of the total

went to food. More widely based averages were produced in a survey of 1904 drawing on 1,944 individual budgets. These showed that even amongst the highest paid workers (weekly incomes of forty shillings plus) over half family income was spent on food. For the poorest families (less than twenty five shillings per week) the average was ≤65 per cent: Nield 1841, P.P. 1889 LXXXIV 97, P.P. 1905 LXXXIV 25.

20. Stedman-Jones 1983, 214.

21. Kirk 1985 provides an investigation and amplification of previous arguments.

22. Burnett 1966, 91-99.

23. E.g. Crossick 1978, 166-69.

24. The national average real per capita consumption rose by 33 per cent 1870/74 to 1910/13, an increase in which workers shared: Supple 1981, 129.

25. Jefferys 1954, 18. The increase represents a combination of the growing penetration of the market in the traditional areas of grocery and provisions, and an expansion in the range of goods sold. By 1887 over 70 per cent of the societies for which data are available sold drapery, boots and shoes, and more than half stocked hardware and ironmongery. It was less often that stores entered other food trades: 27 per cent of societies sold bread and 32 per cent meat; dealing in fish, greengrocery and milk was less common. The increased prosperity of workers and the capture of some middle class trade was reflected in the extension of the stock of individual

larger societies beyond the staples of everyday working class expenditure so that their central premises were amongst the earliest department stores. The Darlington society, for example, was by 1885 advertising its sale of washing and sewing machines, furniture and carpets: Co-operative Union 1887b, Durham Record Office D/Co/Da 117.

26. The comparison is not wholly satisfactory as total consumer expenditure covered a wider range of goods and services than retail trade and the available figures refer to the UK rather than England and Wales: Feinstein 1972, 44-52.

27. See the comments of Hobsbawm 1984, 223-24. There are, however, the exceptions of the two Victorian societies still currently trading: Walsall Locks of 1873 and Equity shoes of 1886.

28. In some respects Scotland followed an independent path with its own indigenous early co-operative tradition and later separate institutions such as the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society.

29. Hollis 1976, 402-03.

30. P.P. 1901 LXXIV.

31. Cf. Johnson 1983, 170 which views co-operation as primarily a means of financial management with the aim of bettering or maintaining an individual family's position within the working class rather than as a vehicle for ideological protest or class warfare.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GEOGRAPHY OF CO-OPERATIVE RETAILING ⊆1820-1850.

I

A stress on the continuity of co-operative activity while illuminating and necessary does have the disadvantage of making it difficult to set a starting point for study. Any historical period will afford instances of joint endeavour in economic and social activity that can be broadly dubbed co-operative.[1] Even the more specific idea of jointly purchasing in bulk to eliminate the middleman, thus reducing costs and ensuring a higher quality of goods is so basic as to defy any attempts to identify its origins precisely. So to note that the earliest recorded joint-purchasing schemes date from the eighteenth century is not necessarily to accord them any primacy. Some early projects were the product of paternalistic provision for rural workers, such as the stores established by the Bishop of Durham at Mongewell, Oxfordshire in 1794.[2] Joint-purchasing schemes also developed under independent working class initiative. During the second half of the century some existing friendly societies extended their operations into purchasing and food supply. New groups were also formed specifically for this purpose. Many of the earliest schemes were in Scotland with the operation launched in 1769 by the Fenwick Weavers' society usually being taken as the first recorded.[3] In the following years and on into the nineteenth century there were independent local developments in Scotland, many of them in the textile towns

of the Central Lowlands.[4]

In England there were seemingly fewer general retailing operations. Record survives only of isolated individuals such as the Oldham Co-operative Supply Company of 1795. This scheme collapsed after only a few years, but was revived in 1802-03 when as the United Friendly Society trading continued until 1808.[5] There are also references to co-operative purchasing amongst men at the Woolwich Arsenal as early as 1816, in which year naval dockyard workers launched the Sheerness Economical Society.[6] This was still functioning at the turn of the century making it the oldest extant co-operative in England. Further scattered examples of less enduring societies can be found in the early nineteenth century, for example, amongst miners at Hetton-le-Hole,[7] County Durham in 1825.

If the weight of surviving evidence is an accurate guide co-operative effort in England during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was devoted less to general retailing than to the production and sale of flour. Societies were founded to build or rent mills and to retail a purer product at a price lower than previously prevailing. The earliest known co-operative mill was built, probably in 1757, by shipwrights at the Woolwich dockyard. Around the same date there was also a mill associated with the Chatham yard.[8] The subsequent foundation of mills seems to have been mainly associated with periods of high prices and increased fears about adulteration under wartime conditions. Several new societies were recorded in the late seventeen seventies at

the close of the American Wars. Larger numbers of mills were the product of the greatly inflated prices of the Napoleonic period. While prompted by immediate need some of these projects enjoyed long term success. Amongst the most enduring were those at Devonport (1815-92), Whitby (1800-88), the Hull Anti-Mill society (1795-1894) and the Hull Subscription Mill (1801-90).[9] The survivors were only a fraction of total activity during this period but it is difficult to establish how widespread the early milling schemes were in the absence of any systematic record. Tann suggests that many mills resulted from initiative by existing friendly societies. Thus they were concentrated in areas where skilled workmen formed a significant proportion of the population. These included the naval dockyards, the East Midland hosiery and lace districts, the areas around Sheffield, Birmingham and the Black Country.[10]

The earliest co-operatives can be seen as a part of a continuing concern about food prices and quality amongst working people. They developed from the tradition which found earlier collective expression in action such as food riots.[11] The self-help of co-operation might be suggested as a means of securing morality in trade which developed as more appropriate to a class-based industrial society in that the solution was sought not by appeal to a widely based consensus but through independent working class action. However, the significant increase in the number of trading ventures during the second quarter of the nineteenth century also reflected

co-operation's incorporation into the programmes of groups whose aims were not primarily the alleviation of immediate problems but the comprehensive reform of economy and society to give workers greater social and political rights and a fair reward for their labour.[12] In this context co-operative trading came to be advocated not as an end in itself but as a tool to aid wider changes. The model of earlier joint-trading schemes was acknowledged but those participating in such ventures were considered to have failed to appreciate their full potential as a means to alter radically the position and status of the worker rather than merely ameliorating his position under the prevailing inequitable system.[13] The association of co-operative trading initially with Owenite socialism and subsequently with Chartism thus helped to give a greater currency to an established idea. Indeed many of the workers who were introduced to co-operation through the journals, tracts and lectures of these two groups found its immediate benefits more attractive than the wider programme of reform. Thus although it was proclaimed as a means of promoting comprehensive social and political change co-operation in practice often had more to do with cheap food and pure goods.

II

Interest in co-operative trading amongst Owenite groups can be traced back at least to the early eighteen twenties. The London-based Co-operative and Economical Society founded in 1821 with the ultimate aim of establishing an Owenite

community expressed the intention of opening a store, but little seems to have come of this proposal. However, the Economist, the journal linked to the group did include an early suggestion that the funds for the development of a community should be raised by trading in foodstuffs and the employment of society members in the production of other items for sale.[14] There were several claims of the independent adoption of retailing as a means of fund raising by Owenite groups in the following years.[15] Ventures in London and Brighton received most widespread publicity and may be taken as the ultimate models for much of the development of co-operative trading in the late twenties and early thirties.

Retailing was suggested as a solution to the problem of the slow pace of accumulation of funds for communitarian schemes by small weekly subscriptions alone. In April 1827 it was proposed to augment the capital of the Co-operative Community Fund Association established by the London Co-operative Society with an Auxiliary Fund to be formed from the profits of retailing. The founder of the scheme claimed

> the plan for raising them [funds] by profits on trade is one of the easiest which can be designed, because they can be so raised without putting the parties concerned to any expense, more than they are compelled to be at for their present convenience and support. The money which they now lay out with general society indiscriminately, may be laid out with themselves, that

> is, at their own depôt, as advantageously as at any other place.[16]

Similar desires to augment their funds prompted the establishment of a Co-operative Trading Fund Association in June 1827 linked to the Brighton Co-operative Benevolent Fund Association formed two months earlier to

> raise a fund to send any industrious families, not having the means of journeying, to any Co-operative community which might be formed.[17]

The progress of the Associations in London and Brighton was reported in the Co-operative Magazine during 1827 and 1828. In the latter year the publication from Brighton of a new journal largely written by Dr. William King was critical in creating wider interest in co-operative trading. In the sixth issue of October 1828 King made the first statement to receive widespread attention of the system of co-operative development by stages starting with retail trading. He wrote that funds should be raised

> first in a weekly subscription, of not less than sixpence, to the common capital: and secondly, in employing those subscriptions in a different way from what is usually done namely, not in investment, but in trade: thirdly, when they have accumulated sufficiently, in manufacturing for the society: and lastly, when the capital has still further accumulated, in the purchase of land and living on it as a community.[18]

In theory this programme offered the prospect of greater job security and reward in proportion to the true value of

their labours to the members directly employed. For the society as a whole there were the immediate benefits of the store and the expectation that with the extension of activities producing an accelerating accumulation of capital, operations would expand to the point where a society employed all its own members and a completely separate communal existence could be planned. Such a hope was never achieved in practice with the few communal experiments that were launched being financed by donations and subscriptions.[19]

The idea of co-operative trading attracted widespread attention during the late eighteen twenties and early thirties. There was a rapid increase in society numbers, initially in locations close to the original London and Brighton associations. Several separate societies were founded within Brighton itself and at nearby Worthing and Findon. Societies multiplied within London producing the concentration shown on Fig. 2.1. They also spread to become established in many of the towns of the southern half of the country. However, the real strength of co-operation was in northern and Midland England. Birmingham, Belper and Duffield were amongst the first ten locations to report societies by the end of 1828.[20] There were further stores in both the West Midlands and the hosiery districts of the East Midlands. But more numerous still were the societies of the textile districts of Lancashire and the West Riding. There is little evidence of the spread of co-operation to the northernmost counties of England. There were several societies in Carlisle

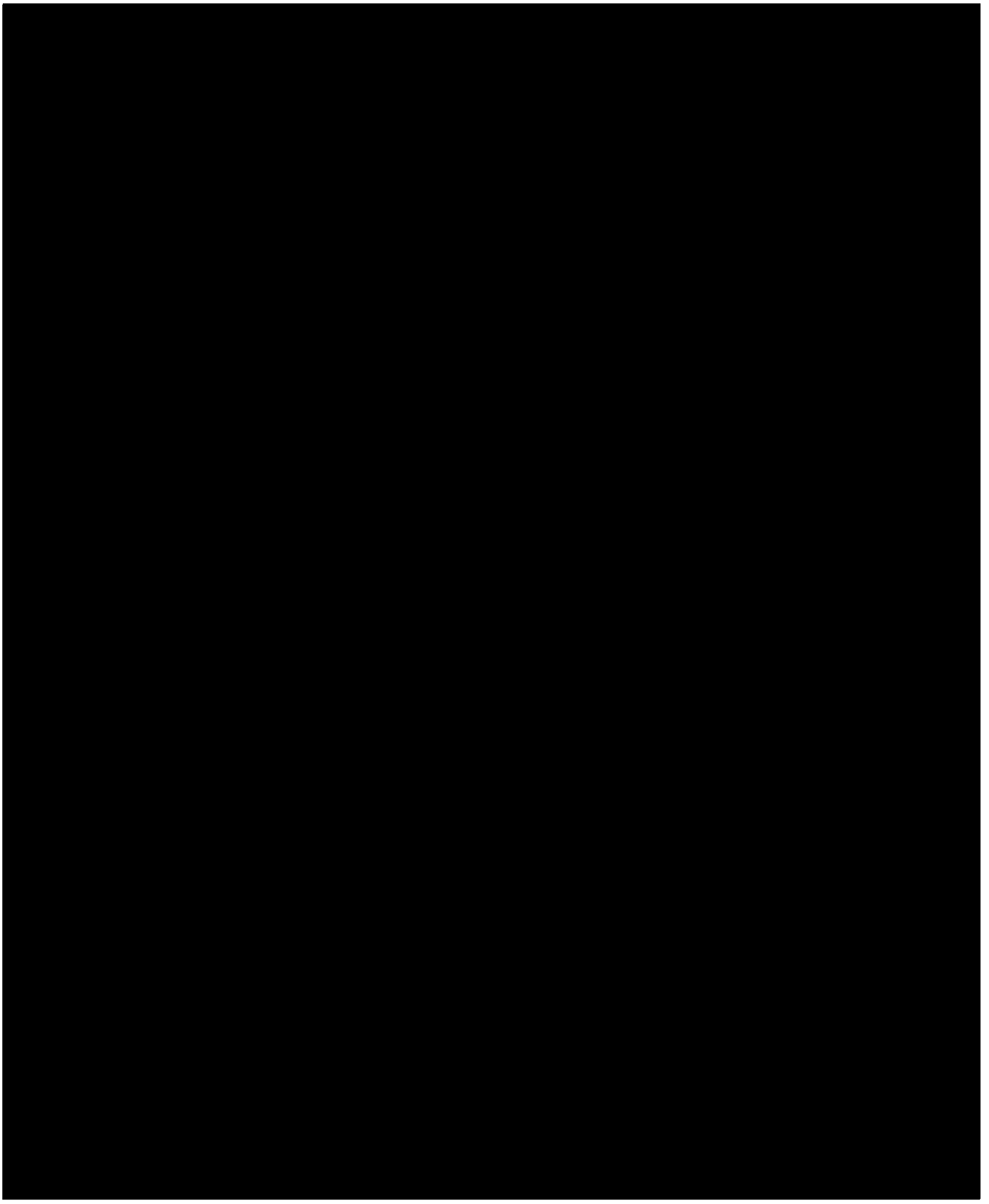

Fig. 2.1. Co-operative Societies in England and Wales: Distribution of Recorded Foundations 1825-34.

Source: Compiled from Holyoake 1879, 313-17 and the contemporary newspapers detailed in the bibliography.

but Fig 2.1 seems to bear out the comments of a correspondent from the town that

> The cause is known here, but not generally in the north of England.[21]

There was also very little incursion of co-operation into Wales. A few societies developed in the north of the principality, probably as an extension of the concentration of societies in North-West England. In the rest of Wales it is possible that language was a barrier to the free spread of Owenite and co-operative ideas. There was no Welsh equivalent of the journals and tracts that were so important in spreading the message in England.

The growth in the total number of societies in the United Kingdom is shown on Fig. 2.2. After a slow start there was rapid growth to a peak of ≤700 societies in the early thirties. This claimed figure is perhaps rather speculative as it is impossible to identify such a large number of individuals from co-operative journals. It is certain, however, that hundreds of societies were formed around 1830 as ≤450 can be named as existing some time in the period 1825-35. Although not all would have operated simultaneously the majority were extant during the period 1829-31. The societies located in England and Wales alone totalled 411 (Fig. 2.1).

Estimates of the numbers participating in co-operation are fewer. In March 1829 the total was put at 3-4,000 families, probably with one co-operative subscriber per family.[22] By May 1830 an estimate of 20,000 individuals was

given, equivalent to around seventy four members for each of the 270 societies noted as extant in the previous month.[23] If their individual size remained constant then the peak number of societies claimed the following year would have represented a national membership of ≤52,000.

The few available statistics detailing the size and finances of individual societies suggest that an average membership of seventy four was not an unreasonable figure. As Table 2.1 shows the majority of societies for which data are available had between fifty and one hundred members. There were a few larger societies; five amongst this limited sample each exceeded 200 members. In part the small size of co-operatives was due to deliberate restriction; 100 or 200 being commonly taken as a maximum membership.[24] Societies whose founders had been influenced by Owenite thinking were commonly limited to a group of a suitable size eventually to form a co-operative community. Similarly they were selective in the age, character and skills of members admitted. But the proliferation of societies within urban centres doubtless also reflected the restricted scale of social identification. It was difficult to inculcate or sustain any unitary communal sense embracing a large urban centre as a whole and sub-groups within the urban population spawned their own small and relatively informal bodies. Some were associated with geographically defined neighbourhoods, but these were supplemented by those with other bases; as in Liverpool where one society was composed of Welsh migrants. Thus in many

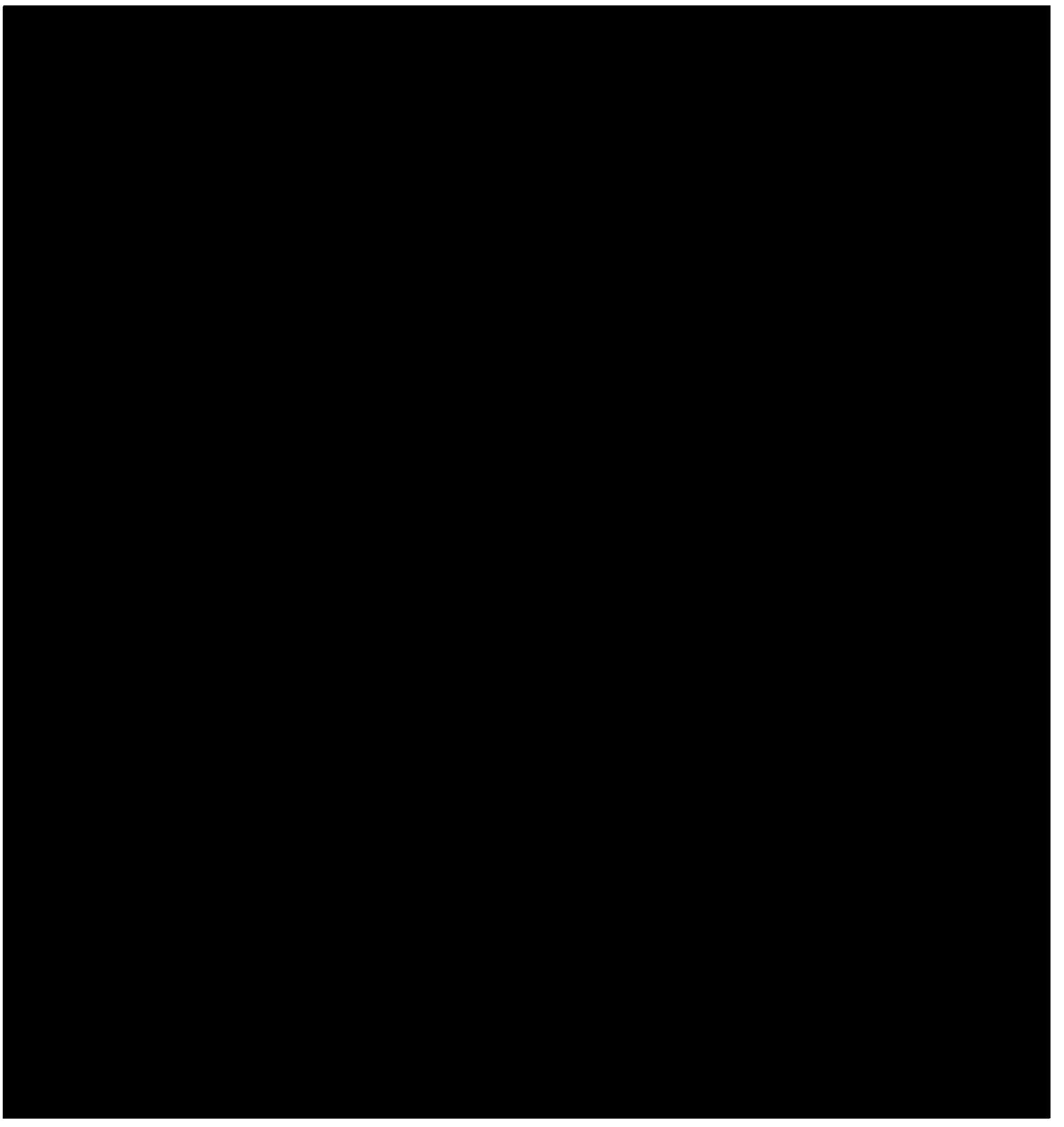

Fig. 2.2. Co-operative Societies in the United Kingdom, 1828-32.

Source: Co-operator May 1828, Sept. 1828, Nov. 1828, Dec. 1828, Jan. 1829, Feb. 1829; Weekly Free Press 14 Mar. 1829, 25 Apr. 1829, 17 Oct. 1829, 10 Apr. 1830, 24 July 1830; Co-operative Miscellany Feb. 1830; Lancashire Co-operator 25 June 1831; Crisis 27 Oct. 1832.

Table 2.1. Co-operative Societies in England and Wales, 1829-32: Membership, Sales and Profits.(25)

Society	Date of Foundation	Date of Information	Membership	Sales/ Period*	Profit/ Period*
Birkacre		10/32	3000		
Chester	5/30	7/30	100+		
		9/30	150		£40/4m
Lamberhead Green		8/30	87		
1st Liverpool		7/30	60		
2nd Liverpool		7/30	60		
3rd Liverpool		7/30	60		
4th Liverpool		7/30	100+		
Low Moor, Clitheroe		9/29	70		
1st Temperance, Manchester	10/29	1/30	65		
1st Chorlton Row, Manchester	5/29	8/30	18	£20/w	
Perseverance, Manchester	4/30	8/30	56	£11/w	
Amicable, Manchester	5/30	8/30	24	£7/w	
Fortitude, Manchester	6/30	8/30	15	£1/w	
Friendly, Miles Platting	4/30	8/30	27	£6/w	
Benevolent, Ancoats	4/30	8/30	124	£46/w	
Economical, Salford	8/29	8/30	30	£20/w	
Temperance, Salford	10/29	8/30	40	£14/w	
Good Intent, Salford	5/30	8/30	48	£7/w	
Independent Hope, Salford	2/30	8/30	45	£60/w	
Rochdale		8/30	60+		
Armitage Bridge	4/30	10/30	46		
Barnsley	6/29	10/29	73		
Halifax		12/29	130		
		2/30	152		£24/3m
		8/31	70		£127/3m
Holbeck	4/29	11/29	110		£46/3m
		3/30			£99/3m
1st Huddersfield	8/29	1/30	140		
		8/30	200-50		
1st Leeds		10/29	40		
2nd Leeds		10/29	90		
Leeds West End	4/29	12/29	97		
Longroyd Bridge	1/29	1/30	84		

Society	Date of Foundation	Date of Information	Membership	Sales/ Period*	Profit/ Period*
Morley	1827	8/29	13		
2nd Sheffield	7/30	11/30	250		£60/3m
Bentham		7/30	60		
1st Carlisle		7/30	100+		
Darlington	6/29	9/30	28		
Upperby	9/29	9/30	25		
Baslow	6/30	11/30	43		
Hucknall Torkard	7/29	2/30	116		
1st Birmingham	1828	8/29	102		
3rd Birmingham		8/29			£2/5w
Burslem	9/29	2/30	53		
		5/30	200+		
1st Coventry	11/29	1/30	79		
1st Kidderm'r	1829	8/29	60		£41/3m
1st Leicester	4/29	12/29	62		
3rd Leicester	2/30	8/30	69		
Colchester	2/30	3/30	60		
Ipswich	11/29	3/30	50		
Norwich	9/27	12/29	30		
Brighton Benevolent		11/27	150		
		2/28	200		
North Brighton		2/28	30		
Hastings	12/28	4/29	160	£50-60/w	
		9/29	200+	£100/w	£70/3m
Oxford		9/29	56		
Worthing		2/28	80		
		3/29	56		£8/3m
1st Chelsea	11/29	2/30	56		
Croydon	11/29	11/29	32		
Kensington	12/29	12/29	32		
Metropolitan	1829	5/30	82		
1st Pimlico	8/29	5/30	82		£32/3m
Ratcliffe		8/30			£54/3m
1st Stepney		8/30	60		£172/15m
Twickenham		1/30	35		
1st West London	1829	12/29	80		
Cheltenham	12/29	12/29	60		
Uley	1828	5/32	24		
Holywell	1830	7/30	120		

* w: week m: month

urban centres an increasing membership was accommodated by the foundation of several separate societies. There were at least six in Birmingham, eight in Liverpool, sixteen in Manchester and Salford and in London there were more than seventy throughout the capital including eight in Bethnal Green alone. Even the smaller towns of Bolton and Carlisle both had at least six societies.

Whatever the precise membership of co-operative societies in the early thirties it cannot be assumed that all were committed Owenites. The idealistic communitarian goal of early co-operation is conventionally stressed in contrast with the later hard-headed commercialism of consumers' co-operation which concentrated on retail trading as an end in itself. This, however, is to caricature developments. It is more appropriate to emphasise the variety of thinking which lay behind co-operative trading ventures. Communitarianism was indeed an insignificant, although not entirely absent, force in later nineteenth century co-operation.[26] The idealistic element within co-operation became reshaped into a quest for the means of the moral and material elevation of the worker within rather than outside the capitalist system. The concentration on the business of retail trade in the second half of the century was not, however, a new development; instances of co-operative trading for its immediate benefits only have been outlined here from at least as early as the eighteenth century.

In discussing the variety of co-operative societies which developed in the eighteen twenties and thirties Garnett suggested that four strands of thought could be identified: the Owenite communitarian theorists, Owenite co-operators who thought of a community as a long term prospect, co-operative traders hesitant about using resources for a community and trade club producer co-operators.[27] The extent to which early co-operation followed from the first two of these strands has perhaps been exaggerated. The views of leading co-operators recorded in journals and conference debates may show a commitment to communitarianism but the same sources also contained frequent admonishments which suggest that individual co-operators and societies commonly fell short of expectations in their concentration on more prosaic projects.

Many co-operators departed from Owenite orthodoxy in their refusal to accept a communitarian goal to their trading and self-employment schemes. In his lectures at Bolton in 1830 the Rev. F. Barker dismissed communitarianism as "somewhat visionary", urging his audience to

> Get capital and buy your own machines.... All the essential points of co-operation, union, trading, friendship, education and improvement, may be obtained in a town where the members are scattered as effectively as in a community.[28]

There were also societies such as the Lambeth General Union which saw their trading operations as leading to the purchase of land but to be divided amongst their members in individual

freehold plots rather than being developed as a community.[29]

Some comments indeed suggest that societies with non-communitarian aims were in the majority. It was claimed at the second Co-operative Congress in October 1831 that

> nearly ninety nine out of every hundred societies were ignorant of the principles of co-operation.[30]

It seems that many societies restricted their activities to trading with little development of self-employment. Thus note was made of the rapid

> increase amongst us in the manufacturing districts of what are commonly termed "co-operative societies", but which are, in fact, in nine cases out of every ten , no more than "joint-stock trading companies"....[31]

More specifically it was reported that of the twenty six societies in and around Blackburn in 1830

> with a few exceptions, their views of co-operation are very confined, and the advantages are in many instances limited to obtaining the articles of food at a cheaper rate.[32]

Some societies did, however, extend from retailing to employ a number of their members in manufacturing. Those in the northern textile districts produced their local staples: flannel in Rochdale; linens, checks and calicoes at Lamberhead Green; ginghams and fustians in Manchester; woollen cloth at Huddersfield and Dewsbury; linen at Barnsley and from Halifax lastings, merinos and stuffs. Co-operatives in the Midlands hosiery districts also began manufacturing, including Thurmaston, Loughborough, Leicester, Hucknall

Torkard and Shepshed.[33] The First London society offered a wider range of products including trunks, boxes, hats, clothing, boots and shoes, blacking and printing.[34] Other goods were exhibited at the London Congress in 1832

> hankerchiefs, flannels, gown prints, Britannia metal tea-pots and some beautifully finished knives, etc. manufactured by various co-operative societies in the North of England.[35]

It was with the hope of further developing such co-operative production that Owenites experimented in the years 1832-34 with the establishment of labour exchanges: centres for the exchange of goods valued in terms of the labour involved in their production. It was also hoped that these exchanges would help to link trade union productive operations more closely with the wider co-operative movement. However, the scheme was inappropriate in many of the areas where co-operation was strongest. Co-operators in the textile districts felt exchanges to be locally impractical given the similarity of the products of individual societies.[36] Their dream of eventual nationwide barter was never realised as the labour exchanges opened in London and Birmingham were unsuccessful.

III

The development of co-operative retailing around 1830 thus reflected the appeal of a range of theoretical associations and practical benefits. It should be viewed against the background of structural changes in economy and society and

working class reaction to them. The Owenite programme had parallels with, indeed in large part borrowed from, established working class experience and values. It built upon artisanal traditions of mutuality; their trade and benefit societies, reading clubs and nonconformist religion. Although co-operation was less widespread than other working class institutions, especially friendly societies, during the early decades of the nineteenth century there was a coincidence of the centres of the greatest development of the various forms in London, Lancashire and the West Riding.[37] Co-operation appealed also to the craftsman's assertion of his own manual labour as a source of wealth creation; an inherent belief in the labour theory of value. This involved a commitment to accord the worker the full reward accruing from his contribution to the production process. Indeed artisanal grievances at the appropriation of value by contractors and middlemen had led to previous attempts to organise schemes of self-employment and direct marketing of products.[38] Both these early projects and their more ambitious Owenite successors offered the prospect not only of immediate improvement of income for the workers directly concerned but also of a multiplier effect throughout the economy. Given a fair return for their labours the level of demand generated by workers themselves would increase greatly thus developing a large and expanding market for the produce of their fellows. Under conditions of growing demand and employment the introduction of machinery presently conceived

as a threat could, if its use was organised in a humane manner, be of benefit. The improvements in productivity made possible would lead not to unemployment but to the redeployment of labour to meet growing consumer demand in other spheres. Owenism planned a framework for the integration of self-help in the various trades providing for the exchange of produce based on the value of labour input. This was conceived both within the context of self-contained co-operative communities and, through labour exchanges, between workers still resident in existing urban areas.

Although there is little detailed record of the history of individual early co-operatives, some indication of the occupational composition of societies confirms the association with artisanal producers. The membership of the London Co-operative and Economical Society of 1821 included those competent to execute orders the society solicited in

> carving, gilding, and for boots and shoes, gentlemen's clothes, dressmaking and millinery, umbrellas, hardware (including stoves, kettles, etc.), cutlery, transparent window blinds....[39]

Similar trades were involved in the more widespread growth of metropolitan co-operation around 1830. The concentration of artisans in Birmingham also produced a strong centre of support for Owenism. The membership of the First Birmingham society included members of many local trades

> brass founders, jewellers, silversmiths, japanners, platers, gilt-toy makers, wire-workers, button-makers, screw-makers, saddlers,... gun-makers, engravers, wood-

turners, book binders,... shoemakers, tailors, millers, bakers, etc..[40]

In many of the smaller provincial centres it was amongst similar groups that co-operative ideas were most firmly rooted. From Brighton it was reported that local co-operators included carpenters, bricklayers, printers, cabinet makers, turners, painters, dress makers, tailors, bakers, grocers, tin-men, coppersmiths, shoemakers, bookbinders, tanners, curriers, stocking makers together with a few agricultural labourers.[41]

However, it was in the cloth manufacturing districts, especially in Lancashire and Yorkshire, that there was the greatest concentration of co-operation. Its appeal in these districts emphasises its role as a reaction not just to the grievances of workers under the system of domestic and workshop manufacture but also to the way in which the position of producers was being further weakened by changes in the organisation of manufacture. These changes were most advanced in the textile districts of northern England. Factory production or the introduction of sweated labour to compete with mechanised production seemed to presage only declining living standards for many workers. Some groups including weavers found their earnings and employment prospects further undermined by foreign competition.[42] Against such a background there was an even greater reason to consider alternative forms of economic and social organisation.

Those workers who swam with the tide and entered factory employment faced the disruption and dislocation of transition. Factory production often reduced the status of the individual from that of skilled craftsman to machine minder; indeed some male workers were entirely displaced by women and children. Changes in employment and the imposition of a new discipline at work were often accompanied by geographical relocation and an enforced adaption to the unaccustomed patterns of urban industrial life. As new production techniques created greater wealth the inequality of its distribution became increasingly apparent. The appropriation by a small section of society of the surplus value produced by the labours of the many frustrated the material advance of workers. In their eyes the case for the allocation of reward on the basis of labour expended was strengthened. For workers swept into factory industry other aspects of the co-operative programme would also have had a particular appeal. Self-employment per se promised a more humane system of production allowing the individual greater status, initiative and financial reward, but located within a co-operative community there was the additional attraction of a major improvement in the material environment and quality of life.

The geography of early co-operation was thus in part a geography of economic and social change and tension. It achieved some of its greatest strength in areas where the stresses of transition to the new industrial order were most acute. However, as has been suggested, this appeal was

frequently based not on the relatively sophisticated arguments of the labour theory of value and the prospect of communal existence but on the more immediate benefits of cheap and purer food and self-employment. Indeed there are signs that the ideological basis of co-operation was least developed in the northern districts where it achieved its greatest strength.[43] It is perhaps not surprising that faced by immediate problems of income, employment and food supply - one of the consequences of an increasingly urban population was greater reliance on retailers for food supply and thus vulnerability to overcharging and adulteration - and against the background of an eminently practical tradition of collective working class self-help, many workers scorned the metaphysical trappings of Owenite socialism.

Co-operative societies generally operated in a way that addressed the immediate concerns of the majority of their members. Viewed, however, as agents of reform projects of the twenties and thirties seem less credible. Despite the enthusiasm displayed for co-operative developments it is clear that they never approached the target of fully employing their membership either within or outside a community. A few individual projects were substantial, perhaps the largest was the printworks at Birkacre, Lancashire. In March 1832 the works and its associated 120 acre estate supported 100 men; it is unclear whether the projected expansion to employ 400 was achieved. Even this figure would have been only a small percentage of the

society's exceptionally large membership of over 3,000.[44] Most societies employed only a handful of their members. In 1831 the Huddersfield society maintained fourteen men in cloth manufacture from a total membership of ≤250.[45] At Chester six members produced boots and shoes, a trade which also occupied two members of the First Birmingham society.[46] Moreover, the profit levels recorded on Table 2.1 would only allow an accumulation of funds that was modest in relation to the thousands of pounds necessary to finance a community.[47] Even allowing for an expanding trading and manufacturing operation and thus increased profit, fund raising would probably have extended across decades rather than years.

Suggestions made at the second Co-operative Congress in October 1831 that a community should be immediately established by the combined efforts of 200 societies each of which would elect a member to the scheme met with little response. Two societies replied to the circular advertising the plan and only the originating society, the First Birmingham, made a deposit in the fund. The conclusion drawn was that

> many societies have embarked their capitals in purchasing raw materials and machinery, for the purpose of employing their members in manufactures, whilst others have been appropriating their spare capital in the way of subscription, to assist in the formation of the "North-West of England Co-operative Company".[48]

This confirms the concentration on more practical trading and manufacturing ventures.

IV

Growing disillusionment with storekeeping as a means of fund raising amongst the more committed communitarians can only have added to forces producing an associated weakening of Owenite support and co-operative trading after ≤1832. This decline of Owenism seems to have resulted from a combination of internal divisions and changing external circumstances. William Lovett, at one time the storekeeper for the First London society, blamed both Owen's personal antipathy to trading, an activity which had begun to grow during his absence in America, and the renewed element of religious controversy generated within Owenism on his return.[49] It appears, however, that greater importance should be attached to a general shift away from faith in the basic tenets of Owenism in favour of a political route to the remodelling of economy and society.

There were a variety of issues attracting popular attention to the political sphere; the most notable were the agitation surrounding the passage of the 1832 Reform Act and the campaign against the implementation of the 1834 Poor Law, a movement which in some areas was the foundation for Chartism. The early thirties saw attacks on Owenism by popular leaders, including individuals previously active as co-operators, foreshadowing a transfer of support to Chartism. By 1832 Henry Hetherington, who had been involved with Owenite schemes since the early twenties and was a former member of the British Association for the Promotion of

Co-operative Knowledge, was arguing that co-operation was a distraction from the true path to social change through political reform. Only universal suffrage allowing a legislative attack on the social inequalities of the prevailing system, could produce conditions under which co-operation would flourish. In rejecting the Owenite view that the co-operative system would gain acceptance simply by proving itself in practice to be superior to capitalism, Hetherington recognised the barriers presented by the vested interests of class and property. Without prior political reforms co-operative community schemes were "a visionary speculation" and there should be no encouragement in the short term for co-operative subscriptions.

If many co-operators displayed little interest in the Owenite vision of comprehensive societal reform, this might be expected to have softened the impact on trading operations of any change in the direction of popular reformist thinking. Any benefits in the supply of goods did not suddenly lose their relevance. It seems likely that the loss of co-operative momentum reflected a variety of causes. Many societies probably contained a range of opinion amongst their membership with only a minority of committed Owenites. The loss of this latter element may, however, have robbed whole societies of much of their leadership and dynamism. Their complete decay followed as they lost also any immediate benefits as they became smaller and more disorganised. It seems in addition that some stores simply failed to develop

as commercially viable trading ventures whether or not they were conceived originally with a wider purpose. Moreover the breakup of particular societies doubtless caused a cumulative loss of faith in co-operative trading. Hitherto successful ventures foundered because the collapse of other stores weakened the confidence of their membership. Societies founded at this date were vulnerable also because of their lack of a clear legal status. Unless taking the expensive step of registering as a joint-stock company, co-operatives, as partnerships, had no power under common law to prevent individual members from defrauding the society.[51]

While there were undoubtedly many failures particularly in the few years after 1832 this did not extinguish co-operative trading. Any assessment of the extent of the decline is handicapped by a lack of evidence. Other issues such as Parliamentary Reform and Owen's plans for mass trades unionism increasingly overshadowed co-operation in popular journals. This absence of press notice cannot, however, be necessarily equated with the immediate or complete collapse of trading. It was not that it had ceased to exist, but rather that it had ceased to be newsworthy. The limited evidence does indeed suggest that individual societies continued to trade and that some new stores were founded through the thirties. There is a possible pattern to the failures which were recorded in the press. Many of the earliest societies to founder were in large cities where commercial conditions made it particularly difficult for a co-operative to run a store successfully. Problems which

were increased by the fragmentation of effort into a number of individually small co-operatives. Such troubles, which presaged the difficulties co-operative retailing had in establishing itself in the larger centres in the second half of the century, were noted in Manchester

> Be it understood that we are no enemies to trading societies where they are practicable, but we much doubt their practicability in large towns , where there is so wide a field for competition.[52]

Thus it was reported from the city in 1832

> Three or four years ago there were (we believe) sixteen trading societies in this town; but owing to their repeated failures in consequence of the bad management of unsuitable shopkeepers... all that remains now are the mere fragments of four, and these, with the exception of one of them will shortly be scattered to the wind....[53]

At the same time co-operation was reported as dying or dead in London, Birmingham, Liverpool and Leeds. Yet in Halifax and district it was

> in a very flourishing state, as regards the accumulation of capital

with societies continuing to operate stores and manufacture cloth.[54] Late in 1833 Owen himself reported

> Huddersfield is, in many respects, the centre of the operations of the working men in this country....

and he recorded his meetings with

> the Trades' Unions, Co-operative Societies, and commercial orders into which divisions and societies the productive operatives are now formed....[55]

It seems that the view of co-operation advanced from London was substantially correct

> We rejoice to hear that notwithstanding the failure in great measure of the co-operative societies of this metropolis, that great success has attended many of those established in the north of England.[56]

V

The geography of co-operative survivals emphasised pre-existing contrasts between its strength in northern and southern England. London experienced a particular loss of co-operative trading. This perhaps partly reflected the general decline of the capital as a centre of reformist activity during the nineteenth century and the shift of initiative to provincial centres. There were repeated complaints that London's very size made it difficult to mobilize popular opinion.[57] Moreover, the degree of competition in metropolitan retail markets made it almost impossible to develop successfully co-operative trade either as a grocery store or the more comprehensive labour exchanges. There were limited survivals in the smaller centres of southern and Midland England. At Portsmouth, for example, continued success was reported in June 1833.[58] Indeed some societies proved enduring; the two stores from this period at

Foleshill, Warwickshire continued trading into the present century. There were also pre-Owenite ventures which operated at least into the second half of the century, including cornmills and the stores founded in 1816 at Sheerness. The survival of societies was, however, greatest in northern England. There was a particular concentration in the smaller and medium sized communities of the West Riding. The county was in addition the location of the last Owenite Co-operative Congresses, held at Barnsley in March/April 1834 and at Halifax in April 1835. Delegates from only twelve societies, all local, were present at the final Congress; they were: Bradford, Dolphin, Halifax, Horbury, Huddersfield, Jammy Green, Mixenden Stones, Mixenden Lane, Mixenden Rocks, Ripponden, Shibden and Clayton.[59] But there were also other societies trading in the West Riding at this date.[60] Additionally there were societies in Lancashire, Cheshire, Nottinghamshire and Cumberland. Owen reported his discovery of surviving societies in Carlisle in 1836

> I found there six or seven co-operative societies in different parts of the town, doing well, as they think, that is, making some profit by joint stock retail trading.[61]

Thus co-operative retailing did not completely disappear from all areas of the country as many accounts imply. The overall scale of operations must have been considerably reduced from the peak of ≤700 societies in the early thirties. Yet the

true extent of survival is difficult to establish. Many societies endured precisely because of their modest scale of operations and unambitious aims; characteristics which would win local attention and approval but unlikely to attract wider notice in the popular press.

Even the limited available references show that societies surviving from the twenties and early thirties were joined by new foundations. Several of the Yorkshire societies already noted were probably established in 1834 or 1835. The number of new societies was seemingly small during the mid thirties but there were signs of reviving co-operative activity which produced a small peak of foundations 1839-41. The first reference for around fifty societies can be found in 1840 (Fig. 2.3). This new dynamism in co-operation thus predates the formation of the Rochdale Pioneers' society in 1844.

The ascription of responsibility for the development of individuals amongst the new societies is often uncertain, but there is evidence of the involvement both of Owenite and Chartist groups. During the eighteen thirties Owenite support was co-ordinated nationally through a series of institutions with a bewildering variety of titles, the most important of which were the Association of All Classes of All Nations of 1835 and the parallel National Community Friendly Society of 1837. In May 1839 these two groups were combined to form the Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists (UCSRR), a body known as the Rational Society after May 1842.[62] The connection of local branches of these institutions (Fig. 2.4

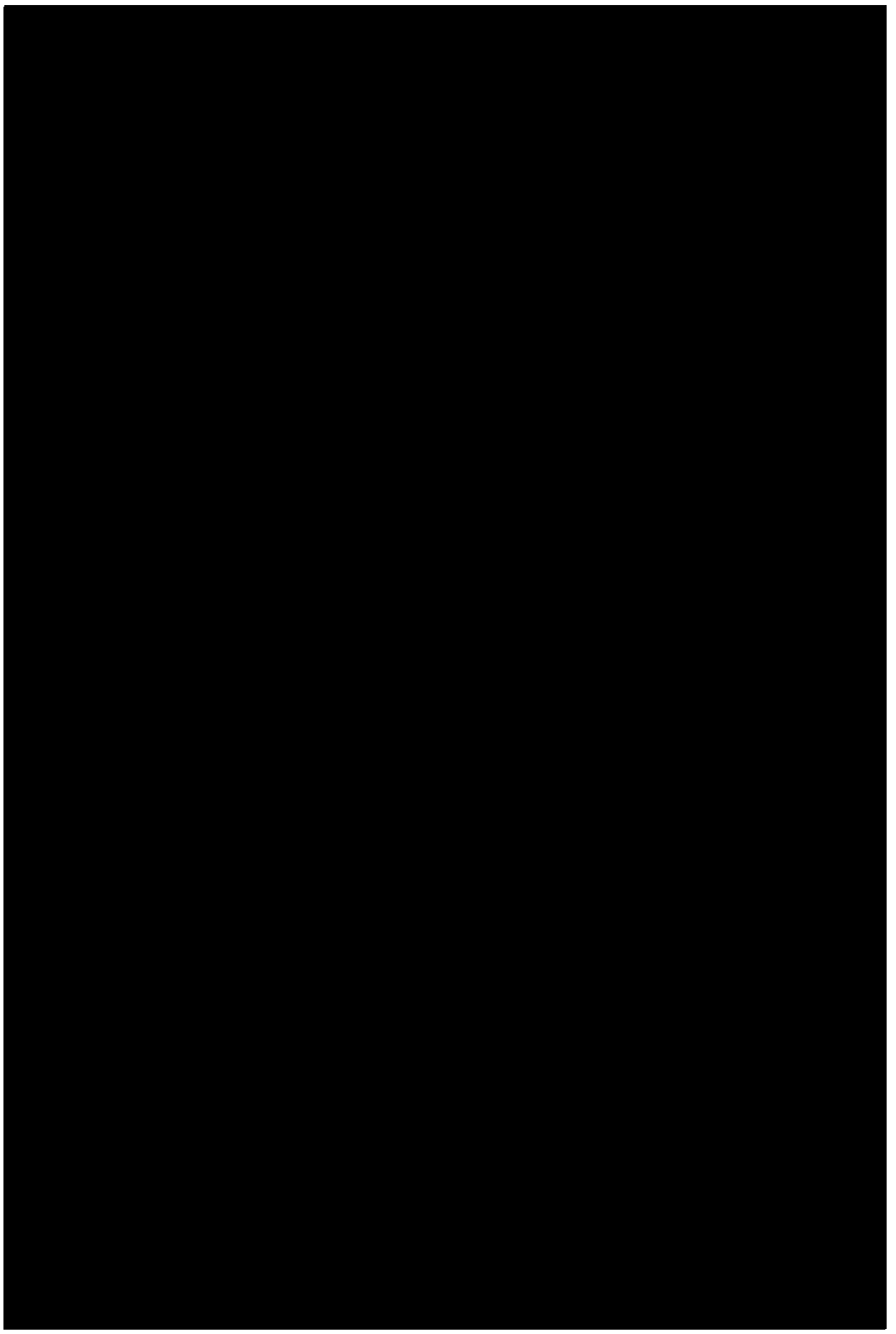

Fig. 2.3. Co-operative Societies in England and Wales: Recorded Foundations 1835-50.

Source: Compiled from P(ublic) R(ecord) O(ffice) FS 1 and the contemporary newspapers detailed in the bibliography.

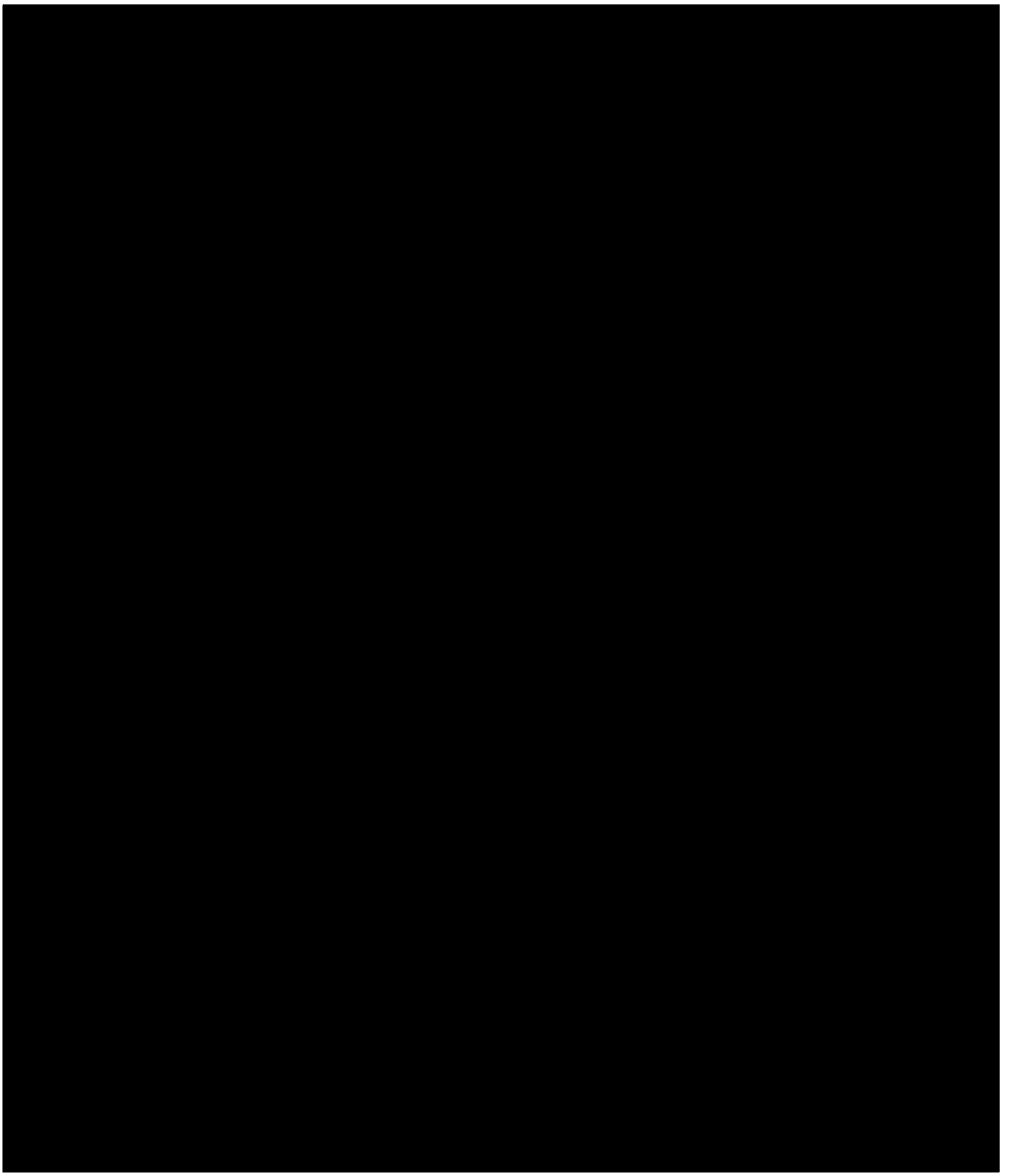

Fig. 2.4. Branch Network and Classes of the Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists/Rational Society, 1839-42.

Source: United Community Society of Rational Religionists/ Rational Society, Proceedings of the Annual Congress 1839-42.

shows the distribution of UCSRR branches, a geographical pattern which closely paralleled earlier Owenite and co-operative activity) with the development of co-operative stores is difficult to trace. Their main activities were educational and propagandist. There was little encouragement at national congresses or through journals for trading as a means of fund raising either for community projects or the construction of Halls of Science to accommodate meetings and educational work.[63] Comment in the New Moral World rather than recalling the plan of advance towards communitarianism financed by trading saw past shopkeeping as a diversion from long term aims which had

> converted members into money-seeking, money-loving, higgling shopkeepers.[64]

At the fifth congress of the UCSRR in 1840 co-operative stores were again attacked. One delegate noted that they

> had been tried ... some ten years ago and found to answer almost any end than the one intended. Much capital and time had been lost, and almost endless feuds and jealousies introduced, which he never wished to see again repeated.[65]

Stores were, however, started by Owenite groups. Watts recalled that

> in connection with some of these [UCSRR] branches, co-operative stores for the sale of articles of grocery and drapery were established....[66]

It is unclear whether these were officially sanctioned by local UCSRR branches or were founded as independent ventures

by socialist supporters. The latter was seemingly the case at Rochdale where the Pioneers' society included members of the local branch of the Rationalists. Several of the Pioneers maintained their active membership of the two separate organisations as late as 1846.[67] Surviving rules of some co-operative societies of the late thirties and early forties, including the original set of the Rochdale society, show commitment to Owenite objectives.[68] Reference was made to capital accumulation for self-employment, the provision of education and the purchase of land for a community

> where members shall by united labour support each other in every vicissitude.[69]

The store was seen as a means of raising capital and along with other functions such as the sick brief, as a short term palliative

> to lighten the bed of affliction until all the members of the Co-operative Friendly Society become as one family having but one interest and living in a community, then the cause for separate funds will cease.[70]

Although the loss of co-operative momentum in the mid thirties partly stemmed from a transfer of support to politically led reform, a movement which made greatest impact with the agitation for the People's Charter, the adversarial quality of the relationship between socialist co-operation and Chartism should not be overstressed. In some areas the two groups maintained a dialogue and individuals were

simultaneously members of both Owenite and Chartist organisations.[71] Chartist arguments against co-operation and communitarianism were chiefly concerned with the sequence of reform measures, rather than basic Owenite objectives. Some Chartists felt that while communitarianism was a goal only attainable in the wake of political reform immediate use could be made of co-operative trading. There were practical benefits in the supply of food but it could also be a weapon in their political battles.

The Chartists had made shopping a political issue with their use of exclusive dealing. Individual members were urged to trade only with retailers supporting the Chartist cause in an attempt to bring pressure to bear on shopkeepers, an important section of the newly enfranchised middle class, and thus force their support for political reform. As Robert Lowery explained in his 1839 address on the issue

> Our pennies make their [shopkeepers'] pounds; dealing at their shops made them middle class men and voters. If we cease to deal with them they will become poor, and lose their vote, and will have to labour for their bread honestly. They will then feel the evils they inflict upon us, and be converted, and cry out for universal suffrage, and cheap government.[72]

An extension of this practice was for the people to establish their own stores. Not only was this

> the best mode of convincing the shopocrats of the justice of the principles of the People's Charter.[73]

there were also immediate financial gains and the prospect of

the extension of co-operation to include self-employment

> The benefits will be a better and cheaper article than they can purchase elsewhere, with a dividend of profits on what they buy, which in every working man's family will amount to some pounds every year, which will pay his rent and increase his comforts; improve his health by living upon good, unadulterated provisions; unite him and his class in the finest bonds of brotherhood and raise them from the destitute and degraded condition they are in. If properly supported ... we may become builders, cultivators, merchants, and producers for ourselves....[74]

The timing of the upturn of co-operative development suggests an association with the setbacks which Chartism received during 1839.[75] Having failed to win concessions by political campaigning or the threat of force, reformers turned to alternative means to stimulate social and economic change. Some returned to Owenite socialism, perhaps supporting societies which included co-operative trading amongst their activities. There was contemporary argument that the failure of other reform movements had produced conditions favourable to an Owenite revival.[76] Specifically Chartist groups also turned to co-operative trading. Indeed in some towns there were both socialist and Chartist stores during this period.[77]

Subsequent variation in the pace of co-operative development reflected a range of factors. The dip in the

number of foundations 1842-43 (Fig. 2.3) - only five new societies can be traced in the latter year - in part reflects a loss of initial enthusiasm for co-operative retailing with a realisation of its practical difficulties; these can only have been increased by offical harassment of Chartist leaders. Some amongst the founders and managers of co-operative stores were imprisoned for their Chartist activities.[78] The temporary deceleration of development was probably compounded by the general economic depression of the early forties and in some areas by a diversion of attention to alternative activities, in particular the strikes and Plug riots in the midlands and north during 1842. Elsewhere, paradoxically, co-operative trading may have become regarded as too successful by some Chartist leaders. Efforts were made to discourage developments seen as deflecting attention away from direct agitation in support of the Charter. There was criticism in the North-East of a preoccupation with details of retail trade; as a result

> they neglected public meetings. The splendid spirit of Chartism, which previously existed, had been allowed to die away.[79]

Yet during this period existing societies continued to function and in some cases to expand, perhaps drawing increased support from their role as stores rather than agents of reform. Consequently in some areas, particularly the textile districts of Lancashire and the West Riding there was an established co-operative body by the mid eighteen forties.

VI

As no estimates were made of the total number of societies trading ≤1840 or of their membership it is impossible to gauge the percentage of the total represented by the societies mapped on Fig. 2.5. It is likely that while incomplete it provides a relatively accurate guide to the geographical distribution of societies. Details of the operations of individual co-operatives are particularly sketchy. The data on Table 2.2 are more an indication of the range of scale of activity than a basis for any accurate estimate of the total strength or success of co-operative retailing.

Table 2.2. Co-operative Societies in England and Wales, 1839-42: Membership, Shareholding and Sales.(80)

Society	Date of Information	No. Shares Taken	Membership	Sales/ Period*
South Shields	10/39	300+		
Sheffield	10/39	50		
Sunderland	11/39		1400	
North of England, Newcastle	12/39			£1035/6d
Huddersfield	1/40		450	
Manchester East	3/40			£134/4w
Middleton	5/40		72	
Stainland	5/40		62	
Cawthorne	5/40		50	
Leeds	5/40			£300/4w
Salford	5/41			£100/1w
Openshaw	1/42		87	£80-90/1w

* d: day w: week

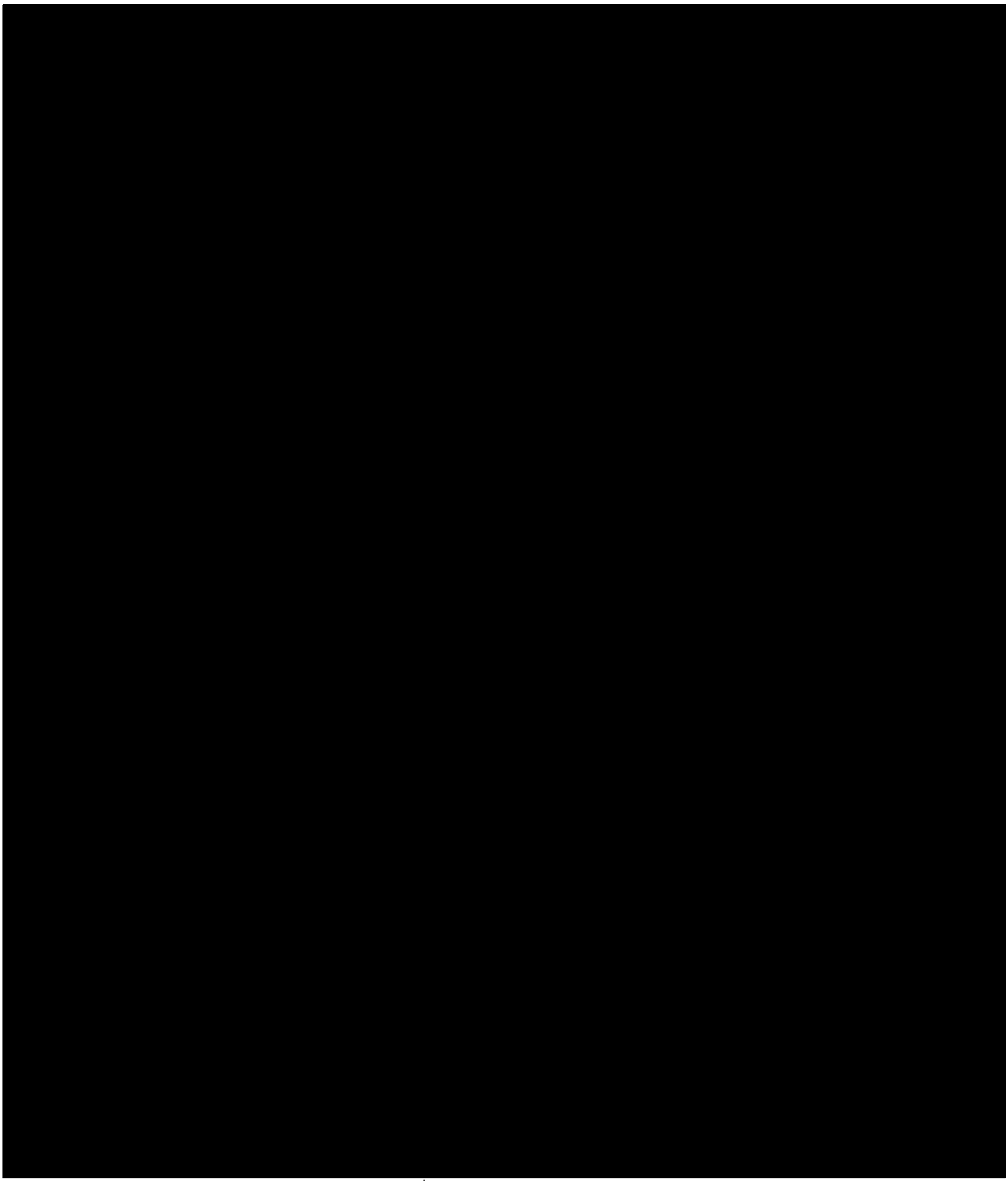

Fig. 2.5. Co-operation in England and Wales: Distribution of Recorded Foundations of Societies Operating a General Retail Store, 1835-44.

Source: Compiled from PRO FS 1 and contemporary newspapers detailed in the bibliography.

Although there are certain similarities of pattern, Figs. 2.5 & 2.6 (see also Fig. 2.4 for the distribution of Owenite Rationalism) show co-operation to have been more spatially restricted than Chartist activity in the years 1839-42. While new co-operatives were fairly widely scattered they were most concentrated in northern districts with the strongest previous tradition of such activity. Around 60 per cent of new societies recorded 1835-44 were located in the textile communities of the West Riding, south-east Lancashire and the adjacent areas of Cheshire and Derbyshire. The occurrence of co-operation in these areas was recalled by Watts

> In ... May, 1840, ... we dined with the manager of a co-operative store in Oldham, and during our rambles at that period, from town to town in Lancashire and Yorkshire, found such establishments chiefly for the sale of articles of grocery, existing in many places.[81]

Within the textile districts there were significant concentrations of activity. Huddersfield was noted earlier as a centre of working class initiative and by 1839 there were over a dozen co-operatives within a ten mile radius. In the same year a co-operative conference was held in the town[82] suggesting a degree of local co-ordination. Twenty more societies[83] were recorded in the area by December 1843. The pattern of development suggests the revival of established local practices. This was probably particularly true where older societies survived as models for new developments. Further, some 40 per cent of foundations in this period were in settlements with previous co-operative experience.

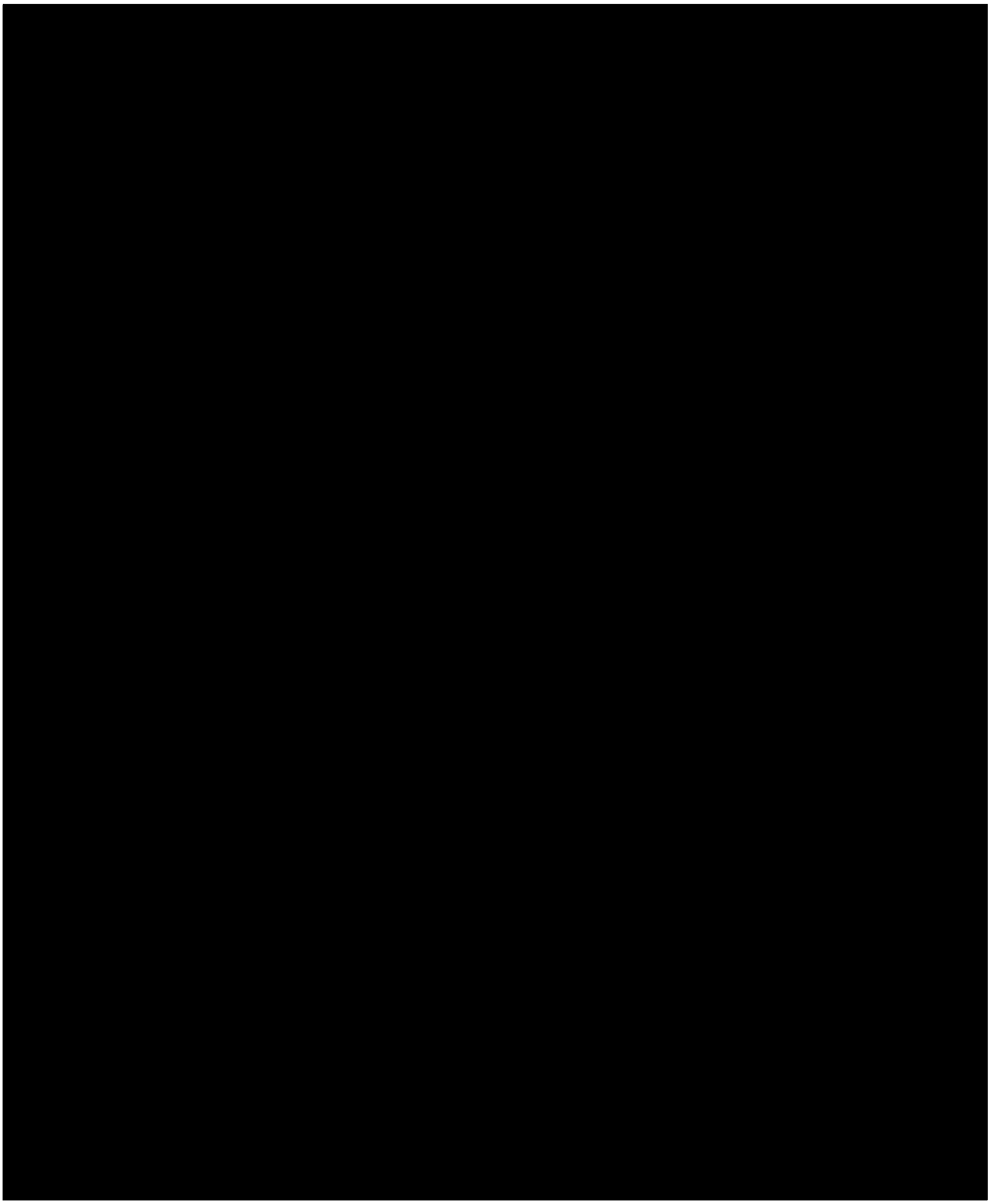

Fig. 2.6. Locations with Recorded Chartist Activity, 1839-42.
Source: Thompson 1984, 342-68.

The correspondence between the patterns of co-operative activity around 1830 and 1840 was not, of course, perfect. In North-East England Chartist strength provided the impetus for co-operative growth in a region which saw little development during the early thirties; although there was some socialist interest in co-operative trading in the second half of the decade preceding the main Chartist-organised projects. Enthusiasm for co-operative trading in the North-East may have derived in part from the character of Chartism in the area. In many districts there was an accord between working class Chartists and shopkeeper radicals; the political use of trading could therefore find expression in the concentration of custom in the hands of these private shopkeepers with a lesser rationale for separate co-operative development. In the North-East there was tension between the two sectors of the reformist movement and co-operation perhaps had in consequence greater appeal.[84] The Chartist schemes, while less enduring than some co-operatives in Lancashire and Yorkshire - most, if not all, north-eastern stores collapsed during the forties - were some of the largest operations of the period. The North of England Joint Stock Co-operative Society of Newcastle which acted as a central supplier for several Tyneside stores claimed to be taking over £1,035 per week in December 1839.[85] Perhaps such projects were overambitious, their very scale militating against their success, and their collapse precipitated a general crisis in co-operation in the area.[86]

There was less evidence of any renewed development in southern England and in Wales where co-operation had been less prevalent in the early thirties. Even in parts of South Wales and the textile centres of south-western England where Chartism prospered there were only a handful of recorded co-operatives: Newport, Newbridge, Bristol and Bath. London did not revive its role as a major centre. A few individual societies were founded during the mid thirties and several societies were operating or projected in the early forties but as with so many popular movements of this period the contribution made by London to the national total was not proportional to its population.[87]

VII

The roots of co-operative progress during the remainder of the eighteen forties lay not in the development of an exciting new model, a role suggested for the Rochdale society, but in the changing relationship of co-operative trading with wider reform movements. Some Chartist groups during the mid forties continued to regard the establishment of stores as an integral part of their programme.[88] There was continuing advocation of co-operative trading at Chartist Conventions.[89] The Chartist Land Plan of the later forties also carried the label "co-operative" although it had no formal links with trading schemes.[90] Despite the continued expressions of Chartist interest co-operative growth often reflected a dilution of the political aims of societies and individuals with previous Chartist connections. Some co-

operatives were established by those who retained a faith in Chartism after its decline in the late forties, but they seemed anxious to organise the two activities separately. One of the leaders of the new store at Halifax thus reported the removal of meetings from the Chartist rooms because of fears that co-operation

> might be looked upon as a party movement.[91]

The progress of co-operation, an enhancement of the attractions of its more practical aspects, has been linked with the general decline of working class radicalism and a diminishing faith amongst working people that they could reshape society to meet their own desires.[92] Co-operative methods and ideas popularised by Chartist groups were indeed turned against them as stores offered themselves as direct and effective alternatives to the vagaries of political reform. Thus co-operative leaders from Heywood and Middleton argued

> The way to elevation was, the shop, the factory and then Parliament. The Charter had been talked of six hundred years; but the working men joining the Coöperative Association were legislating for themselves, and if they could only have confidence in each other they would not have the occasion to work ten hours per day, they would have the mills and shops under their own management.... It was nonsense to talk about the Charter except they would help and act for themselves.

In short

> it was time to do something; they had talked of reform and the Charter, and they got no nearer.[93]

There are a number of points which should be clarified regarding the presentation of the rise of co-operative trading in the wake of Chartist decline. Although new co-operative foundations were a product of popular reaction against Chartism there was not necessarily an increase in the importance of co-operative trading as many of the earlier ventures directly linked with Chartist activity collapsed. There was no wholesale transfer of the popular following that Chartism had enjoyed during the eighteen forties to later co-operation. Even in the northern districts where the largest stores were found at mid century participation in co-operation did not rival the earlier strength of Chartism. Indeed the most significant upsurge of co-operative foundations and thus the basis for the expanding membership was a phenomenon of the later fifties and early sixties. Thus co-operation cannot have been the only destination for disillusioned political reformers. Nor can it be assumed that all those involved in the development of stores around mid century were properly represented by this last label. Some former Chartists did wholly transfer their allegiance to co-operation, but the two activities did not become mutually exclusive. Some individuals such as Benjamin Wilson of Halifax continued to take an active interest in both Chartism and co-operation during the eighteen fifties. It is a presage of subsequent experience, however, that in Halifax as

elsewhere, even where there was an overlap of personnel, there was an increasing tendency for the organisational separation of various working class activities which had been difficult to disentangle earlier in the century. The image presented of co-operation, divested of its associations with visionary reforms and stressing practical aims with immediate popular appeal, came increasingly to follow what had in fact been the reality of much of co-operative activity in the previous twenty years and more. Perhaps as a result of this formal distancing of co-operation from other concerns, the trading societies attracted workers who had not been involved in previous reform agitation, as Foster's researches show for Oldham.[94] Where retailing was still seen in a wider context the aim was not to destroy a capitalism that appeared increasingly invulnerable but to make the working man himself a capitalist and thus win his right to vote.

If groups wishing to start co-operative trading were seeking a model for their development during the later eighteen forties there seems little reason why they should have paid especial attention to the Rochdale society. While it is reasonable to suggest links between the Pioneers and subsequent foundations in the immediate area, such as that at Brickfield, it seems less likely that it attracted widespread notice. As Table 2.3 indicates growth was unspectacular in Rochdale until 1849-50. This expansion followed rather fortuitously from the failure in 1849 of the Rochdale Savings Bank and the consequent transfer of support by many working

class savers to the co-operative. It was only after this episode, which transformed the Rochdale society into one of the largest in the country, that it began to be regarded as a centre of co-operative influence, active in efforts to develop links between established societies and the source to which

> nearly all new parties look for advice and direction.[95]

Table 2.3. Rochdale Pioneers' Co-operative Society, 1844-54: Membership and Sales.(96)

Year	Membership	Sales (£)
1844	28	-
1845	74	710
1846	80	1147
1847	110	1925
1848	140	2276
1849	390	6612
1850	600	13180
1851	630	17638
1852	680	16352
1853	720	22760
1854	900	33364

During the eighteen forties there were other societies in south-east Lancashire which exceeded that at Rochdale both in size and in the attention they received in the popular press; making them more likely models for new co-operative developments. Moreover, some societies advertised their willingness to aid the foundation of stores. The following appeared in the Northern Star in 1844

> They advise the working men in all other towns to follow their example, and persons wishing to do so, may have a copy of their rules by writing to the Co-operative Stores, Ashton-under-Lyne.[97]

Press reports indicate that new co-operatives looked to established societies in Scotland for advice. It is also likely that new foundations in the West Riding, which outnumbered those recorded for Lancashire in the second half of the eighteen forties, were the product of an independent indigenous co-operative tradition rather than any outside influence. Indeed it has been suggested that any transfer of co-operative ideas was initially from Yorkshire to Lancashire with links being claimed between the Rochdale society and its earlier Yorkshire neighbour at Ripponden.[98] Such specific links seem speculative, however, and to have been drawn without reference to the true extent of co-operative activity in the area during the mid forties.

Co-operative development in Yorkshire during the later eighteen forties was not restricted to the store. Other forms of associative activity were well developed in the county, some of which eventually entered into co-operative trading. Thus Yorkshire maintained a tradition as a principal centre of working class self-help. The co-operative developments which attracted the greatest membership in Yorkshire, with extensions into neighbouring northern counties, were the societies formed to mill and retail flour. The coincidence of trade depression, price increases and continued concern about the quality of flour gave a new impetus to such developments in 1847 and the following years.[99] The concentration of development in Yorkshire may have reflected not only the local availability of information, particularly the example of mills at Hull surviving from the Napoleonic period, but

also the importance placed on flour supplies in areas where there was a strong survival of home baking.[100] From the limited details given on Table 2.4 it is clear that the mills included the largest co-operative ventures of the period. In 1851 the Leeds mill was dubbed

> perhaps the most considerable of all co-operative establishments in England.[101]

Although no other society matched its scale, their collective strength suggests the considerable popular appeal of co-operation conceived of simply as a trading venture divorced from any attempt at wider reform. In their links with earlier societies the new mills also demonstrated the continuity of this practical tradition within co-operation.

Table 2.4. Co-operative Mill Societies in England, 1847-51: Membership and Sales.(102)

Society	Date of Information	Membership	Sales/ Period*
Leeds	11/47	2000+	
	10/51	3400	£29000/y
Bradford	8/51	1240	£1000/m
Halifax	9/51	1944	£10851/6m
Birstall	10/51	657	£12000/y
Stonehouse, Devon	10/51	1500	£12000/y
Birmingham	11/51	1000	

* m: month y: year

Co-operative interest, particularly in Leeds, also included attempts to develop Owenite communitarianism shorn of what were seen as its metaphysical delusions. The largest of the several Redemption societies aiming to finance the extension of self-employment amongst their members and the

ultimate establishment of a co-operative community, was founded in Leeds in 1845. This society had over 600 contributing members by January 1847, a figure which had grown to 1,488 in August 1851.[103] Most were Yorkshire residents, particularly in Leeds itself, but Fig. 2.7 maps the national geography of the society's branches and smaller groups of subscribers in the period 1847-51. The northern bias of the Leeds society was reinforced by other independent Redemption societies in Bury (with branches in Ramsbottom and possibly in Manchester), Stockport, Pudsey and Lincoln, with the small society in the East Anglian textile centre of Norwich being the most southerly development. There are thus clear echoes of the geography of earlier Owenism. The size of the Norwich society's early membership, a figure of thirty two was quoted in July 1847[104], made it a venture of a rather different scope from that at Leeds. Indeed the latter clearly outstripped its contemporaries; in 1851 membership figures of seventy for the Pudsey society, forty for Stockport and two hundred for Bury were reported.[105] It was the Leeds society too which most nearly approached the aim of developing a co-operative community. The offer of a 220 acre estate at Garnlwyd in Carmarthenshire allowed the society to employ a few of its members, fourteen in May 1851, in small scale agricultural and manufacturing (chiefly of footwear) operations. However, the society never had the funds to develop the estate fully and indeed it was probably a growing realisation of the inadequacy of the society's resources in

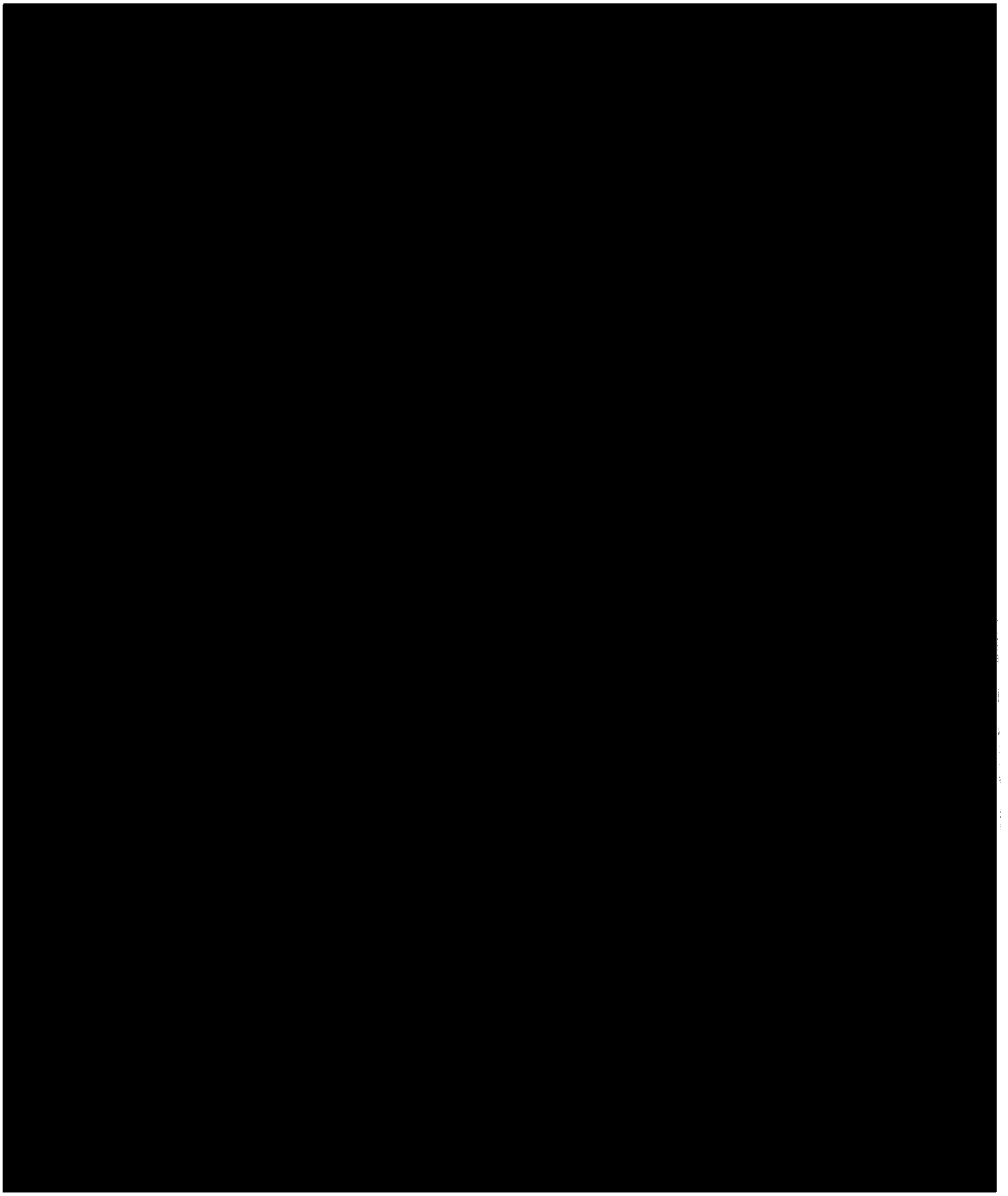

Fig. 2.7. Branch Network and Subscribers of the Leeds Redemption Society, 1847-51.

Source: Herald of Co-operation 1847-48; Spirit of the Age 1848-49; Christian Socialist 1850-51.

relation to its aims that underlay its collapse during the mid fifties.[106] It was, however, the sale of produce from the Welsh estate amongst the membership in Leeds which led the society to enter co-operative retailing.

The activities of the Leeds and other Redemption societies and indeed of some of the flour mills provided an additional source of initiative in co-operative trading. The adoption of retailing had been urged upon the Leeds Redemption society as early as January 1847.[107] Two years later the society's President had enthused about the sale in Leeds of butter and meat from the Welsh estate and had looked forward to the development of a wider trade and the growth of the society as a great merchant body....[108]

It was not until 1851 that a small store was formally established, this sold not only agricultural produce but also a wider range of foodstuffs and Leeds members were employed in a tailoring department.[109] By March 1852 the Leeds leadership was urging its branches also to establish stores.[110] Indeed the Bingley branch seems to have done so previously in 1847.[111] This last, at least, was distinctive in its devotion of half of its profits to self-employment projects for its members and in 1851 it reported that it hoped to end dividend payments and devote the whole amount to employment.[112] In Halifax it was claimed that Redemption society members had been instrumental in the establishment of one of the stores in the town.[113] The Bury Redemption society also operated its own store and urged its branches to follow suit, a suggestion that was productive in Ramsbottom.[114]

Some corn mills also broadened their range of sales to develop a general retail trade. In Leeds this was the aim of much of the leadership, which included men who were also prominent in the Redemption society, but there was less enthusiasm amongst a membership that was suspicious that the success of the mill would be undermined by devotion of funds to more speculative projects in general retailing and self-employment. Although the intention to broaden retailing operations was repeatedly expressed from at least 1851 onwards it was not until 1856 that the society opened a store.[115] This did not end the controversy. The store was given up in 1857 with the sale of groceries being organised like that of flour through the appointment of private retailers as agents for the society's goods. It was not until some time later that co-operative retailing on a more orthodox basis was finally established.[116] Other stores with their origins in flour and milling societies also displayed distinctive features. This was true, for example, of the manner of their payment of dividends; some stores including that at Queensbury initially retained the tradition of distributing dividends as free goods.[117]

There was a degree of diversity in co-operative extension in northern England during the second half of the eighteen forties and early fifties. Societies developed from several models and traditions and some individual stores seem to have combined elements deriving from a number of sources. It is useful to distinguish between the variety of influences which

underlay the initial development of societies within the northern core and the greater uniformity of methods which the same societies eventually adopted, sometimes changing after several years of business. It was in the latter regard and in the later development of new societies from the eighteen fifties onwards that the example of the Rochdale society assumed its principal importance. However, diversity persisted into the eighteen sixties; for example, it was not until the middle of this decade that the Stockport Great Moor society, founded in 1832, finally adopted the standard dividend system of a fixed percentage return on shares and the allocation of the bulk of the dividend in proportion to purchases.[118]

Outside the northern textile districts there was only limited development of co-operative retailing, but there is further evidence of the variety of inspiration within co-operation at mid century. The survival of individual societies formed earlier in the century sometimes provoked local emulation. In Warwickshire two established societies at Foleshill were joined by several others in the Coventry area during the forties and early fifties. At Sheerness the society of 1816 inspired a second store in 1849 and co-operation also spread to neighbouring towns including Whitstable. There were also wider bodies which aimed at the promotion of co-operation. Organisations such as the Co-operative League of 1846, the British Co-operative Association of 1847 and the League of Social Progress founded in 1848, all based in London and the Birmingham Co-operative

League of 1847 were seemingly formed chiefly for the spread of propaganda and the raising of funds for co-operative self-employment and communitarian schemes.[119] Their views showed greater parallels with those of the northern Redemption societies than with consumers' co-operation.[120] Thus the role of these bodies in the development of co-operative retailing in London and Birmingham is unclear. Individuals amongst the leadership of the various groups included known enthusiasts for co-operative stores and it is possible that their propagandism contributed to the establishment of the small number of metropolitan stores begun in the late forties. In Birmingham the secretary of the Co-operative League held the same position in the retailing society established in the city in 1846 and members of the League were also involved in the Birmingham Co-operative Friendly Society of 1852.[121] Although the pace of co-operative development in both London and the West Midlands received a significant boost in the later fifties and early sixties as a result of increased awareness of the success achieved by societies in the northern textile districts, it seems that there was a limited but independent co-operative tradition surviving from the eighteen twenties through to the fifties.

Initial effort to forge inter-regional links between the various co-operatives and thus promote the further spread of societies came not from the northern societies but from outside bodies. Particularly active during the early fifties were the Christian Socialists, a group of middle class

reformers who hoped to promote associative schemes with a more overtly Christian basis of fellowship. While northern societies were ready to answer requests for advice from neighbouring groups interested in co-operation, most showed little enthusiasm for widespread propagandism. They lacked the finance for promotional campaigns and there were few established press outlets through which to report their progress. Moreover, the limited resources of time available to the working class leaders of these societies were fully occupied by the maintenance of their own trading operations. Thus most links between the societies of the northern textile districts and the limited number of stores established in southern England and the North-East were indirect; the stimulus to the foundation of new societies was largely relayed through elements within the Christian Socialist group. Their original interest had been with the development of associations of producers as an alternative to the sweating system. Ultimately they financed thirteen co-operative workshops in London: three tailors, three shoemakers, two builders and one association each of needlewomen, piano makers, printers, bakers and smiths. Other independently funded associations developed in London and the provinces stimulated by Christian Socialist activity, giving new impetus to previous efforts to develop self-employment by individual groups of workers, trades unions and wider bodies such as the National United Trades Association for the Employment of Labour.[122]

Although the Christian Socialists seem initially to have

been unaware of the activities of the Redemption societies and the co-operative stores of northern England, drawing their inspiration from French associative workshops, their early meetings with working men introduced them to English co-operation. A particularly important contact was with Lloyd Jones, then working as a tailor in Oxford Street, but with an involvement in co-operation which dated back to his participation in storekeeping in Salford in the early thirties.[123] Jones provided a personal link with earlier co-operative thinking and was engaged by the Christian Socialists to cultivate contacts with northern societies. He seems also in his enthusiasm for co-operative stores to have been an important influence upon the thinking of some individual group members, particularly E.V. Neale, Thomas Hughes and Jules St. Andre Lechevalier.[124] They, like earlier co-operators, saw the store as a practical first step towards the development of co-operative production. Thus their thinking was more akin to the Redemption societies, although not embracing an enthusiasm for community of property, than that of many northern stores which showed a declining interest in self-employment. There is nothing to suggest, however, that the actual stores established as a result of Christian Socialist propagandism made any major initiatives in co-operative production.

The resources available to individuals amongst the Christian Socialists resulted in increased efforts to prompt the foundation of stores. Lloyd Jones played an important

personal role as he and a fellow London tailor, Walter Cooper, embarked on an active round of lecturing both in London and the provinces. Their northern tours led to the development of contacts with established societies but seem also to have generated new interest in co-operative workshops and stores in towns such as Middlesbrough outside the co-operative core.[125]

It was largely Christian Socialist initiative that was behind the foundation of stores in parts of southern England during the early fifties. Indeed some of the producers' associations linked to the Christian Socialists, including the North London Builders and the Pimlico Builders, extended their activities to food retailing. E.V. Neale himself advanced most of the capital for the establishment of the London Co-operative stores opened during October 1850.[126] This was remodelled in May 1851 to form the Central Co-operative Agency which aimed to combine the functions of a retail store for central London with those of a wholesale supplier for stores in the rest of the country and a clearing house for co-operative produce. The Agency was designed to encourage increased contacts between established co-operatives and to aid the development of new societies both as an advisory centre and in a practical way as a supplier of stock. However, the Agency and the wider programme advanced by the Christian Socialists, particularly Neale, for a co-ordinated extension of co-operation throughout the country had little immediate result.[127] The Christian Socialists failed to establish close links with the main northern

societies; they remained largely isolated by simple geographical distance, social class and by their emphasis on the alliance of the co-operative store with the productive workshop. Ultimately the greatest contribution of the Christian Socialists to co-operative growth was probably their championing of legislation to grant a specific legal status to co-operative societies, embodied in the Industrial and Provident Societies Act of 1852. Their impact on the long term increase of society numbers and membership was small; few of the societies founded under their encouragement survived for any length of time. The real beginning of co-operation in southern England and the North-East dated from the late fifties onwards. In terms of the overall concerns of this thesis it is important to note the presence of these early societies outside the main northern concentration. When examining the mechanisms of the geography of co-operative growth it is equally important to consider the source of their inspiration. This is to stress that they did not represent a precocious effort by northern societies to extend their success to the rest of the country.

VIII

Many of the societies which made up the expanding co-operative body in the second half of the nineteenth century saw the Rochdale Pioneers as a model for their activities. Certainly that society was of great importance as a direct influence on co-operative development, particularly during

the fifties and sixties. However, the Rochdale society was not itself the embodiment of a new idea but a restatement of older thinking. To date the start of the modern co-operative movement from the foundation of the Pioneers' store in 1844 is to insert an artificial break in what should be seen as a continuous record of activity from at least the eighteen twenties onwards.

The publicity given to the Rochdale society has tended to overshadow the existence of older societies which were still operating, albeit on a modest scale, during the second half of the century. The direct continuity of these stores can be supplemented by the record of others, not individually so long lived, but with the life span of several societies overlapping some areas had an unbroken record of activity bridging even periods such as the later eighteen thirties when the standard accounts of co-operation adjudge its fortunes to have been at a very low ebb. Even in the eighteen forties societies were drawing on existing ideas and traditions. Areas, principally Lancashire and the West Riding, in which co-operation had shown particular development in the eighteen twenties and thirties were amongst those which remained the strongest supporters of the idea throughout the century. In part this was an indication of the continuing distinctiveness of the economic and social character of these two counties. But it was also a reflection of the strength given to co-operation by its long and continuous record. Co-operation became part of the repertoire of popular initiatives early in certain districts and was

thus an activity turned to in these areas to meet a variety of circumstances. Elsewhere the development of co-operation during the first half of the century was more limited with individual societies often remaining spatially and temporally isolated. Co-operatives were not a common component of popular experience and were not thus seen as a stock reaction to problems or a means of meeting aspirations.

The geography of co-operation in the second half of the century cannot be divorced from the pattern of earlier developments. The strength of societies in industrial northern England derived much from contemporary social and economic conditions, but the channelling of reaction into the precise form of co-operation owed something to the continued tradition of such initiative in these areas. The existence of which tradition further marked them out as different from other parts of the country. Conditions which prompted co-operative development in the north were rather less likely to lead to a comparable reaction when mirrored elsewhere. Thus the material presented here outlining the pattern of activity in the early years of the century is a necessary foundation for an understanding of the later development of co-operation.

NOTES

1. E.g. Kropotkin 1902.
2. Holyoake 1879, 90-94.
3. Maxwell 1910, 47.
4. Maxwell 1910.
5. Angus 1979, 17.
6. Garnett 1972, 60; Brown 1919, 20.
7. Welbourne 1923, 25.
8. Tann 1980, 48.
9. P.P. 1890-91 LXXIX; P.P. 1893-94 LXXXIV; P.P. 1894 LXXIX; Public Record Office (afterwards PRO) FS 8.
10. Tann 1980.
11. Thompson 1971.
12. It is not the purpose of the present work to make a detailed assessment of the social and political thinking of Owenite or Chartist leaders. This has been attempted in the various biographies of the leading figures in the two movements and in standard historical studies: Cole 1965; J.F.C. Harrison 1969; Garnett 1972; Pollard and Salt 1971; Jones 1975; Thompson 1984; Briggs 1959a.
13. Reference was made, for example, to the workings of the existing mill at Portsmouth whose benefits were restricted to cheap food: Associate Feb. 1829.
14. Garnett 1972, 42-43.

15. E.g. c1827 at Norwich and Thorne: Co-operative Miscellany Feb. 1830; Lancashire Co-operator (afterwards Lancs. Co-op.) 9 July 1831.

16. Co-operative Magazine May 1827.

17. Associate 1 May 1829.

18. Co-operator Oct. 1828.

19. Garnett 1972.

20. Co-operator Jan. 1829.

21. Weekly Free Press (afterwards W.F. Press) 12 Sept. 1829. The strength of co-operation in Carlisle may have been related to the local concentration of workers in textile production.

22. W.F. Press 14 Mar. 1829.

23. W.F. Press 22 May 1830, 10 Apr. 1830.

24. The initial membership limit was not necessarily inviolate; at Halifax, for example, it was raised from 100 to 200: W.F. Press 27 Feb. 1830.

25. Material is derived from contemporary newspapers detailed in the bibliography.

26. Schemes for co-operative communities and villages were advocated in the Co-operator (afterwards Co-op.), for example: 1 July 1866, 11 Apr. 1868, 22 Aug 1868.

27. Garnett 1972, 60.

28. Quoted Musson 1958, 124; Garnett 1972, 134.

29. W.F. Press 25 Apr. 1829.

30. Quoted Musson 1958, 130.

31. Poor Man's Advocate 4 Feb. 1832.

32. Co-operative Miscellany July 1830.

33. W.F. Press 3 Oct. 1829, 9 Jan. 1830, 20 Feb. 1830; Birmingham Co-operative Herald 1 Oct. 1830; Lancs. Co-op. 1 Oct. 1831; Crisis 5 May 1832, 22 Sept. 1832.

34. W.F. Press 13 Mar. 1830.

35. Crisis 28 Apr. 1832.

36. Crisis 22 Sept. 1832; Oliver 1958.

37. See Purvis 1986, 194-95 for comparison of the national distribution of friendly and co-operative society strength c1830.

38. Thompson 1968, 869-70; Patterson 1954, 121, 134-37.

39. Quoted Garnett 1972, 44.

40. W.F. Press 11 Aug. 1830.

41. Co-operative Magazine Sept. 1827.

42. Foster 1974, 20-21.

43. Thompson 1968, 874.

44. Poor Man's Guardian 10 Mar. 1832, 5 May 1832.

45. Lancs. Co-op. 1 Oct. 1831.

46. Chester Co-operative Chronicle 1 Sept. 1830; Birmingham Co-operative Herald 1 Dec. 1829.

47. The projected cost of the various communal plans varied greatly; at one extreme were the grandiose ideas of Owen himself, some of which envisaged capital of around £600,000. Rather more modest were proposals by William Thompson for a community which could have been launched for around £4,000: Garnett 1972, 56, 180.

48. Crisis 5 May 1832. The North-West of England Co-operative Company was an early attempt at co-operative wholesaling: Pahlman 1935.

49. Reprinted in Cole and Filson 1965, 213. See also similar comments by Thomas Whitaker: Leader 23 Nov. 1850.

50. Poor Man's Guardian 14 Jan. 1832, 28 June 1834.

51. Holyoake 1875, 134-35.

52. Lancashire and Yorkshire Co-operator (afterwards L & Y Co-op.) Sept. 1832.

53. L & Y Co-op. Sept. 1832. It seems more likely that the quoted total of sixteen societies was extant c1830 rather than 1828-29.

54. Crisis 22 Sept. 1832.

55. Crisis 23 Nov. 1832.

56. Poor Man's Guardian 30 Mar. 1833. William Lovett the storekeeper of the First London society recorded that their trading operations continued until 1834: Lovett 1920, 43, 89.

57. Read 1964, 50-52, 116-17.

58. Crisis 29 June 1833; Garnett 1972, 137.

59. Pahlman 1935, 211.

60. Other known stores were at Ackworth, Barnsley, Kirkheaton, Lower Houses, Meltham Mills, Paddock, Skelmanthorpe and Underbank.

61. New Moral World 1836 III, 26.

62. J.F.C. Harrison 1969, 218.

63. J.F.C. Harrison 1969, 218-32 details the activities of the UCSRR.

64. New Moral World 4 July 1840.

65. United Community Society of Rational Religionists 1840, 197.

66. Watts 1861, 63.

67. Doyle 1972, 223.

68. The Rochdale rules were based on those of the Manchester Rational Sick and Burial Society established in 1842 by Owenite Rationalists: Doyle 1972, 274.

69. Rules of the Holthead Co-operative Trading Association, registered 30 June 1840: PRO FS 1/817/340.

70. PRO FS 1/817/340.

71. Challinor 1982, 34-35.

72. Lowery 1979, 199. The use of trading for political purposes had a previous history; Foster 1974, 52-55 notes its practice by Oldham radicals from the eighteen twenties onwards.

73. Northern Star (afterwards N. Star) 16 May 1840.

74. Lowery 1979, 202.

75. Maehl 1969. The comments of Prothero on London Chartism are also relevant. He rightly emphasises the intermeshing of a variety of working class activities but seems to present co-operative trading only as an alternative end to the implementation of the Charter rather than, potentially, one amongst a variety of means towards the achievement of political reform. London Chartism arose "amongst men versed in all manner of activity - co-operative, trade union, political and educational. Often several interests were found in one organisation.... Chartists never lost these interests,

even though at times of great political excitement they might be set aside in the effort to win the vote. But in times of decline, when it was clear that the Charter would not be gained in a matter of weeks or months, these interests always re-emerged.": Prothero 1969, 98.

76. E.g. Bower 1839.

77. E.g. Sunderland: N. Star 1 Feb. 1840.

78. Challinor 1982, 38; N. Star 29 July 1840, 15 Aug. 1840.

79. N. Star 2 Sept. 1843.

80. N. Star 1839-42.

81. Watts 1861, 61.

82. N. Star 11 May 1839.

83. N. Star 1839-43; PRO FS 1.

84. This reflects the views of Robert Lowery, one of the leading advocates of co-operative trading. Others have painted a picture of north-eastern Chartism less coloured by such class antagonisms: Harrison and Hollis 1979, 121.

85. N. Star 14 Dec. 1839.

86. Challinor 1982, 37-38.

87. In addition to the sixteen grocery stores mapped here there were also some schemes of production and marketing by London trade societies: Prothero 1971, 215-19. That London did not immediately share in the co-operative revival of the late eighteen thirties is consistent with the chronology of Chartism in the capital outlined in Prothero 1969.

88. E.g. Leicester and Nottingham: N. Star 5 Apr. 1845, 26 July 1845.

89. See discussion at the 1845 Convention reported in N. Star 7 June 1845.

90. Details of the Plan are given in Hadfield 1970 and MacAskill 1959.

91. Wilson 1977, 212.

92. Foster 1974, 205-10; Stedman Jones 1983, 237.

93. Leader 29 June 1850.

94. Foster 1974, 222.

95. Christian Socialist (afterwards Ch. Soc.) 21 Dec. 1850.

96. Cole 1944, 81.

97. N. Star 5 May 1844. The Ashton society seems to have been a substantial concern, it had three stores in 1844 increasing to a group of five branches in Droylsden, Ashton, Oldham and Openshaw by 1846: N. Star 17 Jan. 1846.

98. Calderdale District Archives TU 57/8; Hibberd 1968.

99. P.P. 1856 VIII, 103-10 details the circumstances of the foundation of the Leeds Mill. See also Ch. Soc. 15 Feb. 1851; Harrison 1954, 13-14.

100. P.P. 1856 VIII, 103.

101. Ch. Soc. 12 July 1851.

102. Details derived from Herald of Co-operation, People's Journal, Howitt's Journal, Ch. Soc., Leader, 1847-51.

103. Herald of Co-operation Jan. 1847; Ch. Soc. 9 Aug. 1851.

104. Howitt's Journal 3 July 1847.

105. Leader 13 Sept. 1851; Ch. Soc. 8 Nov. 1851, 9 Aug. 1851.

106. Harrison 1954, 10-12.

107. Herald of Co-operation Feb. 1847.

108. Reasoner 14 Nov. 1849.

109. Leader 9 Aug. 1851, 8 Nov. 1851; Ch. Soc. 20 Dec. 1851.

110. Ch. Soc. 15 Mar. 1852.

111. Howitt's Journal 3 Apr. 1847.

112. Ch. Soc. 25 Oct. 1851.

113. Ch. Soc. 31 May 1851.

114. Ch. Soc. 2 Nov. 1850, 14 Dec. 1850, 1 Nov. 1851.

115. Ch. Soc. 15 Feb. 1851, 12 July 1851, 24 May 1852; Leader 5 Feb. 1853; Harrison 1954, 14-15.

116. Holyoake 1897.

117. Macaulay 1905.

118. Gough 1931.

119. More details of the foundation and aims of these bodies are given in People's Journal 5 Dec. 1846, 19 Dec. 1847; Howitt's Journal 9 Jan. 1847, 27 Mar. 1847, 15 May 1847; Herald of Co-operation Apr. 1847, Feb. 1848; Spirit of the Age 16 Dec. 1848, 23 Dec. 1848.

120. A congress of the representatives of the Leeds Redemption Society and several of the London bodies was held in May 1848: Herald of Co-operation June 1848.

121. Hampton 1928.

122. The work of the Christian Socialists is discussed in St. Andre 1854, Ludlow 1981, Raven 1968, Masterman

1963, Backstrom 1974. Prothero 1971 notes the activities of the NUTAEL.

123. Bellamy, Osburn and Saville 1972, 201-02.

124. Ludlow 1981, 186-87, 209.

125. Ch. Soc. 5 Apr. 1851, 17 May 1851. The activities of Cooper and Jones were reported generally in the Christian Socialist and the Leader.

126. St. Andre 1854, 20.

127. Backstrom 1974, 44-52.

CHAPTER THREE

THE GEOGRAPHY OF CO-OPERATIVE RETAILING ≤1850-1901: THE PROLIFERATION OF SOCIETIES.

I

If the efforts of the Christian Socialists to encourage a greater degree of co-ordination in co-operative development proved unsuccessful they left an important legacy of information about the extent of co-operation in the early eighteen fifties. It is to the attempts of the group to discover the scale of co-operative activity nationwide that we owe the compilation of one of the earliest listings of extant societies. The published list contained 137 English and Welsh retail co-operatives and there were also sixteen milling societies.[1] Supplementary evidence from journals, society registration documents and later listings of co-operatives gives a larger total of 192 retail societies extant in the years 1851/52.[2] Although these societies by no means mark the beginning of co-operative development, the pattern of societies in 1851/52 is taken as a datum for the following more detailed examination of the spread of co-operative retailing.

The 1851/52 cross-section (Fig. 3.1) confirms the concentration of societies in the textile districts of the North-West and Yorkshire. Of the 192 societies mapped eighty seven (45.3 per cent) were in Lancashire, forty eight (25.0 per cent) in the West Riding and five (2.6 per cent) in Cheshire. The disparity of society numbers between Lancashire and the West Riding was a recent development; its size

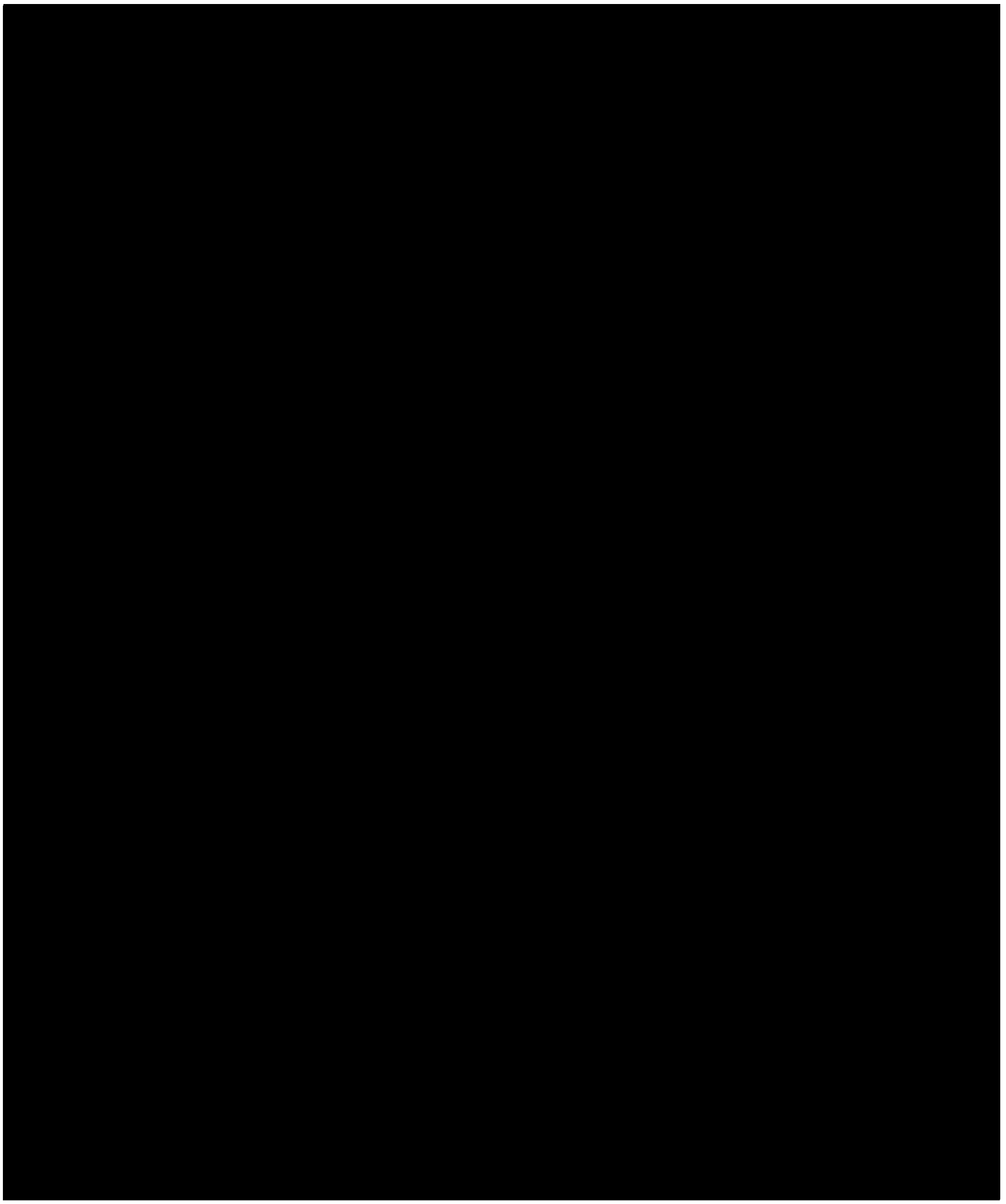

Fig. 3.1. Co-operative Retailing in England and Wales: Extant Societies 1851-52.

Source: PRO FS1, FS8; Christian Socialist 1850-52; Leader 1850-53; Co-operative League Transactions 1852; St. Andre 1854; P.P. 1863 XXIX; P.P. 1864 XXXIII; P.P. 1866 XXXIX; P.P. 1871 LXII; P.P. 1877 LXXVII; P.P. 1880 LXVIII, P.P. 1901 LXXIV.

derived largely from activity in 1850 and 1851 when recorded foundations in Lancashire totalled forty one against ten in the West Riding. The remaining fifty three societies were scattered, mostly as isolated individuals, throughout much of England, but with the Cardiff society being the only Welsh representative. The fourteen London societies formed the largest of the local groupings outside the northern co-operative core. There was also a small cluster in Warwickshire where two surviving societies of Owenite vintage at Foleshill were joined by more recent foundations in Coventry. The peripheral societies showed no particular concentration in any class of settlement size; indeed their number covered the range from London and Birmingham to small industrial villages such as Seaton Delaval. They do, however, seem to have been commonly located in centres with a relatively skilled industrial population. Those participating included the expanding trades of new settlements such as Swindon and the more traditional craft workers of centres like Shaftesbury. There were, however, some major concentrations of population and industry with little evident co-operative activity at this date. Perhaps the most notable area of weakness on Fig. 3.1 is the industrial North-East, a district where co-operation grew strongly from the late eighteen fifties onwards.

From a relatively modest total at mid century co-operative numbers increased markedly in the fifty years that are considered here. The timing of the national growth of societies is shown on Fig. 3.2. This indicates that the mid

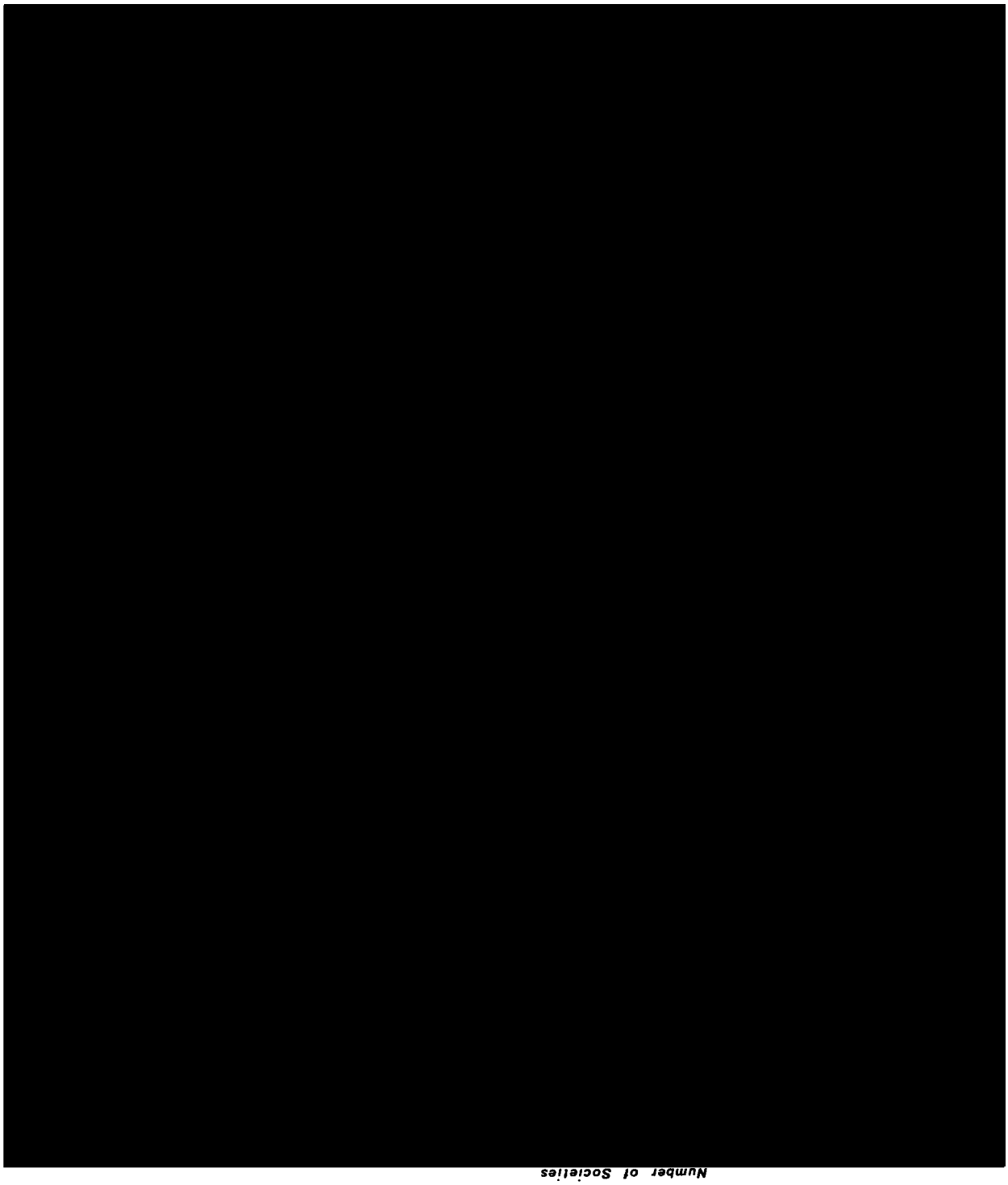

Fig. 3.2. Co-operative Retail Society Foundations in England and Wales, 1850-99: Annual Totals.

Source: PRO FS1, FS8; Christian Socialist 1850-52; Leader 1850-53; Co-operator 1860-62; Annual Returns of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67 and 1870-99: P.P. 1901 LXXIV.

eighteen fifties were a period of only gradual increase, subsiding from the level of foundations which had been achieved under Christian Socialist stimulus earlier in the decade. The efforts of the latter group were, however, dwarfed by the large number of societies established in the twenty years from the late eighteen fifties onwards. Subsequently the development of new co-operatives returned to a rather lower level. In some areas of the country the continued growth of membership was accommodated through the expansion of existing societies rather than the foundation of new ones. The increase in society numbers involved both the consolidation of strength in areas where stores were initially concentrated and the extension of similar schemes to many districts with little or no experience of co-operative trading in 1851/52. It is the geographical pattern of this expansion, which took co-operation into most areas of England and the more populous parts of Wales by the end of the century, that is the chief focus of attention here.

II

A regional summary of the annual totals of new societies for the years 1851-61 (Table 3.1) makes clear not only the increase in their number from the late fifties onwards, but also their spread throughout the country. Although new societies were by no means evenly distributed there were from 1859 onwards foundations in all regions. Outside the original core of the northern textile districts most of these were in

other centres of population and industry, particularly London but also in the West Midlands and the North. The remaining regions had fewer early co-operatives with the peak found in the northern and Metropolitan regions in the early sixties being less marked and/or delayed. As the summary totals of new societies for the rest of the century (Table 3.2) show the greatest absolute numbers of foundations in several of the peripheral regions were during the early seventies. In Wales this was exceptionally delayed until the later eighties. The subsequent decline in the number of new co-operatives was much more marked in the north, where the large numbers of established societies accommodated the continued expansion of membership, than in the south where the lower total number and higher failure rate of societies in the

Table 3.1. Co-operative Retail Society Foundations in England and Wales by Region, 1851-61.(3)

Region	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857	1858	1859	1860	1861
North	1	1		1		2	2	2	4	11	22
North-West	35	5	1	8	2	7	5	10	20	64	39
Yorkshire	12	4	3	8	10	6	3	10	10	31	29
N. Midlands	3			2	1	3	1	1	1	12	5
W. Midlands	2	1		1			1	1	13	12	17
SE. Midlands	1							5	4	8	5
E./E. Anglia	2			2		1		1	1	8	6
South-East	4			1		1		3	2	8	4
Metropolitan	3	1	1	5	2	2	3	2	4	37	35
South-West	2	1							2	10	18
Wales						1			2	9	6
Total	65	13	5	28	15	23	15	35	63	210	186

Table 3.2. Co-operative Retail Society Foundations in England and Wales by Region, 1857-1901.(4)

A) Absolute Totals

Region	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -96	1897 -01	Total
North	41	58	40	65	18	18	9	12	13	274
North-West	138	37	49	56	22	17	22	9	7	357
Yorkshire	83	49	47	45	8	14	9	29	7	291
N. Midlands	20	25	20	47	10	9	9	15	10	165
W. Midlands	44	31	40	43	11	9	17	17	14	226
SE. Midlands	22	41	18	22	13	14	10	8	9	157
E./E. Anglia	16	15	16	29	10	21	19	15	15	156
South-East	17	35	27	38	16	15	33	16	14	211
Metropolitan	81	55	42	44	27	54	52	30	23	408
South-West	30	25	27	27	16	17	21	25	15	203
Wales	17	36	19	37	9	9	42	25	23	217
England & Wales	509	407	345	453	160	197	243	201	150	2665

B) Regional Totals as a Percentage of that for England and Wales

Region	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -96	1897 -01	1857 -01
North	8.1	14.2	11.5	14.3	11.3	9.1	3.7	6.0	8.7	10.3
North-West	27.1	9.1	14.2	12.4	13.8	8.6	9.1	4.5	4.7	13.4
Yorkshire	16.3	12.0	13.6	9.9	5.0	7.1	3.7	14.4	4.7	10.9
N. Midlands	3.9	6.1	5.8	10.4	6.3	4.6	3.7	7.5	6.7	6.2
W. Midlands	8.6	7.6	11.6	9.5	6.9	4.6	7.0	8.5	9.3	8.4
SE. Midlands	4.3	10.0	5.2	4.9	8.1	7.1	4.1	4.0	6.0	5.9
E./E. Anglia	3.1	3.7	4.6	6.4	6.3	10.7	7.8	7.5	10.0	5.9
South-East	3.3	8.6	7.8	8.4	10.0	7.6	13.6	8.0	9.3	7.9
Metropolitan	15.9	13.5	12.2	9.7	16.9	27.4	21.4	14.9	15.3	15.3
South-West	5.9	6.1	7.8	6.0	10.0	8.6	8.6	12.4	10.0	7.6
Wales	3.3	8.8	5.5	8.2	5.6	4.6	17.3	12.4	15.3	8.1
England & Wales	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

eighteen sixties and seventies meant that there remained potential for the establishment or re-establishment of stores throughout the century. Thus the distribution pattern changed over time to show a greater percentage of foundations at a remove from the initial core.

Figures 3.3 to 3.10 refine the broad outline of the regional summaries by recording the location of the individual new societies founded between 1852 and 1901 - initially the maps are for five year periods but the last two each cover a span of ten years. Figure 3.3 confirms the concentration of the limited development of the mid fifties in the northern textile districts and in London. The same areas received many of the new wave of societies established later in the decade and in the early sixties. The period 1857-61 saw a marked increase in the foundation of co-operatives in London. This indicates the boost given by new information about northern successes to the indigenous co-operative tradition in the capital which uniquely of all regions outside the North-West and Yorkshire had maintained a steady trickle of foundations throughout the eighteen fifties (Table 3.1). Expansion in London seems to conform with an observed tendency for innovations to make early progress outside their area of origin by movement up the urban hierarchy to the capital city.[5]

The example of the northern societies which stimulated developments in London also led to its extension to areas which had seen only limited activity in the earlier eighteen fifties. Co-operation leap-frogged over intervening rural

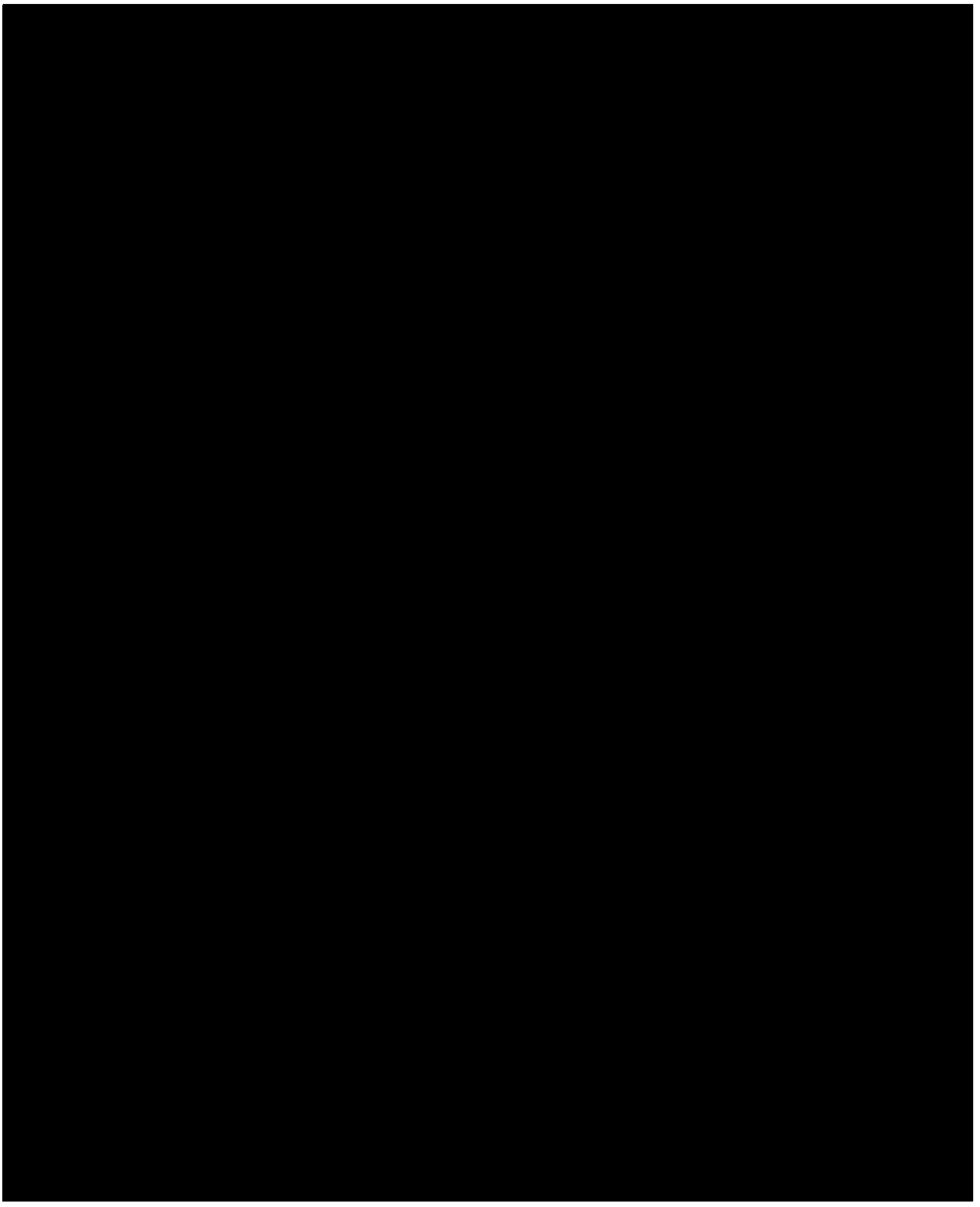

Fig. 3.3. Co-operative Retail Society Foundations in England and Wales, 1852-56.

Source: PRO FS8; Christian Socialist 1852; Leader 1852-53; Co-operator 1860-62; Annual Returns of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67; P.P. 1901 LXXIV.

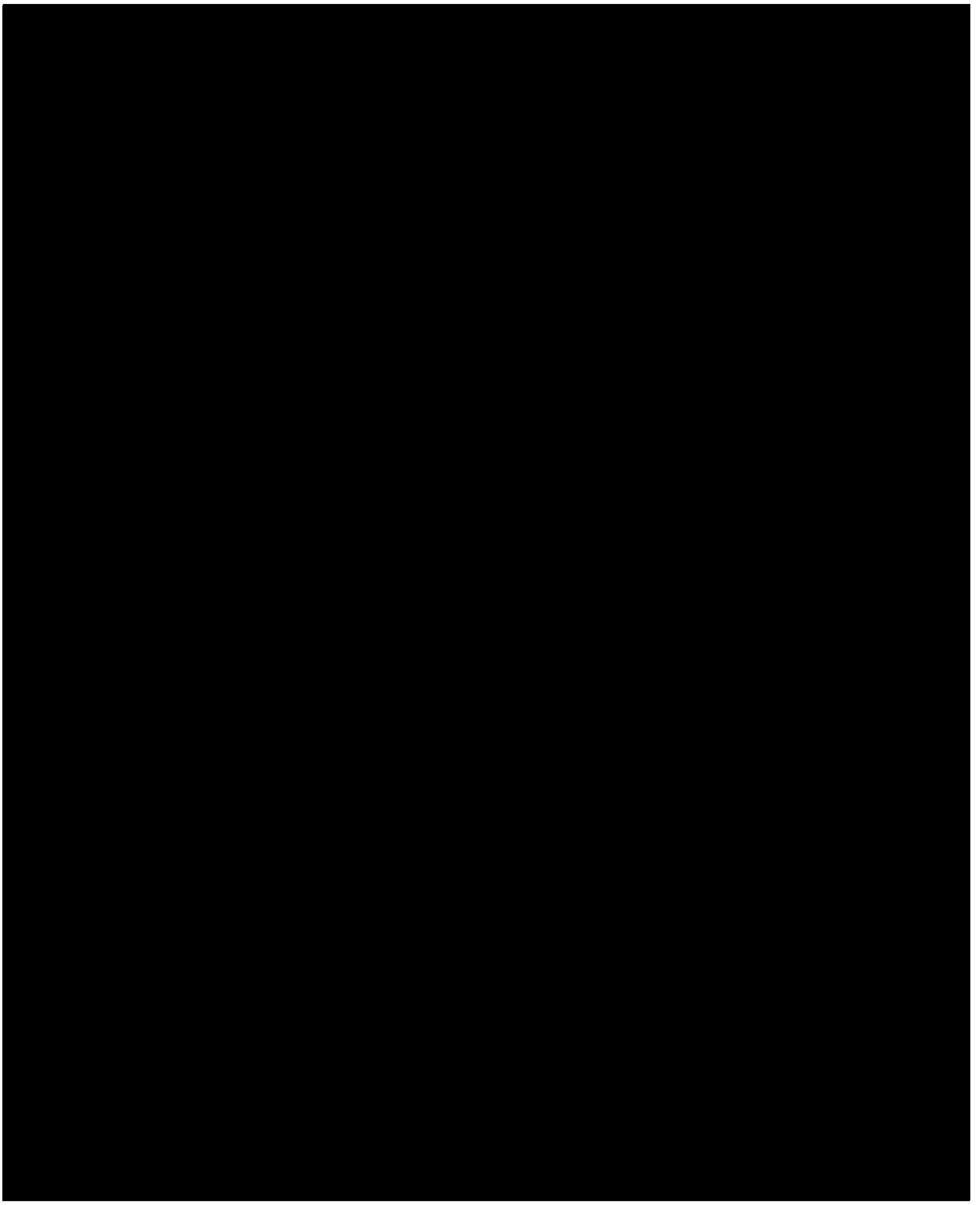

Fig. 3.4. Co-operative Retail Society Foundations in England and Wales, 1857-61.

Source: PRO FS 8; Co-operator 1860-62; Annual Returns of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67; P.P. 1901 LXXIV.

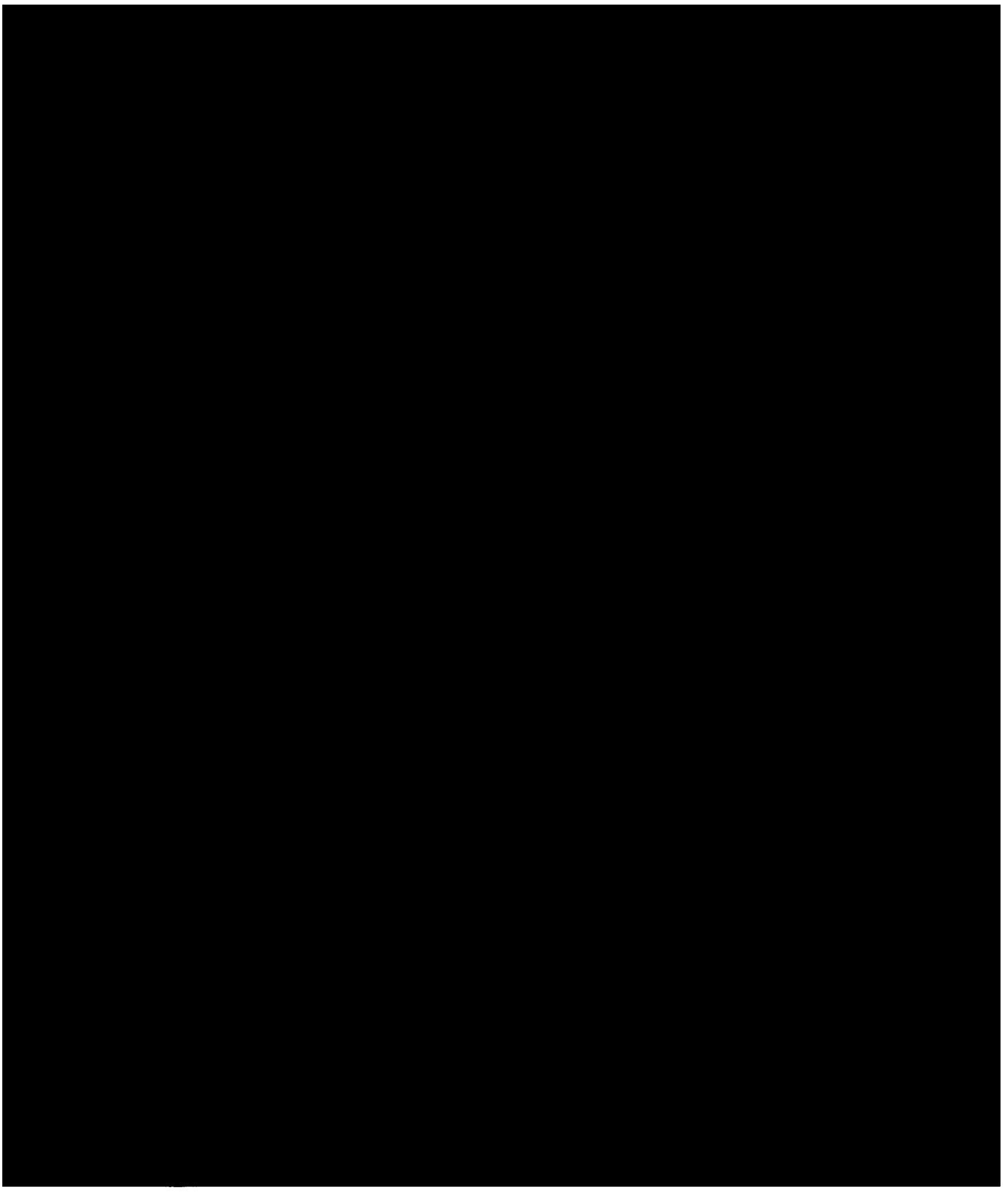

Fig. 3.5. Co-operative Retail Society Foundations in England and Wales, 1862-66.

Source: Annual Returns of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67.

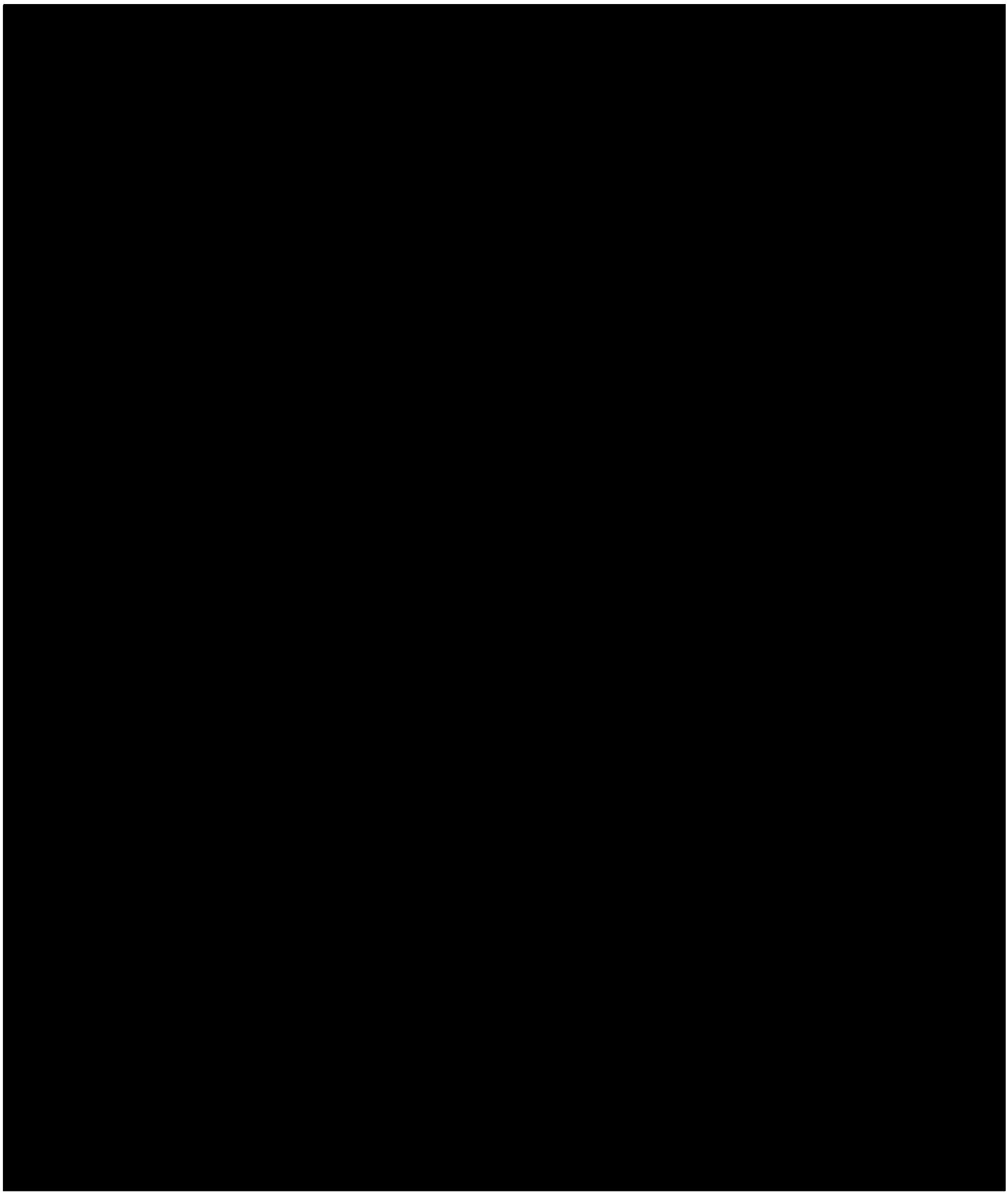

Fig. 3.6. Co-operative Retail Society Foundations in England and Wales, 1867-71.

Source: Annual Returns of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1867 and 1870-72.

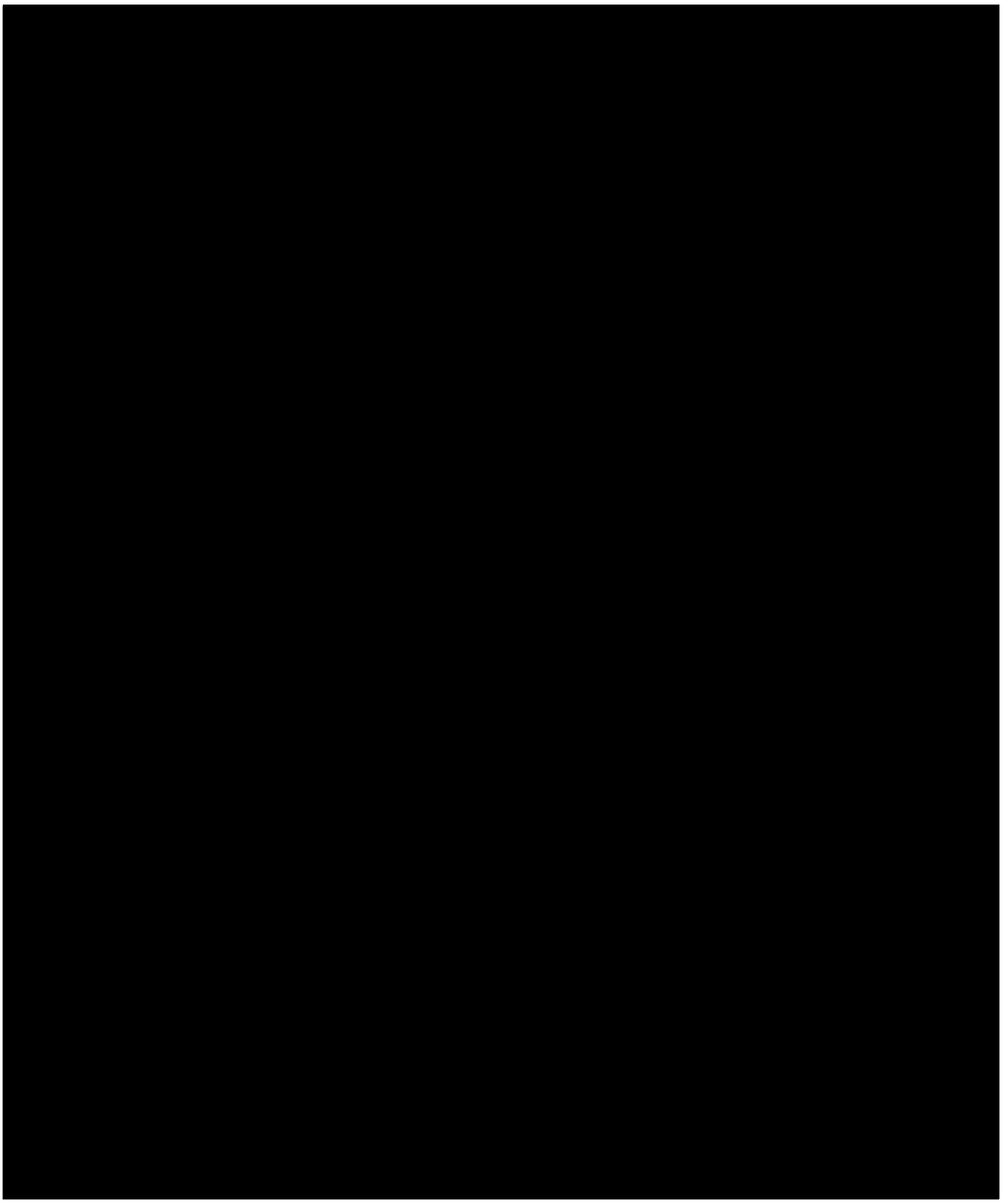

Fig. 3.7. Co-operative Retail Society Foundations in England and Wales, 1872-76.

Source: Annual Returns of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1872-77.

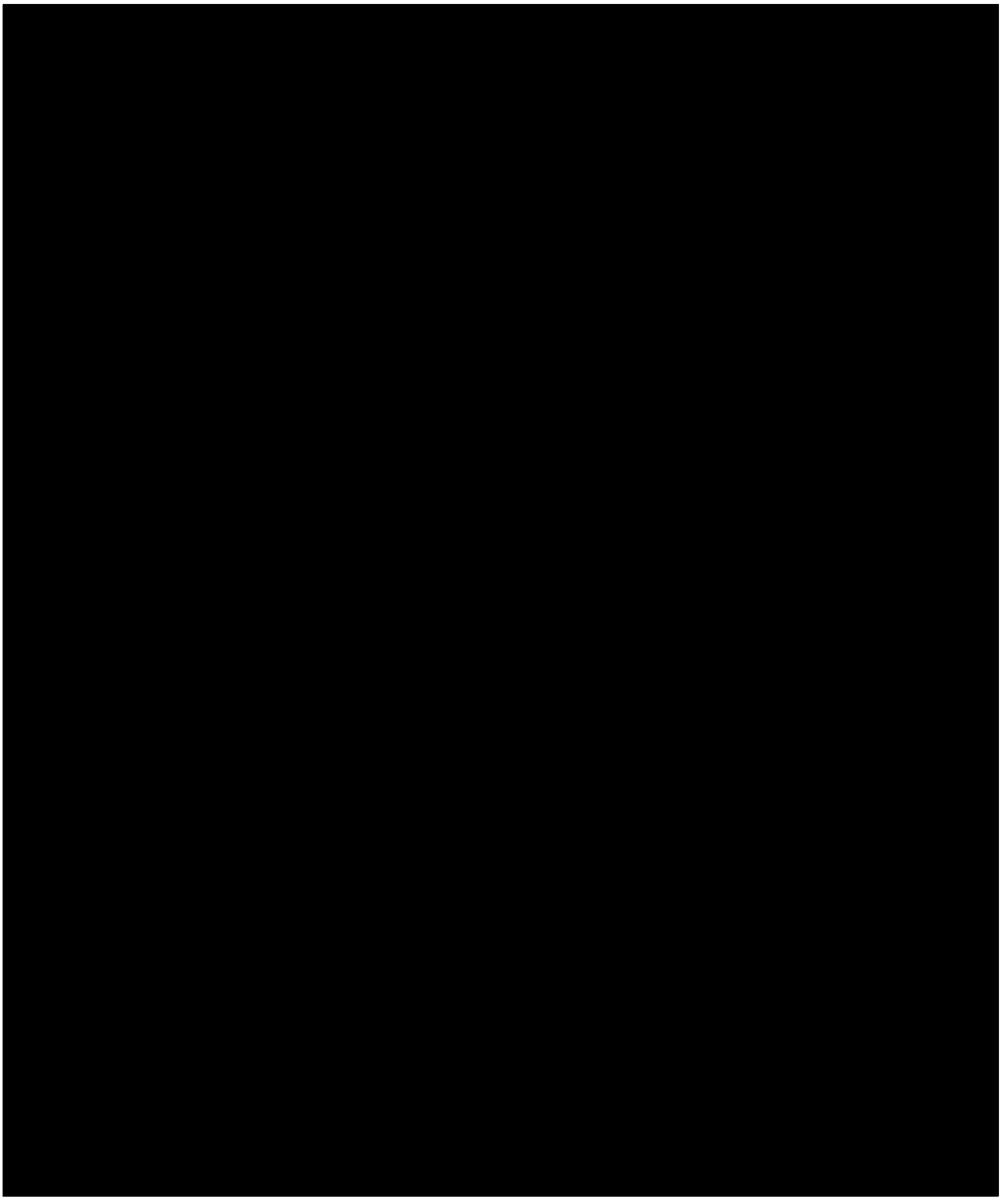

Fig. 3.8. Co-operative Retail Society Foundations in England and Wales, 1877-81.

Source: Annual Returns of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1877-82.

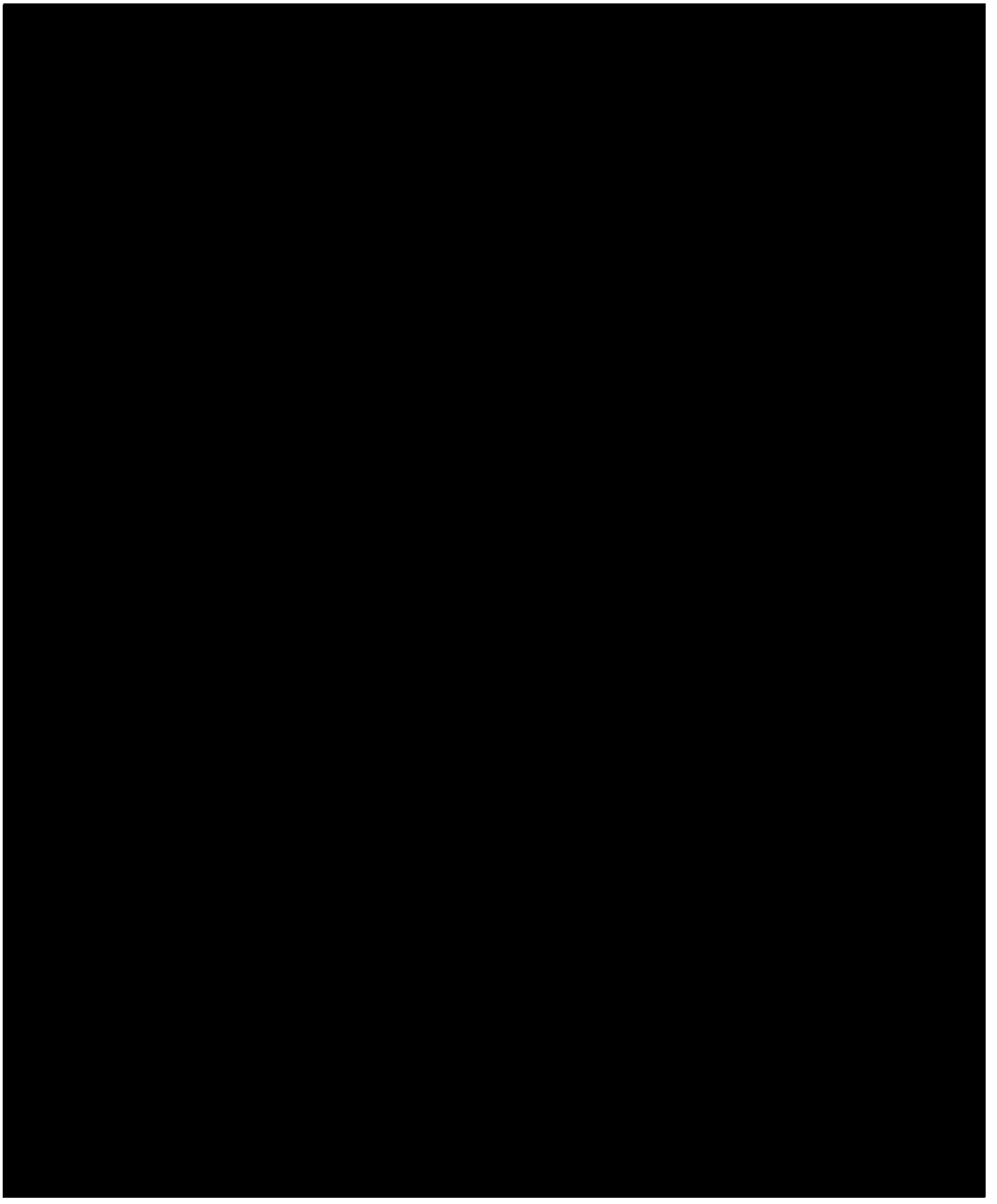

Fig. 3.9. Co-operative Retail Society Foundations in England and Wales, 1882-91.

Source: Annual Returns of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1882-91

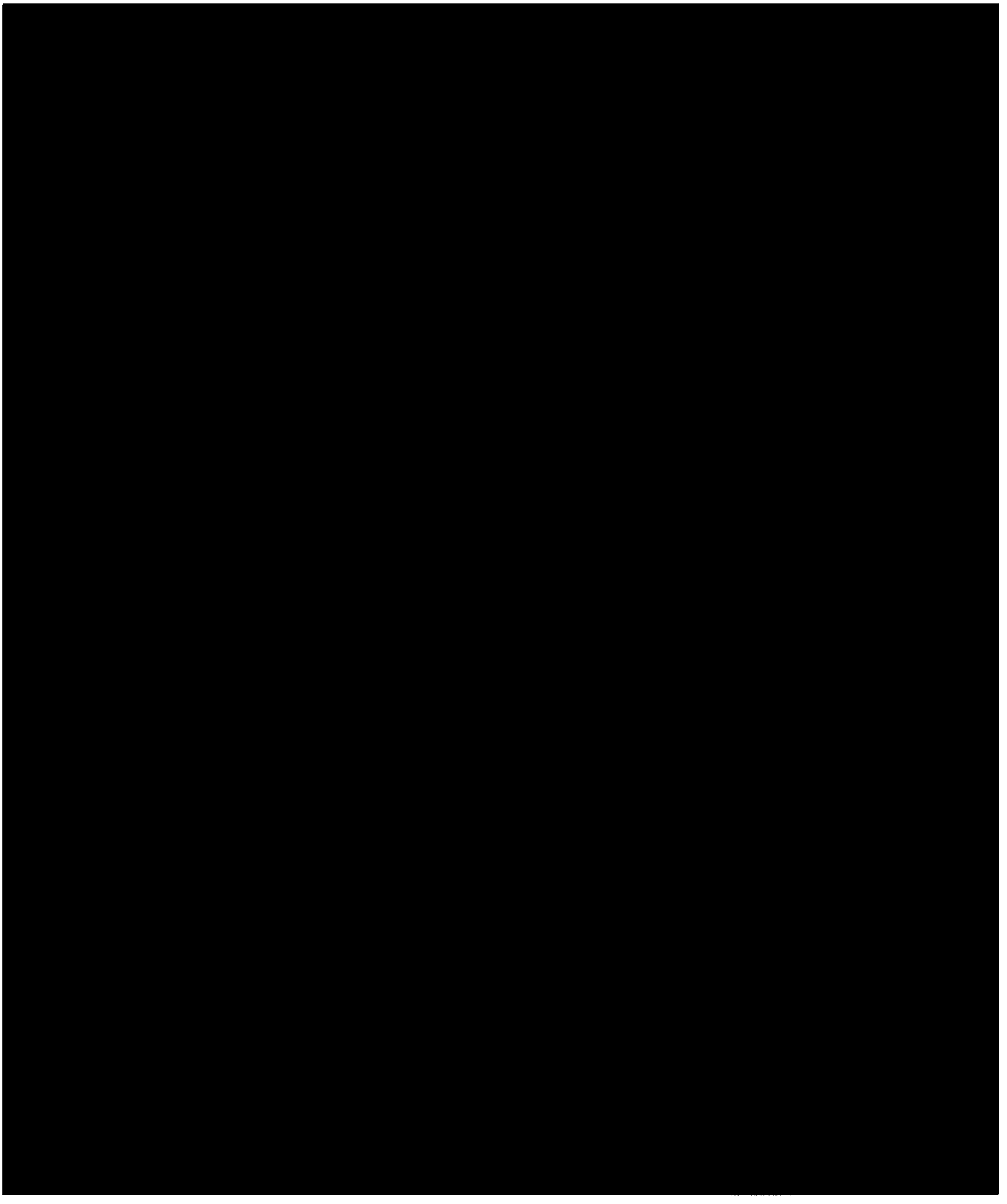

Fig. 3.10. Co-operative Retail Society Foundations in England and Wales, 1892-1901.

Source: Annual Return of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1892-1901.

districts to centres of population and industry outside the northern core. The very earliest growth seems to have come in such areas nearest to Lancashire and Yorkshire: North Staffordshire, Birmingham and the Black Country. The initial societies were also established in other industrial districts. Of these it was North-East England that was to build most strongly on this early base (Figs. 3.5 to 3.7). There were also early societies on the smaller Cumberland coalfield, but there was less potential for the subsequent expansion of their numbers. Contemporary developments in the South Wales coal and iron districts produced a concentration of societies by the end of the sixties but co-operation enjoyed lesser long term success in the area. The high rate of failure of early societies necessitated their later replacement and so these areas continued as centres of co-operative foundations through the rest of the century (Figs 3.5 to 3.10).

While particularly apparent in the major centres of population and industry early co-operative development was not confined to areas with an expanding economy based on heavy and large plant industry. The years 1857-61 saw stores established in the hosiery and shoemaking districts of the East Midlands, areas in which societies proliferated during the eighteen sixties. By the end of the decade there had been co-operative foundations in every English county except Hereford, Huntingdon and Rutland, and in the more populous parts of Wales. As Table 3.3 shows very few areas with a

Table 3.3. Co-operative Foundations and Population Growth: The Record of Co-operative Retail Society Development 1850-61 in Registration Districts Classified by their Rate of Population Growth 1851-61.(6)

Rate of Population Growth 1851-61 %	Registration Districts with an Extant Society 1861 or with Previous Co-operation post 1850		Registration Districts without an Extant Society 1861 and with No Previous Co-oper'n post 1850	
		% of Total		% of Total
Loss	32	13.3	208	86.7
0-4.9	28	22.8	95	77.2
5-9.9	31	40.3	46	59.7
10-14.9	33	56.9	25	43.1
15-19.9	34	73.9	12	26.1
20-24.9	21	80.8	5	19.2
25-29.9	18	85.7	3	14.3
30-39.9	12	80.0	3	20.0
40-49.9	6	75.0	2	25.0
50+	6	75.0	2	25.0
All Districts	221	35.5	401	64.5

rapid growth of population 1851-61, and by implication a buoyant local economy, had no experience of co-operation by the end of the first period of expansion in 1861. Yet it is clear too that there were early societies in areas experiencing more modest economic progress. Initial co-operative spread took it into some of the more stagnant industrial and urban locations. Nearly half the districts with declining population that received early co-operation were secondary areas of textile production, both in the southern counties of Wiltshire, Somerset, Gloucestershire, Essex and Worcestershire and on the fringes of the northern textile core in districts such as Clitheroe and Keighley. The diffusion of co-operation to such areas may have followed from direct economic links with northern textile districts.

It may also have been that local economic and social circumstances common to different sectors of the textile trade were especially favourable for co-operative development. The remaining co-operative districts with a declining population included parts of the footwear and hosiery districts of the South-East Midlands.

The pattern of foundations during the eighteen seventies was not greatly different from that of the previous decade. Concentrations were less obvious where large numbers of earlier foundations had already created a firmly established co-operative body capable of accommodating growing membership and sales. There was expansion at the margins of existing concentrations, reflecting in some cases the geographical extension of economic activity. In the North-East, for example, co-operation grew with the northward development of the Northumberland coalfield. In the south of the district the adoption of co-operation in the ironstone mining communities led to its spread along the Cleveland coast.

During the remainder of the century the rate of foundations declined. The virtual saturation coverage of established societies in some northern districts was compounded by a period of general economic depression in the later seventies and early eighties which reduced the pace of co-operative development (Fig. 3.2). Foundations continued at a high rate only on the South Wales coalfield and in London, often to replace earlier failures. Yorkshire experienced a brief upsurge of foundations during the early nineties largely reflecting the formation of a number of societies

specifically to supply coal. There was a continuing scatter of new societies throughout the rest of the country. Again this included some growth at the fringes of previously colonized areas with, for example, new societies in counties bordering the Wash and on the coalfield of North-East Wales (Figs. 3.9 and 3.10).

The map of societies extant in 1901 (Fig. 3.11) clearly shows the extent of geographical spread since the cross-sectional view fifty years earlier (Fig. 3.1). As Table 3.4 indicates co-operation had at least a toe-hold in all English counties and only Radnor in Wales was completely without retail societies.[7] Yet while co-operation was no longer regionally confined it was still regionally concentrated. In part its strength reflected the massing of population in the major northern industrial areas, but in other districts the distribution of co-operation diverged in some obvious respects from that of population. There was, for example, little westward extension of co-operation within Lancashire onto Merseyside. To the south the chief extension of co-operation was through the eastern Midlands forming an axis between the northern textile districts and London. By comparison the concentrations of population around Birmingham and in the Potteries despite an extended history of co-operative foundations built little major development on this base. It was, however, at the southern end of the axis, in London, that the discrepancy between the number of societies actually present in 1901 and the total that might have been

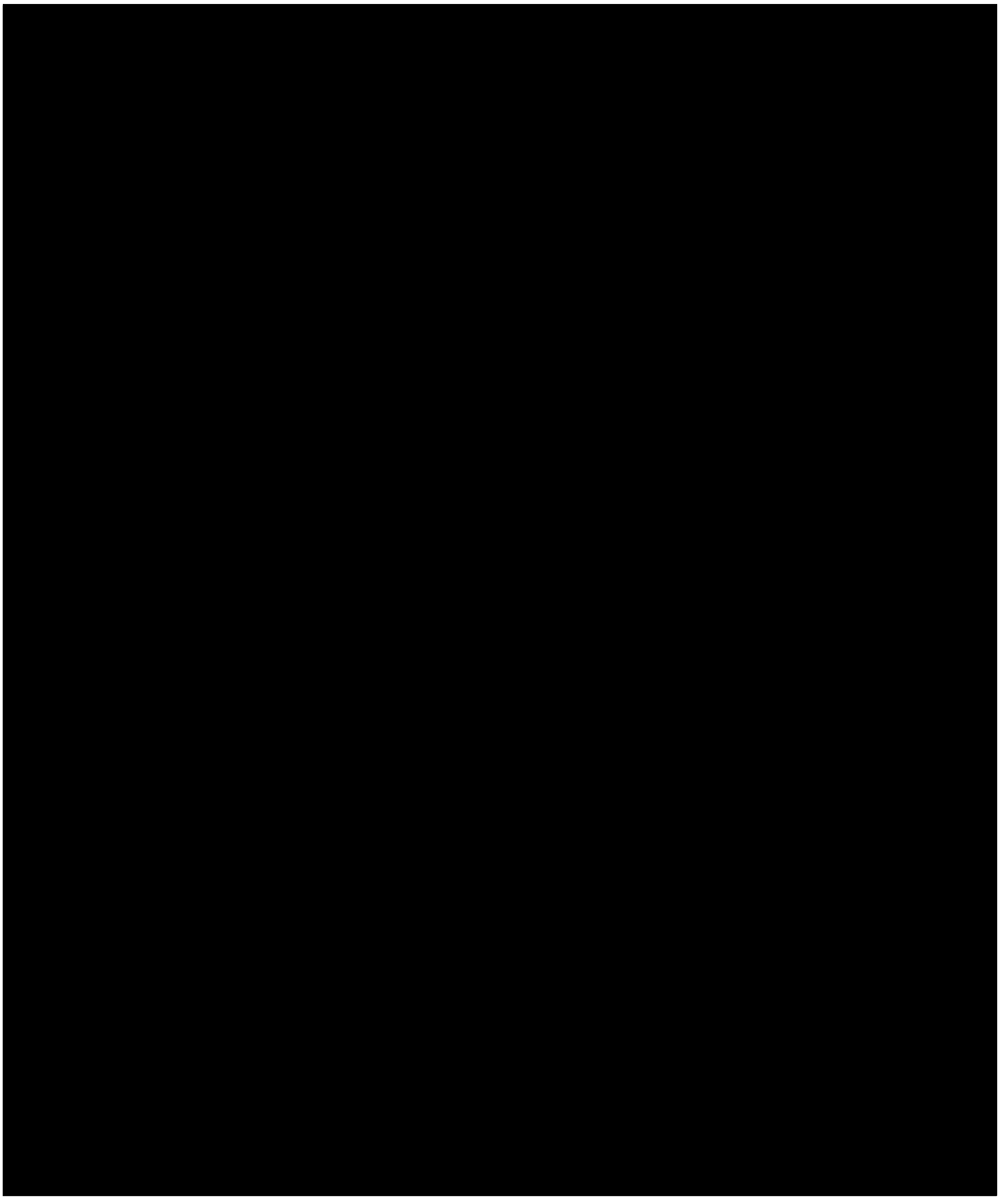

Fig. 3.11. Co-operative Retailing in England and Wales: Extant Societies 1901.

Source: P.P. 1902 XCVI.

Table 3.4. Co-operative Retail Societies in England and Wales, 1901: County Totals.(8)

NORTH	
Cumberland	24
Durham	57
North Riding	17
Northumberland	47
Westmorland	9
NORTH-WEST	
Cheshire	26
Lancashire	193
YORKSHIRE	
East Riding	7
West Riding	200
NORTH MIDLANDS	
Derbyshire	44
Lincolnshire	14
Nottinghamshire	32
WEST MIDLANDS	
Shropshire	10
Staffordshire	24
Warwickshire	26
Worcestershire	12
SOUTH EAST MIDLANDS	
Leicestershire	38
Northamptonshire	42
Rutland	2
EAST/EAST ANGLIA	
Bedfordshire	8
Cambridgeshire	9
Essex	19
Hertfordshire	9
Huntingdonshire	3
Norfolk	13
Suffolk	16
SOUTH-EAST	
Berkshire	7
Buckinghamshire	14
Hampshire	11
Kent	32
London	36
Middlesex	17
Oxfordshire	6
Surrey	15
Sussex	10
SOUTH WEST	
Cornwall	10
Devon	22
Dorset	4
Gloucestershire	16
Herefordshire	1
Wiltshire	11
Somerset	24
WALES	
Anglesey	1
Brecon	1
Cardigan	1
Carmarthenshire	5
Carnarvonshire	6
Denbighshire	4
Flintshire	8
Glamorganshire	47
Merioneth	2
Monmouthshire	11
Pembrokeshire	1
Radnorshire	–
Montgomery	2

expected both from the major concentration of population and the accumulation of foundations shown on Figs. 3.3 to 3.10 is most glaring. The high rate of Metropolitan foundations reflected not growing co-operative strength in an expanding population centre but its continued weakness. The high failure rate meant that most foundations merely replaced

previous societies.

The case of London illustrates most clearly the general point that the diffusion of co-operation was not a simple process of the accumulation of adopters but one in which society failures and the consequent removal of adopting centres were important elements. The number of societies extant in 1901 was significantly below the accumulated number of foundations of the previous half century. It is difficult to establish a firm starting point from which the total number of foundations which could potentially have formed part of the co-operative body in the second half of the century can be calculated. However, at least 2,800 societies can reasonably be included in this total; thus the 1,224 societies mapped on Fig. 3.11 represent only ≤44 per cent of those shown on the previous maps (Figs. 3.3 to 3.10).

The rate of society failures was not geographically uniform; as Table 3.5 shows the percentage of societies founded prior to the eighteen eighties which survived to 1901 was markedly lower in southern England, the West Midlands and Wales than in the rest of the country. Survival rates of societies formed post 1880 generally improved, reflecting partly the increased stability of co-operation, but also the fact that the failure date of a greater percentage of these societies fell after 1901. The increase was most marked in southern England and Wales, reducing and in some cases eliminating the distinction from northern regions. London, while improving, still recorded a performance that was

significantly worse than any other region.

Table 3.5. Co-operative Retail Society Survival Rates by Region: Percentage of Societies Classified by Date of Foundation Still Extant 1901.(9)

Region	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1892 -01
North	61.0	53.4	52.5	46.2	44.4	59.3	84.0
North-West	52.2	48.6	36.7	50.0	45.5	64.1	87.5
Yorkshire	54.2	57.1	63.8	57.8	75.0	87.0	77.8
N. Midlands	30.0	40.0	50.0	53.2	50.0	72.2	88.0
W. Midlands	6.8	25.8	20.0	37.2	45.5	65.4	77.4
SE. Midlands	36.4	48.8	38.9	45.5	38.5	62.5	94.1
E./E. Anglia	25.0	26.7	37.5	27.6	20.0	70.7	80.0
South-East	5.9	20.0	33.3	31.6	25.0	60.4	80.0
Metropolitan	1.2	5.5	9.5	11.4	22.2	17.9	37.7
South-West	20.0	16.0	37.0	22.2	37.5	73.7	67.5
Wales	5.9	16.7	10.5	10.8	33.3	52.9	72.9
England and Wales	33.8	34.2	36.2	37.5	37.5	54.1	72.6

The high failure rate of societies had the effect of inflating the total number of individual foundations. Many societies established later in the century represented not the first introduction of co-operation to a centre but a renewed effort in a location where a scheme had collapsed sometime since the late eighteen fifties. Indeed in the South-East region over 43 per cent of foundations 1880-99 were of this type.[10] Reintroduction was common throughout southern England. Towns such as Dorchester, Southampton, St. Albans, Chatham, Tunbridge Wells, Great Yarmouth, Bath and Yeovil had stores $\subseteq$1860-61, but all had failed by the end of the decade. In these towns co-operation was not re-established until the mid eighties and nineties. Indeed as Fig. 3.12 shows such delay was not uncommon in southern

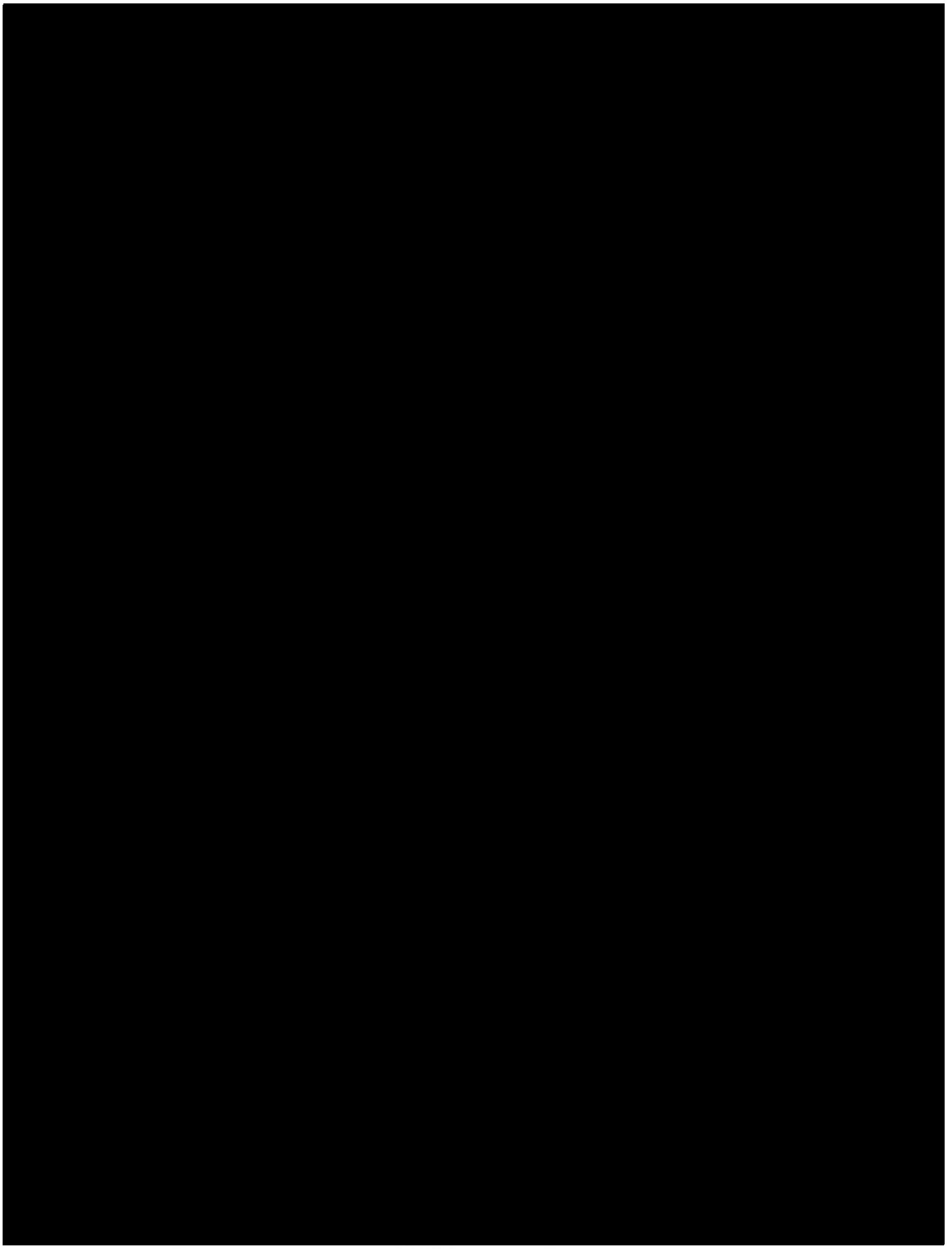

Fig. 3.12. Co-operative Re-introductions: Years Elapsing Between Society Failure in any Given Location and the Foundation of Its Successor.

Source: As Fig. 3.2.

England and Wales, and although all major urban centres saw efforts to reintroduce co-operation, in some smaller settlements the first unsuccessful society was never replaced. In some cases the abandonment of co-operation may have reflected the disillusioning effect of the collapse of an initial society with reintroduction coming from an entirely new generation of enthusiasts. The timing of developments also suggests an association with wider co-operative expansion and propagandism. The initial wave of foundations around eighteen sixty was followed by more concerted efforts by co-operative activists to encourage new societies during the eighteen eighties and nineties. The pattern in northern England was rather different; society failures were less numerous and abundant local evidence of the potential for successful trading tended to encourage re-establishment.

The process of failure and reintroduction of societies has led to an underestimation of early interest in co-operation outside the northern core. Concentration on that small percentage of societies enjoying long term success has led to an underenumeration of co-operatives formed in southern England during the third quarter of the century. Cole by considering only societies still extant in 1912 gives a rather different picture of development from that conveyed by Figs. 3.3 to 3.10 and Tables 3.1 and 3.2, and one which exaggerates the degree to which the initiation of co-operation in southern England lagged behind northern regions.[11] In fact the speed with which co-operation spread

to all regions in the period 1857-61 is noteworthy; less impressive was its subsequent failure to consolidate this first advance in many areas.

III

One approach to the discussion of the increasing numbers and pattern of spatial spread of co-operative societies is to draw on a structure provided by previous geographical work on diffusion. Comparison of the results of a wide range of studies of the spread of different phenomena has led to suggestions of a number of regularities in the process of diffusion.[12] Over time the accumulation of the number of adoptions is commonly found to follow an S-shaped curve. Initially adoption of an innovation is slow but increasing acceptance produces a phase of rapid growth which levels out as saturation of the population of potential adopters is approached. Fig. 3.13 shows that the growth of co-operative society numbers in the second half of the century did approximate to this pattern. There was, however, an extended decline in numbers from 1874 to 1882. If this interruption, which was associated with the general economic downturn of the period, is discounted there are signs of a relatively smooth levelling out of growth during the rest of the century after the peak rates of increase in the early sixties. Society numbers reached their maximum early in the present century and the subsequent decline has been particularly marked in recent years. This reflects a process of amalgamation with membership and business being

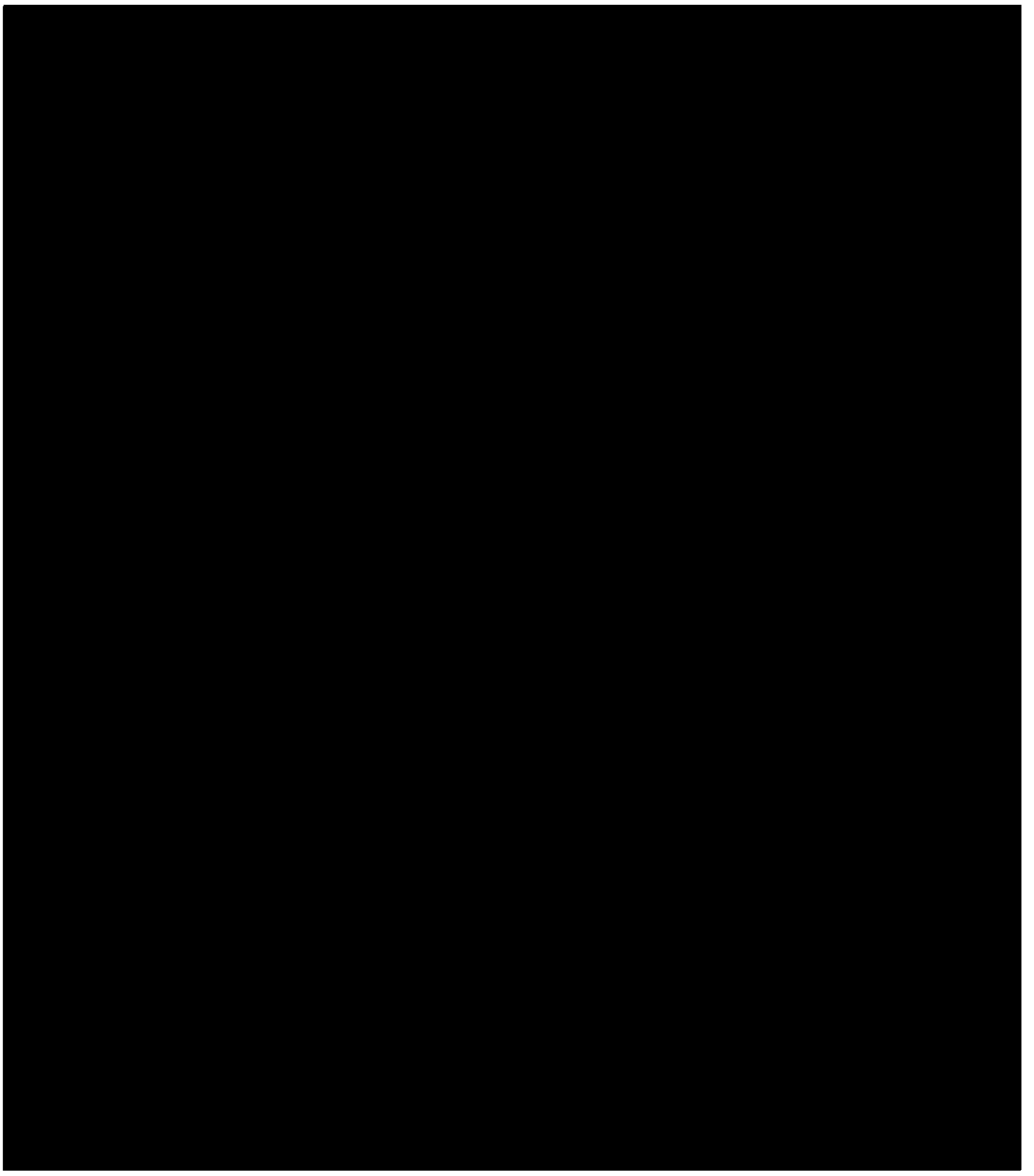

Fig. 3.13. Co-operative Retail Societies in England and Wales: Annual Totals of Extant Societies 1850-99.

Source: As Fig. 3.2.

Hägerstrand, who provided a key geographical examination of the regularities of diffusion, argued for a process which combined both hierarchical and neighbourhood elements

> the spread along the initial "frontier" is led through the urban hierarchy. The point of introduction in a new country is its primate city, sometimes some other metropolis. Then centres next in rank follow. Soon, however, this order is broken up and replaced by one where the neighbourhood effect dominates over the pure size succession.[13]

Other studies have found patterns consistent with that suggested by Hägerstrand. Amongst the most relevant to the present study is Robson's work on the diffusion of the innovations of gas works and street lighting, building societies and telephone exchanges through the urban system of nineteenth century England and Wales. Each example illustrated the operation of the twin processes of hierarchical and neighbourhood diffusion. From a more detailed study of the spread of Starr-Bowkett building societies from an origin in London Robson concluded

> Spread occurs first by the filtering down of societies to the regional centres or to the largest towns within regions and subsequently societies spread out to other, and smaller, places within the region while at the same time consolidation occurs within regions which have already been colonized by this process. Looking at England and Wales as a whole, the two processes of hierarchical filtering and spatial spread occur

consolidated into fewer and larger societies.

The adoption process has also been observed to follow certain spatial regularities. The simplest pattern is the outwards expansion of adoption over time from an initial centre in a wave-like fashion. Under this contagious growth, dubbed the neighbourhood effect, the probability of adoption is assumed to have a strong inverse relationship with the geographical distance between the potential adopter and an established example of the innovation. However, the wave-like pattern of expansion is complicated by the nature of the surface across which diffusion is taking place. Originally barriers to spread and the channelling of growth were considered only in relation to physical features likely to impede or facilitate contact between locations. However, it seems legitimate also to relate diffusion patterns to a geographical expression of variations within human society which may help or hinder the adoption process. Such thinking was implicit in earlier discussion of the pattern of co-operative spread which drew attention to the development of separate poles of growth associated with regional centres of population and industry.

A further observed regularity in the pattern of diffusion is the tendency of adoption to proceed from larger to smaller centres within the urban hierarchy; again a process which can lead to the establishment of spatially isolated poles of adoption from which the innovation spreads. Indeed

simultaneously, but within any region the one precedes the other.[14]

This is a pattern which the spread of co-operation might perhaps be expected to have followed.

As has already been noted early foundations in the forties and fifties were concentrated in the northern textile districts. The complicated history of co-operation within this core makes it difficult to analyse the internal pattern of development. Society failures and reintroductions and the existence of several localised co-operative traditions make it impossible to establish a clear sequence of introductions. However, development was not confined to the larger settlements and it seems reasonable to suggest that the growth of society numbers stemmed from a process of contagious spread. It is likely that similar processes underlay some of the limited developments in other areas of the country with independent survivors from earlier phases of co-operation spawning local emulation. Only in the missionary and journalistic activities of the Christian Socialists and other sympathisers outside the ranks of those involved in the day to day running of societies was there any formal mechanism for the spread of the co-operative message over longer distances.

The established literature on diffusion might lead to the expectation that the spatial pattern of the early expansion of co-operation outside the northern textile districts was determined by the location of the largest urban centres; a

process of hierachical filtering acting to introduce it to all regions through their leading towns. Indeed the first five year period of national expansion up to 1861 did see societies established in all of the largest urban centres and in the majority of towns with a population of 10,000 and above - although individual societies did not always enjoy long term success (Table 3.6). The number of medium sized towns without recorded societies was further reduced during the following decade, although not to the point where

Table 3.6. Urban Experience of Co-operation: Percentage of English and Welsh Towns Classified by Population with Retail Societies by 1861 and by 1871.(15)

Town Population Total 1871	Towns with an Extant Society at Given Date or with Previous Co-operation post 1857				Towns without an Extant Society at Given Date and without Previous Co-operation post 1857			
	1861	%*	1871	%	1861	%	1871	%
100,000+	13	100.0	13	100.0	-	-	-	-
50-99,999	19	100.0	19	100.0	-	-	-	-
30-49,999	34	94.4	35	97.2	2	5.6	1	2.8
20-29,999	23	71.9	28	87.5	9	28.1	4	12.5
15-19,999	25	73.5	30	88.2	9	26.5	4	11.8
10-14,999	34	51.5	48	72.7	32	48.5	18	27.3

* % of all towns in a given population class.

experience of co-operation was universal. Moreover, the spatial distribution of towns without co-operation was similar to that of overall co-operative strength. Taking all towns of 10,000-49,999 population together, experience of co-operation was least likely in the South-East and South-West regions, with particularly low rates also for the outer suburban centres in the Metropolitan region. The remaining

regions may be ranked in order of increasing urban experience of co-operation by 1861 as follows: North Midlands, East/East Anglia, North, West Midlands, Wales, Yorkshire, North-West, South-East Midlands.[16] Its limited early development in certain regions was seemingly not due to the absence of larger population centres through which to channel the introduction of societies. Characteristics of a settlement other than its population size; functions of its geographical position and of its social and economic character were also important in determining the probability of the adoption of co-operation. It is worth repeating, however, that adoption in urban centres did carry it outside the major industrial areas from the very earliest periods of spread.

If most of the larger urban centres had early experience of co-operation the question then arises as to the extent to which societies were found in smaller settlements in the period 1857-61. Towns of 10,000 plus population accounted for 44.9 per cent of recorded foundations 1857-61. But there were also new societies located in relatively small settlements; 26.2 per cent of the total were in centres with a population of below 5,000. The settlement size distribution of co-operative foundations was, however, a compound of the simultaneous spread of co-operation locally within the established North-West/Yorkshire core and a more hierarchically structured extension to other regions. As Table 3.7 shows there was for 1857-61 a clear contrast between the settlement size distribution of new co-operatives in the northern core, where smaller centres accounted for the

largest proportion, and the rest of the country in which foundations were more evenly distributed across the settlement size range with a significant concentration only in the very largest centres, pre-eminently in London. However, even outside the North-West and Yorkshire 16.3 per cent of foundations were in centres of less than 5,000 people; early co-operative development in newly colonized areas was not exclusive to the larger settlements. There were also a number of societies established in settlements for which it is impossible to obtain a separate population total from the published census records. These centres, chiefly located in the developing industrial districts, would probably have had a relatively low population total and thus the percentage of co-operative foundations in the smaller and medium-sized centres is probably underestimated on Table 3.7.

After the initial phase of expansion carrying co-operation to all regions there was a marked reduction in the percentage of new societies located in the larger urban centres. The continuing high rate of foundations in London alone preserved a distinction between the North-West/Yorkshire distribution and that in the rest of the country. The contrast between the two areas in the share of the total accounted for by settlements of less than 5,000 people was reduced over time, but outside the northern core a higher percentage of societies were recorded in centres of less than 1,000 people. In part this reflects the greater tendency for smaller centres, including agricultural villages, in southern and

Table 3.7. Co-operative Retail Society Foundations in England and Wales 1857-61 and 1862-66: Percentage Distribution by Settlement Size.(17)

Settlement Population 1861	1857-61		1862-66	
	North-West & Yorkshire	Rest of England & Wales	North-West & Yorkshire	Rest of England & Wales
-999	1.0	3.5	6.0	13.0
1,000-2,499	12.5	6.9	19.0	14.6
2,500-4,999	15.7	5.9	22.6	13.3
5,000-7,499	13.4	7.6	7.1	7.5
7,500-9,999	4.2	4.5	7.1	4.5
10,000-14,999	5.1	7.3	4.8	4.9
15,000-19,999	1.9	4.9	1.2	2.6
20,000-29,999	1.9	6.6	1.2	1.9
30,000-49,999	7.4	6.3	-	1.0
50,000-99,999	2.8	5.6	-	1.3
100,000+	6.5	32.6	4.8	20.1
Settlements without Pop'n Data	27.8	8.3	26.2	15.3
Total	100	100	100	100

Midland England to spawn their own independent societies, often in the absence of co-operation in nearby towns. In the north it was more common for societies located in the larger centres to serve their smaller neighbours through branch stores and delivery carts.

During the following decade there was little dramatic change in the distribution of society foundations across the settlement hierarchy (Table 3.8). There was an increase in the percentage of foundations in the smallest centres, with settlements of under 5,000 people accounting for 53.1 per cent of all foundations 1861-71 and 45.3 per cent 1872-76. A large percentage of settlements without recorded population figures may well have led to an underestimation of this

Table 3.8. Co-operative Retail Society Foundations in England and Wales 1847-99: Percentage Distribution by Settlement Size.(18)

	Date of Foundation											
Sett'nt Pop'n*	Pre 1847	1847 -51	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
-999	2.3	3.0	-	2.6	11.8	14.5	17.0	18.8	11.7	5.3	9.9	10.0
1,000-2,499	15.9	10.4	8.3	11.8	16.7	20.0	15.7	6.9	8.6	8.6	10.6	8.9
2,500-4,999	25.0	18.5	10.7	11.8	16.2	18.6	12.6	10.0	14.7	13.2	14.5	14.3
5,000-7,499	9.1	12.6	11.9	10.4	7.9	8.1	6.6	4.4	5.1	4.1	6.0	7.6
7,500-9,999	11.4	9.6	6.0	6.1	5.2	6.7	3.3	2.5	4.6	6.2	5.0	5.4
10,000-14,999	2.3	8.1	16.7	5.9	4.7	3.5	2.6	4.4	4.1	5.3	4.6	4.9
15,000-19,999	2.3	1.5	3.6	4.1	2.0	3.8	1.8	1.9	1.0	1.6	2.5	2.5
20,000-29,999	9.1	3.0	2.4	4.7	1.5	2.6	0.4	2.5	5.1	4.9	2.1	2.9
30,000-49,999	6.8	4.4	3.6	5.1	1.0	4.9	2.6	1.9	2.0	4.5	0.7	3.2
50,000-99,999	2.3	5.9	2.4	5.1	0.7	2.3	1.5	1.9	2.5	1.6	1.1	2.4
100,000+	6.8	4.4	8.3	20.0	15.0	12.8	10.8	19.4	30.5	25.5	16.7	16.5
Sett'nts without Pop'n Data	6.8	18.5	26.2	12.4	17.4	2.3	24.9	25.6	10.2	18.9	26.2	21.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

* Population at Census nearest to the date of co-operative foundation.

proportion in the latter case. Any tendency for the increasing concentration of foundations at the lower levels of the settlement hierarchy was, however, interrupted in the final decades of the century with, particularly during the eighteen eighties, a renewed wave of development in the larger centres. The marked increase in the percentage of the total located in the very largest population centres was mainly due to renewed efforts to establish societies in

London. Thus the distribution of society foundations shown on Table 3.8 is the compound product of the spatial spread of co-operation and its variable rate of success in situ. Co-operative advance in a particular location might prompt the later establishment of secondary societies, but the late foundations in the larger centres were more frequently a reflection of failure and consequent efforts to replace societies. In further analysis an attempt will be made to treat separately the effects of spread and performance in situ. Attention to the growth of co-operation through established societies will be reserved for a later chapter; here consideration will be given to the sequence of its first introduction into individual settlements.

Table 3.9 records the number of settlements to receive co-operation arranged by their population size. This may be compared with Table 3.8 which shows the total number of societies similarly classified. Table 3.9 confirms that there were few late introductions (as opposed to reintroductions) of co-operation into the larger urban centres; although Canterbury and Ramsgate both with populations of over 20,000 at the 1891 census had no recorded co-operatives before 1889 and 1890 respectively. At the same time there was also, chiefly in Wales, a renewed wave of introductions into towns with a population of 7,500-14,999. However, the majority of settlements receiving co-operation were rather smaller. The pattern of co-operative introduction into centres of less than 5,000 people shows a clear contrast between the initial

Table 3.9. Settlements in England and Wales with Co-operative Retail Societies 1847-99: Percentage Distribution by Population at the Time of the First Introduction of Co-operation.(19)

	Date of Foundation											
Sett'nt Pop'n*	Pre 1847	1847 -51	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
-999	2.6	3.3	-	3.6	16.5	17.7	25.1	33.3	23.3	10.1	19.4	14.8
1,000-2,499	18.4	10.7	12.0	16.1	22.7	23.7	21.8	11.1	18.6	16.5	19.4	19.0
2,500-4,999	23.7	19.8	16.0	15.3	22.3	20.1	15.8	12.3	25.6	26.6	20.9	19.1
5,000-7,499	7.9	14.0	20.0	13.7	8.2	7.8	7.9	6.2	9.3	7.3	9.0	9.8
7,500-9,999	7.9	7.4	2.0	7.1	5.8	6.7	4.0	2.5	3.5	7.3	5.2	5.7
10,000-14,999	2.6	8.3	6.0	7.7	5.2	2.5	1.7	2.5	2.3	6.4	3.7	4.6
15,000-19,999	2.6	1.7	6.0	5.2	1.4	1.4	0.7	-	1.2	0.9	1.5	2.1
20,000-29,999	7.9	2.5	4.0	6.0	0.7	1.4	-	1.2	-	1.8	-	2.1
30,000-49,999	7.9	3.3	4.0	5.5	0.3	1.4	-	-	-	-	-	1.8
50,000-99,999	2.6	5.0	4.0	4.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.3
100,000+	7.9	3.3	-	1.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.7
Sett'nts Without Pop'n Data	7.9	20.7	26.0	14.2	16.8	17.3	23.1	30.9	16.3	22.9	20.9	19.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

period of growth 1857-61 when 35.0 per cent of locations first receiving co-operation were of this size and the figure of 61.5 per cent for the following five year period (cf. Table 3.8). While there was no consistent subsequent upward progression in the contribution made by smaller settlements it was always at least 50 per cent and during the years 1882-86 reached 67.5 per cent; a total which should probably be increased by a share of those settlements without recorded

population figures. The increase in the contribution of the very smallest centres of less than 1,000 people is also noticeable upto 1881. The subsequent decline may reflect an increasing tendency for such centres to be served as an offshoot of a larger urban society. Clearly then, while experience of co-operation in smaller and medium-sized settlements was not, as in the largest centres, universal they were always a substantial element within the co-operative corpus.

Separate presentation of data for individual regions (Table 3.10) shows no marked divergence from the national pattern of early receipt of co-operation in the larger population centres and a subsequent decrease in the size of settlements adopting for the first time. However, there were variations between regions in the detailed size distribution of settlements receiving co-operation at any particular period. Of special interest is the distribution for 1857-61. The most marked contrast was between the North-West and Yorkshire where the distribution showed the greatest bias towards smaller settlements and the South-East where foundations were particularly concentrated in towns of over 20,000 people. Yet no region was without initiatives in small centres of fewer than 5,000 people. Indeed the South-East Midlands shows a distinctive pattern of development with the early spread of societies through the shoemaking villages of Northamptonshire giving a high percentage of co-operative locations in the smaller population size categories. The

Table 3.10 Settlements in England and Wales with Co-operative Retail Societies 1847-99: Distribution by Population at the Time of the First Introduction of Co-operation, Regional Totals.(20)

North

A) Absolute Totals

Settlement Population	Date of Foundation										
	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
No Data	–	–	3	6	4	11	3	3	2	4	36
1-999	1	–	1	9	3	11	–	1	1	3	30
1000-2499	1	1	5	11	8	9	2	3	–	2	42
2500-4999	1	1	7	10	12	11	1	–	–	1	44
5000-7499	–	–	7	6	1	4	–	2	–	–	20
7500-9999	1	–	5	3	1	–	–	–	–	1	11
10000-14999	–	–	5	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	6
15000-19999	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
20000-49999	–	–	3	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	4
50000+	–	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3

B) Percentage of All Regional Foundations For Given Period

Settlement Population	Date of Foundation										
	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
No Data	–	–	7.7	12.5	13.8	23.9	50.0	33.3	66.7	36.4	18.3
1-999	25.0	–	2.6	18.8	10.3	23.9	–	11.1	33.3	27.3	15.2
1000-2499	25.0	50.0	12.8	22.9	27.6	19.6	33.3	33.3	–	18.2	21.3
2500-4999	25.0	50.0	17.9	20.8	41.4	23.9	16.7	–	–	9.1	22.3
5000-7499	–	–	17.9	12.5	3.4	8.7	–	22.2	–	–	10.2
7500-9999	25.0	–	12.8	6.3	3.4	–	–	–	–	9.1	5.6
10000-14999	–	–	12.8	2.1	–	–	–	–	–	–	3.0
15000-19999	–	–	–	2.1	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.5
20000-49999	–	–	7.7	2.1	–	–	–	–	–	–	2.0
50000+	–	–	7.7	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1.5

North-West

A) Absolute Totals

Settlement Population	Date of Foundation										
	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
No Data	18	7	21	9	9	12	8	2	3	2	91
1-999	1	–	2	2	2	4	2	1	–	–	14
1000-2499	7	1	21	8	3	3	2	3	1	1	50
2500-4999	12	4	17	7	5	7	2	1	–	–	55
5000-7499	8	4	15	1	4	2	–	–	2	1	37
7500-9999	5	1	6	2	1	2	–	–	–	–	17
10000-14999	6	–	8	2	1	–	–	1	–	–	18
15000-19999	1	–	5	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	7
20000-49999	5	2	9	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	16
50000+	7	–	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	12

B) Percentage of All Regional Foundations For Given Period

Settlement Population	Date of Foundation										
	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
No Data	25.7	36.8	19.3	29.0	36.0	38.7	57.1	25.0	50.0	50.0	28.7
1-999	1.4	–	1.8	6.5	8.0	12.9	14.3	12.5	–	–	4.4
1000-2499	10.0	5.3	19.3	25.8	12.0	9.7	14.3	37.5	16.7	25.0	15.8
2500-4999	17.1	21.1	15.6	22.6	20.0	22.6	14.3	12.5	–	–	17.4
5000-7499	11.4	21.1	13.8	3.2	16.0	6.5	–	–	33.3	25.0	11.7
7500-9999	7.1	5.3	5.5	6.5	4.0	6.5	–	–	–	–	5.4
10000-14999	8.6	–	7.3	6.5	4.0	–	–	12.5	–	–	5.7
15000-19999	1.4	–	4.6	–	–	3.2	–	–	–	–	2.2
20000-49999	7.1	10.6	8.3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	5.0
50000+	10.0	–	4.6	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3.7

Yorkshire

A) Absolute Totals

Settlement Population	Date of Foundation: Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
No Data	10	6	20	4	8	14	2	-	-	-	64
1-999	1	4	1	1	2	3	1	2	1	1	17
1000-2499	9	2	13	9	5	7	-	3	1	1	50
2500-4999	12	3	18	14	8	6	1	2	-	2	66
5000-7499	7	-	9	3	2	1	-	1	-	-	23
7500-9999	4	3	4	3	1	1	-	1	-	1	18
10000-14999	2	1	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	6
15000-19999	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
20000-49999	1	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	5
50000+	3	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6

B) Percentage of All Regional Foundations For Given Period

Settlement Population	Date of Foundation: Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
No Data	20.0	31.6	28.2	11.4	27.6	42.4	50.0	-	-	-	24.8
1-999	2.0	21.0	1.4	2.9	6.9	9.1	25.0	22.2	50.0	16.7	6.6
1000-2499	18.0	10.5	18.3	25.7	17.2	21.2	-	33.3	50.0	16.7	19.4
2500-4999	24.0	15.8	25.4	40.0	27.6	18.2	25.0	22.2	-	33.3	25.6
5000-7499	14.0	-	12.7	8.6	6.9	3.0	-	11.1	-	-	8.9
7500-9999	8.0	15.8	5.6	8.6	3.4	3.0	-	11.1	-	16.7	7.0
10000-14999	4.0	5.2	-	2.9	3.4	3.0	-	-	-	-	2.3
15000-19999	2.0	-	1.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	16.7	1.2
20000-49999	2.0	-	2.8	-	6.9	-	-	-	-	-	2.0
50000+	6.0	-	4.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.3

North Midlands

A) Absolute Totals

Settlement Population	Date of Foundation: Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
No Data	-	-	-	1	2	5	1	2	1	1	13
1-999	1	-	1	2	7	11	3	2	2	4	33
1000-2499	2	-	3	7	4	14	1	1	1	4	37
2500-4999	-	1	2	6	3	6	1	2	1	4	26
5000-7499	-	2	3	2	-	5	1	-	-	1	14
7500-9999	-	-	1	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	5
10000-14999	-	-	2	2	-	-	1	-	1	-	6
15000-19999	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
20000-49999	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
50000+	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

B) Percentage of All Foundations For Given Period

Settlement Population	Date of Foundation: Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
No Data	-	-	-	4.8	11.8	11.6	12.5	28.6	16.7	7.1	9.1
1-999	25.0	-	7.1	9.5	41.2	25.6	37.5	28.6	33.3	28.6	23.9
1000-2499	50.0	-	21.4	33.3	23.5	32.6	12.5	14.3	16.7	28.6	26.8
2500-4999	-	25.0	14.3	28.6	17.6	14.0	12.5	28.6	16.7	28.6	18.8
5000-7499	-	50.0	21.4	9.5	-	11.6	12.5	-	-	7.1	10.1
7500-9999	-	-	7.1	4.8	5.9	4.7	-	-	-	-	3.6
10000-14999	-	-	14.3	9.5	-	-	12.5	-	16.7	-	4.3
15000-19999	-	-	7.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.7
20000-49999	25.0	-	7.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.4
50000+	-	25.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.7

West Midlands

A) Absolute Totals

Settlement Population	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
	Date of Foundation										
No Data	-	-	3	4	6	7	1	-	1	1	23
1-999	-	-	-	3	3	12	2	1	3	3	27
1000-2499	-	-	5	3	6	5	-	-	-	-	19
2500-4999	3	-	3	4	2	6	1	-	3	1	23
5000-7499	-	-	4	2	4	2	-	-	1	2	15
7500-9999	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	5
10000-14999	-	-	5	4	1	-	-	-	-	1	11
15000-19999	-	1	5	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	9
20000-49999	3	-	9	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	14
50000+	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3

B) Percentage of All Regional Foundations for Given Period

Settlement Population	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
	Date of Foundation										
No Data	-	-	7.7	19.0	23.1	21.9	25.0	-	11.1	11.1	15.4
1-999	-	-	-	14.3	11.5	37.5	50.0	100	33.3	33.3	18.1
1000-2499	-	-	12.8	14.3	23.1	15.6	-	-	-	-	12.8
2500-4999	42.9	-	7.7	19.0	7.7	18.8	25.0	-	33.3	11.1	15.4
5000-7499	-	-	10.3	9.5	15.4	6.3	-	-	11.1	22.2	10.1
7500-9999	-	-	7.7	-	-	-	-	-	11.1	11.1	3.4
10000-14999	-	-	12.8	19.0	3.8	-	-	-	-	11.1	7.4
15000-19999	-	100	12.8	4.8	7.7	-	-	-	-	-	6.0
20000-49999	42.9	-	23.1	-	7.7	-	-	-	-	-	9.4
50000+	14.3	-	5.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.0

South East Midlands

A) Absolute Totals

Settlement Population	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
	Date of Foundation										
No Data	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	3
1-999	-	-	5	21	5	10	3	6	1	6	57
1000-2499	-	-	6	12	9	7	1	4	3	3	45
2500-4999	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	1	1	6
5000-7499	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4
7500-9999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
10000-14999	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
15000-19999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20000-49999	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
50000+	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

B) Percentage of All Regional Foundations For Given Period

Settlement Population	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
	Date of Foundation										
No Data	-	-	-	2.8	6.7	5.6	-	-	-	-	2.4
1-999	-	-	23.8	58.3	33.3	55.6	75.0	60.0	16.7	54.5	46.3
1000-2499	-	-	28.6	33.3	60.0	38.9	25.0	40.0	50.0	27.3	36.6
2500-4999	-	-	9.5	5.6	-	-	-	-	16.7	9.1	4.9
5000-7499	-	-	14.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	9.1	3.3
7500-9999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16.7	-	0.8
10000-14999	-	-	9.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.6
15000-19999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20000-49999	50.0	-	9.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.4
50000+	50.0	-	4.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.6

East/East Anglia

A) Absolute Totals

Settlement Population	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
	Date of Foundation										
No Data	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	2	1	6
1-999	-	-	-	1	1	9	5	4	2	4	26
1000-2499	-	-	3	2	4	8	2	3	6	6	34
2500-4999	2	-	1	6	3	3	-	6	7	5	33
5000-7499	-	-	4	1	-	3	1	1	2	1	13
7500-9999	-	-	1	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	5
10000-14999	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	3
15000-19999	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
20000-49999	1	-	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	5
50000+	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

B) Percentage of All Regional Foundations for Given Period

Settlement Population	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
	Date of Foundation										
No Data	-	-	6.7	-	-	4.2	11.1	-	10.0	5.9	4.7
1-999	-	-	-	8.3	7.7	37.5	55.5	28.6	10.0	23.5	20.2
1000-2499	-	-	20.0	16.7	30.8	33.3	22.2	21.4	30.0	35.3	26.4
2500-4999	50.0	-	6.7	50.0	23.1	12.5	-	42.9	35.0	29.4	25.6
5000-7499	-	-	26.7	8.3	-	12.5	11.1	7.1	10.0	5.9	10.1
7500-9999	-	-	6.7	8.3	23.1	-	-	-	-	-	3.9
10000-14999	-	-	6.7	8.3	-	-	-	-	5.0	-	2.3
15000-19999	-	-	6.7	-	7.7	-	-	-	-	-	1.6
20000-49999	25.0	-	20.0	-	7.7	-	-	-	-	-	3.9
50000+	25.0	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.6

South East

A) Absolute Totals

Settlement Population	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
	Date of Foundation										
No Data	-	-	-	2	1	1	2	2	2	-	10
1-999	-	-	-	3	7	7	5	2	-	2	26
1000-2499	1	-	-	6	6	8	-	1	2	1	25
2500-4999	1	-	2	6	3	3	3	2	5	4	29
5000-7499	1	-	1	6	3	5	-	2	1	1	20
7500-9999	1	-	-	4	4	1	1	-	1	3	15
10000-14999	2	-	1	3	-	2	1	-	1	-	10
15000-19999	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
20000-49999	1	1	7	1	1	-	1	-	2	-	14
50000+	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4

B) Percentage of All Regional Foundations for Given Period

Settlement Population	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
	Date of Foundation										
No Data	-	-	-	6.3	4.0	3.7	15.4	22.2	14.3	-	6.4
1-999	-	-	-	9.4	28.0	25.9	38.5	22.2	-	16.7	16.7
1000-2499	12.5	-	-	18.8	24.0	29.6	-	11.1	14.3	8.3	16.0
2500-4999	12.5	-	13.3	18.8	12.0	11.1	27.1	22.2	35.7	33.3	18.6
5000-7499	12.5	-	6.7	18.8	12.0	18.5	-	22.2	7.1	8.3	12.8
7500-9999	12.5	-	-	12.5	16.0	3.7	7.7	-	7.1	25.0	9.6
10000-14999	25.0	-	6.7	9.4	-	7.4	7.7	-	7.1	-	6.4
15000-19999	-	-	6.7	3.1	-	-	-	-	-	8.3	1.9
20000-49999	12.5	100	46.7	3.1	4.0	-	7.7	-	14.3	-	9.0
50000+	12.5	-	20.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.6

South-West

A) Absolute Totals

Settlement Population	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
	Date of Foundation										
No Data	–	–	1	1	1	2	3	1	1	3	13
1-999	–	–	3	4	5	8	6	3	–	3	32
1000-2499	–	–	2	7	3	4	1	2	4	7	30
2500-4999	2	–	3	6	8	2	1	5	6	7	40
5000-7499	–	1	3	2	2	2	2	–	2	3	17
7500-9999	1	–	3	3	3	–	1	–	1	1	13
10000-14999	–	–	3	–	1	–	–	–	–	2	6
15000-19999	–	–	2	–	–	1	–	1	–	–	4
20000-49999	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2
50000+	–	–	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	4

B) Percentage of All Regional Foundations for Given Period

Settlement Population	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
	Date of Foundation										
No Data	–	–	3.8	4.3	4.3	10.5	21.4	8.3	7.1	11.5	8.1
1-999	–	–	11.5	17.4	21.7	42.1	42.9	25.0	–	11.5	19.9
1000-2499	–	–	7.7	30.4	13.0	21.1	7.1	16.7	28.6	26.9	18.6
2500-4999	66.7	–	11.5	26.1	34.8	10.5	7.1	41.7	42.9	26.9	24.8
5000-7499	–	100	11.5	8.7	8.7	10.5	14.3	–	14.2	11.5	10.6
7500-9999	33.3	–	11.5	13.0	13.0	–	7.1	–	7.1	3.8	8.1
10000-14999	–	–	11.5	–	4.3	–	–	–	–	7.7	3.7
15000-19999	–	–	7.7	–	–	5.3	–	8.3	–	–	2.5
20000-49999	–	–	7.7	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1.2
50000+	–	–	15.3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2.5

Wales

A) Absolute Totals

Settlement Population	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
	Date of Foundation										
No Data	–	–	3	21	6	16	4	4	15	16	85
1-999	–	–	–	2	1	1	–	–	–	–	4
1000-2499	–	–	1	1	1	1	–	–	1	1	6
2500-4999	–	–	1	4	3	4	–	–	5	3	20
5000-7499	–	–	1	2	1	5	1	3	2	2	17
7500-9999	–	–	3	–	–	3	–	–	4	–	10
10000-14999	1	–	–	1	1	–	–	–	4	2	9
15000-19999	1	1	2	1	–	–	–	–	1	–	6
20000-49999	–	–	4	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	5
50000+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

B) Percentage of All Regional Foundations for Given Period

Settlement Population	Pre 1852	1852 -56	1857 -61	1862 -66	1867 -71	1872 -76	1877 -81	1882 -86	1887 -91	1892 -99	Total
	Date of Foundation										
No Data	–	–	20.0	63.6	46.2	53.3	80.0	57.1	46.9	66.7	52.5
1-999	–	–	–	6.1	7.7	3.3	–	–	–	–	2.5
1000-2499	–	–	6.7	3.0	7.7	3.3	–	–	3.1	4.2	3.7
2500-4999	–	–	6.7	12.1	23.1	13.3	–	–	15.6	12.5	12.3
5000-7499	–	–	6.7	6.1	7.7	16.7	20.0	42.9	6.3	8.3	10.5
7500-9999	–	–	20.0	–	–	10.0	–	–	12.5	–	6.2
10000-14999	50.0	–	–	3.0	7.7	–	–	–	12.5	8.3	5.6
15000-19999	50.0	100	13.3	3.0	–	–	–	–	3.1	–	3.7
20000-49999	–	–	26.6	3.0	–	–	–	–	–	–	3.1
50000+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

relative absence of large centres of population seems not to have hampered the proliferation of societies. The region remained unusual during the remainder of the century for the degree to which independent societies were maintained in many small centres, especially in the shoemaking areas of Northamptonshire, increasingly supplemented by developments in the shoe and hosiery districts of Leicestershire.

The South-East Midlands provide an illustration of the speed with which co-operation could spread to smaller communities within industrial districts. Co-operation was often the product of independent initiative amongst groups of workers in manufacturing industry (although not necessarily factory industry), mining and the building trades. Its development was therefore most likely in centres where concentrations of such workers were found. In much of southern England the only locations to fulfil this criterion were the larger towns, giving a more strictly hierarchical pattern to co-operative development. On the coalfields and in other areas with a staple manufacturing industry concentrations of such workers were found in much smaller settlements. Indeed given their often limited commercial and social facilities the appeal of working class self-help projects might have been greatest in such communities. In relation to access to information about co-operation smaller industrial centres may also have been more favoured than their population size alone would suggest. Often clustered closely together the spread of information between neighbouring settlements was probably no more difficult than

between more widely separated larger towns. Moreover, their industrial activity produced longer distance contacts with other areas with a similar economic base both in the regular course of business and through more irregular individual contacts such as provided by migrating workmen, offering a means of spreading co-operation more widely. Whatever the explanation there was a much greater tendency for early co-operative development in smaller population centres in industrial districts than in the rest of the country where diffusion was more hierarchically structured.

Within some manufacturing districts it is difficult to detect any clear hierarchical filtering of co-operation even during the very earliest period of its introduction. This is the case in Northamptonshire. The three earliest societies in the county were recorded in 1858 and it is impossible to assert primacy for any individual. One of the locations was indeed Northampton itself, but the other two were the smaller centres of Long Buckby (1861 population: 2,500) and Wollaston (1861 population: 1,443). As Fig 3.14 shows the immediately subsequent spread in 1859 and 1860 did introduce co-operation to the relatively large centres of Daventry and Wellingborough but there were also a series of foundations in the much smaller neighbouring villages. Several centres with a population of less than 1,000 thus received co-operation before the first evidence of its establishment in the town of Kettering in 1861 or the achievement of the longer distance jump outside the shoemaking districts to Peterborough,

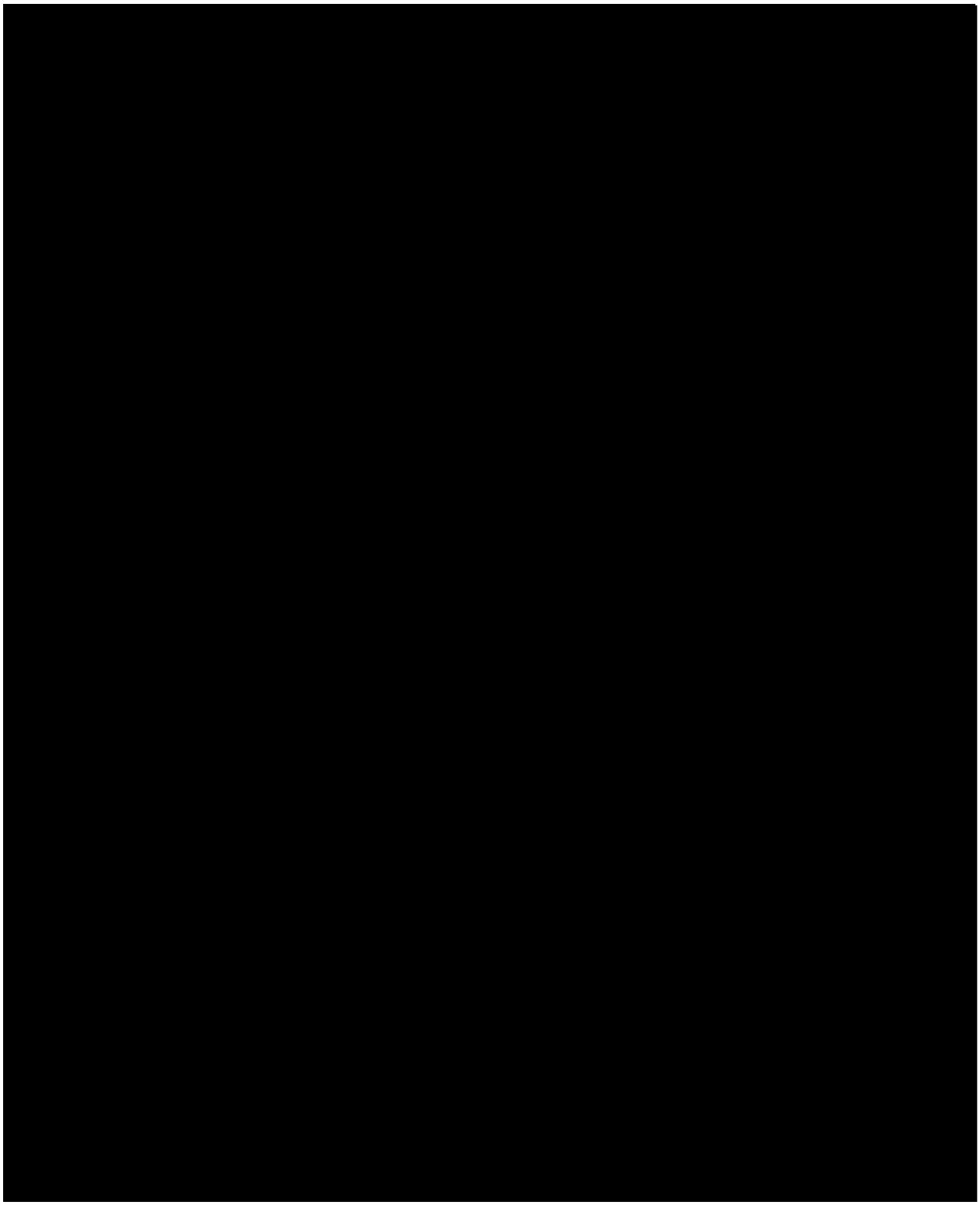

Fig. 3.14. The Spread of Co-operation in Northamptonshire 1858-99: Nearest Neighbour Linkages.

Source: Annual Return of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67 and 1870-99; P.P. 1901 LXXIV.

Northamptonshire's second town, in the same year. The immediate operation of short distance spread to small centres meant that there was no dramatic decline in the average distance between new societies and their nearest established neighbour (the minimum distance which the idea of co-operation would have to travel) during the process of co-operative development in Northamptonshire. The average spacing between the first dozen societies, which if hierachical filtering was operative, might have been expected to be geographically dispersed, was no greater than that of the next group of ten. The increasing number of societies made it likely that the distance separating them would decrease, but this decline was not dramatic (Table 3.11).

There are other examples of co-operative arrival in industrial areas removed from previous centres of adoption through relatively small settlements. The first societies in Cumberland were located on the coalfield. Cleator Moor and Egremont, both with populations of 3-4,000 received co-operation in 1858 some three years ahead of the new society in Carlisle, the much larger county town. It was not, however, the case that the pattern of spread in all industrial areas confounded the hierarchical tendencies shown by the national and regional summaries. Co-operative spread in County Durham may be usefully contrasted with the observations made about Cumberland and Northamptonshire. Fig. 3.15 shows there was a greater tendency in Durham for early spread to be over relatively long distances. Local co-operative development derived largely from the stimulus of

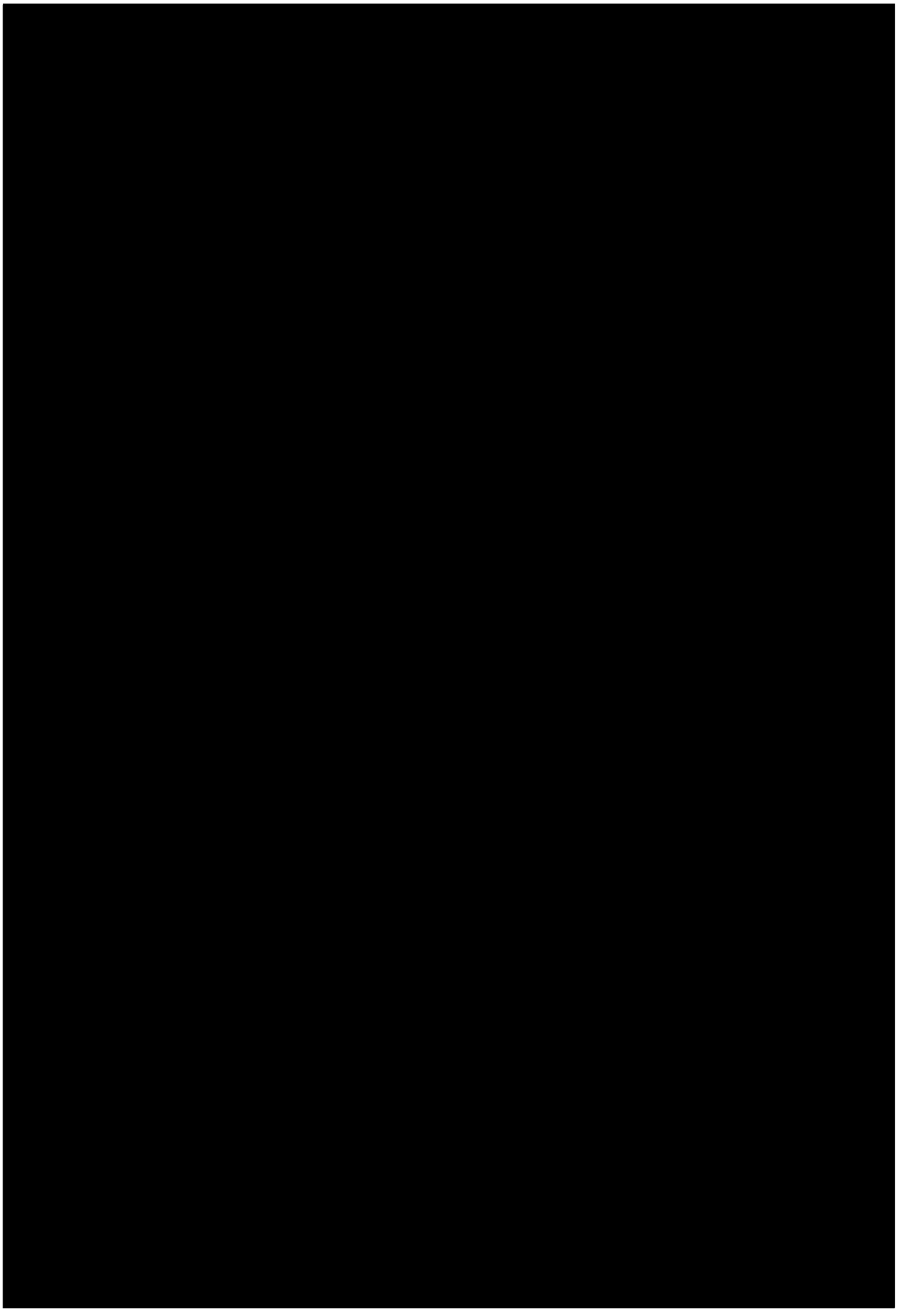

Fig. 3.15. The Spread of Co-operation in County Durham 1858-99: Nearest Neighbour Linkages.

Source: As Fig. 3.14.

Table 3.11. Co-operative Spread in Northamptonshire and County Durham 1858-99: Straight Line Distance of New Societies From Nearest Established Neighbour.(22)

Date of Foundation	No. Societies Established During the Period	Average Distance from Nearest Neighbour (miles)
A) Northamptonshire		
1858-60	12	4.2
1861-62	10	6.3*
1863	10	2.1
1864-66	13	3.1
1867-73	10	3.4
1874-89	10	2.5
1890-99	7	2.6
B) County Durham		
1858-61	16	5.9
1862-63	11	3.4
1864-67	10	3.9
1868-70	10	2.3
1871-74	15	2.1
1875-99	10	1.7

*If the long distance leap outside the shoemaking districts to Peterborough is excluded, this is reduced to 4.0 miles.

its introduction at Blaydon in 1858, from where it spread to other centres in the Tyneside conurbation and in the first phase it also travelled to other large centres of population throughout the county - only Stockton of the towns with a population of over 10,000 had no experience of co-operation by 1861. Thus the average distance between new societies and their nearest neighbours showed a greater decline than in Northamptonshire (Table 3.11). This reflected the contrast between the early more hierarchically structured development

and later localised spread amongst the industrial villages of the coalfield.

Although Northamptonshire and Durham both date the start of their successful co-operative development from the same year the detailed spatial pattern of this achievement was dissimilar. The contrasts between the two areas are a useful warning against expectations of too great a uniformity in the pattern of diffusion of a single innovation. Spread takes place across a territory which already has a distinctive structure, not only in terms of physical geography, but also the form of human society. The different settlement patterns, economy and society of contrasting areas such as Northamptonshire and Durham not only influence the degree to which an innovation spreads at all but also the spatial and hierarchical pattern which it assumes. Certain established features and practices take on an especial relevance in influencing the pattern of diffusion of individual innovations. In the case of co-operation a particular importance might be expected to have been attached to the existing distribution of private retailers and established shopping habits.

The more extended urban hierarchy in County Durham produced a distribution pattern of private grocery and provision shops which was concentrated in the largest centres. The ten towns with the largest number of these shops in 1858 accounted for 52.2 per cent of the county total, an over-representation compared with their 44.2 per cent of the county population in 1861.[22] The larger centres were serving

a population beyond their own immediate boundaries, including that of the smaller settlements on the adjacent coalfields. With this established practice amongst the mining population of shopping in the larger centres it might be expected that co-operation would not immediately spread to smaller communities. Established habits were only slowly changed with miners initially joining societies founded in their nearest large shopping centre rather than immediately embarking on their own independent ventures.[23] By contrast in Northamptonshire there were fewer major centres of population and the largest shopping centres were much less dominant. Indeed the towns with the ten largest groups of grocery and provision shops accounted for only 28.7 per cent of the county total in 1854 as opposed to their 30.8 per cent of its population in 1861.[24] In Northamptonshire individual small communities were more self-reliant in their retail provision producing a more dispersed pattern of private grocers. Thus if the pattern of co-operative development did indeed reflect established shopping habits it would be expected, as actually happened, that societies would be more prevalent from the start amongst the smaller centres.

Co-operative spread is a valuable example of the difficulty of the search for regularities in the pattern of geographical diffusion. It appears that the spread of co-operation is best considered as an amalgam of several different elements with individuals amongst them predominating in certain areas. The clearest common feature

to settlements making the earlier co-operative developments was the presence of relatively large numbers of workers in manufacturing, mining or construction. In some areas such concentrations were found only in the larger towns giving a hierarchical structure to co-operative diffusion. Elsewhere growth was achieved through spread between smaller neighbouring industrial communities.[25] The established settlement pattern and the general structure of the local economy and society were thus not only an influence on the presence or absence of co-operation, they also affected the detailed pattern of its spatial spread.

The nature of co-operation as an innovation was such that it showed a greater degree of flexibility and variety in the pattern of its diffusion than many of the examples previously studied by geographers which were often only appropriate to particular types or sizes of settlement.[26] As the basic trade of co-operatives was in foodstuffs any market size threshold would have been very low and there was no barrier of this sort necessarily to restrict early co-operative development to the larger centres. Moreover, although co-operation was based on the establishment of a commercially successful store the inspiration behind individual foundations was rather different from that of many entrepreneurial innovations. Devoid for much of the nineteenth century of any overall co-ordinating body, stores were usually established by local groups as a response to their immediate problems of food supply, price and quality. In such circumstances considerations of the relative market potential or

profitability of location in different areas or different sized population centres were not an influence on the adoption process. Some co-operatives were, of course, prompted more by the influence of outside groups than local working class initiative. However, the thinking behind such developments was often as much socially as commercially inspired. A contrast may be drawn between efforts made late in the century by national co-operative federations to establish stores in locations previously resistant to co-operative progress which were aimed particularly at larger centres capable of generating a satisfactory trade and the rationale for attempts by middle class liberals to promote co-operative development. The latter were concerned not with commercial opportunities but the introduction of the advantages of co-operation to the disadvantaged poor. The enthusiasm of the clergy and gentry was particularly important in extending co-operation to some rural areas. Attention from the middle class and from groups such as agricultural trades unions was thus targetted at smaller and often remote agricultural villages, areas which would not have been expected to have readily come into contact with co-operative ideas in a simple case where the volume of information flow was a function of population size and the sequence of adoption reflected an aim of exploitation of market opportunities in a larger to smaller sequence.

The expansion of co-operation may be contrasted with the development of chains of branch stores by emerging multiple

retailers during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The financing and co-ordination of growth by a single concern led to an expansion that was less dramatic than the sudden flowering of the many independent co-operative stores during the eighteen fifties and sixties, and one that was rather differently patterned. Multiple retailers selected locations for new stores from a range of possible urban centres with the object of maximizing commercial returns. The decision making behind such developments accords much more closely than was the case for co-operation with reasons suggested for the hierarchical filtering of innovation diffusion.[27] Thus the spread of branch stores of the multiple chains to the largest urban areas was not accompanied by a vigorous undergrowth of development in smaller centres.[28]

If commercial reasons for the hierarchical structuring of diffusion are not particularly relevant in the case of co-operation there remains the issue of information flow. It has been suggested that hierarchical filtering reflects a simple mechanism with the probability of development depending on the chance that a potential adopter living in a given settlement will learn of the innovation, a chance which declines with settlement size. Such a process may have been an element in co-operative spread but it was clearly only an element and not a complete explanation. As has already been suggested the chance of individuals in a particular settlement learning of co-operation was a function of factors other than simple population size. The social and economic character of a settlement affected not only the total volume

of its contacts with centres elsewhere but also their spatial pattern and the probability that they included links with areas where co-operation was already successfully established.

It is useful, moreover, to consider the potential for a different hierarchical and spatial sequence in various aspects of co-operative development. The sequence of adoption may not necessarily have reflected that of information flow but rather the selective application of an idea more widely known in settlements where, as a consequence of local circumstances it was perceived to be especially advantageous. It is difficult to trace the pattern of such an illusive process as the spread of an idea in the abstract but there is evidence from some individual settlements of interest in co-operation several years before any recorded practical experiments. A later chapter will return to the issue of the spread of information about co-operation - the available mechanisms and their spatial patterning - taking it as a central theme.

But there are other stages of co-operative development to be examined; between which indeed there was divergence in their spatial and temporal patterning. The sequence of first establishment of co-operation is not necessarily a clear guide to the geography of its subsequent growth. Early co-operative foundations cannot always be equated with later strength of membership. Some indication of this divergence has already been given in the reference made to society

failures. However, in the following chapter the divergent experience of co-operation in different areas is further explored as attention is turned to the growth of co-operative membership and sales.

NOTES

1. Journal of Association 28 June 1852; see also St. Andre 1854, Appendix 93-96.
2. This is significantly higher than previous estimates such as that of 130 societies given in Clapham 1926, 599. The present figures exclude productive societies in trades such as clothing and footwear which retailed their own output. Baking societies which sold bread as opposed to co-operatives which milled flour only have been included with the general retailing societies.
3. PRO FS 1, FS 8; Ch.Soc. 1850-52; Leader 1850-53; Co-op. 1860-61; P.P. 1863 XXIX; P.P. 1864 XXXIII; P.P. 1865 XXX; P.P. 1866 XXXIX; P.P. 1901 LXXIV. Regions are those shown on Fig. 1.6.
4. PRO FS 8; Co-op. 1860-61; Annual Return of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67 and 1870-1901.
5. Cliff et al 1981, 9.
6. As note 3 plus P.P. 1863 LIII Pt. I.
7. There had been earlier societies in Radnor at Knighton 1868-72 and Abbey Cwm Hir 1871-75.
8. P.P. 1902 XCVI.
9. As note 4.
10. PRO FS 1, FS 8; Annual Return of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67 and 1870-1901.
11. Cole 1944, 148-78.

12. Brown & Cox 1971.

13. Quoted Haggett et al 1977, 240.

14. Robson 1973, 165.

15. PRO FS 1, FS 8; Annual Return of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67 and 1870-72; P.P. 1873 LXXXI Pt. II.

16. The rankings of the South-East Midlands and Wales are rather higher than might have been expected. This may reflect the small number of urban centres involved in the calculations for these two regions.

17. PRO FS 8; Annual Return of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67; Co-operator 1860-61; P.P. 1863 LIII Pt. I.

18. As note 10 plus P.P. 1852-53 LXXXVI; P.P. 1863 LIII Pt. I; P.P. 1873 LXXI Pt. II; P.P. 1883 LXXX; P.P. 1893-94 CVI; P.P. 1904 CVIII.

19. As note 18.

20. As note 18.

21. As note 4.

22. Kelly 1858; P.P. 1863 LIII Pt. I.

23. Spread of membership into surrounding districts by an urban society is noted in Sunderland Co-operative Society 1863.

24. Kelly 1854; P.P. 1863 LIII Pt. I.

25. Although as County Durham showed other complicating factors sometimes gave a more hierarchical structure to the initial stages of diffusion.

26. Many studies have taken as their subject large scale investments which were only appropriate to major urban centres, including some of the examples discussed in Robson 1973 and work on more modern themes such as Berry 1972 on television stations.

27. Berry 1972, 342.

28. E.g. Bird and Witherwick 1986, see also Mathias 1967.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GEOGRAPHY OF CO-OPERATIVE RETAILING $\subseteq$1850-1901: THE GROWTH OF MEMBERSHIP AND SALES.

I

The establishment of co-operative societies, the pattern and sequence of which was described in Chapter Three, produced the basis for the growth of the movement. For a more complete assessment of the changing geography of co-operative strength it is necessary to flesh out this skeleton with a consideration of the progress made by societies in attracting members and increasing their trade. Perhaps the diffusion process should correctly be viewed as having two stages: the macro-scale national diffusion of the organisational form of co-operative societies and the complementary micro-scale process of the recruitment of individual members by an established society. The stability of elements within the national pattern of co-operation depended on the successful local spread of membership and the consequent increase in custom. As figures already given indicate many societies did not win sufficient local support and consequently failed (Table 3.5). Yet others achieved considerable growth, enough in total to be the force behind the steady increase in national co-operative membership and sales that was largely sustained throughout the second half of the nineteenth century; even during periods, notably 1874-82, when society numbers were declining (Figs. 1.3, 1.4 and 3.13).

Several of the standard co-operative histories include tabulations of the annual national totals of membership and sales for part of the second half of the ninetenth century.

However, it is disconcerting to find that the two series of figures for co-operative membership in Great Britain given by Potter and Cole while recording approximately the same totals disagree in detail for the years in which they overlap.[1] Nor is one series consistently higher than the other. In the absence of any information about the source of these totals or the precise manner in which they were calculated it is difficult to speculate on the origins of the differences. Neither treatment pays particular attention to the geography of co-operative strength, the only indication of variation coming through brief verbal description. Potter does, however, reinforce her account with details of co-operative sales per hundred of the population in 1889 mapped and tabulated using parliamentary constituencies as the geographical base.[2]

Cole clearly felt that the shortcomings of the available data precluded a complete presentation of co-operative growth. There seems no reason, however, why he could not have included a regional breakdown of the figures he does give. He noted, referring specifically to the data for co-operative membership

> There are no figures earlier than 1873 accurate enough to be given; but from that date the available statistics give a sufficient impression of the rate and continuity of growth.[3]

Such comments indicate that it is imperative to begin with an examination of the nature of the available data. Certainly

the charting of co-operative growth becomes progressively more difficult the further back one attempts to penetrate. Strongly based on independent control of local societies co-operation lacked for significant periods of its history the co-ordination required for the collection of comprehensive statistics. It was apparent from previous discussion of early co-operation that only isolated and speculative totals of membership and sales could be given to gauge development during the first half of the century. For this period it is easier to find evidence of the existence of individual societies than even the most basic details of their operations.[4]

For the latter half of the nineteenth century there are two important new data sources: the statistics collected and published by the Co-operative Union (1881-) and the official annual returns made by societies to the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies (1862-).[5] Although an advance on previous sources both suffered, particularly in their early years, from the failure of some individual societies to supply the required information. They therefore demand careful use. Because of their greater time span the returns of the Registrar of Friendly Societies have been used as the chief data source in the present work. With correction for obvious errors and discrepancies and compensation for omissions they provide a valuable record of co-operative progress during the last four decades of the nineteenth century.[6] As statements were submitted by individual societies it is possible to combine the figures in a variety of ways; in this chapter

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advantage has been taken of this flexibility to present co-operative statistics at a variety of spatial scales. The results of the national summation of membership and sales data have already been briefly noted (Figs. 1.3 and 1.4). Here the pace of this growth and its reflection in the changing organisational structure of co-operation are examined in more detail. Attention is devoted chiefly to the geography of the expansion of co-operative membership. The consideration of co-operative growth within a regional framework is complemented by a presentation of material at the finer scale of registration districts. Finally attention is turned to the differential performance of societies in individual urban centres distinguished by the size of their population.

II

The aim of this chapter is to clarify the geographical variation in the magnitude and timing of development which was indicated by consideration of society foundations. Chapter Three took as its starting point a cross-sectional view of society numbers in 1851/52 and its seems logical in consequence that the present discussion should begin by presenting what information can be obtained about the totals of membership and sales represented by the 192 societies known to have been extant at this date. The available details for individual co-operatives do not cover the total of recorded stores; membership figures can be obtained for

eighty societies and sales figures for fifty seven (Table 4.1). At best only estimated national totals can be suggested based on the appropriate multiplication of these sample figures. As the available data include material for a few societies of a size unlikely to have been generally matched it was decided to treat societies with a membership of over 200 or annual sales in excess of £5,000 separately in calculations. With the figures for the largest societies taken as a constant the average figures for sales and membership of the remaining societies were multiplied to produce estimated national totals. The result is the suggestion of a national co-operative membership of ≤20,000 and annual sales of ≤£250,000 at mid century.

Although the speculative nature of all early estimates of co-operative strength suggest that judgements should be made with caution, it seems likely that co-operation in the early fifties had not recovered the level of support it had enjoyed twenty years earlier. The smaller number of societies at mid century was not fully offset by the greater size of individual concerns. The inclusion of Scottish societies increased the national estimated membership for 1851/52 to ≤30,000, a figure which may be compared with the ≤52,000 suggested for Great Britain in the early thirties. The differences may be exaggerated as the use of the total of 700 societies claimed in 1831 in the calculation of the earlier figure perhaps overstates the support achieved at any one time. Moreover, the society total used for the fifties may be below the true figure as it includes only stores for which

Table 4.1. Co-operative Retail Societies in England and Wales 1851-52: Membership and Annual Sales.(7)

Society	Membership	Sales (£)
Bacup Economical	300	10,362
Banbury	68	
Bank Lane	17	160
Bingley Industrial	54	1,300
Bingley Peaceful Dove	28	
Birmingham Friendly	>100	
Blackley	24	520
Bolton	97	2,080
Bradford	81	1,400
Brickfield	75	2,080
Brighton	57	
Burnley	53	780
Bury Redemption	125	2,300
Bury Bridge	24	
Castleton	26	
Chadderton	50	1,352
Colne	13	800
Coventry Labourers	723	
Crewe	67	2,079
Crumpsall	54	1,040
Elton (Lancs)	24	572
Golborne	36	100
Greenwich Bread & Flour	87	
Halifax Working Men's	240	3,640
Harpurhey	50	1,040
Haslingden	90	50
Haydock	133	
Heywood	280	6,240
Leaven Green	40	300
Lees	60	800
Leigh	57	1,040
Limehouse	70	800
Littleborough	40	1,040
Liverpool Temperance	26	300
London Charlotte St.	140	3,120
London Newham St.	35	
Lowton	60	
Macclesfield	35	
Manchester Garratt Road	155	1,716
Manchester Rochdale Road	90	6,240
Middlesbrough	40	390
Middleton & Tonge	160	2,400
Newsome	39	2,080
Oakenrod	23	884
Oldham Auxiliary Mutual	166	3,232
Oldham Glodwick Lane	150	2,436
Oldham Greenacres Hill		1,404
Oldham Mutual Benefit	60	1,040
Padiham	125	3,300
Peckleton	20	
Pig's Leigh (Lancs)	30	676
Pimlico	31	600
Plumstead	264	2,278
Portsea	80	
Preston Stonygate	98	3,640
Ramsbottom	28	520
Ripponden	142	10,766
Rochdale	670	18,000
Rooden Lane	26	624
Royton	78	1,404
Salford	30	624
Shaw	65	1,560
Shawforth	40	680
Sheerness Provision	852	8,240
Sheffield	30	118
Simister Lane	21	
Steps	60	2,500
Swindon	164	
Swinton	164	
Todmorden	56	832
Tongfold	8	
Whitefields	48	1,040
Whitworth	110	600
Whitstable	108	2,000
Willsden	30	624
Woolwich	80	
Woolwich Baking	240	

there is evidence of presence or foundation in the years 1850-52. It thus excludes societies founded in the late forties of whose existence there is no subsequent record. It is likely that some were still trading in the early fifties but the numbers involved cannot be judged. It is not impossible that there were still other societies extant at mid century of which no record at all has survived. Thus the totals given here while an increase on previous estimates are still probably incomplete.

Whatever the true size of the excess of co-operative strength in the thirties over that of the early fifties it is certain that the earlier total was quickly surpassed in the growth of the second half of the century. Figures for 1862, the first of the series of annual totals which cover the remainder of the century, show a marked increase on those of ten years earlier. Membership of consumers' co-operative societies in England and Wales had risen to ≤102,000 - an increase of over 400 per cent - and with a growth of business of over 800 per cent the level of sales per member had nearly doubled to give a national total of ≤£2,361,000. If the performance of co-operative flour and milling societies, excluded from earlier totals, are added to the 1862 figures these rise to ≤121,000 and ≤£2,781,000 respectively.[8]

Clearly growth during this period was considerable but it is hard to give precise details of its timing. It seems likely that progress was more rapid in the period after 1857 when the national total of societies began to climb sharply

than in the previous five years when overall numbers were more stable (Fig. 3.13). Even for established societies it might be expected that a general increase in interest in co-operation would lead to faster expansion in the later years. This was the case at Rochdale where membership of the Pioneers' society increased by 2,050 1857-61, representing 63.7 per cent of the total for 1852-61.[9] Growth was achieved not only through the expansion of society numbers already outlined (Figs. 3.2 and 3.13) but also through an increase in the size of individual societies. Although there were already a few large societies by 1851/52, the vast majority were very small by the standards established during the second half of the ninetenth century.[10] Many of the societies which survived to 1862 grew considerably during the decade and new societies were generally larger than those that failed. As Table 4.2 indicates the size distribution of societies measured by both membership and sales changed markedly between 1851/52 and 1862 with increasing percentages in the larger size categories and a particular decline in the contribution of the smallest size class.

After 1862 it is possible to present a more detailed series of annual totals of membership and sales. Membership in England and Wales (Fig. 1.3) showed rapid and unbroken growth throughout the whole period rising from ≤121,000 in 1862 to ≤1,366,000 in 1899. Sales (Fig 1.4) also increased markedly from ≤£2,781,000 in 1862 to ≤£38,729,000 in 1899 if current market values are taken. The increase was even

Table 4.2. Co-operative Retail Societies in England and Wales: Size Distribution by Membership and Annual Sales 1851/52 and 1862.(11)

Membership Total	No. of Societies 1851/52 Absolute	%	No. of Societies 1862 Absolute	%
<25	10	12.50	10	2.14
25-49	19	23.75	99	21.24
50-74	17	21.25	72	15.45
75-99	11	13.75	43	9.23
100-199	13	16.25	120	25.75
200-499	5	6.25	82	17.60
>500	5	6.25	40	8.58
Total Societies for which data available	80	100.00	466	100.00

Annual Sales Total (£)	No. of Societies 1851/52 Absolute	%	No. of Societies 1862 Absolute	%
<500	7	12.28	27	6.05
500-999	16	28.07	66	14.80
1000-1999	13	22.81	105	23.54
2000-4999	14	24.56	151	33.86
5000-9999	3	5.26	54	12.11
>10000	4	7.02	43	9.64
Total Societies for which data available	57	100.00	446	100.00

sharper if notional figures are calculated using constant retail prices; from c.£2,505,000 to c.£46,106,000. These latter figures give an increase for the whole period of 1700 per cent against that of 1300 per cent calculated for current market value sales totals.[12] There were some reversals in the growth of sales which are reduced but not eliminated if account is taken of changing retail prices. The most significant checks occurred in 1877-79 and 1891-93, both periods of falling industrial output and high unemployment. Such conditions would be expected to have reduced sales.

Indeed total consumers' expenditure was depressed during these years (Fig. 1.5).[13] It appears, however, that unemployment peaks in the late eighteeen sixties and mid eighties did not have an equal effect. The pace of growth of current value sales figures was reduced but there was no decline as in the the seventies and nineties. Moreover, when changes in retail prices are taken into account the effect on sales growth is greatly reduced in the eighteen eighties.

Variation in the pace of co-operative growth is seen more clearly if the totals for the annual growth of membership and sales are examined. Figure 4.1 expresses the two series of annual increases in a standardised form and shows the general coincidence in the timing and degree of deviation from average absolute growth. The trend to increased growth over time is complicated by considerable short term variation. With the figures for membership in particular it is possible to discern a break in the upward trend with the progress of the eighteen sixties and early seventies being interrupted by a severe curtailment of growth during the slump of the later seventies. Subsequent increase in the absolute total of membership growth began a new upward trend from this lower level.

The discontinuity marked by the late eighteen seventies is more apparent if annual year on year percentage growth rates are used (Figs. 4.2 and 4.3). Again it is the membership figures which show this break most clearly. Comparison of the two presentations of membership and sales data show that while the pace of absolute growth generally

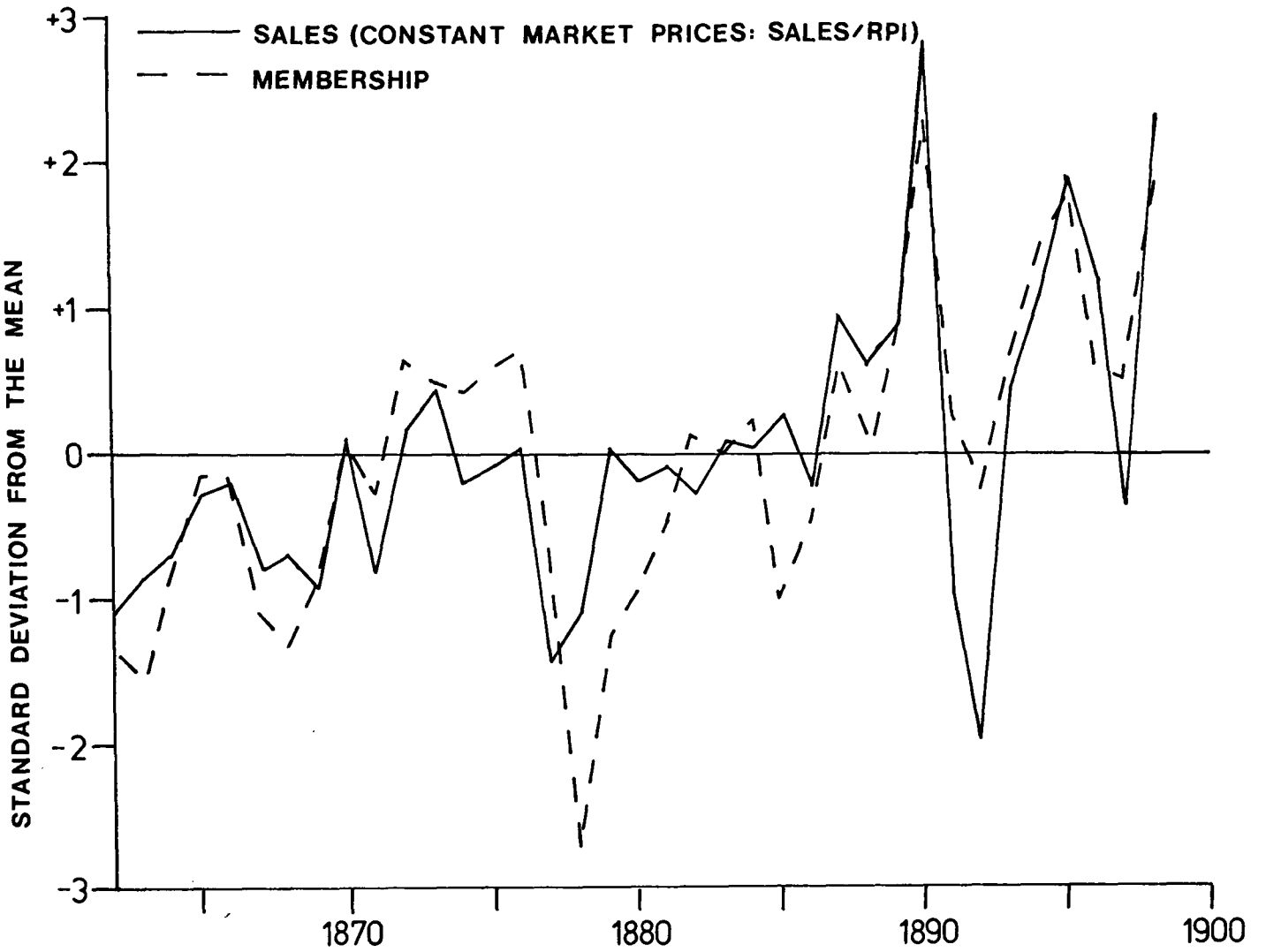

Fig. 4.1. Co-operative Retailing Society Membership and Sales for England and Wales 1862-99: Annual Growth Expressed as Deviations from the Annual Average Growth for the Period as a Whole.

Source: Calculated from data derived from Annual Returns of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67 and 1870-99.

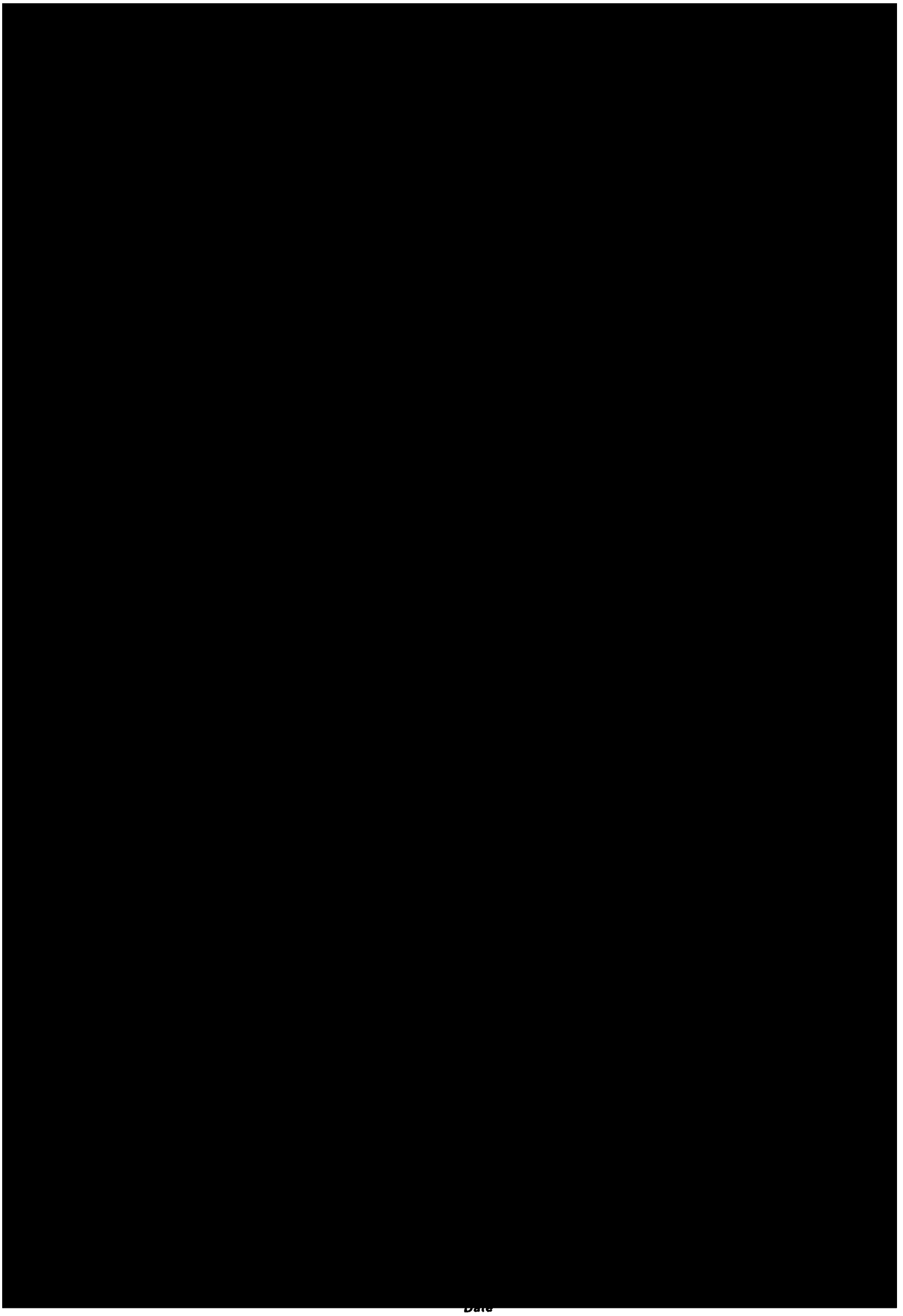

Fig. 4.2. Annual Percentage Growth of Co-operative Retail Society Membership in England and Wales 1862-99 Compared with Estimated UK Unemployment Rates for the Same Period.

Source: Calculated from data derived from Annual Returns of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67 and 1870-99; Feinstein 1972, T125.

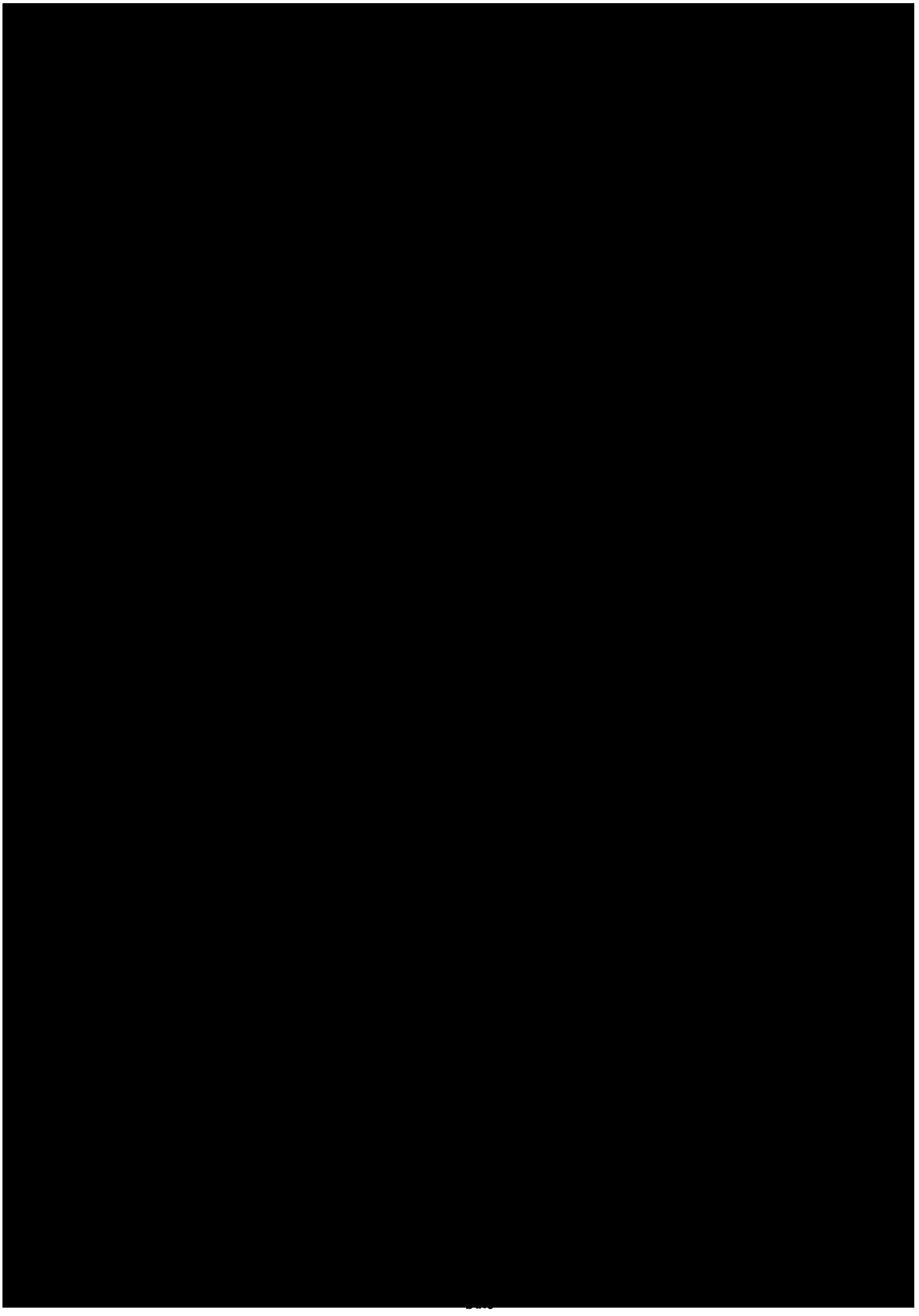

Fig. 4.3. Annual Percentage Growth of Co-operative Retail Society Sales in England and Wales 1862-99 Compared with Estimated UK Unemployment Rates for the Same Period.

Source: As Fig. 4.2.

increased over time it was not sufficient to prevent a decline in the percentage growth rates. By the last quarter of the century co-operative membership in some areas of established strength would have been so high that there was a reduced potential for further expansion except in line with population growth. In the remainder of the country co-operation was only just beginning by the late nineteenth century to establish a permanent network of societies, as opposed to the often ephemeral earlier introductions, which would allow the substantial long term increase of membership. This yielded results with the major expansion of co-operation in southern and Midland England during the first half of the present century. The pattern of Figure 4.2 is interesting, however, as it shows a single discontinuity separating periods of high and low growth with little discernable long term trends within the periods, rather than a gradual decline in percentage growth rates over time.

Figures 4.2 and 4.3 show clearly the cyclical variations in the pace of co-operative expansion. In the past contradictory opinions have been voiced about the effect of the changing pace of general economic growth on co-operative progress.[14] Clapham suggested that any effect was minimal and Fay claimed that co-operative trade increased during depression

> because spending power is concentrated on the necessaries which they in particular supply.[15]

There are local observations which support such a view, in

1875 it was reported from the North-East

> The grocers, drapers and other tradesmen are suffering very much; but while this is a fact with tradesmen, it has struck me as very remarkable that many of the co-operative stores are doing a larger amount of business than they have been doing before, and in particular I find this is the case at Jarrow. The co-operative store there has done about a thousand pounds more business this quarter than ever it did before.[16]

The national figures show that major fluctuations in the pace of co-operative growth followed general economic trends. Peaks of unemployment in 1868, 1878/79 and 1893 coincided with a marked reduction in the rate of co-operative expansion (Figs. 4.2 and 4.3); indeed in the last three years sales showed an absolute decline. High unemployment in 1886 affected co-operative recruitment but seems not to have markedly depressed the rate of growth of sales. Moreover, the preceding period of full employment did not produce the rapid expansion of sales associated with similar periods in the mid sixties, early seventies and early nineties. The effect of depression on the curtailment of co-operative growth was immediate; by contrast there was commonly a lag of at least a year between the lowest point of unemployment and the peak of co-operative increase.

During an economic downturn the number of potential members able to spare money for the payment of the initial entrance fee would have been reduced and some members were lost to co-operation as they withdrew their entire capital

from their society.[17] In extreme cases this completely eliminated co-operation locally by precipitating society failures, elsewhere a reduction in the inflow of new members combined with a cut in the purchasing power of existing customers produced an absolute decline of sales during the worst periods of depression. However, the effect was more usually to slow the pace of expansion rather than throw it into reverse. The trade in basic foodstuffs would never have collapsed completely and some co-operative members by virtue of their savings were in a financially more favoured position than the majority of workers. In times of hardship capital was withdrawn from various working class savings institutions in an attempt to offset falling incomes.[18] The spending of accumulated co-operative dividends may have encouraged a greater degree of loyalty to the store than normally prevailed. Moreover, the long term transfer of custom from private traders to co-operatives seems to have continued during depressions. But even if a co-operative was increasing its local market share this may not have been sufficient to offset a decline in the total volume of trade allowing a store to continue its growth.

III

It seems appropriate to complement the description of national growth of co-operation by a consideration of the changing organisational structure of the movement. The increasing membership was accommodated not only through the expansion of society numbers but also by the growth of

individual societies. Such a pattern of growth has already been noted during the period 1851/52-62, the consequent changes in the size distribution of societies being shown on Table 4.2 This was a process which continued throughout the century with some societies assuming considerable sizes.[19] Thus by 1901 the Leeds society, the largest in the country with nearly fifty years of expansion behind it, had at 48,960, a membership greater than the national total at mid century. No other society approached such a size; the membership of the second ranking society in 1901, interestingly located at Plymouth somewhat removed from the main area of co-operative strength, was 28,579. However, the expansion of society size was general. In many cases it was the societies founded during the major co-operative expansion of the years 1857-61 which experienced the most significant growth, and contributed most largely to the total membership at the turn of the century. As Table 4.3 shows those co-operatives of this vintage still extant in 1901 made up 14.1 per cent of all societies but included 36.5 per cent of membership. This classification of societies by their date of establishment shows the general tendency of the earlier foundations to make a more than proportional contribution to total membership. This was a combination of the extended period available for their growth and the inclusion amongst their number of societies located in the larger centres of population where the potential for continued local expansion was greatest.[21] The consequences of this growth for the

Table 4.3. Co-operative Retail Society Numbers and Membership 1901 by Date of Foundation.(20)

Foundation Date	% of Total Societies	% of Total Membership
Pre 1847	1.2	2.1
1847-51	2.7	8.9
1852-56	1.9	2.5
1857-61	14.1	36.5
1862-66	11.3	11.6
1867-71	10.1	11.3
1872-76	13.4	8.3
1877-81	5.0	2.7
1882-91	19.0	11.1
1892-1901	21.2	4.9

structure of co-operative organisation are shown on Table 4.4. The number of societies in the larger size categories increased progressively throughout the second half of the century with the result that by 1901 over one third of all co-operators were in societies with a membership in excess of 7,000; a far cry from the position in 1862 when the largest single society, that at Leeds, had only 3,771 members.

The growth of individual societies is a crude indicator of their changing nature. Stores began with the formalization of a grouping of friends and workmates that was usually already established. Although recruitment often continued to rely significantly on a network of personal contacts it was impossible to maintain a high degree of association amongst the entire membership of the largest societies. While the small village stores, like the communities of which they were often an important part, could continue to operate as a unitary social grouping as well as a single commercial concern there developed within the larger societies

Table 4.4. Co-operative Retail Societies: Size Distribution by Membership 1862, 1881 and 1901.(22)

Membership Total	No. of Societies Absolute	% of Total	No. of Members Absolute	% of Total
A) 1862				
0-99	225	46.8	12080	10.6
100-199	121	25.2	16840	14.8
200-299	46	9.6	10992	9.6
300-499	37	7.7	13483	11.8
500-999	36	7.5	24696	21.6
1000-2999	11	2.3	17825	15.6
3000-6999	5	1.0	18200	15.9
7000-13999	-	0.0	-	0.0
>14000	-	0.0	-	0.0
B) 1881				
0-99	240	25.6	14011	2.6
100-199	220	23.5	31271	5.7
200-299	144	15.4	35239	6.5
300-499	105	11.2	39482	7.2
500-999	104	11.1	73846	13.5
1000-2999	91	9.7	157651	28.9
3000-6999	27	2.9	125867	23.1
7000-13999	5	0.5	47967	8.8
>14000	1	0.1	19889	3.6
C) 1901				
0-99	166	13.8	9665	0.6
100-199	198	16.4	29070	1.9
200-299	146	12.1	36372	2.4
300-499	189	15.7	73880	4.9
500-999	202	16.7	139900	9.2
1000-2999	192	15.9	323854	21.4
3000-6999	69	5.7	321267	21.2
7000-13999	31	2.6	301955	20.0
>14000	13	1.1	276531	18.3

alternative foci for the association of smaller groups of members. The developing educational and social activities of societies, which received an important boost with the foundation of the Women's Co-operative Guild in 1883, brought many of the more committed co-operators into regular contact.

Some of these groupings drew their support from amongst the entire membership of a large co-operative but others preserved a more geographically resticted basis of association with the organisation of bodies such as the Guild through individual branch stores. Some branches were also provided with their own communal facilities, such as reading rooms to serve the immediate neighbourhood. For the membership as a whole the primary point of contact and identification was often with the particular store at which they did most of their shopping. This was given more formal expression by the practice of some co-operatives of holding quarterly meetings for each branch in addition to that for the society as a whole.

While expansion tended to dissipate the social focus of individual co-operatives it did mean that by the later decades of the century the largest societies were considerable commercial undertakings. Co-operatives at Barnsley, Bolton, Newcastle, Oldham, Pendleton and Plymouth all had sales in excess of half a million pounds in 1901 and the Leeds society was pre-eminent with a figure of over £1.4 million. A further twenty eight societies had sales of between a quarter and a half a million pounds in the same year.[23] In many instances co-operatives accounted for a substantial percentage of trade in their local areas. Some societies had come a long way from their invariable origins in a single small store - a literal measure of this advance is presented on Table 4.5. Not all societies made equal

progress; for some this was a reflection of weakness, others were located in smaller communities where despite the limited potential for major expansion their local importance was often greater than that of societies in the cities. The multiplication of society numbers and the continuing local focus of co-operation meant that most societies never progressed beyond a single store. However, as a corollary of their increasing size the larger concerns developed chains of branch stores. Although the bulk of this development took place in the later years of the century with the results shown on Table 4.5 some northern societies were amongst the earliest multiple retailers. In 1861 it was reported that the Liverpool Provident society had three branches, the Manchester and Salford Equitable five, the Leeds society had ten branches, and the larger of the societies in Stockport

four, all in addition to their central stores. This process was a result of a combination of pressure from members for

Table 4.5. Number of Stores Operated by Co-operative Societies in England and Wales, 1881 and 1900. (25)

Number of Stores per Society	Number of Societies 1881	%	1900	%	Number of Stores 1881	%	1900	%
1	818	80.9	727	62.1	818	45.3	727	20.8
2	73	7.2	140	12.0	146	8.1	280	8.0
3	35	3.5	84	7.2	105	5.8	252	7.2
4	18	1.8	57	4.9	72	4.0	228	6.5
5	10	1.0	30	2.6	50	2.8	150	4.3
6	12	1.2	15	1.3	72	4.0	90	2.6
7	8	0.8	14	1.2	56	3.1	98	2.8
8	11	1.1	13	1.1	88	4.9	104	3.0
9	4	0.4	9	0.8	36	2.0	81	2.3
10	2	0.2	14	1.2	20	1.1	140	4.0
>11	20	2.0	68	5.8	343	19.0	1341	38.4
Total	1101		1171		1806		3491	

more conveniently sited shops and the enterprise of committee men in attempting to open new areas to co-operative trade. In the larger towns and cities successful societies opened branches throughout the working class suburbs. Enterprising societies in smaller towns such as Banbury, Lincoln and Ipswich also used chains of branches to colonize country districts and neighbouring towns; although some societies used travelling vans rather than fixed shops to serve less densely populated districts.

IV

Having presented the trends of national co-operative growth in a more accurate and complete form than previously available attention can now be turned to the geography of this expansion. The basic outlines can usefully be presented within a regional framework. This demonstrates the varying experience of different areas in the importance of co-operative trading, the timing and extent of co-operative growth and the manner in which it was achieved. The broad outlines of the geographical concentration of co-operative strength in northern industrial England are, of course, well known but this has tended to overshadow consideration of the development of co-operation in other areas.[26] Chapter Three made clear that while co-operative foundations were particularly numerous in the main northern population centres they were also found throughout most of the remainder of England and Wales. These repeated efforts to develop co-

operation and the eventual success of some southern societies have remained largely unconsidered.[27] Moreover it is not without interest to examine areas in which co-operative success was long delayed or very limited despite repeated attempts to start societies, rather than as a reflection of an absence of co-operative involvement.

Although it is difficult to describe precisely the timing and geography of co-operative growth in the decade 1851/52 to 1862 it is possible to suggest the basic outlines of expansion. The geographical distribution of societies in 1851/52 (Fig. 3.1) indicates their clustering: the core area of south-east Lancashire, the West Riding and the adjacent parts of Cheshire and Derbyshire accounted for ≤74 per cent of the national total. As several of the societies in this core were amongst the largest in the country (Table 4.1) it seems likely that a still higher percentage of national membership and sales were concentrated in this area. Indeed given this concentration co-operation may have been stronger in the core area at mid century than it was in the same districts in the early thirties. As Table 4.6 shows it was in the northern regions that the largest number of societies are known to have survived through the eighteen fifties, during which period many of them considerably increased their membership (Table 4.7). Indeed much of co-operative expansion in the years 1851/52 to 1862 was achieved by growth in centres where societies were already present at mid century. There were 101 locations where co-operation was recorded at both dates, although activity was not necessarily continuous

in the intervening period. Membership estimates suggest an increase in these locations from ≤18,000 in 1851/52 to ≤57,000 in 1862. This growth represented just under half the national total.

Table 4.6. Survival of Co-operative Retail Societies 1851/52 to 1862: Distribution by Region.(28)

Region	No. of Societies 1851/52	No. of 1851/52 Societies still extant 1862
North	6	2
North-West	92	31
Yorkshire	48	20
North Midlands	6	4
West Midlands	8	2
South-East Midlands	2	2
East/East Anglia	3	-
South-East	9	2
Metropolitan	13	4
South-West	3	3
Wales	2	-
Total	192	68

Table 4.7. Individual Co-operative Retail Society Membership Growth, 1851/52 to 1862.(29)

Society	Membership 1851/52	Membership 1862
Bacup	300	2006
Brickfield	75	314
Crewe	67	579
Haslingden	90	389
Heywood	280	750
Lees	60	239
Littleborough	40	482
Middleton & Tonge	160	388
Oldham, Glodwick Road	150	100
Rochdale	670	3501
Shaw	65	320
Steps	60	320
Swinton	67	85
Whitworth	110	341
Bingley	54	175
Halifax	240	3502
Ripponden	142	186
Todmorden	56	485
Sheerness Provision	852	670
Woolwich	80	275
Swindon	164	42

As most new foundations were products of the latter part of the decade they were still small in 1862 and did not make a contribution to total membership proportional to their number. Also their geographical concentration did little to alter the existing pattern of co-operative strength; 46 per cent of new societies 1852-61 were located in the North-West and Yorkshire regions (Table 3.1). As a result of the combination of growth by established societies and their reinforcement with new foundations these two regions accounted for ≤65 per cent of the estimated national growth of membership and ≤75 per cent of the increase of sales during the decade. Although this expansion was probably concentrated towards the end of the period it is likely to have been continuous. Elsewhere co-operative progress was seemingly more chequered. Particularly in southern England the societies of the early fifties must be presumed to have quickly failed. As their loss was not immediately balanced by new foundations during the mid fifties (Table 3.1) and two of the three surviving societies for which data are available declined in membership, co-operation probably lost strength in much of southern England during the mid fifties. In Wales it had very little strength to lose.

In most regions the real beginnings of co-operative growth may be dated from the upturn in the rate of society foundations already identified in the period 1857-61. The publication of the first annual returns of co-operative membership, trade and finances by the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies in 1862 thus comes at an interesting time.

Co-operation, already well established in the North-West and Yorkshire, was starting to grow in other regions. In some areas, notably the North and the South-East Midlands the societies founded 1857-61 were the vanguard of regional co-operative strength; in others such as the West Midlands and London, the potential of expanding society numbers in the late eighteen fifties was only partially fulfilled. For much of the rest of England and Wales substantial absolute, as against percentage, growth of membership and sales was longer delayed and their share of national totals remained modest throughout the century.[30]

The sequence of growth can be seen from an examination of the regional totals for sales and membership given in Tables 4.8 and 4.9. The disparity between the North-West and Yorkshire regions and the rest of the country is obvious. Although the percentage contributed by these two regions to the national total inevitably declined as co-operation expanded in other areas, together they still accounted for over 50 per cent of both membership and sales in 1901. Moreover, new growth in the sixties and seventies was largely concentrated in the North region so that for the first half of the period the share of the national total contributed by northern England as a whole increased. London, the major centre of co-operative strength in the remainder of the country at the beginning of the period, failed to match the subsequent pace of expansion in other areas. Its share of the national total drifted erratically downwards so that by 1901

Table 4.8. Co-operative Retail Society Membership, Regional Totals 1862-1901.(31)

	1862	% of National Total	1866	% of National Total	1871	% of National Total
North	10947	9.1	22742	12.8	46171	16.2
North-West	42758	35.3	64405	36.1	98089	34.3
Yorkshire	36626	30.1	47399	26.5	74071	25.9
N. Midlands	5001	4.1	6558	3.7	12232	4.3
W. Midlands	4277	3.5	4195	2.4	8416	2.9
S.E. Midlands	2091	1.7	5733	3.2	9300	3.3
E/E. Anglia	1454	1.2	3052	1.7	3968	1.4
South-East	2627	1.9	3980	2.0	6920	2.3
Metropolitan	7700	6.6	8728	5.1	10405	3.7
South-West	5783	4.8	7841	4.4	10377	3.6
Wales	1975	1.6	3573	2.0	5767	2.0
England & Wales	121239	100	178206	100	285716	100

	1876	% of National Total	1881	% of National Total	1886	% of National Total
North	75448	16.7	90836	16.6	127071	17.9
North-West	153137	34.0	182480	33.4	225451	31.8
Yorkshire	121403	27.0	147648	27.0	174353	24.6
N. Midlands	24736	5.5	32744	6.0	43404	6.1
W. Midlands	14902	3.3	15397	2.8	19041	2.7
S.E. Midlands	14680	3.3	17215	3.1	23367	3.3
E/E. Anglia	6213	1.4	9384	1.7	16030	2.3
South-East	8265	1.8	12006	2.2	20325	2.9
Metropolitan	9444	2.1	12792	2.3	24686	3.5
South-West	13349	3.0	18820	3.4	27440	3.9
Wales	8500	1.9	7957	1.5	8640	1.2
England & Wales	450077	100	547279	100	709808	100

	1891	% of National Total	1896	% of National Total	1901	% of National Total
North	160837	17.0	191821	16.4	252030	16.7
North-West	287781	30.4	351379	30.0	430080	28.4
Yorkshire	217618	23.0	265372	22.7	328327	21.7
N. Midlands	59146	6.3	76580	6.6	101647	6.7
W. Midlands	30056	3.2	40168	3.4	59316	3.9
S.E. Midlands	28752	3.0	39028	3.3	53367	3.5
E/E. Anglia	24832	2.6	37528	3.2	50666	3.3
South-East	35306	3.7	46885	4.1	69687	4.6
Metropolitan	38547	4.1	38340	3.3	48967	3.2
South-West	43830	4.6	57026	4.9	84437	5.6
Wales	19582	2.1	24028	2.1	34695	2.3
England & Wales	946287	100	1168155	100	1513219	100

Table 4.9. Co-operative Retail Society Sales (Constant Prices), Regional Totals 1862-1901.(32)

	1862		1866		1871	
	£	% of National Total	£	% of National Total	£	% of National Total
North	165455	6.7	490807	11.1	1293773	16.6
North-West	1186253	48.0	1909612	43.2	3031814	38.9
Yorkshire	687503	27.8	1221721	27.7	2125853	27.3
N. Midlands	84934	3.4	136160	3.1	274592	3.5
W. Midlands	77221	3.1	87508	2.0	179095	2.3
S.E. Midlands	33072	1.3	107888	2.4	174964	2.2
E/E. Anglia	22955	0.9	47197	1.1	67900	0.9
South-East	39246	1.6	66690	1.5	127444	1.6
Metropolitan	88235	3.6	124524	2.8	176898	2.3
South-West	86423	3.5	128006	2.9	161178	2.1
Wales	34041	1.4	98134	2.2	173537	2.2
England & Wales	2469836	100	4418246	100	7787049	100

	1876		1881		1886	
	£	% of National Total	£	% of National Total	£	% of National Total
North	2358964	18.1	2952621	18.5	4561229	21.0
North-West	4825287	37.0	5670460	35.5	7380492	34.0
Yorkshire	3599052	27.6	4537448	28.4	5577159	25.7
N. Midlands	590545	4.5	758695	4.8	939687	4.3
W. Midlands	320234	2.5	322299	2.0	414882	1.9
S.E. Midlands	321412	2.5	368655	2.3	535316	2.5
E/E. Anglia	116196	0.9	191610	1.2	362074	1.7
South-East	178581	1.4	299055	1.9	532093	2.5
Metropolitan	238374	1.8	278797	1.7	581959	2.7
South-West	239633	1.8	333328	2.1	508439	2.3
Wales	261617	2.0	239706	1.5	299591	1.4
England & Wales	13049896	100	15952674	100	21692919	100

	1891		1896		1901	
	£	% of National Total	£	% of National Total	£	% of National Total
North	6800956	21.3	7743205	20.5	10603646	21.7
North-West	9936457	31.2	12062260	31.9	14218122	29.1
Yorkshire	7947603	24.9	9168109	24.2	11169747	22.8
N. Midlands	1566286	4.9	2076559	5.5	2930419	6.0
W. Midlands	724026	2.3	881609	2.3	1323889	2.7
S.E. Midlands	707933	2.2	1010202	2.7	1382544	2.8
E/E. Anglia	582357	1.8	915106	2.4	1210297	2.5
South-East	977886	3.1	1128569	3.0	1612222	3.3
Metropolitan	909221	2.9	787688	2.1	1173852	2.4
South-West	870744	2.7	1173764	3.1	1730393	3.5
Wales	870647	2.7	903383	2.4	1527905	3.1
England & Wales	31894118	100	37850454	100	48883037	100

it made the second smallest contribution, despite being the largest region measured by the size of its population.

The regional pattern of strength is made clearer if membership is expressed in relation to population (Table 4.10). This shows that while the North-West had the largest single concentration of co-operators, the movement was proportionately stronger in Yorkshire. The rapid growth of membership in the North region to a proportion comparable with that of Yorkshire pushed the North-West back into third place by 1891. The strength of co-operation in the small South-East Midland region is also revealed; by 1901 it had the fourth highest membership:population ratio just ahead of the North Midlands, the only other region to lie above the national average at this date. Further evidence is provided of the lack of co-operative success in London. Despite the large number of society foundations it was during the eighteen sixties and seventies merely marking time in step

Table 4.10. Proportional Strength of Co-operative Retail Society Membership in Relation to Population, by Region, 1862-1901.(33)

Region	Co-operative Membership per 1,000 Population				
	1862	1871	1881	1891	1901
North	8.1	28.1	46.3	72.5	100.8
North-West	14.6	28.9	44.4	61.7	82.5
Yorkshire	20.2	34.2	57.7	76.0	102.2
North Midlands	4.9	11.0	25.4	42.1	62.6
West Midlands	2.3	4.0	6.5	11.6	20.7
South-East Midlands	4.2	17.0	27.5	40.5	67.3
East/East Anglia	0.9	2.4	5.5	13.9	26.3
South-East	1.1	2.9	4.7	12.3	22.2
Metropolitan	2.5	2.7	2.6	7.0	7.5
South-West	2.4	4.2	7.5	17.0	31.1
Wales	1.5	4.1	5.0	11.0	17.2
England & Wales	6.0	12.6	21.1	32.6	46.5

with population growth whilst all other regions were making greater relative progress. Consequently by the time it made some advance in the eighteen eighties the Metropolitan region was bottom of the list and a failure to maintain the improvement during the nineties left it well adrift by 1901.[34]

A comparison of the two sets of figures for the distribution of membership and sales indicates that the latter were more concentrated in certain areas than the former giving regional variations in the level of sales per member (Table 4.11). Average sales per member showed a general upward progression from the eighteen sixties until the early eighteen nineties, after which the total declined slightly in many regions. During the earlier period of growth, however, no single region showed a continuous increase in the level of sales.[36] Sales per member were consistently above the national average in the North-West,

Table 4.11. Average Annual Co-operative Retail Sales per Member at Constant Prices, by Region, 1862-1901 (£).(35)

Region	1862	1866	1871	1876	1881	1886	1891	1896	1901
North	15.1	21.6	28.0	31.3	32.5	35.9	42.3	40.4	42.1
North-West	27.7	29.7	30.9	31.5	31.1	32.7	34.5	34.3	33.1
Yorkshire	18.8	25.8	28.7	29.6	30.7	32.0	36.5	34.5	34.0
N. Midlands	17.0	20.8	22.4	23.9	23.2	21.6	26.5	27.1	28.8
W. Midlands	18.1	20.9	21.3	21.5	20.9	21.8	24.1	21.9	22.3
SE. Midlands	15.8	18.8	18.8	21.9	21.4	22.9	24.6	25.9	25.9
E./E. Anglia	15.8	15.5	17.1	18.7	20.4	22.6	23.5	24.4	23.9
South-East	14.9	16.8	18.4	21.6	24.9	26.2	27.7	24.0	23.1
Metropolitan	11.5	14.3	17.0	25.2	21.8	23.6	23.6	20.5	24.0
South-West	14.9	16.3	15.5	18.0	17.7	18.5	19.9	20.6	20.5
Wales	17.2	27.5	30.1	30.8	30.1	34.7	44.5	37.6	44.0
England & Wales	20.4	24.8	27.3	29.0	29.1	30.6	33.7	32.4	32.3

and Yorkshire and the North climbed above this level from 1866 and 1871 respectively. The North indeed was markedly above the average by 1891. The three northern regions were distinguished as areas where co-operation was not only numerically strong in its membership but also important as a source of supplies to each individual member and perhaps, also to the wider community as purchase by non-members may have inflated the level of sales per member. Within each year there is a rough correlation between the absolute level of co-operative strength and the proportional strength expressed

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as sales per member. The one major exception to this equation is Wales where from the mid sixties onwards a high rate of sales per member prevailed despite co-operation's overall weakness. This should be related to the nature of the communities in which most Welsh societies were located; there, as in the North region where comparable levels of sales were recorded, societies developed in mining communities that were both relatively prosperous and relatively isolated, often with a low level of retail provision. Thus where a co-operative society was successfully established it was in a good position to capture a high percentage of local trade.

A convenient summary of the progress of co-operation measured by its membership and of the shifting location of

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areas of rapid percentage growth is provided on Table 4.12 which by comparing the growth rates of individual regions with the national average indicates the extent to which

Table 4.12. Regional Percentage Shift of Co-operative Retail Society Membership, 1862-1901.(39)

Region	Actual Membership Change (A)	% Change	National Growth Component (B)	% Change	Total Shift (A-B)	% A Minus % B
A) 1862-66						
North	11795	106.5	5544	47.0	6251	59.5
North-West	21647	50.6	2009	47.0	1551	3.6
Yorkshire	10773	29.5	17153	47.0	-6380	-17.5
N. Midlands	1557	31.1	2350	47.0	-793	-15.9
W. Midlands	-82	-1.9	2010	47.0	-2092	-48.9
S.E. Midlands	3642	174.2	983	47.0	2659	127.2
E./E. Anglia	1598	109.9	683	47.0	915	62.9
South-East	1284	55.0	1098	47.0	186	8.0
Metropolitan	1097	13.7	3756	47.0	-2659	-33.3
South-West	2058	35.6	2718	47.0	-660	-11.4
Wales	1598	80.9	928	47.0	670	33.9
B) 1866-71						
North	23468	102.6	13792	60.3	9676	42.3
North-West	33684	52.3	38836	60.3	-5152	8.0
Yorkshire	26633	56.3	28503	60.3	-1870	-4.0
N. Midlands	5674	86.5	3954	60.3	1720	26.2
W. Midlands	4221	100.6	2530	60.3	1691	40.3
S.E. Midlands	3567	62.2	3457	60.3	110	1.9
E./E. Anglia	980	32.1	1840	60.3	-860	-28.2
South-East	3077	85.0	2183	60.3	894	24.7
Metropolitan	1476	16.2	5480	60.3	-4004	-44.1
South-West	2536	32.3	4728	60.3	-2192	-28.0
Wales	2194	61.4	2155	60.3	39	1.1
C) 1871-76						
North	29200	63.0	26646	57.5	2554	5.5
North-West	55048	56.1	56401	57.5	-1353	-1.4
Yorkshire	47409	64.2	42493	57.5	4916	6.7
N. Midlands	12504	102.2	7033	57.5	5471	44.7
W. Midlands	6416	76.2	4839	57.5	1577	18.7
S.E.Midlands	5450	58.6	5348	57.5	102	1.1
E./E. Anglia	2181	54.1	2318	57.5	-137	-3.4
South-East	1548	23.1	3851	57.5	-2303	-34.4
Metropolitan	-1100	-10.4	6074	57.5	-7174	-67.9
South-West	2972	28.6	5967	57.5	-2995	-28.9
Wales	2733	47.4	3316	57.5	-583	-10.1

Region	Actual Membership Change (A)	% Change	National Growth Component (B)	% Change	Total Shift (A-B)	% A Minus % B
D) 1876-81						
North	15295	20.2	16241	21.5	-946	-1.3
North-West	29343	19.2	32924	21.5	-3581	-2.3
Yorkshire	26338	21.7	26082	21.5	256	0.2
N. Midlands	8008	32.4	5318	21.5	2690	10.9
W. Midlands	565	3.8	3189	21.5	-2624	-17.7
S.E. Midlands	2465	16.7	3171	21.5	-706	-4.8
E./E. Anglia	3171	51.0	1336	21.5	1835	29.5
South-East	3757	45.6	1773	21.5	1984	24.1
Metropolitan	2961	31.3	2035	21.5	926	9.8
South-West	5471	41.0	2870	21.5	2601	19.5
Wales	-543	-6.4	1828	21.5	-2371	-27.9
E) 1881-86						
North	36235	39.9	27069	29.8	9166	10.1
North-West	42971	23.5	54379	29.8	-11408	-6.3
Yorkshire	26705	18.1	43999	29.8	-17294	-11.7
N. Midlands	10660	32.6	9758	29.8	902	2.8
W. Midlands	3644	23.7	4588	29.8	-944	-6.1
S.E. Midlands	6152	35.7	5130	29.8	1022	5.9
E./E. Anglia	6646	70.8	2796	29.8	3850	41.0
South-East	8287	69.0	3577	29.8	4710	39.2
Metropolitan	12297	99.0	3703	29.8	8594	69.2
South-West	8675	46.1	5608	29.8	3067	16.3
Wales	683	8.6	2371	29.8	-1688	-21.2
F) 1886-91						
North	33766	26.6	42315	33.3	-8549	-6.7
North-West	62330	27.6	75075	33.3	-12745	-5.7
Yorkshire	43265	24.8	58060	33.3	-14795	-8.5
N. Midlands	15742	36.3	14454	33.3	1288	3.0
W. Midlands	11015	57.8	6341	33.3	4674	24.5
S.E. Midlands	5385	23.0	7781	33.3	-2396	-10.3
E./E. Anglia	8802	54.9	5338	33.3	3464	21.6
South-East	14822	73.1	6756	33.3	8066	39.8
Metropolitan	14020	56.7	8232	33.3	5788	23.4
South-West	16335	59.4	9156	33.3	7179	26.1
Wales	10942	126.6	2877	33.3	8065	93.3

Region	Actual Membership Change (A)	% Change	National Growth Component (B)	% Change	Total Shift (A-B)	% A Minus % B
G) 1891-96						
North	30710	19.1	37636	23.4	-6926	-4.3
North-West	63598	22.1	67341	23.4	-3743	-1.3
Yorkshire	48028	22.1	50923	23.4	-2895	-1.3
N. Midlands	17434	29.5	13840	23.4	3599	6.1
W. Midlands	10112	33.6	7033	23.4	3079	10.2
S.E. Midlands	10276	35.7	6728	23.4	3548	12.3
E./E. Anglia	12469	50.2	5811	23.4	6658	26.8
South-East	12222	34.8	8216	23.4	4006	11.4
Metropolitan	-623	-1.6	9066	23.4	-9689	-25.0
South-West	13196	30.1	10256	23.4	2940	6.7
Wales	4446	22.7	4582	23.4	-136	-0.7
H) 1896-1901						
North	60483	31.6	56506	29.5	3977	2.1
North-West	78701	22.4	103657	29.5	-24956	-7.1
Yorkshire	62681	23.6	78366	29.5	-15685	-5.9
N. Midlands	25067	32.7	22591	29.5	2476	3.2
W. Midlands	19148	47.7	11850	29.5	7298	18.2
S.E. Midlands	14339	36.7	11513	29.5	2826 -	7.2
E./E. Anglia	13365	35.8	11004	29.5	2361	6.3
South-East	22354	47.2	13963	29.5	8391	17.7
Metropolitan	10848	28.5	11245	29.5	-397	-1.0
South-West	27411	48.1	16823	29.5	10588	18.6
Wales	10667	44.4	7088	29.5	3579	14.9

regional shares of the national total changed. Co-operative spread in the late fifties and early sixties produced an increase in the share of the North, South-East Midland, East/East Anglia, South-East and Welsh regions during 1862-66. In absolute numbers, however, this growth was concentrated in the South-East Midlands and, particularly in the North. In the other regions (with the exception of the North-West which managed a percentage gain that was slightly above average, although a substantial increase in absolute numbers, perhaps because despite its strength it was starting in 1862 from a point of depressed membership during the cotton famine) growth was below average. Indeed in the West Midlands there was a small absolute fall in numbers. It was really only in the North, however, that the momentum of above average growth was maintained during the later sixties. The percentage growth rate in the North subsequently tailed off as the established base of membership increased, but the region's share of the national total was only marginally reduced during the eighteen eighties and nineties (Table 4.8). In southern England growth quickly fell back below average with the exception of the South-East which had not recorded growth comparable with its neighbours during 1862-66. The performance of the South-East 1862-71 and the pattern of society foundations in the same period (Table 3.2) suggests that it lagged behind other regions in its trend of growth. The generally lower levels of growth in southern England and Wales 1866-76 reflect the way in which the increase in the membership of those relatively few societies

which became firmly established at this early date was offset by a larger number of society failures (Table 3.5). In the South-East Midlands, however, loss of momentum was due not so much to failure as to the limited potential for growth faced by many of the societies in the region. Independent societies were established in small communities in the footwear and hosiery producing areas that were experiencing only limited population growth, rather than their being served by societies based in the larger towns such as Kettering, Northampton and Wellingborough. Thus a society once established was unlikely to experience a rapid influx of new members. It was the North and the West Midlands which showed some of the strongest growth 1866-76, although in the latter case the region's share of the national total remained below the level of 1862. Indeed the West Midlands pursued a rather eccentric growth pattern with periods of above average increase 1866-76 and 1886-1901 being interspersed with relative decline 1862-66 and 1876-86.

There was a further shift southwards in the areas of greatest percentage growth from the late eighteen seventies onwards, although overall growth rates were markedly lower than in the first part of the period (Fig. 4.2). The relative improvement in the performance of the southern regions thus reflected their maintenance of existing rates in the face of falling national averages rather than a sustained growth in their percentage rate of increase compared with the pre 1876 period. This also helps to explain the relative revival of the South-East Midlands. After 1876 the non-metropolitan

southern regions consistently showed above average growth and for the years 1876-91 London fell into line with them. Indeed it outstripped their performance to become the fastest growing region in the early eighteen eighties. This was not maintained and the region returned to below average growth; showing a small absolute loss 1891-96. The return of rapid percentage growth to Wales was the most long delayed of any region. Yet its impressive performance 1886-91, admittedly starting from a base that was the smallest of all the regions, was not matched in the nineties despite a recovery to above average growth 1896-1901.

V

Regional totals of membership as a measure of co-operative progress between 1862 and 1899 are plotted on Fig. 4.4. This clarifies the upward trend of membership indicated by the periodic regional figures (Table 4.8)[40]. The absolute figures show the very different strength of co-operation in the individual regions. The two largest regional concentrations of co-operative membership, the North-West and Yorkshire were also the only areas not to have experienced an absolute decline of membership for any individual year during the period 1862-99. Amongst the remaining regions London, the West Midlands and Wales are confirmed as areas where co-operative growth was particularly prone to interruption. The absolute figures have also been used to calculate a

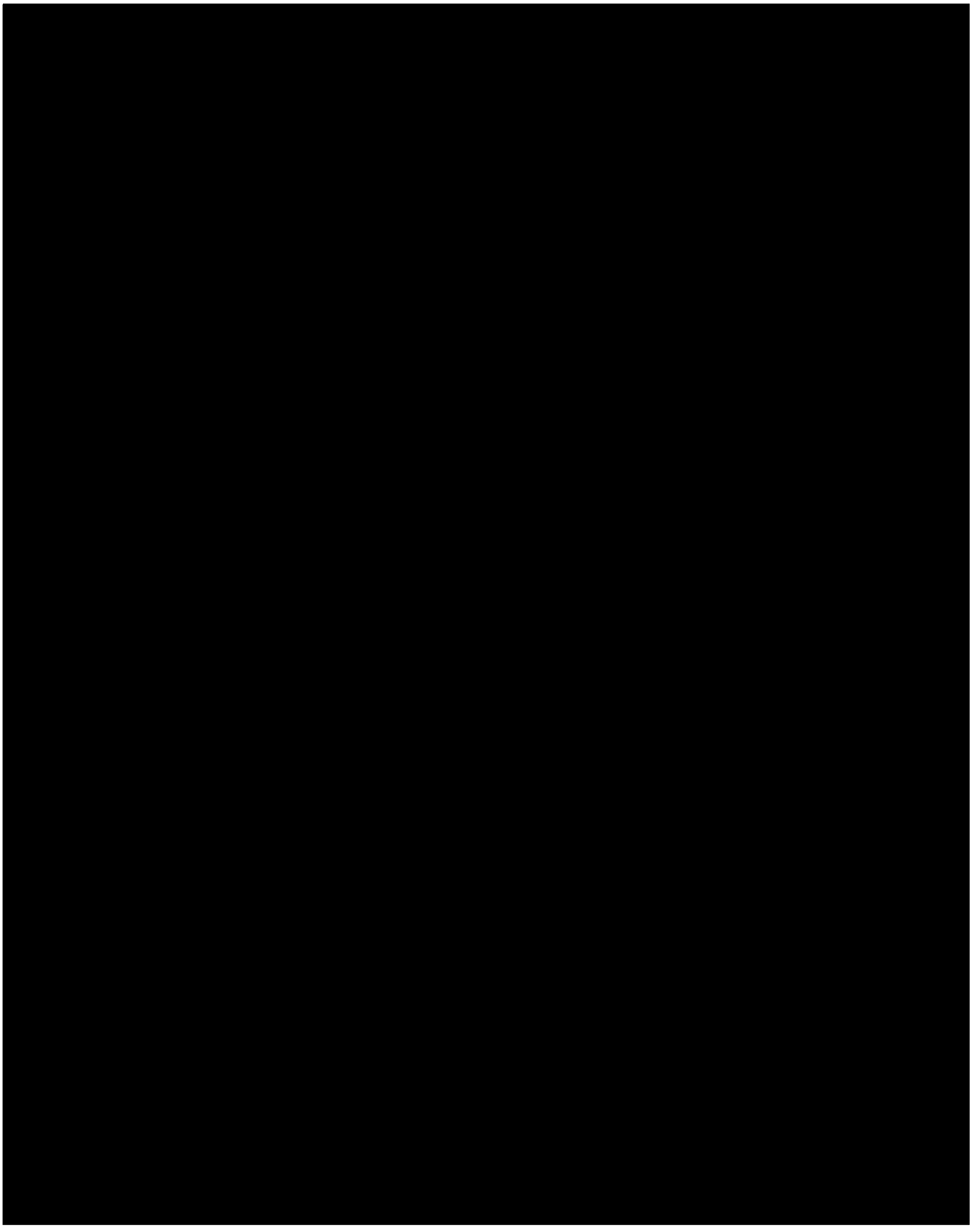


Fig. 4.4. Annual Totals of Co-operative Retail Society Membership by Region 1862-99.

Source: Annual Returns of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67 and 1870-99.

standardised index, annual membership totals being expressed as a percentage of the 1901 figure and it is in this form that they are represented on Fig. 4.5. The index figures allow the comparison of the timing of co-operative growth between regions.

Starting from a position of established strength in 1862 the North-West and Yorkshire regions had a percentage of their 1901 membership already enrolled in any given year that was consistently above the national average. They both exceeded 25 per cent of the 1901 total by 1873 and 50 per cent by 1885 (Fig. 4.5A). Their level of membership was bettered only by the Metropolitan region during the eighteen sixties and 1886-93, but this was the product of very different circumstances from those in the two northern regions. The pattern in London (Fig. 4.5C) reflected not an early penetration of the local population by co-operation of comparable depth to that in the north, but the failure of metropolitan initiatives to meet with any consistent success in the period to 1901. The overall trend towards increasing annual growth of membership gives the growth paths on Fig. 4.5A a slight concavity. Indeed the check to membership growth associated with the depression of the late seventies produced a double concavity. However, membership did not expand at a rate sufficient to maintain the annual percentage growth at the high levels generally prevailing before the late seventies. Thus the regional percentage growth rates show a pattern very similar to the national figures (Fig. 4.2) of a marked discontinuity between the initial high rates

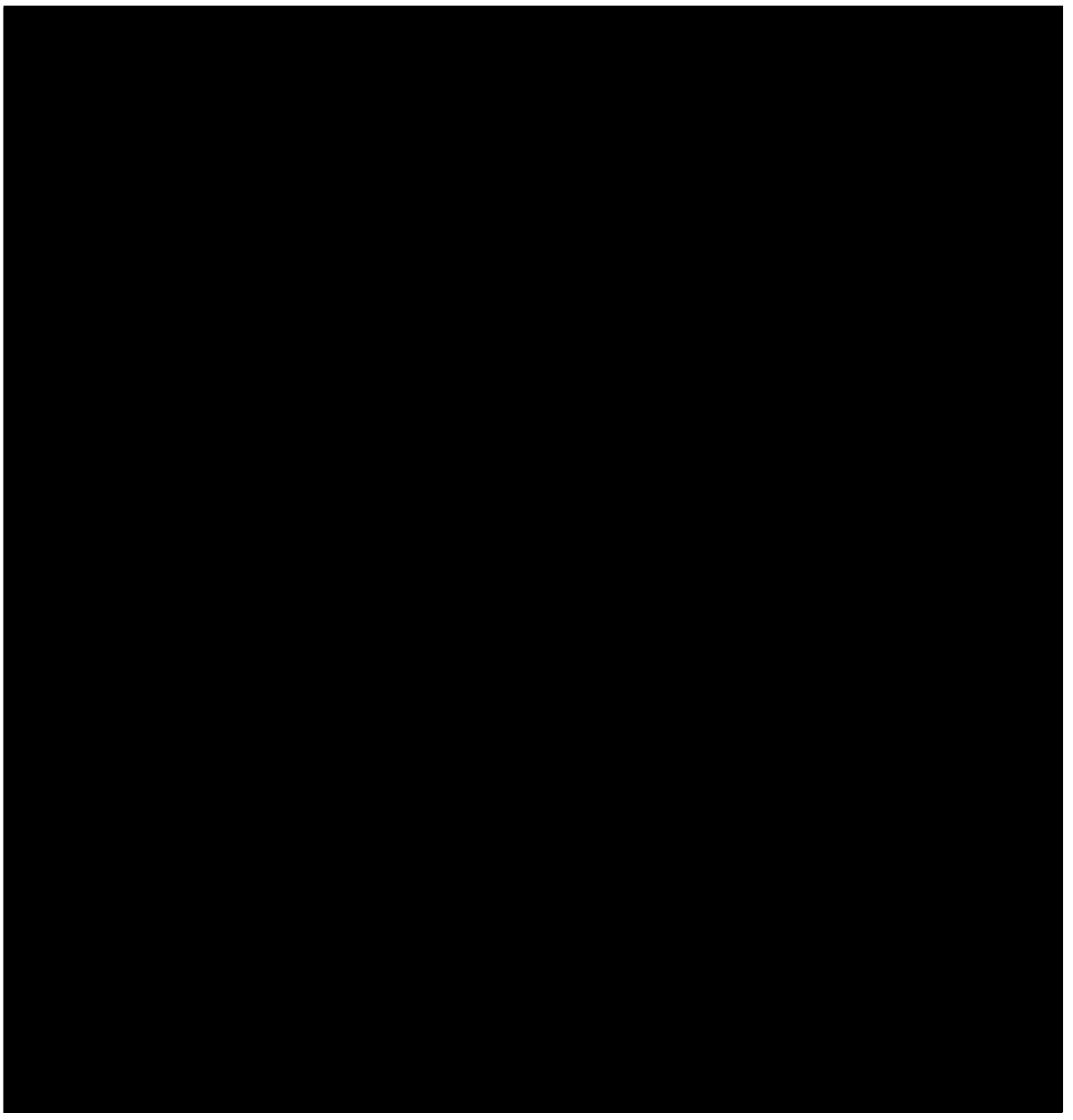
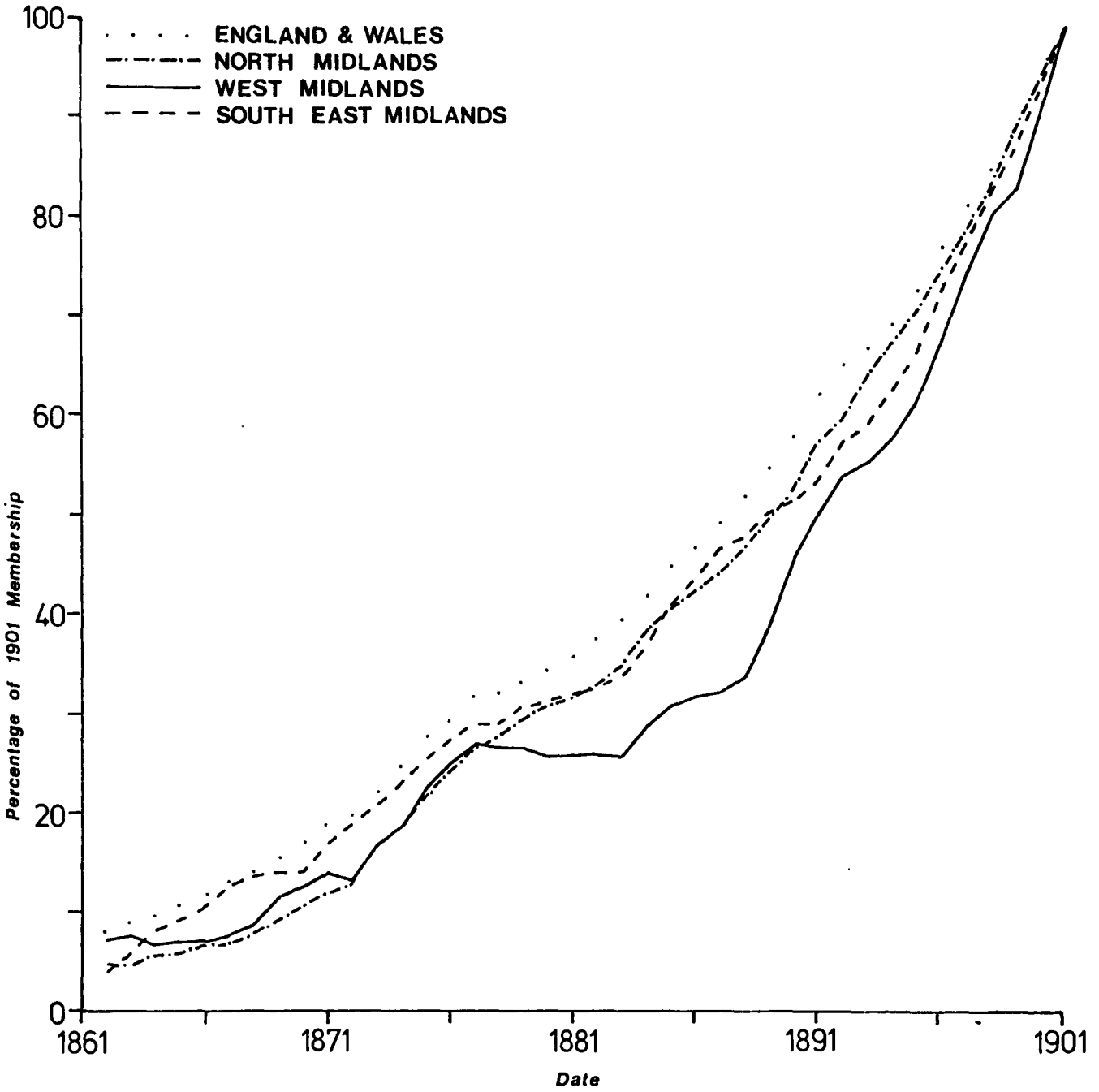


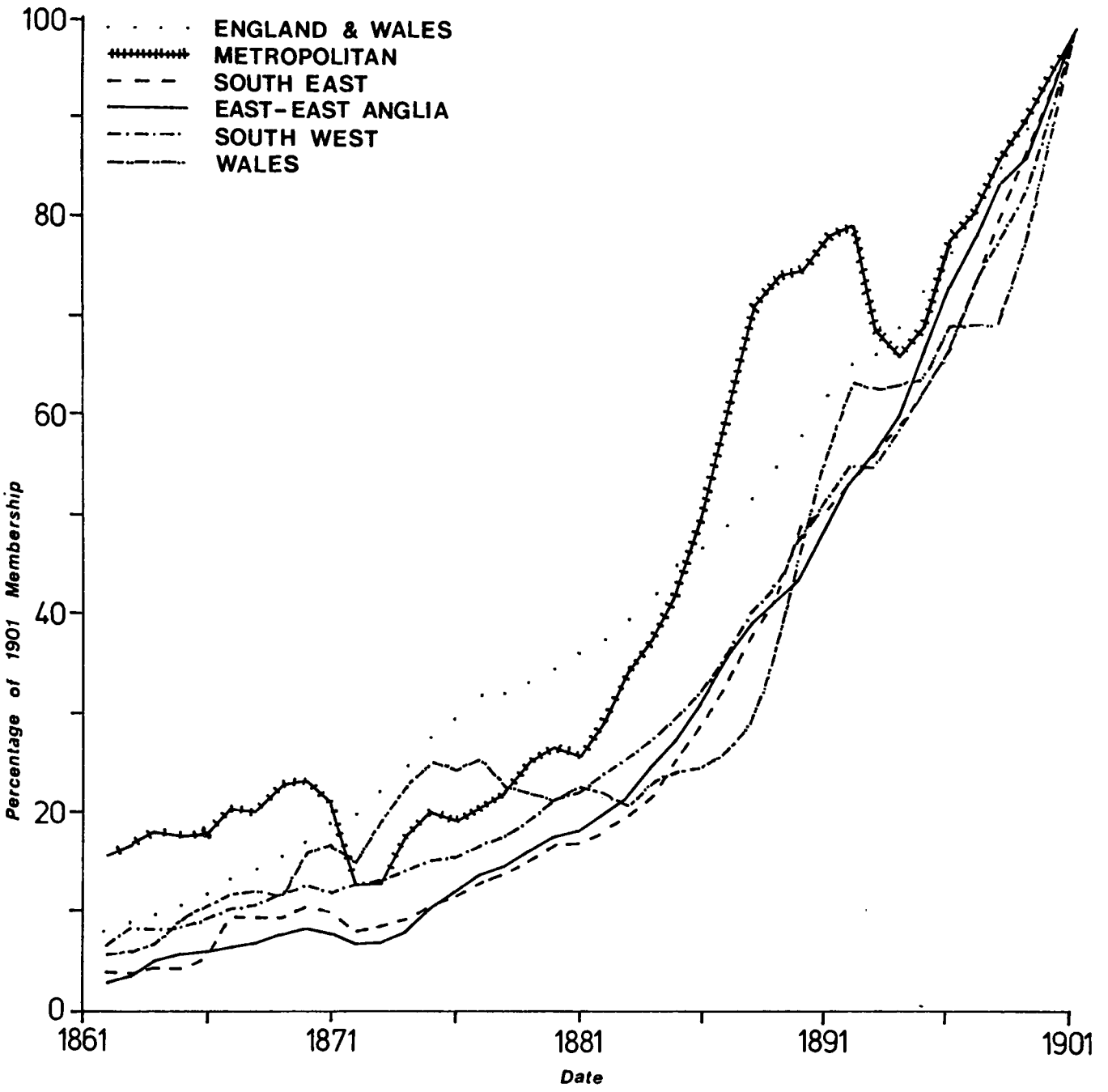
Fig. 4.5. Indices of Growth of Co-operative Retail Society Membership by Region 1862-1901: Annual Membership Totals Expressed as a Percentage of 1901 Membership.

Source: Calculated from Annual Returns of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67 and 1870-1901.

A) North, Yorkshire, North-West.



B) North Midlands, West Midlands, South East Midlands.



C) Metropolitan, South East, East/East Anglia, South West, Wales.

and the later slower growth.

The North region with a much smaller established co-operative body than the two other northern regions, started in 1862 with a percentage of its 1901 membership that was below the national average. The growth pattern shown on Fig. 4.5A reflects the greater concentration of absolute membership growth towards the end of the period, climbing from the early eighteen seventies onwards roughly in step with the national average.

Excepting the early sixties the North region consistently had a higher percentage of its 1901 membership already enrolled at any given date than did any of the Midland regions (Fig. 4.5B). The gap widened particularly during the late eighteen seventies and early eighties, so that the achievement of 50 per cent of the 1901 total lagged three to five years behind the North. The reaction of the Midland regions to the depression of the late seventies was rather different from that of the northern regions. The slowdown of growth followed, as was the case further north, a period of above average membership increase, most extended in the North Midlands and the West Midlands, in the early seventies. The particular effect of the subsequent depression upon the growth of co-operation in the West Midlands is clear from Fig. 4.5B. The region fell badly behind the growth path of its Midland neighbours during the late seventies and early eighties. The depression which caused a slowing of growth in the northern regions produced an extended downward drift in

the West Midlands.

In their turn the Midland regions were generally more advanced in their increase of membership than were the non-metropolitan regions of southern England (Fig. 4.5C). In the latter areas levels of membership growth were generally low before the mid eighteen eighties. Thus the response both to the boom of the early seventies and the following slump were much more muted than in other regions. The concentration of increase in the later part of the period produces a marked concavity in the growth paths shown on Fig. 4.5C; the achievement of 25 per cent of the 1901 membership being delayed until 1883-85, some ten years behind the national average. The timing of the upturn in the three southern regions is interesting as it coincides with a period of depressed growth in the northern and Midland regions associated with the general state of the economy. The muted effect of this episode on the national growth of co-operation is thus partly explained by regional divergence (Figs. 4.1 to 4.3). The increase in southern membership, following renewed efforts to develop co-operation in some of the larger towns of the area (Table 3.8), partly helped to counterbalance the low rate of growth elsewhere.

Of the two remaining regions Wales pursued a pattern of growth that showed the greatest affinities with experience in the West Midlands, sharing the latter region's malaise (including several years of absolute membership loss) from the mid seventies to the mid eighties after a period of above average growth in the early seventies (Figs.4.5B and C).

Subsequent growth was, however, more erratic than in the West Midlands with a more marked and extended response to renewed economic depression in the mid nineties. London also showed a major reaction to this last episode, suffering its largest absolute loss of membership in any single year throughout the whole period in 1893. This was but one feature of the rather eccentric growth pattern followed by London. Early co-operative development produced a relatively large membership in 1862 (Table 4.8) but subsequent growth in the capital during the sixties and seventies was modest. The interruption to growth 1870-72, experienced in most southern regions was particularly marked in London and thus the growth path on Fig. 4.5C shows a lateral translocation in the mid seventies. The precise pattern of co-operative growth may have been distorted by a lack of full data for the immediately preceding years exaggerating the steepness of the decline from an inflated peak in 1870 to the trough of 1872.[41] The basic fact of the weakness of London co-operation is not, however, affected. The region shared in the expansion of membership in southern England during the eighties but this growth proved far more fragile than elsewhere.

VI

The regional breakdown of co-operative membership growth shows greater delay in the advent of the period of take-off with increased distance from the co-operative heartland. This reflected not any major delay in the initial adoption of the

innovation[42], but the inability of co-operative retailing to prosper in some locations once adopted. The establishment of co-operatives ran at a lower rate in southern compared with northern England but the weakness of southern co-operation cannot be wholly explained by an absence of societies. In many instances the early southern societies failed to reach the size necessary for sustained existence and ceased trading after only a short life. Attention has already been drawn to the regional differentiation in failure rates of societies (Table 3.5); the percentage of societies formed pre 1882 surviving to 1901 was markedly lower in southern England, the West Midlands and Wales than in the rest of the country. Table 4.13 indicates the relationship between society size and the chance of survival. Of societies failing between 1862 and 1899 which left some record of their membership 79 per cent had a maximum membership of below 200. It was only once this figure had been exceeded that a society's chances of extended survival became better than even, and further increases in membership helped to consolidate its position. There is also, however, an indication of geographical variation in the vulnerability of societies of any given size. A simple two-fold division distinguishing those northern regions in which co-operative membership per head of the population in 1901 was above the national average from southern areas which fell below this figure shows that the survival prospects of medium-sized societies were clearly greater where co-operation was generally stronger.

Table 4.13. Co-operative Retail Society Failures: Societies Extant for All or Part of the Period 1862-99 Classified by their Maximum Recorded Membership.(43)

Maximum Recorded Membership	Percentage of all Societies of this Size Failing by 1901			Share of the National Total Represented by Societies of this Size	
	England & Wales	North	South	% of All Societies	% of All Failures
0-49	90.3	91.3	89.3	11.4	23.6
50-99	73.4	74.3	72.7	18.3	30.7
100-99	54.3	43.0	63.8	19.8	24.7
200-99	35.9	33.3	39.0	11.7	9.6
300-499	23.0	16.8	30.6	12.1	6.4
500-699	11.9	7.5	18.5	6.8	1.9
700-999	11.6	5.1	22.2	4.8	1.3
1,000-2,999	8.7	8.0	10.3	9.9	2.0
3,000-6,999	-	-	-	3.3	-
7,000+	-	-	-	1.9	-
				100	100

While larger societies developed an expansive cycle of success and growth, their progress also encouraging local emulation with further foundations adding to the expansion of membership, small co-operatives could become trapped in a vicious circle which stunted their individual growth and thus wider regional expansion. Smaller societies were disproportionately affected by the loss of a few members, perhaps even the removal of a single leader with the financial acumen and enthusiasm to keep the store running. Their capital resources were often limited making it difficult to sustain operations through a period of depressed trade. Moreover, by reinforcing popular scepticism failure made any reintroduction of co-operation more difficult, hence perhaps the long delay between initial attempts and its eventual re-establishment in many southern towns (Fig. 3.12).

Later societies perhaps also found the problems of recruitment increased and thus the co-operative body in a particular settlement remained small and vulnerable.

The failure of an individual society did not preclude the subsequent development of co-operation but at the very least growth was interrupted with the destruction of a platform for future progress. Much of the strength of northern co-operation was built on the framework of the earliest societies. It was through the expansion of their membership that much of the subsequent growth was achieved. Table 4.14 shows the high percentage of early societies, particularly those founded upto 1861, in the totals for the three northern regions in 1901. It also makes clear that these societies made a more than proportional contribution to regional membership in that year. Especially striking is the contribution made by foundations from the period 1857-61. The average membership in 1901 of all early foundations was high everywhere except the West Midlands, where the few early survivors made a contribution to regional membership only slightly above their share of the total of societies in the region. However, the low absolute numbers of survivors in many areas reduced the potential for growth from this source. The regions with the smallest total contribution from societies founded 1857-61 (irrespective of the size achieved by individual co-operatives) were invariably those with the smallest total membership in 1901.[45]

Table 4.13 showed that there were regional differences in the survival prospects of societies which had attained any

Table 4.14. Co-operative Retail Societies Extant 1901: Regional Percentage Distribution of Society Numbers and Membership by Date of Foundation.

North	No. of Societies	%	No. of Members	%
Pre 1847	2	1.3	1500	0.6
1847-51	-	0.0	-	0.0
1852-56	-	0.0	-	0.0
1857-61	25	16.2	108341	42.7
1862-66	32	20.8	50859	20.1
1867-71	21	13.6	38853	15.3
1872-76	31	20.1	21898	8.6
1877-81	8	5.2	4945	2.0
1882-91	16	10.4	18630	7.3
1892-1901	19	12.3	8504	3.4
		100		100

North-West				
Pre 1847	3	1.4	21093	5.0
1847-51	21	9.9	48669	11.5
1852-56	9	4.2	20961	5.0
1857-61	71	33.3	217826	51.4
1862-66	18	8.5	18981	4.5
1867-71	17	8.0	20021	4.7
1872-76	27	12.7	27766	6.6
1877-81	10	4.7	4135	1.0
1882-91	23	10.8	37061	8.8
1892-1901	14	6.6	6932	1.6
		100		100

Yorkshire				
Pre 1847	7	3.4	6507	2.0
1847-51	8	3.9	69235	21.1
1852-56	10	4.9	13364	4.1
1857-61	45	22.0	101897	31.0
1862-66	28	13.7	48840	14.9
1867-71	30	14.6	48869	14.9
1872-76	26	12.7	15964	4.9
1877-81	6	2.9	1567	0.5
1882-91	18	8.8	15293	4.7
1892-1901	27	13.2	6726	2.0
		100		100

North Midlands	No. of Societies	%	No. of Members	%
Pre 1847	-	0.0	-	0.0
1847-51	2	2.2	16902	16.6
1852-56	1	1.1	1559	1.5
1857-61	6	6.7	21337	21.0
1862-66	10	11.2	16471	16.2
1867-71	10	11.2	7697	7.6
1872-76	22	24.7	18929	18.1
1877-81	5	5.6	2845	2.8
1882-91	13	14.6	8404	8.3
1892-1901	20	22.5	8003	7.9
		100		100

West Midlands				
Pre 1847	2	2.8	1263	2.1
1847-51	-	0.0	-	0.0
1852-56	-	0.0	-	0.0
1857-61	3	4.2	3167	5.3
1862-66	5	6.9	7656	12.9
1867-71	8	11.1	7728	13.0
1872-76	13	18.1	11111	18.7
1877-81	5	6.9	7667	12.9
1882-91	16	22.2	14378	24.2
1892-1901	20	27.8	6346	10.7
		100		100

South-East Midlands				
Pre 1847	-	0.0	-	0.0
1847-51	-	0.0	-	0.0
1852-56	-	0.0	-	0.0
1857-61	9	11.1	15645	29.4
1862-66	20	24.7	11083	20.8
1867-71	7	8.6	4497	8.4
1872-76	10	12.3	4265	8.0
1877-81	4	4.9	9745	18.2
1882-91	15	18.5	5995	11.3
1892-1901	16	19.8	2033	3.8
		100		100

East/East Anglia	No. of Societies	%	No. of Members	%
Pre 1847	-	0.0	-	0.0
1847-51	-	0.0	-	0.0
1852-56	-	0.0	-	0.0
1857-61	4	5.3	8194	16.2
1862-66	4	5.3	5707	11.2
1867-71	6	7.9	10659	21.0
1872-76	8	10.5	8770	17.3
1877-81	2	2.6	891	1.8
1882-91	29	38.2	11342	22.4
1892-1901	23	30.3	5169	10.2
		100		100

South-East				
Pre 1847	1	1.1	1710	2.5
1847-51	1	1.1	1995	2.9
1852-56	1	1.1	261	0.4
1857-61	1	1.1	6087	8.7
1862-66	7	8.0	8626	12.4
1867-71	9	10.3	6575	9.4
1872-76	12	13.8	14429	20.7
1877-81	4	4.6	4046	5.8
1882-91	28	32.1	17954	25.8
1892-1901	23	26.4	7959	11.4
		100		100

Metropolitan				
Pre 1847	-	0.0	-	0.0
1847-51	1	1.3	97	0.1
1852-56	1	1.3	1017	1.6
1857-61	1	1.3	10779	16.6
1862-66	4	5.1	6002	9.3
1867-71	4	5.1	19957	30.8
1872-76	4	5.1	1862	2.9
1877-81	8	10.1	2195	3.4
1882-91	18	22.8	9502	14.7
1892-1901	38	48.1	13370	20.6
		100		100

South-West	No. of Societies	%	No. of Members	%
Pre 1847	-	0.0	-	0.0
1847-51	-	0.0	-	0.0
1852-56	1	1.2	1670	2.0
1857-61	6	7.1	39542	47.0
1862-66	4	4.7	4147	4.9
1867-71	9	10.6	5248	6.2
1872-76	6	7.1	2470	2.9
1877-81	6	7.1	1751	2.1
1882-91	28	32.9	24413	29.0
1892-1901	25	29.4	4869	5.8
		100		100

Wales				
Pre 1847	-	0.0	-	0.0
1847-51	-	0.0	-	0.0
1852-56	-	0.0	-	0.0
1857-61	1	1.3	3855	15.3
1862-66	6	7.9	865	3.4
1867-71	2	2.6	2881	11.4
1872-76	4	5.3	1441	5.7
1877-81	3	3.9	1876	7.4
1882-91	27	35.5	8110	32.2
1892-1901	33	43.4	6139	24.4
		100		100

given membership total but in all areas it was the smallest societies that were most vulnerable. Thus for a region to have a disproportionate share of these smaller co-operatives was often a reflection not only of its limited previous development but also the likelihood that future progress would be slow and somewhat erratic. In 1862 the recent major increase in society numbers meant that in all regions a high proportion of co-operatives were small, with at least 60 per cent having below 200 members (Table 4.15). The difference between areas of established co-operation and those where its introduction was more recent is clearer in the distribution of membership between societies in the different size classes. In the North-West and Yorkshire the contribution of the newly founded co-operatives was overshadowed by older, larger societies so that those which had enrolled less than 200 contributed only around 20 per cent of the total membership. No other region approached this level except the South-East where the pattern was repeated on a very much reduced scale; a large share of the total being accounted for by the Sheerness society dating from 1849.

The various regional experiences of co-operation produced increased differentiation in the size distribution of society numbers and membership by 1881. In the South-East and London the failure of individual new foundations to grow rapidly led to an increase in the percentage of societies with under 200 members in the period 1862-81. Although the proportion fell in all other areas the reduction was greatest in the three

Table 4.15. Co-operative Retail Societies: Regional Size Distribution by Membership 1862, 1881 and 1901. (46)

North

Membership Total	No. of Societies Absolute	% of Total	No. of Members Absolute	% of Total
A) 1862				
0-99	23	44.2	1150	11.0
100-199	13	25.0	1871	17.9
200-299	5	9.6	1253	12.0
300-499	4	7.7	1107	10.6
500-999	7	13.5	5053	48.4
1000-2999	-	-	-	-
3000-6999	-	-	-	-
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
B) 1881				
0-99	16	11.1	1061	1.2
100-199	35	24.3	5018	5.5
200-299	26	18.1	6360	7.0
300-499	19	13.2	6376	7.0
500-999	24	16.7	18663	20.6
1000-2999	19	13.2	32637	36.0
3000-6999	5	3.5	20486	22.6
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
C) 1901				
0-99	8	5.3	514	0.2
100-199	15	9.9	2258	0.9
200-299	15	9.9	3748	1.5
300-499	24	15.8	9176	3.6
500-999	26	17.1	18041	7.2
1000-2999	42	27.6	64306	25.5
3000-6999	15	9.9	69100	27.4
7000-13999	5	3.3	51578	20.4
>14000	2	1.3	33300	13.2

North-West

Membership Total	No. of Societies Absolute	% of Total	No. of Members Absolute	% of Total
A) 1862				
0-99	64	41.8	2488	8.4
100-199	37	24.2	5123	12.3
200-299	16	10.5	3845	9.2
300-499	19	12.4	7184	17.3
500-999	10	6.5	6990	16.8
1000-2999	5	3.3	7867	18.9
3000-6999	2	1.3	7103	17.1
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
B) 1881				
0-99	46	20.5	2764	1.5
100-199	34	15.2	5034	2.8
200-299	39	17.4	9360	5.1
300-499	24	10.7	9163	5.0
500-999	33	14.7	22552	12.4
1000-2999	35	15.6	58397	32.0
3000-6999	8	3.6	27243	14.9
7000-13999	5	2.2	47967	26.3
>14000	-	-	-	-
C) 1901				
0-99	15	6.9	868	0.2
100-199	32	14.6	4579	1.1
200-299	25	11.5	6244	1.5
300-499	28	12.8	10617	2.5
500-999	38	17.4	26535	6.2
1000-2999	43	19.7	76823	17.9
3000-6999	20	9.2	95092	22.1
7000-13999	13	6.0	131153	30.5
>14000	4	1.8	77995	18.1

Yorkshire

Membership Total	No. of Societies Absolute	% of Total	No. of Members Absolute	% of Total
A) 1862				
0-99	56	51.9	2803	8.0
100-199	25	23.1	3474	9.9
200-299	3	2.8	727	2.1
300-499	7	6.5	2580	7.4
500-999	10	9.3	6758	19.4
1000-2999	4	3.7	7458	21.4
3000-6999	3	2.8	11097	31.8
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
B) 1881				
0-99	24	13.8	1480	1.0
100-199	50	28.7	6953	4.7
200-299	31	17.8	7814	5.3
300-499	26	14.9	10566	7.2
500-999	17	9.8	12084	8.2
1000-2999	16	9.2	34409	23.4
3000-6999	9	5.2	54147	36.7
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	1	0.6	19889	13.5
C) 1901				
0-99	23	11.2	1485	0.5
100-199	31	15.0	4578	1.4
200-299	22	10.7	5363	3.0
300-499	40	19.4	15677	4.8
500-999	41	19.9	29053	13.6
1000-2999	25	12.1	44112	13.4
3000-6999	13	6.3	61611	18.8
7000-13999	7	3.4	63371	19.3
>14000	4	1.9	103058	31.4

North Midlands

Membership Total	No. of Societies Absolute	% of Total	No. of Members Absolute	% of Total
A) 1862				
0-99	10	47.6	413	10.0
100-199	6	28.6	939	22.6
200-299	2	9.5	441	10.6
300-499	1	4.8	309	7.5
500-999	1	4.8	659	15.9
1000-2999	1	4.8	1385	33.4
3000-6999	-	-	-	-
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
B) 1881				
0-99	26	34.2	1558	4.8
100-199	18	23.7	2456	7.5
200-299	11	14.5	2705	8.3
300-499	7	9.2	2809	8.6
500-999	6	7.9	4523	13.8
1000-2999	6	7.9	9665	29.5
3000-6999	2	2.6	9008	27.5
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
C) 1901				
0-99	17	19.1	838	0.8
100-199	11	12.4	1741	1.7
200-299	8	9.0	1882	1.9
300-499	15	16.9	5947	5.9
500-999	13	14.7	8651	8.5
1000-2999	18	20.2	32413	31.9
3000-6999	4	4.5	17237	17.0
7000-13999	2	2.2	18001	17.7
>14000	1	1.1	14937	14.7

West Midlands

Membership Total	No. of Societies Absolute	% of Total	No. of Members Absolute	% of Total
A) 1862				
0-99	16	51.6	989	25.7
100-199	10	32.3	1361	35.3
200-299	2	6.5	412	10.7
300-499	3	9.7	1093	28.4
500-999	-	-	-	-
1000-2999	-	-	-	-
3000-6999	-	-	-	-
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
B) 1881				
0-99	19	34.5	1125	7.3
100-199	17	30.9	2411	15.7
200-299	8	14.5	2029	13.2
300-499	3	5.5	1011	6.6
500-999	5	9.1	3620	23.5
1000-2999	3	5.2	5201	33.8
3000-6999	-	-	-	-
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
C) 1901				
0-99	13	18.8	543	0.9
100-199	11	15.9	1512	2.5
200-299	8	11.6	2197	3.7
300-499	6	8.7	2678	4.5
500-999	15	21.7	9599	16.2
1000-2999	11	15.9	18619	31.3
3000-6999	5	7.2	24168	40.7
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-

South East Midlands

Membership Total	No. of Societies Absolute	% of Total	No. of Members Absolute	% of Total
A) 1862				
0-99	9	56.3	450	22.6
100-199	5	31.3	641	32.2
200-299	1	6.3	220	11.0
300-499	-	-	-	-
500-999	1	6.3	680	34.2
1000-2999	-	-	-	-
3000-6999	-	-	-	-
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
B) 1881				
0-99	31	47.7	1703	9.9
100-199	13	20.0	1787	10.4
200-299	9	13.8	2181	12.7
300-499	8	12.3	2741	15.9
500-999	2	3.0	1420	8.2
1000-2999	1	1.5	1132	6.6
3000-6999	1	1.5	6251	36.3
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
C) 1901				
0-99	17	20.7	1010	1.9
100-199	25	30.5	3538	6.6
200-299	13	15.6	3282	6.1
300-499	7	8.5	2889	5.4
500-999	12	14.7	8133	15.2
1000-2999	5	6.1	8523	16.0
3000-6999	1	1.2	6000	11.2
7000-13999	2	2.5	19992	37.5
>14000	-	-	-	-

East/East Anglia

Membership Total	No. of Societies Absolute	% of Total	No. of Members Absolute	% of Total
A) 1862				
0-99	9	75.0	530	43.8
100-199	1	8.3	124	10.3
200-299	2	16.7	555	45.9
300-499	-	-	-	-
500-999	-	-	-	-
1000-2999	-	-	-	-
3000-6999	-	-	-	-
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
B) 1881				
0-99	13	36.1	714	7.7
100-199	8	22.2	1141	12.2
200-299	3	8.3	819	8.7
300-499	7	19.4	2690	28.7
500-999	4	11.1	2418	25.8
1000-2999	1	2.8	1602	17.1
3000-6999	-	-	-	-
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
C) 1901				
0-99	7	9.3	448	0.9
100-199	16	21.3	2069	4.1
200-299	12	16.0	3018	6.0
300-499	16	21.3	6038	11.9
500-999	13	17.4	9804	19.4
1000-2999	7	9.3	10837	21.4
3000-6999	4	5.3	18452	36.4
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-

South East

Membership Total	No. of Societies Absolute	% of Total	No. of Members Absolute	% of Total
A) 1862				
0-99	4	40.0	236	13.0
100-199	2	20.0	219	12.1
200-299	3	30.0	689	38.0
300-499	-	-	-	-
500-999	1	10.0	670	36.9
1000-2999	-	-	-	-
3000-6999	-	-	-	-
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
B) 1881				
0-99	17	39.5	857	7.1
100-199	11	25.6	1329	11.1
200-299	3	7.0	727	6.1
300-499	3	7.0	1049	8.7
500-999	5	11.6	2945	24.5
1000-2999	4	9.3	5095	42.5
3000-6999	-	-	-	-
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
C) 1901				
0-99	14	16.5	881	1.3
100-199	5	5.9	961	1.4
200-299	12	14.1	3057	4.4
300-499	18	21.1	7281	10.4
500-999	14	16.5	10054	14.4
1000-2999	18	21.2	29884	42.9
3000-6999	4	4.7	17569	25.2
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-

Metropolitan

Membership Total	No. of Societies Absolute	% of Total	No. of Members Absolute	% of Total
A) 1862				
0-99	15	38.5	841	11.9
100-199	12	30.8	1665	23.5
200-299	6	15.4	1428	20.2
300-499	3	7.7	1210	17.1
500-999	3	7.7	1942	27.4
1000-2999	-	-	-	-
3000-6999	-	-	-	-
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
B) 1881				
0-99	13	41.9	829	7.0
100-199	11	35.5	1581	13.4
200-299	1	3.2	270	2.3
300-499	-	-	430	3.6
500-999	2	6.5	1319	11.2
1000-2999	4	12.9	7400	62.6
3000-6999	-	-	-	-
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
C) 1901				
0-99	19	33.9	942	1.9
100-199	10	17.9	1598	3.3
200-299	7	12.5	1742	3.6
300-499	4	7.1	1622	3.3
500-999	8	14.3	5329	10.9
1000-2999	6	10.7	8300	16.9
3000-6999	-	-	-	-
7000-13999	1	1.8	10779	22.0
>14000	1	1.8	18662	38.1

South West

Membership Total	No. of Societies Absolute	% of Total	No. of Members Absolute	% of Total
A) 1862				
0-99	14	50.0	817	15.4
100-199	6	21.4	865	16.3
200-299	5	17.9	1222	23.1
300-499	-	-	-	-
500-999	2	7.1	1303	24.6
1000-2999	1	3.6	1088	20.5
3000-6999	-	-	-	-
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
B) 1881				
0-99	19	37.3	942	5.0
100-199	16	31.4	2478	13.2
200-299	6	11.8	1387	7.4
300-499	3	5.9	1150	6.1
500-999	4	7.8	2999	16.0
1000-2999	1	2.0	1064	5.7
3000-6999	2	3.9	8732	46.6
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
C) 1901				
0-99	12	14.0	854	1.0
100-199	18	20.9	2675	3.2
200-299	11	12.8	2657	3.1
300-499	17	19.8	6445	7.6
500-999	13	14.5	9053	10.7
1000-2999	12	14.0	22210	26.3
3000-6999	1	1.2	4883	5.8
7000-13999	1	1.2	7081	8.4
>14000	1	1.2	28574	33.8

Wales

Membership Total	No. of Societies Absolute	% of Total	No. of Members Absolute	% of Total
A) 1862				
0-99	5	45.5	363	20.6
100-199	4	36.4	558	31.7
200-299	1	9.1	200	11.4
300-499	-	-	-	-
500-999	1	9.1	641	36.4
1000-2999	-	-	-	-
3000-6999	-	-	-	-
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
B) 1881				
0-99	16	42.1	978	13.0
100-199	7	18.4	1083	14.4
200-299	7	18.4	1587	21.2
300-499	5	13.2	1497	20.0
500-999	2	5.3	1303	17.4
1000-2999	1	2.6	1049	14.0
3000-6999	-	-	-	-
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-
C) 1901				
0-99	21	23.9	1282	3.8
100-199	24	27.3	3561	10.4
200-299	13	14.8	3182	9.5
300-499	14	15.9	5510	16.1
500-999	9	10.2	5648	16.5
1000-2999	5	5.7	7827	22.9
3000-6999	2	2.3	7155	20.9
7000-13999	-	-	-	-
>14000	-	-	-	-

northern regions. Changes in the distribution of membership between different sized societies over the same period were less marked. All regions reduced the percentage of membership accounted for by the smallest societies. There was, however, a slight widening of the gap between the regions with the largest and smallest proportions of their members in such co-operatives.

The reduced differential between the weakest and the strongest regions by 1901 is a change that would be expected to have followed from the upturn in co-operative growth in southern England and Wales from the eighties onwards. There remained, however, an increase north to south in the proportion of small societies and the contribution they made to membership totals. Although the South-West and London echoed the three northern regions and the North Midlands in having a large share of their membership in societies over 7,000 strong, in the two southern areas this represented not the pinnacle of a strong regional co-operative body but the domination of relative weakness by, in each case, two large societies. The particular weakness of metropolitan co-operation was reflected in the overall size distribution of societies; in 1901 societies with under 200 members still made up over half the total.[47]

In London the limited co-operative growth can by no means be associated with lack of effort to establish societies. There was a continuity of foundations throughout the second half of the century, indeed more societies were established in the Metropolitan region in the period 1857-99 than in any

other (Tables 3.1 and 3.2). However, as a wide variety of nineteenth century popular movements discovered London was particularly difficult to mobilize successfully. The early opinion that

> London is an extinguisher upon all enthusiasm [48]

was substantially true of the whole of the second half of the century. The high total of Metropolitan foundations stemmed in large part from efforts to replace earlier failures. Table 4.16 shows the fate of early foundations in London (1850-62) compared with the stability of the North-West region. London societies were quite spectacularly unsuccessful; only the Battersea and Wandsworth, and the Brixton Industrial

Table 4.16. Lifespan of Societies Founded 1850-62: North-West and Metropolitan Regions.(49)

Date of Failure	North-West	%	Metropolitan	%
1850-54	23	10.4	3	3.2
1855-59	20	9.0	4	4.3
1860-64	35	15.8	44	47.3
1865-69	14	6.3	20	21.5
1870-74	9	4.1	18	19.4
1875-79	6	2.7	-	0.0
1880-84	5	2.3	2	2.2
1885-89	6	2.7	-	0.0
1890-94	1	0.5	-	0.0
1895-1901	3	1.4	-	0.0
Extant 1901	100	45.0	2	2.2
Total	222	100.0	93	100.0
Lifespan (Years)				
1-2	27	12.2	38	40.9
3-5	47	21.2	21	22.6
6-9	18	8.2	13	14.0
10-14	7	3.2	15	16.1
15-19	8	3.6	1	1.1
>20	115	51.8	5	5.4
Total	222	100.0	93	100.0

societies survived to 1901. Most had failed by 1865 after a lifespan of, in over 40 per cent of cases, two years or less. By contrast over half the North-Western societies survived for twenty years or more; 45 per cent entered the twentieth century. While there were a number of short-lived failures in the North-West also, the figures given here are probably somewhat exaggerated as they include some societies disappearing from the record through amalgamation, a process far more common in the North-West than in London. For the years 1860-61 there is the additional complication that a number of the Metropolitan foundations were branches of the National Industrial and Provident society and were thus shaken by the failure of the parent body irrespective of

their local performance. A few such societies did reform themselves as independent local operations, but none of the southern societies of this type proved particularly enduring. Moreover, the pattern of co-operative failure in London in these early years was repeated throughout most of the century (Table 3.5). With a few notable exceptions societies were weak, small and short-lived. The large numbers formed were an indication of the tenacity of co-operative leaders in London. When Metropolitan co-operation did begin to expand in the eighties growth was centred not in the inner districts which had fostered many of the early societies: Clerkenwell, Bermondsey, Islington, Whitechapel, and the City, but in the outer fringes at Woolwich, Edmonton, Enfield, Stratford, Wood Green and Bromley. However this growth did not end London's

weakness. The many small societies of the region were vulnerable to reverses such as that which occurred during the general economic downturn in 1893-94.

VII

The regional framework is of considerable value for the outline presentation of co-operative growth. However, such treatment is often most effective when combined with analysis at finer spatial scales. In the case of co-operation the importance of independent local initiative - an aspect of the movement much prized by contemporaries - should not be forgotten and with it the potential for intra-regional variation. It has already been implied that local economic and social conditions had an influence on the probability of the foundation of a co-operative and on the path of its subsequent progress. The interaction between such local and regional circumstances and co-operative growth is a theme explored more fully in later chapters. However, the degree of local variation in co-operative experience still remains to be clearly outlined. Some indication of the geographical pattern was provided by the discussion of society foundations in Chapter Three. This allowed the identification of areas, mainly the more remote and sparsely populated rural districts, without any experience of co-operation. Beyond the broad outlines of the regional growth rates little indication has so far been given of the geographical variation of society success. One measure of this is the more detailed presentation of the degree to which co-operative membership

penetrated the local population.

To attempt to outline the degree of local penetration by individual co-operative societies would be impossible. This is principally because in many instances the size of their market area and thus the potential membership represented by its population are unclear. Consequently in Figs. 4.6 to 4.10 registration districts are used as the component units. This arrangement is not ideal as some societies had unknown proportions of their members drawn from districts other than that in which their main store was located, but any distortion in the pattern presented is almost certainly slight. In the last two maps an attempt has been made to compensate for this problem which becomes more serious as the size of individual societies increased. In Figs. 4.9 and 4.10 the membership of societies with a geographically dispersed branch network was divided between the several registration districts involved following the distribution of individual stores.[51]

The maps (Figs. 4.6 to 4.10) show both the geographical extension of co-operation over time at the national scale and its increasing penetration of the population of individual districts. They, of course, indicate the concentration of co-operative strength in the north of England, but also show the degree of local variation. Within the North-West, for example, contrast may be made between the considerable advance made in the textile districts and the relative failure of co-operation on Merseyside. The Liverpool district itself had a membership equivalent to 1.4 per cent of its

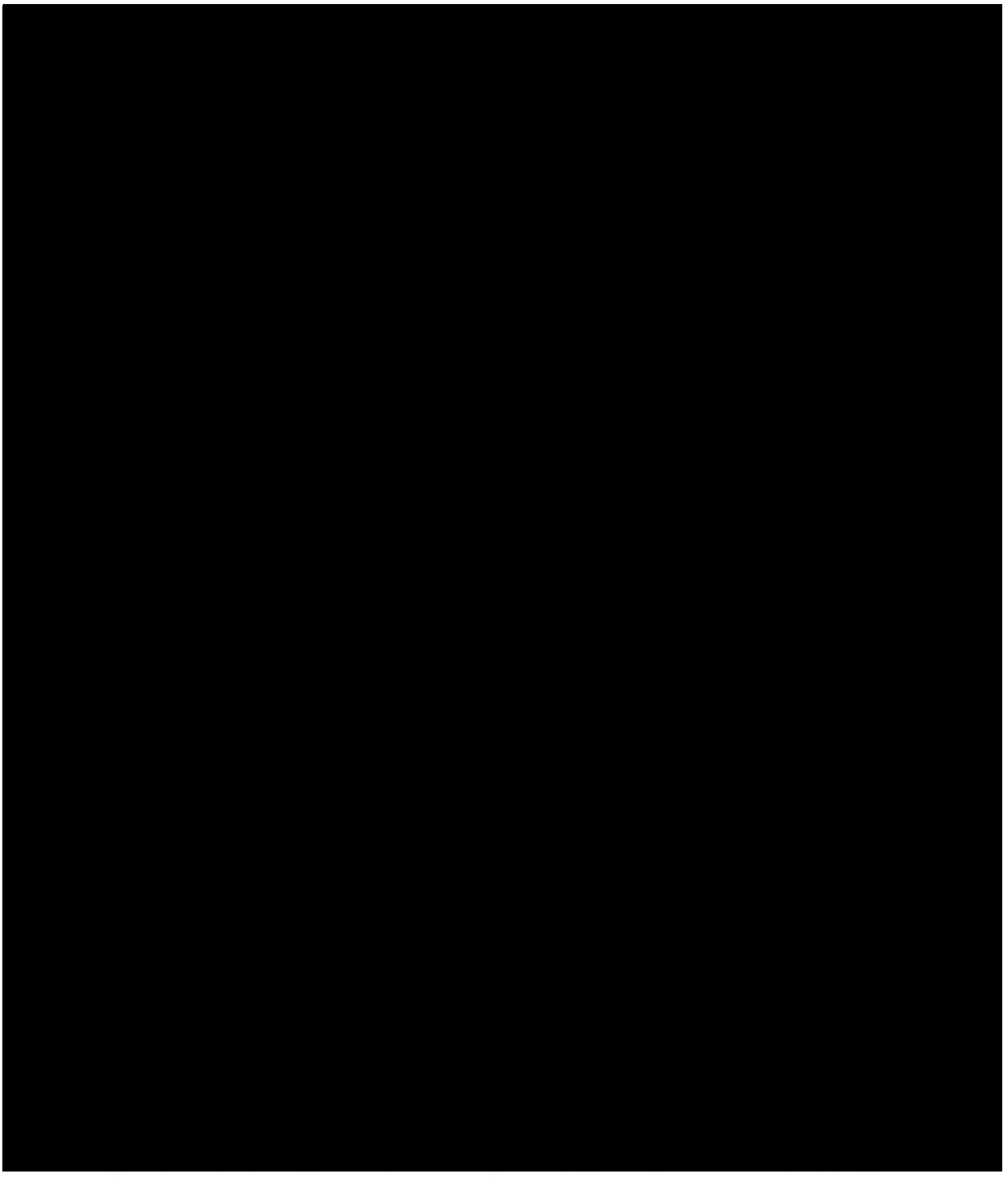


Fig. 4.6. Co-operative Retail Society Membership per Head of the Total Population, 1862.

Source: Calculated from data in P.P. 1863 XXIX and P.P. 1863 LIII Pt. I.

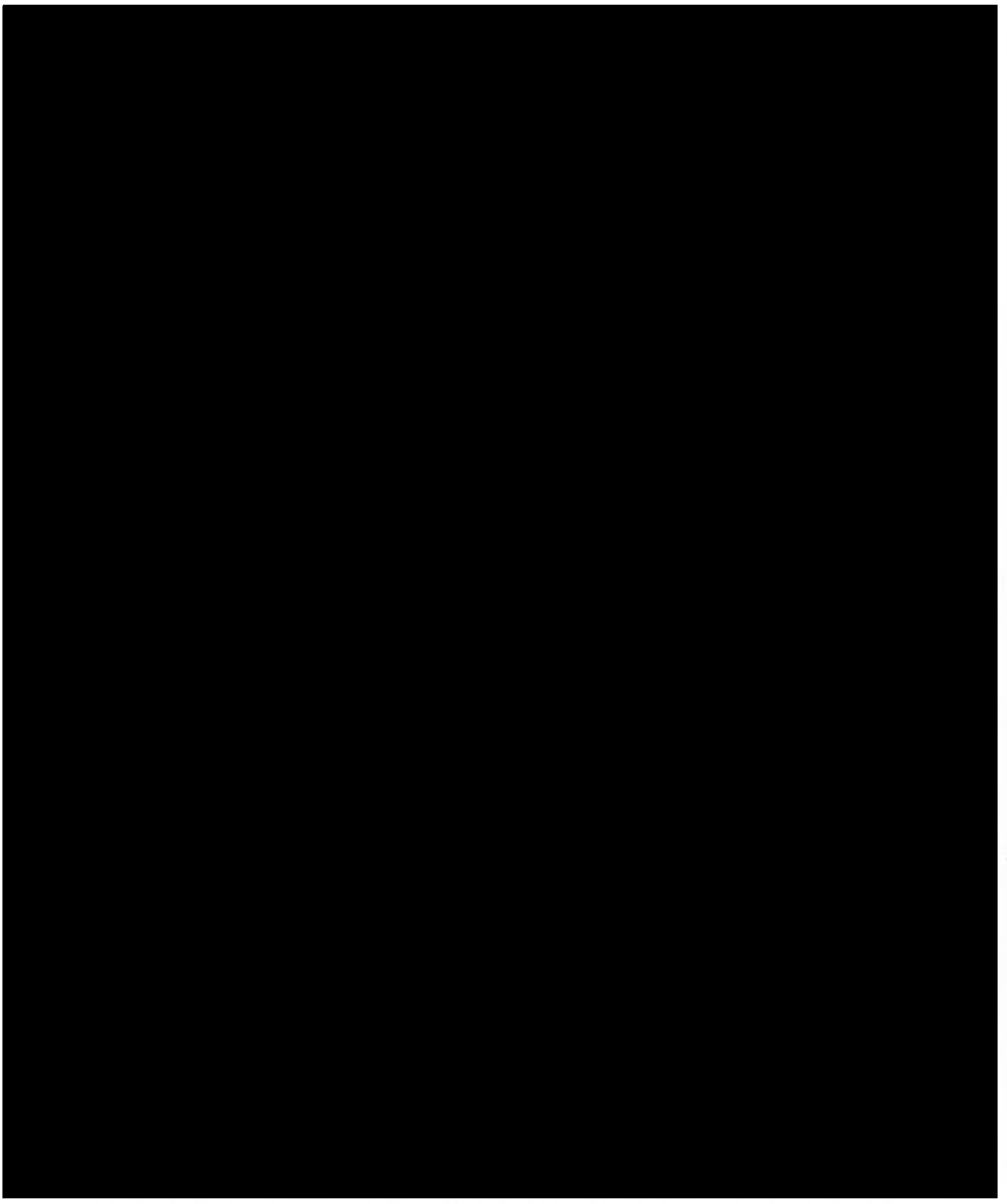


Fig. 4.7. Co-operative Retail Society Membership per Head of the Total Population, 1871.

Source: Calculated from data in P.P. 1872 LIV and P.P. 1873 LXXI Pt. II.

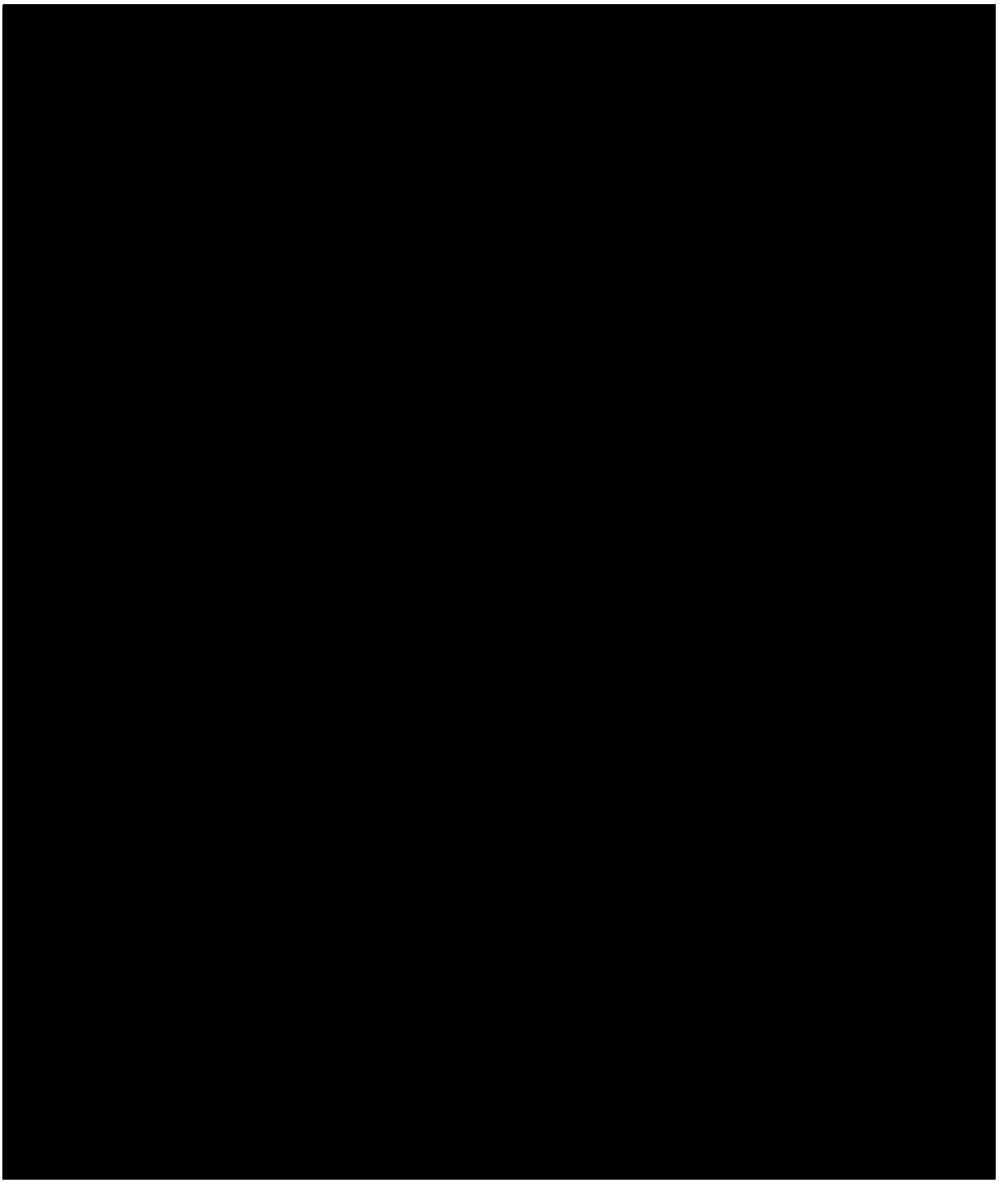


Fig. 4.8. Co-operative Retail Society Membership per Head of the Total Population, 1881.

Source: Calculated from data in P.P. 1882 LXVI and P.P. 1883 LXXX.

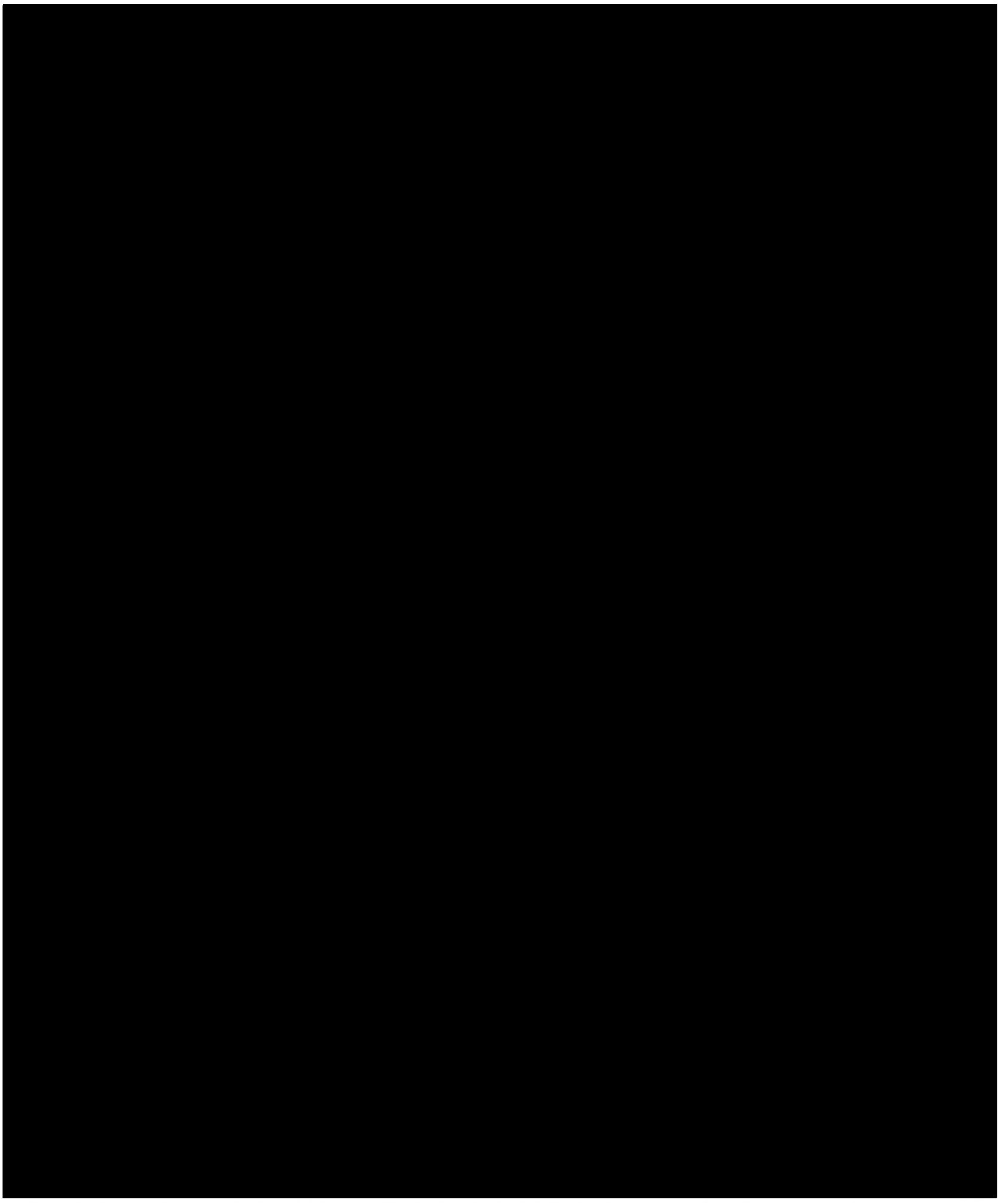


Fig. 4.9. Co-operative Retail Society Membership per Head of the Total Population, 1891.

Source: Calculated from data in P.P. 1892 LXXIII and P.P. 1893-4 CVI.

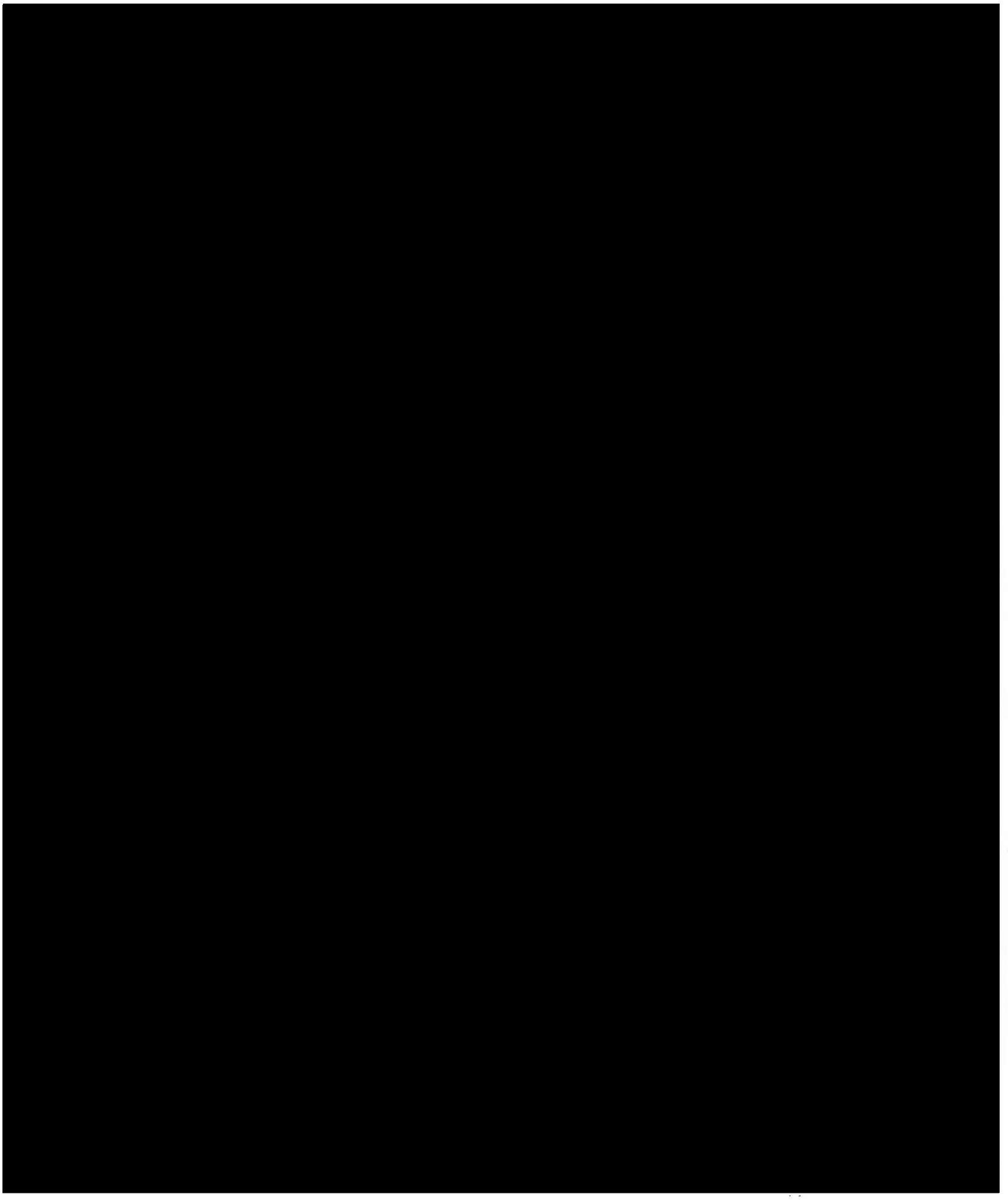


Fig. 4.10. Co-operative Retail Society Membership per Head of the Total Population, 1901.

Source: Calculated from data in P.P. 1902 XCVI and P.P. 1904 CVIII.

population in 1862 a figure which fell as low as 0.1 per cent in 1881 rising to only 1.6 per cent in 1901. It is hardly surprising that one of the clearest features of the maps is the hold of co-operation in the northern textile areas. In 1862 co-operation achieved its greatest strength in the Rochdale district where membership represented 9.9 per cent of the total population. This level was most nearly approached in the immediately adjacent areas of Todmorden (6.0 per cent) and Halifax (5.3 per cent). There was a further surrounding ring of districts where co-operation was relatively well advanced. The same area stands out on succeeding maps. Thus in 1901 membership was such a high percentage of the local population - over 20 per cent in Rochdale, Saddleworth, Todmorden and Dewsbury - that most families must have included a co-operative member even if the degree of penetration of the population was exaggerated slightly by some individuals who were members of more than one society. The strength of co-operation in the industrial North-East is also confirmed, although by 1901 there was a clear distinction within the area between the very strongest coalfield districts in Durham and around Morpeth in Northumberland and the lesser penetration of Tyneside, Wearside and Teeside.

There were no comparable concentrations of co-operative progress elsewhere, although parts of Cheshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and the shoemaking districts of Northamptonshire recorded a performance that was above both

national and regional averages. Individual districts in Northamptonshire - in 1901 Kettering, Daventry and Wellingborough - showed a degree of co-operative success that was comparable with industrial districts further north. By the turn of the century it seems also to have been particularly strong in the nearby Potterspury district, based on the railway town of Wolverton. Other industrial areas are marked more for their lack of co-operative advance. Societies made very little progress in Birmingham and the Black Country. In the Wolverhampton district the membership rose from the equivalent of 0.1 per cent of the population in 1862 to 0.6 per cent in 1901; comparable figures for Walsall were 0.2 per cent rising to 1.3 per cent and West Bromwich recorded an increase from 0.2 per cent to 1.4 per cent. Indeed the most successful of the West Midlands districts were more peripheral areas such as Kidderminster and the eastern parts of Warwickshire including Foleshill, Rugby and Southam. Progress in all parts of South Wales was also very limited. Here as in many districts within the West Midlands co-operation was no stronger than in much of southern England.

The maps show the spread of co-operation in southern districts and the increasing complexity of the patterning of its strength. They also indicate that there were no outstanding concentrations of success within these regions. In 1862 the Dean coalfield, parts of Wiltshire, the Sheppey district which contained the two long established Sheerness societies and the towns of Reading and Colchester were areas

where co-operation was slightly more advanced than the southern norm. Only in Sheppey and the Melksham district of Wiltshire was there subsequent progress that was in any degree comparable with that of northern industrial areas whose position had been similar in 1862. In the South-East and East/East Anglia regions the accelerating expansion of membership noted in the later decades of the century (Fig. 4.5C) seems to have reflected the geographical spread of co-operation rather than the concentration of its support in a particular area (Figs. 4.8 to 4.10).This was less true of the South-West and London. Although both shared in the new wave of society foundations substantial percentages of their regional total memberships were accounted for by two pairs of societies - those at Gloucester and Plymouth in the South-West and Stratford and Woolwich in London (Table 4.14). Most southern districts with a co-operative presence in 1901 still had a membership that was less than 5 per cent of their population. Essex, Kent, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Devon had several districts above this level but only scattered individuals were markedly above the regional average - Plymouth, Gloucester, Stroud, Melksham, Sheppey. Also strong by the standards of southern England and more particularly in comparison with the dismal performance of the rest of London was the Woolwich district.

The larger scale inset detailing the county of London (which is consequently omitted from the main map) shows the consistent weakness of metropolitan co-operation. Less

obvious from the main map is the tendency of many large urban centres to record a level of co-operative membership below that of the surrounding areas. Although, as was noted in Chapter Three, the larger towns and cities all had early experience of co-operation some failed to make significant progress from this platform. In areas removed from the main co-operative centres some of the largest towns completely lost their early societies and remained without replacement for several years. Co-operation was absent in Bristol 1874-84, Norwich 1870-75, Brighton 1875-88, Southampton 1867-87, Wolverhampton 1872-85, Stoke 1883-87 and in Hull where milling societies continued to trade there was no store between 1873 and 1890. Birmingham and Liverpool were never without co-operatives but none grew to any size. In 1901 the society at Brighouse had over 1,000 members more than the 5,108 strong Birmingham Industrial society. Even in northern cities such as Leeds, Newcastle and Manchester where societies grew to a considerable size (on a national ranking by membership these societies were in 1901 first, eighth and tenth respectively amongst English co-operatives) they did not achieve a penetration of their local population comparable to the most successful co-operatives in smaller communities. A summary of the performance of co-operation in different sized centres is given on Table 4.17 which compares the distribution of the total population of England and Wales with that of co-operative membership. Although societies based in cities of over 100,000 population increased their contribution to membership they still fell well below their

share of the national population in 1901. Co-operation was proportionately stronger in smaller and medium sized towns.

Table 4.17. Percentage Distribution of Total Population and Co-operative Retail Society Membership for England and Wales by Settlement Size, 1861/62, 1881, 1901.(52)

Settlement Population Total	1861/62 % of All Pop'n	1861/62 % of All M'ship	1881 % of All Pop'n	1881 % of All M'ship	1901 % of All Pop'n	1901 % of All M'ship
100,000+	28.8	18.7	36.2	19.6	43.7	25.8
50-99,999	6.1	11.5	7.3	11.8	7.4	11.4
20-49,999	7.5	16.5	9.4	13.4	9.9	20.5
10-19,999	6.6	11.6	6.6	13.8	8.1	15.4
<10,000	51.0	41.7	40.5	41.2	30.9	26.9

The weakness of co-operation in the larger centres of southern and Midland England is clarified by Fig. 4.11 which for 1901 plots the total co-operative membership of those towns which were the locations of the 100 largest societies against their population. Also included are seven other centres with a population of over 100,000. It seems more than coincidental that the latter comprise five major ports - Birkenhead, Cardiff, Hull, Liverpool and Southampton - plus Brighton and Stoke. In addition to the large outliers shown on Fig. 4.11 there is a suggestion of a break in the trend of the relationship between co-operative membership and population sustained by a number of towns with a population of $\leq$70,000 to $\leq$150,000. Below the former figure any curtailment of membership with reducing population is much more gradual. This reflects co-operative success in the lesser urban centres and points to a ceiling above which it

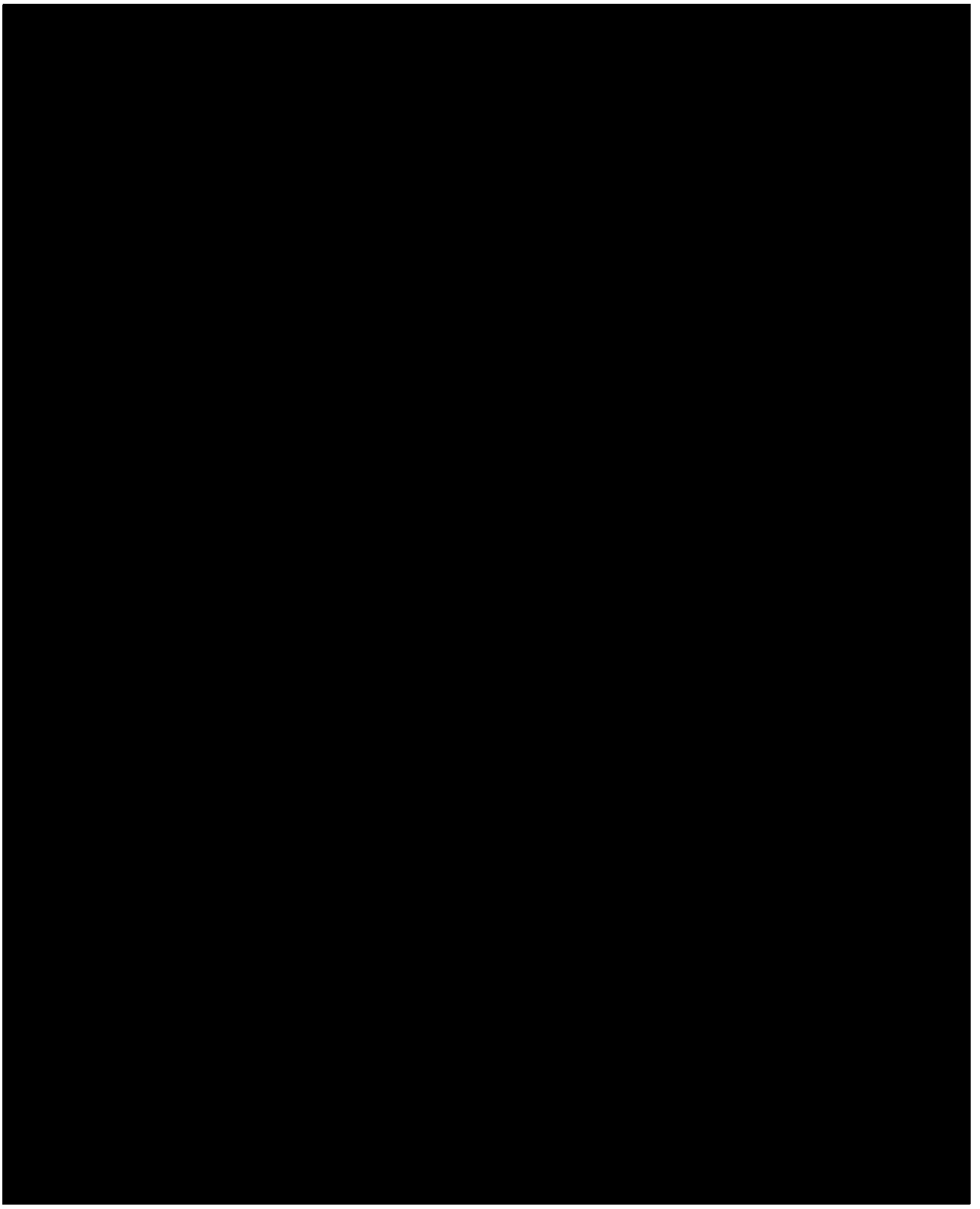


Fig. 4.11. Co-operative Retail Society Membership and the Population Size of Urban Centres, 1901.

Source: P.P. 1902 XCVI and P.P. 1904 CVIII.

was found difficult to maintain their strong performance.

VIII

Taken together Chapters Three and Four provide a record of the changing geography of co-operative retailing during the second half of the nineteenth century. The material presented here clarifies and quantifies the well-known strength of societies in northern England. Within these areas more detailed information shows a significant degree of intra-regional variation including a clear relationship between settlement size and the degree to which co-operatives successfully penetrated local consumer markets. The local success of co-operation is put into the wider context of the national geography of the movement. It comes perhaps as something of a surprise to discover the sheer number and widespread distribution of attempts to establish stores during this period. No less revealing is the divergence between the spatial and temporal pattern of co-operative foundations; the effort put in by small committed groups, and the ultimate strength of membership as a reflection of the wider popular response. Variations in co-operative progress were as much a product of differences in the success achieved within the local community by individual societies as they were of the process of spread of awareness of the co-operative idea within the national space.

The presentation of a spatial distribution pattern is an interesting exercise but it is often not a satisfactory end in itself. It seems logical that attention should turn from

description to an explanatory analysis of the geography of co-operative retailing. The spread of the organisational and commercial institution of the store and the increase of individual membership raises a range of questions. An exploration of the mechanics of the particular innovation diffusion process is a conventional beginning to any attempt at analysis but there are also basic issues which are less commonly addressed directly in geographical diffusion studies. Why should working people show any interest at all in co-operation? Why did they adopt this specific innovation? And following on from this, why should there be such marked contrasts in the degree of success experienced by societies established in settlements in different areas of the country and of different economic and social character. Any attempt at explanation needs to adopt as broad a perspective as possible. The traditional concern of diffusion studies with the relative location of individual adoptions and the contacts between them should be allied with consideration of the make-up of the adopting groups and the local milieu in which adoption decisions are made. Simply expressed, the concerns are both with spatial patterns and place specific character.

It is to the means available for the diffusion of information about co-operation as a first stage in its spread that attention is initially turned. Subsequent chapters make a more detailed examination of the context of co-operative development, reflecting its somewhat ambiguous nature as both

a venture in retailing which needed to achieve commercial viability for its survival and a social exercise in working class self-help.

NOTES

1. Potter 1891, Appendix V; Cole 1944, 371.
2. Potter 1891, 250-53.
3. Cole 1944, 370.
4. Available details for individual societies are given on Tables 2.1, 2.2 and 4.1.
5. The Returns of the Chief Registrar were not published for the years 1868 and 1869.
6. Details of the weaknesses of the Returns and measures taken to correct them are given in Appendix One.
7. Ch.Soc. 1851-52, Leader 1851-52, Co-operative League Transactions 1852.
8. Estimates based on data in P.P. 1863 XXIX.
9. Cole 1944, 81.
10. The largest membership totals were those of the Sheerness Provision and Rochdale Pioneers' societies. The Rochdale store followed by that at Ripponden topped the sales figures. See Table 4.1.
11. As note 7 plus P.P. 1863 XXIX.
12. The calculation of constant prices derives from the retail price index given in Feinstein 1972, T140.
13. Feinstein 1972, T8.
14. Clapham 1938, 256.
15. Fay 1928, 310-11.
16. Newcastle Daily Chronicle 8 Dec. 1875.
17. They may, however, have continued to purchase from the store as non-members.

18. Henderson 1934, 97 gives details of the effects of the cotton famine in the North-West during the early sixties.
19. In later years the normal process of growth was supplemented by the amalgamation of societies.
20. P.P. 1902 XCVI.
21. Cf Table 3.8.
22. P.P. 1863 XXIX; P.P. 1882 LXVI; P.P. 1902 XCVI.
23. P.P. 1902 XCVI.
24. Co-op. Jan. 1861, Feb. 1861, Apr. 1861, Aug. 1861.
25. Co-operative Union 1881, 69 and 1900.
26. By 1901 there were several substantial southern societies each with a membership of over 5,000: Plymouth, Woolwich, Stratford, Gloucester, Reading, Colchester, Norwich.
27. A notable but isolated example is Crossick 1978, Chapter Eight.
28. PRO FS 1, FS 8; Ch. Soc. 1850-52; Leader 1850-53; Co-operative League Transactions 1852; St. Andre 1854; P.P. 1863 XXIX; P.P. 1864 XXXIII; P.P. 1866 XXXIX; P.P. 1871 LXII; P.P. 1877 LXXVII; P.P. 1880 LXVIII; P.P. 1901 LXXIV.
29. Ch. Soc. 1850-52; Leader 1850-53; Co-operative League Transactions; St. Andre 1854; P.P. 1863 XXIX.
30. Co-operation made greater progress in southern and Midland England during the first half of the present century. See the figures for membership in 1942 in Cole 1944, 391.

31. P.P. 1863 XXIX; P.P. 1867 XXXIX; P.P. 1872 LIV; P.P. 1877 LXXVII; P.P. 1882 LXVI; P.P. 1887 LXXVI; P.P. 1892 LXXIII; P.P. 1897 LXXXII; P.P. 1902 XCVI.

32. Calculated from sources detailed in note 31.

33. P.P. 1863 XXIX; P.P. 1872 LIV; P.P. 1882 LXVI; P.P. 1892 LXXIII; P.P. 1902 XCVI; P.P. 1863 LIII Pt. I; P.P. 1873 LXXI Pt. I; P.P. 1883 LXXX; P.P. 1893-94 CVI; P.P. 1904 CVIII.

34. Bushell 1921 provides an alternative measure of co-operative strength early in the present century. An indication of its share of total retail trade is given by the percentage of the population registered with societies to obtain rations of imported butter in 1919. In London county the figure was only 5 per cent compared with 10-15 per cent in the surrounding areas of southern England; in northern England levels were generally above 30 per cent, peaking at 48 per cent in Durham and Northumberland.

35. As note 31. See also note 12.

36. Several regions show depressed sales associated with the general economic downturn of the late seventies.

37. Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient of membership / 1,000 population with sales per member by region yields results rising from +0.50 in 1862 to +0.55 in 1881 and +0.78 by 1901.

38. Throughout the period the greatest absolute growth remained firmly anchored in northern England.

39. Calculated from sources detailed in note 31.

40. The precise form of the break in growth recorded in some regions in the early seventies may reflect data deficiencies: see Appendix One.

41. See Appendix One.

42. See Chapter Three.

43. Calculated from the Annual Returns of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67 and 1870-1901.

    North: North, North-West, Yorkshire, North Midlands, South-East Midlands.

    South: West Midlands, East/East Anglia, South-East, Metropolitan, South-West, Wales.

44. P.P. 1902 XCVI.

45. Spearman's Rank Correlation of +0.85.

46. P.P. 1863 XXIX; P.P. 1882 LXVI; P.P. 1902 XCVI.

47. The total was similar in Wales again reflecting the recent origin of a high percentage of the societies extant in 1901. The situation in the South-East Midlands was rather different, the large number of small societies was more a result of the limited size of the settlements in which they were located rather than, as was the case in London and in Wales, the failure of co-operatives to become firmly established within a larger market.

48. Herald of Co-operation Nov. 1847.

49. PRO FS 1, FS 8; Ch. Soc. 1850-52; Leader 1850-53; Co-operative League Transactions 1852; St. Andre 1854; Annual Returns of the Funds and Effects of Industrial and Provident Societies for 1862-67 and 1870-1901.

50. The National society attempted to establish a chain of branches throughout the country affiliated to and partly supplied by a headquarters in London. The scheme was also distinguished by its use of a proportion of trading profits to finance medical and life assurance for members. Internal conflict between individual stores and the national headquarters aggravated the society's financial problems leading to its collapse in 1861. Several branches re-established as independent societies generally had a short life only: National Co-operative Leader 1860-61; see also Chapter Five for details of the distribution of the society's branches.

51. In the absence of detailed information membership was assumed to be equally divided between individual outlets with the exception of the central store which was taken to deal with twice the number of customers of each of the branches.

52. P.P. 1863 XXIX; P.P. 1882 LXVI; P.P. 1902 XCVI; P.J. Waller 1983, 8.