

Child welfare and the impact of late-nineteenth-century English reformatory and industrial schools: a life-course analysis of social mobility, emigration, and character

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Contents

List of Abbreviations .....
Introduction 1
Sources and approaches 15
Reassessing histories of child welfare and emigration 31
Chapter One: Children and their families 36
Children in the records 38
Origins of the reformatory and industrial school movement 41
Removing children from abusive and wilfully neglectful situations 49
Children's responses to family situations 63
The impact of poverty and instability 64
The impact of relationships on children's behaviour 71
Conclusion 88
Chapter Two: Boys and social mobility 91
Measuring outcomes 95
Seizing the opportunity of emigration 102
How emigration was understood 114
Outcomes for emigrant boys 128
Comparing outcomes to non-emigrants, fathers, and siblings 139
Conclusion 148
Chapter Three: Girls and social mobility 151
Measuring outcomes 154
A life of service? 166
Returning to friends 181
Girls' emigration 191
Social mobility 197
Did emigration confer greater social mobility? 207
Conclusion 215
Chapter Four: Character and the influence of relationships 218
Important individuals 221
Moulding character 231
The importance of institutional relationships 244
Changing emotions and changing relationships 261
Relationships and their effect on character 273
The importance of sibling relationships 280

The influence of peer relationships 288
Conclusion 300
Conclusion 302
List of Figures 311
Tables 311
Figures 312
Bibliography 313
Primary sources 313
Secondary Material 327

Short Abstract

This thesis fundamentally reshapes understandings of working-class life and social mobility in modern Britain and disrupts existing histories of nineteenth-century institutional welfare. Focusing on the lives of 230 children who entered two Surrey-based reformatory and industrial schools between 1850 and 1895, it integrates qualitative and quantitative analysis. It uses rich archival data together with the latest digitised sources to contextualise children's lives with those of their families (c. 1200 individuals). It reveals children's experiences of welfare across the life course, within and beyond the British Isles.

The thesis explores the intellectual origins of reformatory and industrial schools. Through a focus on the causes of family breakdown, it reveals the harmful backgrounds of many children and shows that a substantial proportion considered institutional care preferable to life at home. It builds on these new understandings to argue for a reassessment of the purpose and effectiveness of institutional welfare.

The study provides the first comparative study of children's life courses and demonstrates that philanthropic intervention delivered gains in social mobility for girls and especially boys. This contradicts existing characterisations of nineteenth-century welfare as ineffective or driven by motives of class control. Through an examination of the motives behind emigration, it shows that children were active agents in this process as they sought financial opportunity overseas. This argues for the inclusion of juvenile emigrants in histories of empire. It shows that working-class families thought of opportunity as transnational but not necessarily imperial.

The examination of children's pre-institutional lives together with the social mobility benefits that welfare delivered, shows that nineteenth-century institutional care offered

advantages unmatched in the twentieth century when welfare became centralised, living standards rose and investment dropped. This transforms existing histories of working-class life and undermines conventional narratives of linear progress in the welfare state.

Long Abstract

This thesis asks what impact philanthropic intervention had on the lives of children in the second half of the nineteenth century. Focusing on the life courses of 230 children and their families, it integrates qualitative and quantitative analysis to contextualise children's lives and their interactions with residential welfare. By following these working-class individuals from the cradle to the grave, both within, and beyond, the British Isles, it fundamentally reshapes our understanding of working-class life and social mobility in modern Britain and disrupts existing histories of nineteenth-century institutional welfare.

The research is based on the records of two of Victorian England's principal residential institutions for children. The Royal Philanthropic Society's (RPS) Farm School for boys was a reformatory school established in Red Hill, Surrey in 1849, and The Princess Mary Village Homes (PMVH) for girls was an industrial school established in Addlestone, Surrey in 1870. Both institutions acted as models for developments in child welfare provision in the second half of the century and have been chosen for their contemporary importance.

The analysis takes as its focus the lives of eighty girls and 150 boys, who entered these institutions between 1850, when the reformatory experiment first began to be taken seriously, and 1895 when objectives regarding national efficiency and imperial expansion began to dominate emigration strategies. It takes advantage of a rich archive of institutional material, which includes Annual Reports, magazines, admissions registers, discharge records and letter books. It combines these with a wealth of new sources available online, which include birth, death, marriage and census data, court and prison records, poor law registers, passenger lists, military service files, probate books and newspapers. The latest advances in

digitisation of genealogical records have provided previously unparalleled opportunities for the researcher to find out much more about the lives of working-class people in the past.

The thesis innovatively combines these sources to create detailed life histories of each of the 230 children. Each is contextualised by an analysis of their families, encompassing an estimated 1200 people. This allows us to see more completely those who, before digitisation, we would have scarcely glimpsed. In placing children's experiences at the centre of its analysis, this study builds on a body of scholarship that argues for the importance of children within histories of modern Britain. Throughout the research shows that using age as a category of analysis provides new perspectives on established histories.

The thesis makes five principal interventions. Firstly, by providing the first comparable study of mobility across the life course, it demonstrates that philanthropic and state intervention in children's welfare delivered gains in social mobility for boys and girls. In comparing outcomes for institutionalised children to their non-institutionalised siblings, it contradicts existing characterisations of nineteenth-century welfare as ineffective or driven by motives of class control.

It reveals new understandings on social mobility that contribute to recent scholarship that explores how social mobility was perceived by those who experienced it. The thesis argues that research into middle-class families showing the importance of preventing downward social mobility between social classes should be extended to encompass preventing downward mobility *within* social classes. It also suggests that there is a need to rethink existing impositions of twentieth-century occupational hierarchies on assessments of nineteenth-century mobility. It shows that while outcomes for boys and girls were gendered, both thought about mobility in terms other than occupational progress. An

exploration of girls' mobility demonstrates the importance of stability in adulthood and the value attached to fine gradations of social status within the homogenising category of the working-class. Evaluating boys' social mobility shows that boys thought in terms of financial opportunity and prioritised economic gains over skilled work. They were prepared to travel across the world in pursuit of these ambitions.

Secondly, the thesis argues that there is a need to rewrite histories of empire to include juvenile emigrants. Juvenile emigration has generally been marginalised by imperial historians because of its presumed involuntary nature. It has also been significantly criticised by historians of childhood and welfare. Yet, while emigration made little difference to girls' prospects in occupational terms, it was hugely beneficial for boys. Fifty-one percent of emigrant boys did better than their fathers and forty-nine percent did better than their brothers. The research shows that boys competed for the opportunity of emigration, were encouraged to emigrate by their parents and were fully cognisant of the employment opportunities available across the Anglo-world, whether part of the Empire or not. Recognising boys as active agents driven by personal and individual financial aims changes our view of the motives for emigration and reshapes our understanding of modern Britain and Empire by showing that working-class families thought of opportunity as transnational but not necessarily imperial.

Thirdly, the research transforms existing histories of working-class life. In recent years, historians have sought to rehabilitate working-class families criticised by middle-class Victorian reformers. Continuing the historiographical trend begun by E.P. Thompson, historians have recast fathers' and mothers' toil as indicative of parental devotion rather than obligation and detachment, spurring a re-evaluation of kinship, affection, and labour

amongst the working classes. This process of revision has extended to studies of child welfare. Through a focus on parental interaction with institutions, historians have presented Victorian narratives of abusive, neglectful, and violent parents as discursive strategies designed to loosen parental control rather than as representative of common experience.

This thesis challenges this presentation, by providing the first detailed examination of children's lives before they entered the institution. It reveals the abusive and neglectful family environments that characterised many families and argues that these restricted children's ability to thrive. It shows that children responded in multiple ways to these situations, including opting for institutional care over life with their family. It proposes that these recognitions provide some weight to Victorian discourses of harmful parents and present an important counterpoint to existing histories. They force us to reconsider the basis on which we judge the impact of welfare intervention and to reject binary assessments of the value of institutional care.

Fourthly, the thesis builds on these new understandings to argue for a reassessment of the purpose and effectiveness of institutional welfare. Most recent studies of institutional care have concentrated on high profile 'child-saving' organisations such as Dr Barnardo's or on poor law schools. This focus has led to explanations for philanthropic intervention that have foregrounded narratives of national efficiency or imperial ambition. Yet many of these institutions emerged only in the last decades of the nineteenth century. By taking industrial and reformatory schools as its focus, the thesis addresses a significant gap in the scholarship and shifts our focus to earlier in the century.

Reformatory and industrial schools were a hugely significant part of late-Victorian welfare provision. An estimated 125,000 children passed through these institutions between 1850

and 1901. The thesis argues that reformatory and welfare institutions emerged from a mid-Victorian intellectual spirit of reform that sought to protect children from their families and provide them with a better future. Through a process of experimentation and experience, the two institutions in this study, the RPS and the PMVH, developed pioneering practices that shaped later ideas about what worked in looking after children. Their influence only began to wane towards the end of the century as founders died, new charitable organisations emerged, and state intervention in the welfare of children grew.

Finally, the study argues for the need for more research into the significance of relationships in determining the impact of welfare and directing social mobility. An exploration of sibling and peer networks reveals the enduring nature of sibling bonds and indicates that scholarship on middle-class experiences can be extended into the working classes. The research shows that, despite often long separations, children developed and valued sibling relationships both within and beyond borders. When children did not have siblings, institutional life fostered peer bonds that could act to replace them. The creation of peer and sibling networks was an important part of the emigrant experience. The research shows that young emigrants used these relationships to create opportunities for social and geographic mobility. They formed mutually supportive and self-disciplining communities abroad and used these to their advantage in pursuit of their success. New imperial scholarship has demonstrated the significance of informational, social, and cultural networks in stimulating the expansion and settlement of the Anglo-world. This thesis shows that children were part of this process too.

These findings emerge from the research through four chapters. Together they respond to the central question of the thesis: what impact did institutional intervention have on

working-class children across the life course? To answer this question, the thesis examines three main areas: children's background, their social mobility, and the impact of the institution on their character and relationships in later life.

The first chapter provides context to the creation of reformatory and industrial schools and argues for their inclusion in the literature of institutional care. By showing the links between the founders of the two institutions and National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, the chapter positions their emergence as part of a mid-Victorian moment of innovation when intellectuals sought new solutions to the problems that faced society. It argues that they were motivated by a desire to protect children and to change their lives. It supports this argument about the institutions' protective purpose by reconstructing children's lives before they entered institutional care. Using a wealth of digitised sources to complement the sometimes-scant information in the institutional archive, it uncovers the many incidences of neglect, violence, sexual abuse, and emotional turmoil that characterised children's lives. It provides valuable context to both boys' and girls' encounters with philanthropists and shows that Victorian discourses of abusive neglectful parents had some foundation. By focusing on children as individuals it reveals the multiple ways in which children responded to their familial situations and demonstrates how, through their actions, they shaped their own futures.

The next two chapters concentrate on the impact of the institution on children's social mobility throughout the life course and show that both boys and girls experienced social mobility when compared to their fathers and non-institutionalised siblings. This directly contradicts existing narratives that criticise the effectiveness of institutional training. Both chapters demonstrate the historically contingent nature of social mobility by revealing that

philanthropists and children defined social mobility in ways that were different to those that dominate discussions of the twentieth century.

Chapter Two focuses on boys and tracks their occupational trajectories throughout their lives. By drawing on over one thousand letters from children to the institution, the chapter reveals that financial gains were more important to boys than artisanal skill. This led boys to pursue emigration as an opportunity and, when overseas, to leave skilled work in search of greater financial benefit. It shows that emigration delivered greater mobility than the alternative of remaining in Britain.

Chapter Three focuses on girls' social mobility and shows that experiences were gendered. It demonstrates that ambitions for girls centred around ideas of stability as the key to happiness. This was achieved either through employment or marriage. A brief exploration of how girls experienced mobility within domestic service demonstrates that there were fine gradations of social status within the broad categorisation of working class that mattered. To individuals, these were more important than twentieth-century ideas of class progression. It concludes that emigration provided a higher standard of living and a greater choice of employment for girls but made little difference to girls' lives in terms of occupational social mobility.

The final chapter focuses on relationships and their influence. It draws principally on letters between children and the institution. These sources have been marginalised by historians, who have positioned them as fictionalised institutional propaganda. Yet by linking together case files, published correspondence, unpublished letter records and other digitised data the research argues in favour of their authenticity. This under-utilised resource provides valuable insights into children's views of institutional care. The chapter makes three key

arguments. Firstly, while acknowledging that extant correspondence presents only one perspective — that of the individual who kept in touch — it argues that the correspondence shows that reciprocal and affective relationships existed between children and the institution. Secondly, it shows the influence of relationships on children's character. Institutional, sibling and peer relationships were instrumental in the development, maintenance, and policing of children's values after leaving the institution. Exploring these interactions reveals the active role children played in accepting or rejecting institutional teaching. Thirdly, through analysis of the correspondence, it shows that children's views of the institution changed over time as they aged. This demonstrates the importance of moving beyond a reliance on isolated episodes of resistance as indicative of children's settled perspectives on the institution.

The thesis reinforces the usefulness of age as an analytical category. Approaching this study through the lens of the life course has revealed the transient and changing nature of individual responses to family and institutions. It has shown how children's social mobility was contingent on age and how philanthropists viewed both emigration and domestic service as an important part of transitioning children from care to independent adulthood. This rested on an extended vision of childhood that recognised the need for support and stability if welfare intervention was to prove effective. Yet, while this study has demonstrated the significance of institutional intervention in children's lives, it has also revealed that it was children's responses to philanthropic efforts that determined welfare's ultimate life-long impact.

There is scope to extend these insights through further research. Further examinations of progress within domestic service in future research could generate fruitful new insights into

female social mobility. An exploration of whether state-run institutions or late nineteenth-century voluntary institutions delivered similar mobility benefits would be valuable. This could help identify the significance of factors, such as type of institution, length of time in an institution or spatial configuration, in children's outcomes. Further work with other types of working-class emigrants to explore how familial, charitable, state, and peer networks shaped social mobility across borders would expand on the insights gleaned from this study and transform histories of empire.

Overall, the thesis argues that the experiences of children admitted to care in the nineteenth century were different to the turn-of-the-century experiences that dominate the historiography. Motivations for intervention changed as the new century began and social imperialistic ambitions grew. The impact also changed. The effect of welfare intervention is relative and children's circumstances before intervention matter in our analysis. Nineteenth-century philanthropists were able to invest more and provide more than working-class children's families could. This relative advantage reversed in the twentieth century, as rising living standards and greater state involvement in the family brought benefits in terms of health and education that began to improve children's lives. In the nineteenth-century institutional care delivered social mobility, while today care leavers are among the most disadvantaged in society. Understanding why and how this happened tells us not only about how the role of the state has changed over time but questions narratives of linear progress that continue to dominate analyses of modern Britain.

List of Abbreviations

CoE –Church of England

CRO - Criminal Record Office

E&W – England & Wales

JRF – Joseph Rowntree Foundation

LAC – Library and Archives Canada

LMA – London Metropolitan Archives

MABYS – Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants

NAPSS – National Association for the Promotion of Social Science

NSPCC – National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

ODNB – Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

PMVH – Princess Mary Village Homes

RPS – Royal Philanthropic School

SDUK — Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge

SHC — Surrey History Centre

TNA – The National Archives

Introduction

This thesis asks what impact philanthropic intervention had on the lives of children in the second half of the nineteenth century. Taking the individual life course as its focus, it argues that late-Victorian philanthropic providers made deeper and more effective interventions in working-class children's futures than their families could. This provided institutionalised children with the opportunity to make social mobility gains versus non-institutionalised peers. This comparative advantage eroded as families' living standards increased during the twentieth century and as the state took over welfare provision.[1] Understanding these dynamics undermines existing negative depictions of institutional welfare and questions teleological narratives of progress in the welfare state.[2]

The research builds on a body of scholarship that argues for the importance of children within histories of modern Britain. Children are 'symbolic' of the modern state's 'commitment to the values of freedom, democracy and care'.[3] Their education in character and morality encouraged 'nation building' and mass enlistment in the First World War and has 'a bearing' on the histories of religion, social reform and empire.[4] Children were

[1] For statistical overview of living standards see: S. Horrell, 'Living Standards in Britain 1900-2000: Women's Century?', *National Institute Economic Review*, 172 (2000), pp. 62-77. For a summary of care leaver disadvantages in the last forty years, see: 'The lifelong health and well-being of care leavers' https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/The-lifelong-health-and-well-being-of-care-leavers.-Nuffield-Foundation-and-UCL-policy-briefing.-Oct-2021.pdf (17 July 2022). For discussion of the state's growing intervention in child welfare provision see: H. Hendrick, *Child Welfare* (London, 1994), pp. 96-104, 108-115, 121-6, 136-7, 188.

[2] P. Addison, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War* (London, 1994).

[3] A. James, 'Giving Voice to Children's Voices: Practices and Problems, Pitfalls and Potentials', *American Anthropologist*, 109/2 (2007), p. 261.

[4] S. Olsen, *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen* (London, 2014), p. 11; S. Heathorn, *For Home, Country and Race: Gender, Class and Englishness in the Elementary School*, 1880-1914 (Toronto, 2000), p. 217; S. Swain, 'A Motherly Concern for Children: Invocations of Queen Victoria in Imperial Child Rescue Literature' in S. Robinson and S. Sleight (eds), *Children, Childhood and Youth in the British World* (London, 2016), pp. 36-7.

simultaneously representative of 'misery and poverty' and the promise of the future.[5] Children and young people 'were central to the imperial project' and 'their experiences' 'exemplify the processes through which "Britishness" was expressed and contested across the globe'.[6] Children's very malleability, their temporality and their symbolism give them 'analytical potentiality' that provides new perspectives on old histories.[7]

In this study I exploit this analytical potential to consider three key questions. Firstly, using the records of two of Victorian England's principal residential institutions for children, I ask how our evaluation of welfare changes when we consider the circumstances of children's admission to the institution. What do children's backgrounds tell us about poverty, family, and philanthropy in this period? Families were, as Emma Griffin has shown, central to the power structures of Victorian Britain.[8] Over the last fifty years, historians have considered family life from multiple perspectives. A focus on demographic measurement and quantification has given way to analyses of affective and power relationships.[9] Taking their lead from E.P. Thompson, historians have challenged discursive depictions of working-class families as drunken, brutal or idle.[10] Using material culture, life writing, state records and

[5] H. Barron and C. Langhamer, 'Children, class and the search for security: writing the future in 1930s Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 28/3 (2017), p. 368.
[6] Robinson and Sleight, *Children, Childhood and Youth in the British World*, p. 2; E. Boucher, *Empire's Children. Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 9; C. Bischof, 'Review of *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967*', *Reviews in History*, no. 1663 (October 2014), Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967 | Reviews in History (30 June 2022).
[7] N. Milanich, 'Comment on Sarah Maza's "the Kids Aren't All Right"' *The American Historical Review,* 125/4 (2020), p. 1295.
[8] E. Griffin, *Bread Winner. An Intimate History of the Victorian Economy* (New Haven, 2020).
[9] For quantitative studies of family continuity and change see: M. Anderson, 'The social implications of demographic change' in F.M.L. Thompson (ed), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950* vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 1-70; J. Bourke, 'Housewifery in Working-Class England 1860-1914', *Past & Present*, 143 (1994), pp. 167-197; J. Begiato, *Unquiet Lives, Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England 1660-1800* (Cambridge, 2009). For affective relationships see: J-M Strange, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class 1865-1914* (Cambridge, 2014); J. Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (London, 2009); E. Ross, *Love and Toil Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford, 1993).
[10] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1966); Strange, *Fatherhood*, p. 6; M. Reynolds, *Infant Mortality and Working-Class Child Care, 1850-1899* (London, 2016), pp. 160-3; M. Cannon,

more, they have revealed the gendered practices of family life and the impact of the shift towards 'breadwinner' roles.[11] Fathers' and mothers' toil has been recast as indicative of parental devotion rather than obligation and detachment spurring a re-evaluation of kinship, affection and labour amongst the working classes.[12]

This process of revision has extended to studies of child welfare. Historians have argued that Victorian discourses of abusive, neglectful, and violent parents were strategies designed to loosen parental control over children and better facilitate their transformation into ideal citizens.[13] Lydia Murdoch's landmark work challenged much of the existing historiography that focused on the social control purposes of child welfare within the broader context of the nineteenth-century disciplinary society.[14] Parents, she claimed, resorted to welfare as part of a range of survival strategies in the face of economic pressure, not because they did

'Negotiating the Blending of Families: Tension and Affection Between Step-Parents and Children in Early Modern England' in C. Beardmore and S, King (eds), *Family Life in Britain 1650-1910* (Cham, 2019), pp. 179-202.

[11] M. Doolittle, 'Time, Space and Memories. The Father's Chair and Grandfather Clocks in Victorian Working-class Domestic Lives', *Home Cultures*, 8/3 (2011), pp. 245-264; Strange, *Fatherhood*; Ross, *Love and Toil*.

[12] Strange, *Fatherhood*; Ross, *Love and Toil*.

[13] S. Swain and M. Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire. Child rescue discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850-1915* (Manchester, 2010); L. Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor families, child welfare and contested citizenship in London* (New Brunswick, 2006).

[14] J. Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools before 1933,' *History of Education*, 13 (1984), pp. 45-58; M. Cale, '"Saved from a Life of Vice and Crime": Reformatory and Industrial Schools for Girls c. 1854–1900.', (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1993); J. Donzelot, *The Policing of Families* (New York, 1979), p. 551; G. Behlmer, *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England 1870–1908* (Stanford, 1982); J.A. Stack, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools and the Decline of Child Imprisonment in Mid-Victorian England and Wales', *History of Education*, 23/1 (1994), pp. 59-73; A. Keating, 'Administrative Expedience and the Avoidance of Scandal: Ireland's Industrial and Reformatory Schools and the Inter-Departmental Committee of 1962-3' *Estudios Irlandeses,* 10/10 (2015), pp. 95-108; A.G. Ralston, *The Treatment of Destitute and Delinquent Children in Scotland, 1812-1872: With Special Reference to Industrial and Reformatory Schools* (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1982).

[14] L. Mahood, *Policing Gender, Class, and Family: Britain, 1850-1940* (London, 2005), pp. 7-8; M. Moore, 'Social Control or Protection of the Child? the Debates On the Industrial Schools Acts 1857—1894', *Journal of Family History*, 33/4 (2008), p. 361; S. Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939* (Oxford, 1981).

not care.[15] In so doing they behaved as active citizens seeking to enforce their parental rights.[16]

Yet, as Laura Peters and Jane Humphries both highlight, this 'rehabilitation' of the working classes may have gone too far. Humphries questions the absence of deserting or 'careless' fathers in Julie-Marie Strange's work on Victorian fatherhood. Laura Peters makes a similar point about Murdoch, whose depiction of struggling single parents dominates her account.[17] Absolving parents of responsibility for children's institutionalisation and positioning them as part of a process of negotiation within the system directs the gaze away from children's experiences and back towards the policies and structures of modern Britain. It prevents us from evaluating the impact of welfare intervention on its recipients.

Murdoch's book is one of the most significant pieces of research to consider Victorian child welfare institutions.[18] Yet, like most of the wider scholarship, it focuses on Dr Barnardo's homes and on poor law schools which were only one part of the patchwork of welfare provision in late Victorian Britain.[19] The institutions within this thesis — reformatory and

[15] L. Abrams, *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh, 1998); Ross, *Love and Toil*; Strange, *Fatherhood*; L. Hollen Lees, 'The Survival of the Unfit: Welfare Policies and Family Maintenance in Nineteenth Century London', in P. Mandler (ed), *The Uses of Charity: The Poor on Relief in the Nineteenth-Century Metropolis* (Philadelphia, 2016), pp. 68-91; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*.
[16] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 91-119.
[17] J. Humphries, '"Julie-Marie Strange, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class, 1865-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015', *The Economic History Review*, 69/3 (2016), pp. 1025-7, quote at page 1027; L. Peters, 'Review of "Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London", by L. Murdoch', *Victorian Studies*, 50/1 (2007), pp. 112–14.
[18] Claudia Soares' unpublished 2015 thesis looks at the emotions of institutionalised children. C. Soares, 'Neither Waif nor Stray: Home, Family and Belonging in the Victorian Children's Institution, 1881-1914' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Manchester, 2015).
[19] Boucher, *Empire's Children*; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*; Soares, 'Neither Waif nor Stray' M. Langfield, 'Righting the record?' in K. Federowich and A.S. Thompson (eds), *Empire, migration and identity in the British world*, pp. 150-168; R. Lamont, E. Moss and C. Wildman, 'Who Cares? Welfare and Consent to Child Emigration from England to Canada, 1870 to 1918', *Liverpool Law Review*, 41 (2020), pp. 45-65; G. Wagner, *Children of the Empire* (London, 1982) all focus on voluntary emigration societies and/or poor law children.

industrial schools — have been relatively neglected. Many of the existing histories are more than thirty years old and view industrial and reformatory schools principally as part of a broader discussion about juvenile delinquency and 'middle-class attempts to control working-class families'.[20] John Hurt described the industrial regime as reflective of the 'low regard that society had for these children'.[21] Linda Mahood saw the movement as part of a process of social control and 'policing families'. [22]

Making these institutions the focus of this research provides an alternative view. In exploring the background to children's admission to reformatory and industrial schools, I reveal the complex and messy realities of Victorian working-class life. I demonstrate that many institutionalised children came from problematic families and that children responded in varying ways to the challenges their families presented. My research shows that there were occasions when children actively chose to enter institutions or contributed to their admission through their own actions — often in response to difficult familial situations. This is an important change in perspective. If we recognise that for some children the shelter and comfort of the institution was preferable to life at home, we are forced to reassess our existing views of welfare and recognise the protective role it played.[23]

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[20] Moore, 'Social Control or Protection of the Child?', p.360. Examples include, M. Cale, '"Saved from a life of Vice and Crime": Reformatory and Industrial Schools for Girls, c. 1854-1901' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1993); Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools,' pp. 45-58; Stack, 'Interests and Ideas in Nineteenth-Century Social Policy', pp. 36-45; Mahood, *Policing Gender.* M. May, 'Innocence and Experience: The Evolution of the Concept of Juvenile Delinquency in the mid-19th Century', *Victorian Studies*, 17/1 (1973), pp. 7-29; A.M. Platt, *The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency*, (Chicago, 1969); S. Magarey, 'The Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Labour History*, 34 (1978), pp. 11-27; Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels?*.

[21] Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', p. 51.

[22] Mahood, *Policing gender*, p. 10.

[23] Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels?*; Hendrick, *Child Welfare;* Abrams, *The Orphan Country*; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*; Boucher, *Empire's Children*, p. 55*;* S. Swain, 'Child rescue. The emigration of an idea' in J. Lawrence and P. Starkey (eds), *Child Welfare and Social Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Liverpool, 2001).

This argument fits into an emerging body of scholarship, which has begun to re-evaluate nineteenth-century welfare. Historians have argued that there is a need to look beyond the rhetoric and criticism that targeted nineteenth-century parents to the lived experiences of the poor who accessed these services.[24] Much of this work has focused on the agency of the working classes in challenging and disrupting the structures of the state, but there have also been numerous detailed microhistories that have revealed the regionality of welfare practice. This has shown the contrast between local experiences and the public ideologies of welfare provision.[25] These conclusions were extended to children's welfare by Siân Pooley and Jonathan Taylor whose recent edited collection demonstrated that children's experiences of welfare were localised and specific to the communities and providers with which they engaged. This, Pooley, and Taylor concluded, reveals far greater instances of continuity for children living apart from the family than traditional whiggish narratives of progress in the welfare state would have us believe. 'If we attend to children's experiences, we need to rethink the classic historiographical narrative of the "road to 1945"'.[26]

My second key question asks what philanthropists wanted for children's futures and explores how they saw children's social mobility. Welfare institutions did not just seek to 'rescue' children but also to prepare them for a better life than that pursued by their parents.[27] Most historiographical analysis concludes that they failed. John Hurt and, more

[24] P. Jones and S. King, *Pauper Voices, Public Opinion and Workhouse Reform in Mid-Victorian England. Bearing Witness* (Cham, 2020), p. 2; S. Chaney, 'Review of Anna Shepherd, Institutionalizing the Insane in Nineteenth-Century England', *Medical History*, 60/3 (2016), pp. 437-8; P. Higginbotham, 'How gruelling was the Victorian workhouse?', History Extra, (9 Nov. 2021), https://www.historyextra.com/period/victorian/how-gruelling-victorian-workhouse-life-like-reality/ (23 March 2022); A. Ritch, *Sickness in the Workhouse: Poor Law Medical Care in Provincial England, 1834-1914* (Rochester, 2019).
[25] C. Newman, 'To Punish or Protect: The New Poor Law and the English Workhouse', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 18/1 (2014), pp. 124, 141.
[26] S. Pooley and J. Taylor, 'Introduction' in S. Pooley and J. Taylor (eds), *Children's Experiences of Welfare in Modern Britain* (London, 2021), pp. 9-10.
[27] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 121.

recently, Roy Parker, argued that institutional training existed for the benefit of the institution not the benefit of the individual. It did not prepare children for life after the institution.[28] This view was supported by Lydia Murdoch who claimed that children were trained for professions 'ill-suited to the late Victorian and Edwardian industrial economy'.[29] She argued that the principal aim was to train children to become 'orderly labourers' and 'useful citizens'.[30] This training, she added, was 'overlaid and intertwined with the rhetoric of domesticity' and reinforced the social order not the achievement of social mobility.[31]

I question these arguments, which rely on data gleaned predominantly from official government reports or polemical newspaper articles. The conclusion that training failed in its aim is based on the observation that by the end of the century, few boys went into the artisanal trades — choosing instead careers in the military, work as messengers or employment in the growth area of mining — and that, unsurprisingly, given that domestic service remained the primary occupational option for girls, most girls became servants. [32] There are two principal problems with this analysis. Firstly, these conclusions are drawn from isolated snapshot data. There has been no scholarship that has sought to explore what children actually did on leaving the institution. Only by following children throughout the life course can we evaluate their employment choices and their mobility. Secondly, I argue that in making these judgements about children's occupational choices, we need to think more deeply about how social mobility was regarded in the nineteenth century. As Christina de Bellaigue has argued 'existing historical analyses of social mobility' do not 'adequately'

[28] Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', p. 57; R. Parker, *Uprooted* (Bristol, 2008), pp. 193-5, 264-5,
[29] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 121; Parker, *Uprooted*, pp. 77, 82, 83, 99.
[30] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 123.
[31] L. Murdoch, 'From Barrack Schools to Family Cottages. Creating Domestic Space for Late Victorian Poor Children' in J. Lawrence and P. Starkey (eds), *Child Welfare and Social Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Liverpool, 2001), p. 164.
[32] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 137-8.

account for the 'cultural prominence of the discourse of self-improvement and the self-made man' in the nineteenth century.[33] I explore this idea by drawing on children's own ideas of what was important for success.

Criticisms of training and of children's lives after the institution are similarly at the forefront of the analysis of child emigration programmes, which forms the core of much of the more recent literature on child welfare. Here too, Murdoch's scholarship has been influential.[34] Ellen Boucher's ground-breaking 2014 work *Empire's Children* built on ideas first introduced three decades earlier by Gillian Wagner as well as on the breadth of imperial research that had emerged since the millennium.[35] Boucher, argued that child emigration programmes emphasised the potential of the settler empire as a 'redemptive space'.[36] Nineteenth-century ideas of citizenship were intertwined with the expansion and maintenance of empire.[37] Emigrant children were told that they would be able to achieve a 'higher degree of social mobility' than if they remained at home.[38] Countries such as Canada were societies where 'piety, morality and temperance' rather than birth 'determined an individual's potential'.[39]

Yet, once again the effectiveness of such schemes is under-explored in the literature. The sole piece of substantive research on emigrant children's outcomes was published more

[33] C. de Bellaigue, 'Rags to Riches? New Histories of Social Mobility in Modern Britain – Introduction', *Cultural and Social History*, 16 (2019), p. 4.
[34] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 3. Murdoch had been cited 228 times as of 14 June 2022 (google scholar). She is cited multiple times in Boucher, *Empire's Children* and in S. Swain and M. Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*.
[35] Wagner, *Children of the Empire*; See Boucher, *Empire's Children*, footnote 23, p.9 for a discussion of the reading Boucher considers essential in the field of empire scholarship.
[36] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, p. 8.
[37] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 115-117; R.J. Bates, 'Building Imperial Youth? Reflections on labour and the construction of working-class childhood in late Victorian England', *Paedagogica Historica*, 45/1-2 (2009), pp. 143-4.
[38] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, p. 8.
[39] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, p. 117.

than forty years ago. Joy Parr's *Labouring Children*, a detailed, careful, and landmark piece of work on children who emigrated under Dr Barnardo's schemes to Canada, remains the definitive view on the accuracy of philanthropic claims regarding the possibilities of emigration. This is despite, as Parr herself acknowledged, being limited in its scope.[40] Her analysis considered only boys and only those who chose to stay in touch with the institution. And, as Roy Parker pointed out, 'we are handicapped' 'in drawing conclusions about the success or otherwise' of the scheme by the 'absence of comparable information from those who were not emigrated'.[41]

This thesis addresses this absence in the scholarship through a detailed analysis of children's occupational trajectories throughout the life course. In covering both boys and girls it provides the first comparative study of outcomes between the sexes. It concludes that most children who entered institutions achieved greater occupational mobility than their parents and siblings. Yet it also finds that opportunities were gendered. For girls, emigration made little difference to their relative mobility but for emigrant boys, life overseas provided significant gains —both compared to family members and compared to peers from the institution who remained in Britain. While the research measures occupational progress to facilitate the evaluation of social mobility, the analysis also reveals the importance of financial objectives to emigration. Both philanthropists and current emigrants emphasised the money to be made overseas in comparison to Britain. They prioritised financial gain not occupational progression. This demonstrates the historical contingency of social mobility

[40] J. Parr, *Labouring Children* (London, 1980), p. 125.
[41] Parker, *Uprooted*, p. 281.

and questions existing studies that impose twentieth-century hierarchies of occupation on analyses of the nineteenth century.[42]

These findings speak to Boucher's call for more work to 'explore just how deeply the concept of Greater Britain permeated British society'.[43] In demonstrating that boys and their families considered overseas employment as part of a range of options, I contradict traditional presentations of juvenile migrants as passive victims of philanthropic enthusiasm.[44] Children emigrated voluntarily and willingly. Once overseas they displayed considerable geographic mobility, in many cases travelling to other destinations outside the empire or returning to Britain where they either remained or emigrated once more.

This has significant implications for our understanding of working-class life within empire.[45] The emergence of the 'British World' concept in the last twenty-five years, together with a rise in the use of 'transnationalism' as an analytical tool, has drawn attention to the importance of experiences of emigration within histories of modern Britain.[46] Kent Federowich and Andrew Thompson have asserted that understanding mass migration is 'integral to a proper analysis of "global Britishness"'.[47] They argue that migration 'changes

[42] For discussion of current models of social mobility see: K. Prandy and W. Bottero, 'Social Reproduction and Mobility in Britain and Ireland in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *Sociology*, 34/2 (2000), pp. 275-6; A. Miles, 'New Approaches to Social Mobility', *British Journal of Sociology*, 69/4 (2018), pp. 1057-58; de Bellaigue, 'Rags to Riches?', pp. 1-11.
[43] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, p. 10.
[44] M. Harper and S. Constantine, *Migration and Empire* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 4-5, 247; For discussions of consent see Langfield, 'Righting the record?', p. 155; Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 81; Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 67-68; Lamont, Moss and Wildman, 'Who Cares?', p. 49.
[45] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, p. 10.
[46] C.V. Reed, 'Review of Harper, Marjory and Constantine, Stephen, *Migration and Empire*, (Jan. 2012) https://networks.h-net.org/node/16749/reviews/18417/reed-harper-and-constantine-migration-and-empire (16 June 2022); For a discussion of transnationalism see: P. Clavin, 'Defining Transnationalism', *Contemporary European History*, 14/4 (2005), pp. 421-439; N. Schiller, L. Basch, and C. Blanc-Szanton, 'Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 645/1 (1992), pp. 1-24.
[47] K. Federowich and A.S. Thompson, 'Mapping the Contours of the British World' in K. Fedorowich and A.S. Thompson (eds), *Empire, migration and identity in the British world* (Manchester, 2013), p. 6.

the way in which individuals — and the families they left behind — imagine their social and political spaces, thereby making their migration a defining aspect of their identity'.[48] Eric Richards called for analyses of 'the social psychology' of emigration. What made people emigrate? Understanding this would, he argued, tell us much about modern British society, culture, and identity.[49] Including children's evidence provides a route into these evaluations and responds to Federowich and Thompson's call to explore 'transnationalism or globalisation from below' by considering new emigrant groups.[50]

It also speaks to new imperial scholarship that has challenged the concepts of metropole and periphery. This has argued that networks facilitated the reciprocal flow of ideas about culture and society across the world.[51] The combination of genealogical tracing and letter analysis in this thesis shows that children used the transnational networks that they formed with philanthropists, kin, and peers to shape their own futures. Emigrants supported other emigrants with accommodation or employment. Emigrant children gave advice and shared information about opportunities with friends and family back in the British Isles. This provides an insight into why they chose to leave Britain. As Gary Howells has shown, these personal networks facilitated the flow of information about the lucrative opportunities available overseas.[52] Tracing individual life courses reveals the longevity and geographic range of these nineteenth-century networks. They stretched the boundaries of working-class opportunity well beyond those of the British Isles and even the empire.

[48] Federowich and Thompson, 'Mapping the Contours', p. 15.
[49] Federowich and Thompson, 'Mapping the Contours', p. 16; E. Richards, 'Emigration at the Extremes', *Bridging Boundaries in British Migration History* (London, 2020), pp. 57-63; E. Richards, *The genesis of international mass migration* (Manchester, 2018), p. 8.
[50] Federowich and Thompson, 'Mapping the Contours', p. 18.
[51] A. G. Hopkins, *Global History: Interactions Between the Universal and the Local* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 5.
[52] G. Howells, '"For I was tired of England Sir"': English Pauper Emigrant Strategies 1834-60', *Social History*, 23/2 (1998), p. 184.

The question of how these networks were created and maintained is the third principal area of focus within this thesis. Relationships were central to this process. They influenced children's responses to institutional intervention, their absorption of institutional values and crucially the long-term impact of residential welfare on children's lives. Yet, most histories of welfare have focused on the way relationships were disrupted or severed by philanthropic intervention.[53] There have been few studies that have considered how the welfare child built and negotiated relationships within and beyond the institution.

In concentrating on the relationships between children, staff and peers, this study offers new insights into the impact of welfare on children's lives. It provides the first consideration of the staff members who delivered institutional care and suggests that we need to pay more attention to these individuals. It reveals the reciprocal and affective relationships that developed between children and staff and the long-lasting responsibility that the institution felt for children's care. In demonstrating that individuals asked for and were given help by the institution after leaving it — sometimes for decades — I disrupt existing narratives that position the institution as uncaring about children's outcomes.[54]

I also reveal alternative arguments about the motivations underpinning philanthropic intervention. It is true that, as Shurlee Swain has argued, 'the appeal of children lay in their potential for transformation'.[55] But, I question the extent to which we can argue that mid-

[53] C. Soares, 'Dear Sir, remember me often if possible': family, belonging and identity for children in care in Britain, c. 1870-1920' in Pooley and Taylor (eds), *Children's Experiences of Welfare in Modern Britain*, p. 76; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans,* pp. 1-11; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, p. 130; Levene, 'Family breakdown', p. 72; Abrams, *The Orphan Country*, p. 164; G. Frost, '"Your mother has never forgotten you": illegitimacy, motherhood and the London Foundling Hospital, 1860-1930', *Annales de Démographie Historique*, 128 (2014), pp. 45-72; Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 62; S. J. Taylor, 'Conceptualising the 'Perfect' Family in Late Nineteenth-Century Philanthropic Institutions' in C. Beardmore, C. Dobbing and S. King (eds), *Family Life in Britain 1650-1910* (Cham, 2019), p.167.
[54] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 161-2; Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 82, 92-6.
[55] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, p. 31.

century philanthropists regarded children as potential contributors to 'the economic strength of Britain' and emigration as part of a 'larger cultural move towards disciplining the poor'.[56] I argue that the philanthropists responsible for the system of residential welfare that emerged in the 1850s and 1860s were the product of earlier debates around state-funded education, suffrage, abolitionism, public health, and penal reform. Staff at both girls' and boys' institutions were driven by theories of intervention that saw 'character' and stability as significant for children's future contentment. Staff encouraged children to live honest, industrious, god-fearing, and steady lives because they expected, or hoped, it would deliver better *individual* outcomes not because it would further imperial or national ambition.

Staff drew on their own experiences to foster peer relationships that developed a sense of mutual responsibility that enforced institutional values. Children were encouraged by the institution to monitor each other's character. Analysis of children's letters shows that children measured each other's successes and failures and that children ended relationships with peers and families when they failed to adhere to the values of the institution. These recognitions deliver important insights into the extent to which children absorbed philanthropic aims. It contributes to a scant literature on friendship which focuses principally on adult alliances rather than on peer relationships amongst children.[57]

It also contributes to our understanding of working-class sibling relationships. Leonore Davidoff's *Thicker than Water*, remains almost the only historical discussion of sibling relationships in modern Britain. Davidoff's work on middle-class siblings has been described as 'pioneering' for its discussion of the lifelong importance of sibling connections and the

[56] Bates, 'Building imperial youth?', pp. 144-5.
[57] B. Caine, *Friendship: A History* (London, 2009); A. Herbert, *Female Alliances: Gender Identity and Friendship in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven, 2014); I. Schweitzer, *Perfecting Friendship: Politics and Affiliation in Early American Literature* (Chapel Hill, 2006), pp. 6-9.

implications these bonds have for debates on the making of the middle classes.[58] Similar studies of working-class peer and sibling relationships are lacking but the research for this thesis demonstrates that the working-class children within the institution similarly cared for their siblings well into adulthood.[59] This suggests that 'threads of kinship, friendship and patronage' extended 'beyond the middle-class experience'.[60] It speaks to scholarship that seeks to broaden our analysis of family dynamics beyond the middle classes.[61]

These new understandings of family life, welfare and social mobility reveal the value in placing children at the centre of our analysis. In focusing on children's experiences and responses, I am drawing on what Siân Pooley and Jonathan Taylor called 'a long historiographical tradition of taking the recipients of welfare seriously'.[62] Despite the transformations this approach has wrought in other histories of welfare, as Pooley and Taylor point out, it is one that has 'imprinted itself lightly' on the historiography of '*child* welfare'.[63] Children are still regarded principally as objects of policy, subject to adult agendas and objectives. Yet Anna Davin, Nicholas Stargardt and, more recently, the contributors to Pooley and Taylor's *Children's Experiences of Welfare in Modern Britain* have shown that approaching history from the perspective of children can substantially alter the way we view the past.[64] This thesis shows the many ways in which that is true.

[58] H. Cunningham, 'Thicker than Water: Siblings and Their Relations, 1780–1920 by Leonore Davidoff (review)', *Journal of Social History*, 47/4 (2014), pp. 1108.
[59] Davidoff, *Thicker than Water*, pp. 316-318.
[60] Ibid., p. 28.
[61] Strange, *Fatherhood*; Ross, *Love and Toil*.
[62] Pooley and Taylor, 'Introduction', p. 5.
[63] Original emphasis. Pooley and Taylor, 'Introduction', p. 6.
[64] A. Davin, *Growing up Poor: Home, School and Street in London, 1870-1914* (London, 1996); N. Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives Under the Nazis* (New York, 2006); Pooley and Taylor, *Children's Experiences of Welfare*.

Sources and approaches

The research is based on the case records of two of Victorian England's principal residential institutions for children: The Royal Philanthropic Society's Farm School for boys (RPS) established in Red Hill, Surrey in 1849, and The Princess Mary Village Homes for girls (PMVH) established in Addlestone, Surrey in 1870. The RPS was a reformatory school and the PMVH an industrial school. Both institutions acted as models for developments in child welfare provision in the second half of the century and have been chosen for their contemporary importance.

While, as Harry Hendrick points out, 'social policy for deprived children' can be traced back to sixteenth-century systems of 'boarding-out' apprentices, it was not until towards the middle of the nineteenth century that institutions targeted specifically at children began to proliferate.[65] The Acts establishing reformatory and industrial schools were passed in 1854 and 1857 respectively. By 1859 there were an estimated 38-40,000 children in residential institutions in England and Wales, two-thirds of whom were in the workhouse. Of the remainder, children in England's forty-eight reformatories accounted for twenty-three percent. Two-thirds of reformatory children were boys.[66] From the 1860s, the number of industrial schools grew rapidly reaching 141 by 1896. Many of these were small, holding fifty or fewer children. In 1870, the philanthropic societies run by Dr Barnardo and by the National Children's Home were established and the Waifs and Strays followed in 1881. The number of children in residential institutions grew rapidly and by the end of the century an estimated 70,000 children were in care. Slightly over half of these were in poor law

[65] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*. p. 74.
[66] *Parliamentary Papers* (1860), Cm 2688 vol. 35, Inspector of Reformatory Schools Third Report, p. 5; *Parliamentary Papers* (1909), Cm 4499 vol. 37, Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, p. 186; *Parliamentary Papers* (1865), Cm 3527, Inspector of Reformatory Schools of Great Britain, Eighth Report, pp. 3-4; 'The Education of Pauper Children', *The Standard* [London], (26 Dec. 1866), p. 5 col e.

institutions, around seventeen percent were in philanthropic society homes and twenty-seven percent in reformatory and industrial homes.[67]

Overall, an estimated 125,000 children passed through industrial or reformatory schools between 1850 and 1901.[68] Reformatory and industrial schools were therefore a significant component of the nineteenth-century residential welfare provision. According to statistician John Watson's calculations, in 1896 one in 230 children aged between five and fifteen was being brought up in an industrial or a reformatory school.[69] These institutions were the product of collaboration between the state, families, and charities. Reformatory and industrial schools were privately owned and operated institutions that were certified and inspected by government and received their funding from a mixture of philanthropic donations, parental contributions, and per capita state funding. This, according to the Inspector of Reformatory and Industrial schools, allowed them to retain their 'independent and partially charitable character'.[70]

Both industrial schools and reformatories were regarded by contemporaries as 'nearly identical' except in the age of children they addressed.[71] Reformatory schools admitted 'juvenile offenders' — categorised as a young person aged between ten and sixteen convicted of an offence liable to imprisonment —for a period of between two and five

[67] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 76 gives 70-90,000 as an estimate for 1900-1914. Calculations based on the following documents give an aggregate number of c. 67,000 and as these are not complete surveys and omit the very many small homes for fallen girls etc. I have chosen to go with the 70,000 estimate. *Parliamentary Papers* (1907), Cm 5037 LII.1, Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, Appendix vol. XVIII, p. 2, Appendix vol. XVIII, pp. 2-6; *Parliamentary Papers* (1907), Cm 4449 (37), Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, p. 181; *Parliamentary Papers* (1902), Cm 145, LIX.377, Poor Law children (cottage homes), pp. 1-4.
[68] Cale, '"Saved from a Life of Vice and Crime"', p. 4.
[69] *Parliamentary Papers* (1896), Cm 8204 XLV.1, Dept Committee on Reformatory and Industrial Schools vol. 1, pp. 8-9; J. Watson, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 59/2 (1896), p. 278.
[70] Cale, '"Saved from a Life of Vice and Crime"', p. 4; *Parl. Pap.* (1896), Cm 8204 XLV.1, pp. 10-13.
[71] *Parl. Pap.* (1896), Cm 8204 XLV.1, p. 13.

years. Industrial schools admitted destitute, disorderly, and non-criminal children aged between seven and fourteen for a minimum term of eighteen months. Industrial schools also admitted children under twelve years convicted of an imprisonable first offence as well as children under fourteen whose mothers had two or more convictions and children whose parents believed they were 'uncontrollable'. Both schools admitted vagrants.[72]

The RPS was both the first and the largest of England's reformatory schools and was immortalised by Charles Dickens in his journal *Household Words* in 1852.[73] First established in 1788 as a charity for homeless and delinquent boys, it moved out to the Surrey countryside in 1849 under the influence of its superintendent Sydney Turner[74] The RPS contained around 300 boys, equating to twelve percent of boys in reformatory care in 1860 and nine percent in 1900.[75] It admitted boys from a 150-mile radius of its location just south of London and contained a mix of city, town and country boys. Of the 150 boys studied for this thesis forty-six percent came from a location outside of London.[76]

The PMVH was less high-profile but similarly significant within the industrial school movement. Founded by high-profile Victorian philanthropist Susanna Meredith and her friend Caroline Cavendish, it had the Princess Mary as its patron.[77] It began operations in 1870 and contained around 200 pupils, making it England's largest institution for girls. It represented twelve percent of the female industrial school population in 1875 and six

[72] 'All about certified industrial schools', All About Certified Industrial Schools (childrenshomes.org.uk) (21 June 2022); Cale, '"Saved from a Life of Vice and Crime"', pp. 5-7; *Parl. Pap.* (1896), Cm 8204 XLV.1, pp. 11-13.
[73] C. Dickens, 'Boys to Mend', *Household Words*, 5/129 (1852).
[74] M. Whitten, *Nipping Crime in the Bud: How the Philanthropic Quest Was Put into Law* (Hampshire, 2011), p. 177.
[75] *Parl. Pap.* (1896), Cm 8204 XLV.1, pp. 8-9.
[76] The 1870 Annual Report showed forty-seven percent fell into this category. Woking, Surrey History Centre (SHC), 2271/1/16, Annual Report (1870), p. 10.
[77] B. Forsythe, 'Susannah Meredith', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)* (Oxford, 2009), https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-38850 (01 June 2022).

percent by 1900.[78] Two-thirds of its girls came from London, while the remainder came from as far afield as Manchester, Somerset, and Hampshire.

Despite the differences between the two institutions in origin and approach and irrespective of gender, the children admitted by the PMVH and the RPS were similar in circumstance and background to each other as well as to the wider population of children in residential institutions run by poor law schools and voluntary societies.[79] Given their common characteristics, tracing these children allows us to examine the impact of residential child welfare on working-class children's lives across England.

It considers how children engaged with welfare throughout their life through an exploration of their actions, responses, and relationships. This moves beyond the existing historiographical focus on the role of policy makers and philanthropists in delivering welfare to children.[80] It builds on research that has used oral histories, material culture, institutional records, school records, life writing, advice materials and more to gain access to the perspective and experiences of children across class, gender, and racial boundaries.[81]

[78] *Parliamentary Papers* (1872), Report of Comparative Number of Committals of Boys and Girls to Reformatories and Industrial Schools, p. 138; *Parl. Pap.* (1896), Cm 8204 XLV.1, pp. 8-9.
[79] Chapter One, pp. 45-47.
[80] Pooley and Taylor, 'Introduction', p. 7. An exception is Lynn Abrams whose oral history-based approach in her evaluation of boarded-out children in Scotland in the twentieth century found that the preferred Scottish option of fostering children created a similar sense of disruption and isolation to that experienced by children in residential institutions, Abrams, *The Orphan Country*.
[81] S. Maza, 'The Kids Aren't All Right: Historians and the Problem of Childhood', *American Historical Review*, 125/4 (2020), p. 1284; Abrams, *The Orphan Country*; Davin, *Growing up Poor*; H. Shore, *Artful Dodgers: Youth and Crime in Early Nineteenth-Century London* (Suffolk, 1999); L. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* (London, 2000); Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*; H. Sunderland, 'Politics in Schoolgirl debating cultures in England, 1886-1914', *The Historical Journal*, 63/4 (2020), pp. 935-57; B. Bellingham, 'Waifs and Strays: Child Abandonment, Foster Care, and Families in Mid Nineteenth-Century New York' in P. Mandler (ed), *The Uses of Charity: The Poor on Relief in the Nineteenth-Century Metropolis* (Philadelphia, 2016), pp. 123-161; J. Humphries, 'Care and Cruelty in the workhouse: Children's Experiences of Residential Poor Relief in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century England' in N. Goose and K. Honeyman, *Childhood and Child Labour in Industrial England: Diversity and Agency, 1750-1914* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 115-134; Barron and Langhamer, 'Children, class and the search for security'; I. Pande, *Sex, Law, and the Politics of Age: Child Marriage in India, 1891–1937* (Cambridge, 2020).

Institutional children have been a popular choice for historians seeking to recover nineteenth-century children's experiences because they are well documented.[82] The records for both the PMVH and the RPS are held in the Surrey History Centre in Woking, near London. These records differ in their completeness. The records for the RPS have fewer gaps than those for the PMVH. This could be explained by several factors. Firstly, although neither institution exists today, the RPS became part of present-day social welfare charity *Catch 22* in 1996. Most of its records were deposited in Woking in the 1960s and 1970s and their relative completeness could reflect a desire to maintain the RPS's legacy.[83] In contrast, the PMVH was converted to a council-run Approved School in the 1930s. It closed in 1980 and its remaining records were deposited around then.[84] It may be that given the institution was closing, the records were regarded as less valuable, and less care was taken with collecting them all up. The PMVH admissions register frequently refers to the 'Servants Register', which is no longer extant, and which could have been a wonderful source for this project. Secondly, geography may have been influential. The RPS was based in Reigate, twenty-nine miles from central London, well outside the Greater London boundary. The PMVH on the other hand was based in Addlestone, which although also in Surrey is at the opposite end of the county and crucially is inside the boundary of Greater London. This means that the school moved council boundaries twice in London-boundary reorganisations. It is possible that files went missing in this process.

[82] P. Stearns, 'Challenges in the History of Childhood', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 1 (2008), p. 36.
[83] 'The Royal Philanthropic Society, Redhill: Records', https://www.surreyarchives.org.uk/collections/getrecord/SHCOL_2271 (1 July 2022); For information on Catch22 see: https://www.catch-22.org.uk/ (1 July 2022).
[84] 'Princess Mary Village Homes, Addlestone: Records', https://www.surreyarchives.org.uk/collections/getrecord/SHCOL_2591 (1 July 2022).

Yet, even if all the records were present, the information they conveyed would have been different. From the surviving documents, it is evident that the two institutions had dissimilar approaches. The records for the boys' school were generally structured and formulaic. Much of this private information was for the school's own use and was not intended for publication. The RPS gathered as much information as possible about each boy and his family. Managers used two pages to record boys' admission according to set criteria, which included: name, date of birth, address, schooling, parents' occupation and character, description of crime or circumstances of admission, any previous convictions, details of any 'friends' and then sufficient space for a summary of any punishments while in the institution, as well as contact with the institution afterwards. It noted a physical description of the boy, any education he had received and whether he had been baptised or confirmed.[85] Detailed information about his family was gathered including father's wages and comments on parental character. A separate discharge register covering the period from 1880 survives. It also noted a boy's conduct while in the school, where he had gone when leaving and recorded any subsequent moves for a minimum of four years but often longer.[86]

As historians we need to always be conscious, as Kaisa Vehkalahti acknowledged, of 'whose voices are heard and recorded in the archives and why'. Archives are shaped by power relations.[87] 'They reflect the perceptions and the preoccupations of those who compiled them'.[88] Each superintendent added his own emphasis to the records. The Reverend Charles

[85] R. Shoemaker and R. Ward, 'Understanding the Criminal: Record Keeping, Statistics and the Early History of Criminology in England', *British Journal of Criminology*, 57 (2017), pp. 1442-1461.
[86] M. Thompkins, 'The Philanthropic Society in Britain with particular reference to the Reformatory Farm School, Redhill 1849-1900' (MA thesis, University of Western Australia, 2007), p. 6.
[87] K. Vehkalahti, 'Dusting the archives of childhood: child welfare records as historical sources', *History of Education*, 45/4 (2016), p. 431.
[88] Parker, 'Preface', *Uprooted*, xiii.

Walters who became superintendent in 1857 and was an advocate of emigration, appears to have introduced a letter book containing notes on all letters received by the school from emigrants. This covers the period between 1857 and 1874. Any later dated book is missing but the discharge registers and admissions registers also make brief notes of the contents of letters received. Charles Walters had been educated at Trinity College Dublin where he was Primate's Hebrew Prizeman in 1848 and Archbishop King's Divinity Prizeman two years later. He spent twenty-four years at the school and died in 1882. Walters was followed by the Reverend Arthur Jackson, son of a newspaper proprietor from Wolverhampton. Jackson introduced a biannual newsletter called *The Hive of Bees* and served for five years until he died in 1887 and was replaced by the Reverend Marshall Vine who remained at the school from 1887 to 1918. Vine, a graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford had been, according to his obituary, one of 220 candidates for the role of superintendent. He brought with him over a decade of experience of working with schools and young men and spent over thirty-four years as superintendent of the school.[89] Vine was particularly interested in boys' physical development and health. By 1896, Vine was monitoring progress in boys' height and chest measurements as representative of the 'very marked improvement in physique' delivered while boys were in the school's care.[90] This represented just one of the many ways in which these boys' lives were monitored.

Work by a range of historians has shown that reading these adult-authored sources can provide valuable insights into children's experiences.[91] Case files, as Mark Peel recognises,

[89] 'Death of Canon Vine', *The Surrey Mirror and County Post* (6 Sep 1918), p. 5, col d.
[90] SHC, 2271/1/27, Annual Report (1896), p. 28.
[91] See R. Swartz, 'Children's experiences of the Children's Friend Society emigration scheme to the colonial Cape,1833-41: snapshots from compliance to rebellion', pp. 27-48; G. Lamb, '"Their mother is a violent drunken woman who has been several times in prison": saving children from their families 1850-1900', pp. 49-72, C. Soares, '"Dear Sir, remember me often if possible": family, belonging and identity for children in care in Britain, c. 1870-1920', pp. 72-98 and G. Lynch, 'Welfare and Constraint on children's agency: the case of post-

provide a source of information, a place where the voices of the poor can be heard. Yet, as he acknowledges, they are partial, one-sided, and frustrating. There are absences and gaps.[92] This is particularly true of the surviving girls' records. The PMVH's nineteenth-century records consist primarily of its register of cases for the period 1870-1890 and its *Annual Reports* from 1883 onwards. There is considerably more information for the twentieth century, implying either that record keeping improved or the early documentation was lost. The records that do exist do not display the disciplined recording of information evident within the RPS. The case register contained no set criteria. It noted children's and parents' names (although not always) and circumstances of admission but only occasionally locations and details of 'friends'. Added to over time, it sometimes usefully included girls' later occupations or status. Some entries are an entire page, others a few lines. We cannot know why this information is so sparse. The few studies that exist into institutional case records do not seem to indicate any gendered reason for the difference. Claudia Soares' study of the children admitted to Waifs and Strays' institutions makes no mention of gendered record-keeping practices. Instead, she notes that some files are incomplete.[93] Similarly, Lydia Murdoch does not make note of any gendered bias in the recording of information, pointing out that 'records reflect the values and practical workings of the institutions'.[94]

One possibility is that detailed admission registers comparable to the RPS existed at some point and are missing, however, the *Annual Reports* of the PMVH are also much less detailed than those of the RPS indicating that the approach to measurement varied in the

war UK migration programmes to Australia', pp. 175-196, all in Pooley and Taylor (eds), *Children's Experiences of Welfare*.

[92] M. Peel, *Miss Cutler and the Case of the Resurrected Horse* (Chicago, 2012), p. 16.

[93] Soares, 'Neither Waif nor Stray', p. 22.

[94] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 70.

first place. A more probable explanation lies in the longevity of the PMVH staff between 1870 and 1900. Its three founders, Susanna Meredith, Caroline Cavendish, and Mrs Meredith's sister, Martha Lloyd, were present throughout that time. The institutional manager Elizabeth Penrose was also in place for over twenty years. It could have been that they retained much of their institutional knowledge at an individual rather than an institutional level.

The institutional records are complemented by extra-institutional sources such as probate files, birth, death, marriage and census data, court records, prison registers, poor law records, passenger lists, newspaper archives, and family tree images. The latest advances in digitisation of genealogical records have provided previously unparalleled opportunities for the researcher to find out much more about the lives of working-class people in the past.[95] Local history websites, government resources, paid-for genealogical sites such as ancestry.com and findmypast.co.uk and free sites such as familysearch.org all offer public access to wide ranging records that allow us to 'know the lives' of even the 'humble, marginal and obscure' in history.[96]

Yet, these children did not control what was recorded about them. As Mark Peel notes 'we see them almost always through the eyes of others'.[97] Like the institutional archives, these digitised records are products of 'political, social and economic power'.[98] None of the children within this study gave consent for their lives to be examined in this way. This raises

[95] T. Hitchcock and R. Shoemaker, 'Making History Online', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 25 (2015), pp. 75-93; J. Laite, 'The Emmet's Inch: Small History in a Digital Age', *Journal of Social History*, 53/4 (2020), pp. 964.
[96] Laite, 'The Emmet's Inch', pp. 963-4.
[97] Peel, *Miss Cutler*, p. 18.
[98] Laite, 'The Emmet's Inch', p. 979.

ethical considerations.[99] Data Protection laws affect those who seek to use data from twentieth-century institutions but information about lives of nineteenth-century individuals is freely available in the archives and, in many cases, on the internet via free and paid for genealogical search engines.[100] Grappling with the decision of how to treat such open data has been difficult. Anonymising such records would be impossible given the need to also provide useable references for subsequent historians. Letters in public Annual Reports give authors' real initials that, when tied to admissions registers and online information enable identification. Newspaper court reports and articles are similarly informative and again accessible online. Having decided not to provide anonymity, I aim instead to tell individual stories as sensitively as I can and through that to restore to sight these marginalised individuals.

My main methodological approach is to use these varied digitised sources together with the archival records to re-create the life courses of 230 of the children who were in these institutions between 1850 and 1896. The beginning date of 1850 has been chosen because it marked the first full year of operation of the RPS farm school in Surrey and consequently the beginning of the reformatory and industrial school movement. This was an era of mass intervention in children's lives and a time of possibility when philanthropists were generating initiatives to deal with societal problems that the state had not yet developed the bureaucracy to handle.[101] The end point of 1895 was chosen because the mid-to-late 1890s was the point at which imperialistic motives and national efficiency concerns began

[99] Laite, 'The Emmet's Inch', p. 979.
[100] The UK Data Protection Act 2018 prohibits personal information being openly available for 100 years. In America and Canada, census data up to 1940 is available online.
[101] L. Goldman, *Science, Reform, and Politics in Victorian Britain: The Social Science Association 1857-1886* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 14.

to dominate child institutionalisation and emigration.[102] The first few years of the century were also marked by the Boer War.[103] These changes altered both the circumstances of children being 'rescued' and the employment market for young men.[104] There was a further practical consideration in that the admissions register for the PMVH runs only from 1870 to 1890 and the average length of time a girl spent in the school was between five and six years meaning that 1896 covers the end period in the institution for the girls for whom we have information.

Overall, I have studied in detail the cases of 150 boys and eighty girls, representing five percent and twenty percent of their respective available records. I had intended to follow two hundred and eighty children (180 boys and 100 girls) evenly split between the decades (including the half decade 1890-95). Unfortunately, my research was adversely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic which resulted in personal restrictions on the time available to research as well as in the prolonged closure of my archives during the crucial research phase of my project. For the boys, each admissions volume was listed alphabetically within time periods, and the information was split across nineteen volumes between 1850 and 1895. On each visit I focused on a particular set of boys' volumes and photographed randomly within that. The girls' records were different as they were all contained within one volume and were semi-alphabetised with often more than one record on a page. They were photographed in two batches. One batch pre-pandemic and a second batch during the brief

[102] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 81-94; Boucher, *Empire's Children*, pp. 44-45; Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 143.
[103] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 84-107.
[104] The government legislated for free school meals in 1905, a school medical service (1907), and children's health and well-being in the Children's Act (1908) whose provisions largely superseded those of the Reformatory and Industrial Acts of the 1850s.

re-opening of my archive in 2020. Each record in a batch was assigned a number and then sorted by a Microsoft excel-generated random number for selection purposes.

For each individual record, children's lives were mapped from birth through to death where possible. Each recorded event was carefully checked, noted, and supplemented by as much information as possible. These life courses were accompanied by family grids for each child that also charted the lives of their parents and siblings where possible. This encompassed around 1200 individuals. Eighty-one percent of boys and sixty-six percent of girls were traced into old age. The difference in traceability is explained by both the less-complete admissions records available for girls and the difficulty of tracing women who marry and change their names.

This process allows us to see individuals more completely and to uncover those who, in the past, we would have scarcely glimpsed. Over 100 variables were recorded for each of the 230 children. These included datapoints such as: number of siblings, prior convictions, birth order, employment, place of birth, as well as more information about behaviours and emotions such as, expressions of regret or nostalgia or incidences of running away. These records were aggregated into a spreadsheet that compared and contextualised each case. This innovative blend of qualitative and quantitative approach reveals patterns in children's backgrounds or experiences that show whether individual lives are representative of the bigger whole.

Evaluating children's lives in this way tells us not only why children ended up in care, but what they did afterwards. It reveals the myriad factors that contributed to their admission to the institution and what happened to their families while they were absent. It shows when parents were returned to prison, when they moved streets or changed employment,

when they gave birth to more children or buried others. Following children after the institution tells us where they went, who they worked for and where they lived. Through the records of their marriages and births of children and through census data, their changes in circumstances are revealed. Exploring probate records, newspapers, and obituaries tells us about the family connections they made and the new networks they formed. Through this painstaking and detailed process, we see the choices children made and what they considered to be important.

This is complemented by analysis of children's letters to the institution. There are an estimated 1000 published letters from boys and thirty-one published letters from girls.[105] All the boys' letters are from emigrants while the girls' letters come from a mix of emigrants and non-emigrants. Emigrant letters have a wide-ranging scholarship and have been explored from multiple perspectives including the discursive and the psychological.[106] They are, according to David Gerber, 'a central mechanism of transnationality'.[107] Correspondence from emigrants has been used to consider affective family relationships and colonial practices. Sarah Pearsall argues that 'family letters helped to make empire possible, bearable, justifiable and profitable for many'.[108] They are, she added, 'a rich means of entry into family dynamics'.[109] Yet much of this interest has been confined to historians of overseas settlements or of empire. They have not been used for the insights they provide into life within modern Britain. As a puzzled Eric Richards pointed out in 2006, while a 'vigorous and penetrating' 'post E.P. Thompson literature on British working life histories'

[105] Based on average of twenty published letters pa over a period of fifty years.
[106] D. Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation* (Cornell, 2019), pp. 23-25.
[107] B. Elliott, D. Gerber and S. Sinke, *Letters Across Borders: The Epistolary Practices of International Migrants* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 12.
[108] S. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2008), p. 110.
[109] Ibid., p. 111.

had emerged to evaluate 'the lives of working people', for some reason it seemed 'almost entirely oblivious of the rich humus of emigrants' letters'.[110]

Historians of child welfare have also discounted children's letters as 'fictional accounts' 'carefully constructed' to give a positive view of institutional efforts or as 'sanitised' to prevent negative reports being publicised.[111] Yet, through careful work, I have matched published correspondence from the RPS to unpublished letters contained within the archive or noted in the letter book, which transcribes the content and phrases of around 2000 letters received between 1857 and 1874. This provides support for the authenticity of the published letters. It also reveals that there was little selection in the publishing process, in that the letters published seem representative of the whole. The PMVH lacks a letter book but through the process of matching details included in letters with those found through tracing work, several of the girls' letters have been tied to specific individuals. This suggests that they too were authentic.

This is important because letters provide us with rare access to how children thought and felt. It is true that these letters were not necessarily intended to be private, but this was not unusual. As Gerber pointed out, there were 'permeable boundaries of public and private space within immigration communication networks'.[112] Children were aware of the use to which letters could be put. Many of the letters asked for parts to be read out to current pupils.[113] Yet the letters also contained sensitive and self-critical information. Children frequently gave accounts of their difficulties or what they judged to be poor behaviour. This

[110] E. Richards, 'The Limits of the Australian Emigrant Letter' in Elliott, Gerber and Sinke (eds), *Letters Across Borders*, p. 59.
[111] Soares, 'Neither Waif nor Stray', p. 177; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, p. 161.
[112] Elliott, Gerber and Sinke, *Letters Across Borders*, p. 10.
[113] For examples, see Chapter Four, pp. 293-4.

would seem to imply that despite their possible public nature, letters also formed an important part of children's relationships with the institution, one in which they needed to share the travails of their lives as well as their successes. As Elizabeth Errington argues, letters could serve multiple purposes: they were 'a way to make sense of the world', 'a declaration of the importance of continuing ties to "home" and community' and 'a conscious attempt to maintain or resume relationships across time and space'.[114] Children's letters reveal how their perspectives changed as they aged. They tell us how they responded to the events of their lives, how they felt about the institution and their families, and whether they accepted or rejected institutional values. When used in conjunction with the archival records and the tracing work they question existing characterisations of children's relationships with welfare institutions as uncaring.

They also reveal that children were far from passive within the welfare process. Agency is a theme that emerges throughout the research as a product of the work, not as Lynn Thomas cautions, as 'an endpoint' of the analysis.[115] The question of agency among children has been challenged in recent scholarship. Sarah Maza's assertion that 'it is near impossible to find children acting effectively on the world without stretching beyond recognition the definition of autonomous action or that of childhood' was met with furious resistance by many scholars in the field.[116] Stephen Mintz argued that while children's agency existed along a spectrum that varied according to 'age and social and cultural context', they clearly met the criteria for possessing agency.[117] Bengt Sandin pointed out that 'children must not always do something to be agents: remaining silent, passive or invisible is also a social action

[114] E. J. Errington, *Emigrant Worlds and Transatlantic Communities: Migration to Upper Canada in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Montreal, 2007), p. 8.
[115] L. Thomas, 'Historicising Agency', *Gender and History*, 28/2 (2016), p. 335.
[116] Maza, 'The Kids Aren't All Right', p. 1168.
[117] S. Mintz, 'Children's History Matters', *American Historical Review*, 125/4 (2020), p.1291.

that has very real effects in the world'.[118] These debates are underpinned by a question pertinent for this thesis – how do we define a child? Anna Davin has argued that childhood was historically contingent, its limits flexible, its properties 'multiple and elusive'. [119] Maza's assertion that older children who gained 'autonomy through wages and removal from the parental household become adultified' seems to categorise agency as an adult quality irreconcilable with childhood.[120]

This seems strange. How then are we supposed to think about the twelve-year-old housemaid or the fourteen-year-old farm labourer living independently in comparison with the nineteen-year-old delinquent still in reformatory school. Is the fourteen-year-old an adult and the nineteen-year-old not? What about the seven-year-old child that leaves her mother's home and asks for admission to the institution, thus irrevocably changing her present as well as her future?[121] Her agency is unquestionable, does she now become an adult? Such questions support Laura Tisdall's call for us to think more deeply about 'how the experience of being young' is shaped in response to what it means to be 'older'.[122]

The research in this thesis reveals what Pooley and Taylor call 'the spectrum of everyday responses' to philanthropic intervention.[123] It shows the multiple ways that children used welfare strategically for their own ends, complying with adult agendas regarding

[118] Maza, 'The Kids Aren't All Right', p. 1268; R. Chapdelaine, 'Little Voices. The Importance and Limitations of Children's Histories', *American Historical Review*, 125/4 (2020), p. 1298; B. Sandin, 'History of Children and Childhood – Being and Becoming, Dependent and Independent', *American Historical Review*, 125/4 (2020), p. 1310.
[119] A. Davin, 'What is a Child?' in A. Fletcher and S. Hussey (eds), *Childhood in question. Children, parents and the state* (Manchester, 1999), p. 15.
[120] Maza, 'The Kids Aren't All Right', pp. 1268-1269.
[121] This case is discussed in Chapter One, pp. 65-66.
[122] L. Tisdall, 'State of the Field: The Modern History of Childhood', *The Journal of the Historical Association* (2022), p. 15.
[123] Pooley and Taylor, 'Introduction', p. 13.

institutionalisation, emigration, or employment when it suited them to do so.[124] Children's choices tell us much about what they valued in the present as well as about how they saw their futures. Their stories provide insights into wider questions about dynamics of nineteenth-century relationships, the purpose and effectiveness of welfare and the realities and opportunities of working-class life in Britain and across the Anglo-world.

Reassessing histories of child welfare and emigration

The principal aim of this research is to ask what impact welfare had on the lives of nineteenth-century children. To answer this question the thesis examines three main areas in four chapters: children's background, their social mobility, and the impact of the institution on their character and relationships in later life.

The first chapter explores why the reformatory and industrial school movement is significant within the broader system of residential welfare. It positions it within a mid-century moment of reform and argues that these intellectual origins were essential to new ideas about child protection. The remainder of the chapter supports this argument by exploring the circumstances of children's admission to the institution. Through the process of building complete case studies, it uncovers multiple incidences of neglect, violence, sexual abuse, and emotional turmoil that give context to children's encounters with philanthropists. The chapter reveals the role children themselves played in their entry to institutions and supplies evidence to support the view that reformatory and industrial schools fulfilled protective as well as reformative functions. This provides an alternative perspective to revisionist accounts that have rehabilitated working-class families by showing that not all

[124] M. Gleason, 'Avoiding the agency trap: caveats for historians of children, youth and education', *History of Education*, 45/4 (2016), p. 448.

families were good places for children to live. It argues that these new understandings have implications for how we view the purpose and impact of institutional welfare.

The next two chapters build on this by considering what children did after leaving the institution. Both chapters argue that social mobility needs to be historicised and build on recent research that use life stories to examine 'previously neglected individuals' as 'agents and recipients of social mobility'.[125] Both also represent the first historical study of institutionalised children's social mobility across the life course.[126] Chapter Two focuses on boys. It tracks boys' occupational trajectories throughout their lives and reveals that institutionalisation delivered social mobility gains for boys versus their parents and their non-institutionalised siblings. This directly contradicts existing narratives that criticise the effectiveness of institutional training.[127] It also importantly explores how the philanthropists of the RPS defined success in adulthood and asks what boys themselves valued. This shows that financial gains were more important to boys than artisanal skill. These objectives led boys to pursue emigration as an opportunity and to leave skilled work in search of greater financial benefit. This recognition questions the existing focus on occupational class hierarchies in research into the nineteenth century.[128] It provides an insight into why the ideas of Samuel Smiles that claimed the nineteenth century was a time of opportunity were so dominant.[129]

[125] de Bellaigue, 'Rags to Riches?', p. 6.
[126] Joy Parr's work in *Labouring Children*, while valuable was not a life course analysis as she lacked access to present-day digitised data.
[127] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 123, 127; Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', p. 57; Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 137-139.
[128] A. Miles, *Social Mobility in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-century England* (London, 1999); A. Miles, 'How open was nineteenth-century British society? Social mobility and equality of opportunity, 1839–1914', in A. Miles & D. Vincent (eds), *Building European Society: Occupational Change and Social Mobility in Europe*, 1840–1940 (Manchester, 1993), pp. 18-39.
[129] de Bellaigue, 'Rags to Riches?', p. 4.

Chapter Three shifts the spotlight to girls' lives after care. This provides a much-needed insight into working-class female social mobility.[130] It also crucially, given the commonalities of children's backgrounds between institutions, allows us to compare how experiences of social mobility were gendered. Staff at the PMVH drew on their experience working with female prisoners to argue that stability was the key to successful adult lives. This was achieved either through employment or marriage. Lacking the breadth of sources available for the boys, this chapter makes the most of the letters that do exist to show how girls absorbed these ideals. Drawing on public documents and writings by Meredith, the chapter questions existing characterisations of training for girls as inadequate or unimaginative.[131] It shows that training was tailored to girls' abilities and temperament. Through tracing girls' lives, it demonstrates that it was girls without familial support who went into domestic service, while those with families often returned to them. Most girls left service for marriage within five years but, for those who did not, domestic service offered an opportunity for career progression. Importantly, it concludes that emigration made little difference to girls' lives in terms of social mobility showing the gendered nature of imperial opportunity.

The final chapter brings boys and girls back together to consider relationships. I argue that relationships are central both to the successes and failures of institutional care. I make several key propositions: firstly, by comparing juvenile emigrant letters with those of adult settlers, I make a case for reconsidering existing histories that foreground negative responses to institutional care. In searching for unhappiness in emigrant literature, child welfare historians have tended to overlook positive emotions within correspondence.

[130] de Bellaigue, 'Rags to Riches?', p. 3.
[131] Murdoch, 'From Barrack Schools', pp. 149, 159-166; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, p. 121; Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', pp. 49, 56.

Secondly, I argue that age is an important category of analysis. Through the process of linking children's letters with their records and following them over time, I reveal that negative emotions were frequently transient. Children's view of the institution altered as they aged. Thirdly, I question existing characterisations of the institution as uncaring by demonstrating the reciprocal and deep affective relationships that existed between children and the institution. This care was demonstrated by the dedicated and long-lasting aftercare institutions provided, which could last for decades. Fourthly and finally the chapter argues that any consideration of the impact of welfare needs to consider the relationships developed both within and beyond the institution. Institutional, sibling and peer relationships were instrumental in the development, maintenance, and policing of children's character after leaving the institution. Exploring these reveal the active role children played in accepting or rejecting these values.

Taken together these four chapters reveal a picture of children's welfare that differs from that which dominates the literature. This thesis argues that there is a need to separate nineteenth-century child welfare, organised and operated by philanthropists, from later state-run programmes. The experiences of children admitted to care in the nineteenth century were not the same as those admitted from the twentieth century and allowing later evidence to dominate the analysis clouds our view. Motivations for intervention changed as the new century began and social imperialistic ambitions grew.[132] The impact of welfare on a child is relative. Children's circumstances before intervention and their circumstances after matter. Nineteenth-century philanthropists were able to invest more and provide more than children's families could. This relative advantage reversed in the twentieth century, as

[132] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 81, 124-6.

greater state involvement in the family brought benefits in terms of health and education that began to improve children's lives.[133] In the nineteenth-century institutional care could deliver social mobility, while today care leavers are among the most disadvantaged in society.[134] Understanding why and how this happened tells us not only about how the role of the state has changed over time but questions narratives of linear progress that continue to dominate analyses of modern Britain.[135]

[133] Pooley and Taylor, 'Postscript' in Pooley and Taylor (eds), *Children's experiences of welfare*, p. 277.
[134] There is extensive research on care leavers. For more information see: '10 asks for care leavers', https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/2020/10/29/10-asks-for-care-leavers/ (accessed 30 June 2022)
[135] Pooley and Taylor, 'Introduction', p. 10.

Chapter One: Children and their families

In 1994, Harry Hendrick produced the first comprehensive history of child welfare. He argued that the relationship between children and welfare was 'very often central' to larger debates about 'the State, the family, education, citizenship and social stability'.[1] His work formed part of a broader scholarship that questioned the motives behind middle-class philanthropic intervention in working-class lives and was characterised by what Seth Koven described as 'an indignant sense that adults have sacrificed children's "welfare" to serve their own professional, economic, and political interests'.[2] Yet, despite its focus on children, it was also, as Hendrick acknowledged, a work in which children remained 'virtually silent'.[3] Like other studies within the field, it viewed children as 'objects of welfare provision' and, as Siân Pooley and Jonathan Taylor have argued, formed part of a scholarship that focuses on 'how adults have constructed child welfare'.[4]

This chapter takes a different approach. It expands the existing scholarship through a focus on reformatory and industrial institutions and argues that considering their origins within an earlier chronology of the mid-nineteenth century alters our perspective on their purpose. It builds on Pooley and Taylor's arguments regarding the importance of children's experiences to argue that our view of philanthropic intervention looks different when we place children at the heart of our analysis.[5] It asserts that we can only understand the impact of residential

[1] H. Hendrick, *Child Welfare. England 1872-1989* (London, 1994), p. 289.
[2] A.M. Platt, *The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency* (Chicago*,* 1969)*;* J. Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools before 1933,' *History of Education*, 13 (1984), pp. 45-58; J. Donzelot, *The Policing of Families* (New York, 1979); S. Koven, 'Harry Hendrick. Child Welfare: England 1872-1989. New York: Routledge. 1994, pp. xv, 150. $29.95.', *Albion (Boone)*, 27/1 (1995), pp. 166–67.
[3] Hendrick, *Child Welfare,* p. 211.
[4] S. Pooley and J. Taylor, 'Introduction' in S. Pooley and J. Taylor (eds), *Children's Experiences of Welfare in Modern Britain* (London, 2021), p. 7; Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. xi.
[5] Pooley and Taylor, 'Introduction', p. 26.

welfare on children if we contextualise children's backgrounds prior to admission. Family is central to evaluations of welfare. It is the counterpoint to institutional care. Our judgement of the impact of the institution must be made on a relative basis and in as full as possible an understanding of children's lives before the institution.

The findings of this analysis question the existing scholarship on institutional care. Victorian reformers described working-class parents as abusive and neglectful, 'vagrants, drunkards, and prostitutes', primarily interested in their children for their economic contribution.[6] Revisionist histories have challenged this description as part of a longer historiographical trend towards the rehabilitation of working-class lives.[7] These studies have shown that middle-class reformers foregrounded initially ideals of domesticity and then, later in the century, imperial objectives, in order to justify the removal of children from their parents.[8] Lydia Murdoch has asserted that it was this conflict between 'middle and working-class notions of citizenship' that underpinned the 'discrepancy between the representation and the reality of children's experiences'.[9] Undermining earlier depictions of institutional welfare as a social-control mechanism in which the poor were 'helpless victims', powerless 'to shape or resist onerous policies', she asserted that the poor actively affirmed their rights as

[6] L. Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor families, child welfare and contested citizenship in London* (New Brunswick, 2006), p. 2.
[7] For revisionist scholarship on parents' interaction with nineteenth-century welfare see: L. Hollen Lees, 'The Survival of the Unfit: Welfare Policies and Family Maintenance in Nineteenth Century London,' in P. Mandler (ed), *The Uses of Charity: The Poor on Relief in the Nineteenth-Century Metropolis* (Philadelphia, 2016), pp. 68-91; B. Bellingham, 'Waifs and Strays: Child Abandonment, Foster Care, and Families in Mid Nineteenth-Century New York' also in Mandler (ed), *The Uses of Charity*, pp. 123-161. For analysis on working-class lives see: J-M. Strange, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class, 1865-1914* (Cambridge, 2015); E. Ross, *Love and Toil Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford, 1993).
[8] S. Swain and M. Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire* (Manchester, 2010); E. Boucher, *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869-1967.* (Cambridge, 2016); S. Swain, 'Child rescue. The emigration of an idea' in J. Lawrence and P. Starkey (eds), *Child Welfare and Social Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Liverpool, 2001).
[9] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 7.

parents to negotiate with institutions over their children's care.[10] This she argued, showed that institutionalised children more commonly came from desperate yet caring families afflicted by poverty.[11] She concluded that there were 'certainly victims, but often no clear villains'.[12]

Yet, as I will show, the historiographical redemption of working-class parents has gone too far. In focusing on parents, it has lost sight of the children. It is true that many children came from families fractured by structural circumstances beyond their parents' control, but it is also the case that difficult relationships, violence, abuse, and neglect, underpinned many admissions to residential care.[13] The research reveals situations where children were removed by adults from abusive and neglectful families and, crucially, occasions where children themselves sought to enter care rather than remain in the familial home. This provides an alternative perspective on late nineteenth-century working-class families and on analyses of institutional welfare that are shaped by a historiographic supposition that the family environment was preferable.

Children in the records

Studies of children's backgrounds are shaped by admissions registers. Welfare records have long been a valuable source for historians. As Lynn Hollen Lees has shown, applying for relief was an 'active negotiated process' shaped by need on the part of the poor and by expectation on the part of the benefactor.[14] Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe have all highlighted the value of the sources that emerge from these confrontations

[10] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 6-7, 90; Hollen Lees, 'The Survival of the Unfit', pp. 68-91; L. Abrams, *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh, 1998).
[11] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 3.
[12] Ibid., p. 2.
[13] Ibid., p. 69.
[14] Hollen Lees, 'The Survival of the Unfit', pp. 69-70.

between state or charitable authorities and the poor.[15] These records provide a unique window into the lives of those who are otherwise, as Peter Mandler puts it, 'comparatively dumb'.[16] Yet, as I discussed in the Introduction, they can also be partial and inconsistent.[17] Like historians of other marginalised groups, historians of children often need to 'rely on fragmentary pieces of evidence that offer only glimpses into the lives of the children described in them'.[18] While individual welfare encounters are 'of limited value', careful linking of case records across agencies can, as Shurlee Swain has pointed out, provide histories that reveal the 'long-term impact of intervention on the family'.[19]

In this chapter I too seek to integrate disparate records but, in this instance, to create a more complete picture of children's backgrounds. The admissions registers are complemented by other documentary evidence such as court files, prison records, newspapers, and migration data and any other contemporary evidence available. Official genealogical data is invaluable and provides scope for reading between the lines. Where people lived or moved from, how they lived, what relationships they had, how those changed, who was alive, who was dead, what they did – all these scraps of information delineated children's family lives.

Unlike the case files explored in other historical studies, there is no indication that the registers of the PMVH or the RPS were intended for a public audience. There are no structured narratives or notations from 'overseeing officials'.[20] The details recorded are

[15] T. Hitchcock, P. King, and P. Sharpe, *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840* (Basingstoke, 1997), pp. 3-5.
[16] P. Mandler, 'Introduction' in Mandler (ed.), *The Uses of Charity*, p. 1.
[17] 'Introduction', pp. 19-22.
[18] K. Vehkalahti, 'Dusting the archives of childhood: child welfare records as historical sources', *History of Education*, 45/4 (2016), pp. 430-445, p. 431.
[19] S. Swain, 'Destitute and dependent: Case studies in poverty in Melbourne, 1890–1900', *Australian Historical Studies*, 19/74, p. 100.
[20] M. Peel, *Miss Cutler and the Case of the Resurrected Horse* (Chicago, 2012), p.4.

those provided by parents, magistrates, ministers, courts, police and the children themselves. The files offer explanations, often very brief, for how children ended up in the care of the institution. While children's own accounts are normally prefaced with 'boy's account' or 'girl says', the origins of adult contributions are less apparent. The information is reshaped by those recording it. It is important, as historians, that we are attentive to the 'philosophical stance' of those recording children's backgrounds and mindful of the prejudices held.[21] However, the registers demonstrate what managers thought to be relevant to children's admission and as such provide what Mark Peel has called 'a crucial window' into reformers' thoughts.[22] The fragmented nature of the records mean that some explanations will always remain shadowed and partial. However, this chapter argues that the glimpses they provide into children's often chaotic lives give us some insight into 'the meaning of rescue for the children'.[23]

The chapter makes three key interventions. The first section makes the argument for the inclusion of reformatory and industrial schools within studies of institutional welfare and explores their origins as part of an intellectual current of reform. The second section reconstructs children's backgrounds and restores some balance to the historiography by exploring situations where children were clearly better off in institutional care than in the family environment. The third and final section concentrates on children's behaviour and actions in driving their admission to care. It reveals that children knew their options within the structures of welfare provision open to them. They often either sought out care as a preferable option to the familial environment or ended up in institutions because they were

[21] S.J. Page, 'A New Source for the Historian of Urban Poverty: A Note on the Use of Charity Records in Leicester 1904-29', *Urban History Yearbook*, 14 (1987), p. 52.
[22] Peel, *Miss Cutler*, p. 5.
[23] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 77.

pushing back against familial relationships. They and their parents were not the 'victims' of child rescue that have often been portrayed but active participants within a complex child protection system that sought to improve their lives.

Origins of the reformatory and industrial school movement

Existing studies of institutional welfare have positioned residential institutions for children principally as tools of the penal system or as means of implementing social control.[24] This has relied on analysis of poor law institutions or late-nineteenth-century organisations such as the Waifs and Strays or Dr Barnardo's.[25] This section argues that by extending the analysis to include reformatory and industrial schools we gain a different perspective on institutional care. By exploring the origins of the reformatory and industrial school movement we can see that its purpose was protective as well as reformative.

Industrial and reformatory schools have received 'little attention in the existing historiography of child protection'.[26] Yet, as the first institutions targeted specifically at children, they were influential as models for later welfare provision. Both the RPS and the PMVH were significant within their respective fields. The RPS was both the first and the largest of England's reformatory schools, while the PMVH was the first institution to operate the 'cottage home' system which would come to be regarded as the model way to house

[24] J. Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools before 1933,' *History of Education*, 13 (1984), pp. 45-58; M. Cale, '"Saved from a Life of Vice and Crime"': Reformatory and Industrial Schools for Girls, C.1854-c.1901' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1993); Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, p. 551; J.A. Stack, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools and the Decline of Child Imprisonment in Mid-Victorian England and Wales', *History of Education*, 23/1 (1994), pp. 59-73; R. Parker, *Uprooted. The Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867-1917* (Bristol, 2008), pp. 189-208; A.G. Ralston, 'The Treatment of Destitute and Delinquent Children in Scotland, 1812-1872: With Special Reference to Industrial and Reformatory Schools' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1982).

[25] Boucher, *Empire's Children*; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*; Swain, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire*; J. Parr, *Labouring Children* (London, 1980); Hendrick, *Child Welfare* all concentrate on Barnardo's or poor law children. Abrams, *Orphan Country*, focuses on children admitted to Quarrier's, a Scottish philanthropic organisation.

[26] M. Moore, 'Social Control or Protection of the Child? the Debates On the Industrial Schools Acts 1857—1894', *Journal of Family History*, 33/4 (2008), p. 361.

institutional girls. The founders of both institutions were significant in developing practices of care that would be used as a model for other children's residential institutions.

It is possible to link the intellectual origins of both the RPS and the PMVH to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science (NAPSS), founded in 1857.[27] Within this organisation was another, the Law Amendment Society (LAS), which had since the mid-1840s been wrestling with ideas about how to reform the treatment of criminals.[28] The emergence of the reformatory movement was intrinsically connected to the LAS and the NAPSS. The NAPSS, according to Lawrence Goldman, 'had a considerable, and perhaps surprising degree of influence over the making of social policies', and Sydney Turner, the 'founder of the reformatory movement' was also a founder member of the NAPSS and delivered its inaugural address.[29] Turner was a reformer, described by historian Muriel Whitten as 'strikingly confident and steeped in the empirical tradition of observation and analysis'.[30] Susanna Meredith, founder of the PMVH was also a member of the NAPSS and had moved in the same circles as many of the key female founders since her arrival in England in 1860.[31]

Both Turner and Meredith were connected intellectually to other prominent reformers and government figures of the time. These included radical Whig reformer Henry Brougham, Poor Law inspector Edward Carleton Tuffnel, Viscount Ashley, president of the Ragged School Union and Reverend T.J. Jackson and James Kay-Shuttleworth, founders of the

[27] L. Goldman, *Science, Reform, and Politics in Victorian Britain: The Social Science Association 1857-1886* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 39-43.
[28] Ibid., 33.
[29] Ibid., pp. 6, 30, 41, 39-44; M. Whitten, *Nipping Crime in the Bud*: *How the Philanthropic Quest Was Put into Law* (Hampshire, 2011), p. 258.
[30] Whitten, *Nipping Crime in the Bud*, p. 179.
[31] Goldman, *Science, Reform, and Politics*, p. 30.

innovative Pestalozzi-inspired Battersea Teacher Training College.[32] Meredith was 'a significant figure among Victorian middle-class philanthropists', and a passionate campaigner for women.[33] Educated in Latin and Greek as well as German and French, she was a close associate of emigrationist Maria Rye and feminist Bessie Parkes, both founder members of the NAPSS. Following her move to London with her sister Martha Lloyd in 1860, she edited and provided articles for feminist magazine *Alexandra*, although she abandoned this work to become involved in prison missionary campaigning.[34]

The reforming ideas of Turner and Meredith were evident in their approach towards the children they helped. Both were motivated by a desire to protect as well as to reform children. Their focus was the child not the family. The PMVH's mission was 'the protection of little children'.[35] The RPS wanted to provide a 'little interference and oversight' to a boy's character.[36] Historians have positioned these interventions as driven by ideas of social control, highlighting that poor children were often admitted to industrial and reformatory schools for offences that, if committed by middle-class children, would have been dealt with within the family environment.[37] This is true, yet without institutional intervention, as we shall see many of the children in these institutions would have probably ended up in prison

[32] Whitten, *Nipping Crime in the Bud*, pp. 198; 208-09, p. 237,
[33] B. Forsythe, 'Susannah Meredith', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)* (Oxford, 2009), https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-38850 (01 June 2022).
[34] M.A. Lloyd, *Susanna Meredith: a record of a vigorous life* (London, 1903), p. 20.
[35] Woking, Surrey History Centre (SHC), 2591/1/14, Report for the Year 1886, p. 5.
[36] SHC, 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 9.
[37] Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', pp. 45-58; M. Cale, '"Saved from a Life of Vice and Crime"': Reformatory and Industrial Schools for Girls, C.1854-c.1901' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1993); Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, p. 551; Stack, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', pp. 59-73; R. Grigg, 'Educating criminal and destitute children: reformatory and industrial schools in Wales 1858-1914', *The Welsh History Review*, 21/2 (2002), pp. 292-327; R. Parker, *Uprooted. The Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867-1917* (Bristol, 2008), pp. 189-208; A.G. Ralston, 'The Treatment of Destitute and Delinquent Children in Scotland, 1812-1872: With Special Reference to Industrial and Reformatory Schools' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1982).
[37] Moore, 'Social Control', p. 383.

or on the streets. John Stack has shown that children were sent to prison on 191,090 occasions between 1856 and 1875.[38] Given this was the alternative, more weight should be given to Michelle Cale's argument that these institutions were a 'vehicle for social justice'.[39]

Both Meredith and Turner expressed views that demonstrated they viewed their institutions in this vein. They argued that children's admission was primarily a function of circumstance. Susanna Meredith stated that the principal reason why many girls were admitted was their class. She noted that that the girls were no different in mental capacity to the 'general public' and claimed that 'similar children pass into society from the better classes unnoticed'. The main difference was that these children were in 'poverty'.[40] Similarly, in 1851, Sydney Turner, superintendent of the RPS argued that 'juvenile offenders' were boys who 'left without the necessary superintendence and control' due to a 'parent's death' or 'constant occupation in the calling by which they earn their livelihood'. This led to them falling into 'bad associations' and criminality.[41] Turner asked: 'what would be the result with the sons of the more wealthy classes if they were turned loose in the streets and alleys of our cities for nearly half the day'? [42]

These ideas and questions influenced the institutional approach to the children the RPS and the PMVH admitted. While both institutions noted the official legal criteria for the admission of children, they also identified other factors that they thought were significant in contributing to children's admission. The RPS's 'Rules of Admission' stated that it took 'two classes of boys': the 'sons of convicted felons' and 'boys who have themselves been guilty of

[38] Stack, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', p. 65.
[39] Cale, '"Saved from a Life of Vice and Crime"', p. 9.
[40] SHC, 2271/1/21, Annual Report (1891), p. 6.
[41] SHC, 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 9.
[42] 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 14.

criminal practices'.[43] Yet the Annual Reports went further in also noting the number of children among those it admitted who had had criminal parents or siblings, had lost one or both parents to death, were 'sleeping out', had been deserted by a parent, came from step-families or who had drunk and dissolute parents.[44]

At the PMVH, admissions were also categorised according to official criteria laid down in the 1861 and 1866 amendments to the 1857 Industrial School's Act. Children could be admitted because they were thieves, vagrant, destitute or uncontrollable or because their parents were criminal.[45] At the PMVH this latter category contributed a higher proportion of admissions than was typical for an industrial school. Nationally only six percent of children admitted to industrial schools had criminal parents compared to between two-thirds and three-quarters of the girls admitted to the PMVH.[46] This reflected the staff's first-hand experience, gained through their work with discharged prisoners in London, of the impact on children of parental imprisonment. Mrs Meredith wrote that children should be 'protected, helped and cherished'.[47] The PMVH's public literature was clear about its protective purpose.[48] The institution's focus was not just on the immorality of children's families, but also on the consequent neglect and abandonment that children of prisoners suffered.[49] Many of the children admitted to the PMVH were under the age of six. These children's places were not funded by the government but by charitable donations as they were too young to qualify under the Industrial Schools Act. These children were described

[43] This included boys convicted of vagrancy. 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), 'Rules of Admission'.
[44] 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 8-9; 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1852), p. 5.
[45] 'Ragged schools, Industrial schools and Reformatories', https://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/articles/raggedschool.html (21 July 2022).
[46] G.C. Gear, 'Industrial Schools in England, 1857-1933: "Moral Hospitals" or "Oppressive Institutions"?' (D.Phil. thesis, University of London, 1999), p. 59.
[47] Lloyd, *Susanna Meredith*, p. 92.
[48] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1886), p. 5.
[49] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

as being in 'perilous circumstances' because of parental imprisonment.[50] Other reasons for admission included having 'no home', having 'cruel' or 'vicious' parents, or being 'circumstanced as to be peculiarly exposed to demoralizing influence'.[51] Girls could also, as historians have noted, end up in residential care if their mothers were 'unmarried, deserted or widowed' or if their homes were thought to be 'immoral'.[52] Fifteen percent of PMVH girls admitted between 1870 and 1890 fell into this category.[53] It is important to note that categories were not mutually exclusive and single mothers were often those that either resorted to criminality or fell into unstable or violent relationships.

In recognising these factors as significant in the lives of the children they admitted, the RPS and the PMVH were making an argument about what they considered to be influential in precipitating children's encounters with welfare. Importantly, these were the same factors evident in other types of children's institutions. Separate studies by Lydia Murdoch and Bruce Bellingham have found that children suffered multiple overlapping categories of disadvantage that transcended national boundaries. Bellingham's work on the Children's Aid society in America and Murdoch's on poor law homes and Barnardo's institutions in Britain reveals that institutionalised children had comparable backgrounds despite their geographic gulf.[54] In focusing on how children responded to these backgrounds, the case studies in the

[50] 2591/1/15, Thirty-first Annual Report, p. 5.
[51] 'No place like home', https://chertseymuseum.org/pmvh (10 March 2022); 2591/1/15, Thirty-first Annual Report, p. 5.
[52] S. Farrall and S. Karstedt, 'Explaining gendered sentencing patterns for violent men and women in the late Victorian and Edwardian period', *The British Journal of Criminology,* 45 (2005), pp. 696-720; H. Shore, 'The trouble with boys: gender and the "invention" of the juvenile offender in the early nineteenth century', in M. Arnot and C. Usborne (eds), *Gender and Crime in Modern Europe* (New York, 1999), pp. 75-92; Cale, '"Saved from a Life of Vice and Crime"', p. 1.
[53] Based on the sample of eighty girls for this thesis.
[54] Bellingham, 'Waifs and Strays', p. 133-135; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 89.

next two sections will demonstrate their impact on children's lives and the value of the protection the institution could provide.

These similarities support the inclusion of reformatory and industrial schools within our analysis of institutional welfare. But by including them, we are opening up an alternative perspective. Formed in the middle of the century, these organisations were created during a different moment to the later child-saving institutions that have dominated the historiography. They were part of what Goldman has described as a 'humane movement' aimed at treating child offenders differently from adults.[55] Their establishment took place during what historians have termed 'The Age of Equipoise', a period between the 1850s and 1870s when there was a 'distinctive change in the national temperament'.[56] A mid-century moment of innovation in social reform that Lawrence Goldman has characterised as a 'transitional age in the history of the British state'.[57]

Both institutions were influential in the development of residential care for children in the second half of the nineteenth century. The RPS, in particular, was to have a profound effect. In 1857 Sydney Turner was appointed as Her Majesty's first Inspector of Reformatory and Industrial Schools marking his transition from philanthropy to government.[58] This provided him with considerable influence over the development of the system. His former secretary at the RPS, Henry Rogers, joined him at the Inspectorate and became Chief Inspector after Turner's death.[59] Turner was the author of the official history of reformatory and industrial schools published in 1876 and was described by the 1896 Royal Commission into

[55] Goldman, *Science, Reform, and Politics*, p. 42.
[56] Ibid., p. 10.
[57] Ibid., pp. 39-43, 145-6, 275-276.
[58] Stack, 'The mid-Victorian Reformatory School', p. 36.
[59] Whitten, *Nipping Crime in the Bud*, pp. 217-254.

Reformatory and Industrial schools as the 'chief originator' of the reformatory movement.[60] Many of the reformatory schools that opened in the second half of the nineteenth century modelled themselves on the RPS and Turner and his successors were frequent speakers at conferences and government inquiries.[61] Meredith was a frequently quoted and enthusiastic advocate of the 'family system' of welfare for girls and the PMVH was the first institution to adopt the system, which later became popular with poor law institutions and societies such as Dr Barnardo's.[62]

As pioneers in their respective areas, the subsequent chapters will show that their approaches were driven by a combination of pragmatism and experimentation. Both institutions sought not just to remove children from their families, but to provide children with the tools for individual success. Their ideas lived on in the operation of these institutions until the founders and staff of these schools died or retired at the end of the century.[63] As the 1896 Royal Commission acknowledged, many of the rules and practices in operation in the 1890s could 'be traced back to the beginning of the system'.[64] During this time, expectations for the young had changed considerably.[65] Yet, for much of the second half of the century, the RPS and then the PMVH were at the forefront of what Michelle Cale

[60] *Parl. Pap.* (1896), Cm 8204 XLV.1, Dept Committee on Reformatory and Industrial Schools vol. 1, pp. 8-9; Appendix 1, p. 177.
[61] Whitten, *Nipping Crime in the Bud*, pp. 231, 258. M. Ploszajska, 'Moral landscapes and manipulated spaces: gender, class and space in Victorian reformatory schools', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 20/4 (1994), p. 414; Grigg, 'Educating Criminal and Destitute Children', p. 308; C. Walters, *Emigration as a Mode of Disposal of Reformatory School Boys, and Its Results in Ten Years* (Surrey, 1871); Marshall Vine published a book of his ideas about reforming boys in 1905, M. Vine, *In loco parentis: chapters on institution, life and work* (London, 1905).
[62] Murdoch, 'From Barrack Schools', p. 147.
[63] M. Cale, '"Saved from a Life of Vice and Crime"', pp. 141-150.
[64] *Parl. Pap.* (1882), Cm 3876-I, Royal Com. on Reformatories and Industrial Schools. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Appendices, Index, p. 23.
[65] Cale, '"Saved from a Life of Vice and Crime"', pp. 7-10.

has described as 'forward-thinking philosophies and methods' that sought to shape state approaches to care in response to experiences gained through practice.

Removing children from abusive and wilfully neglectful situations

Histories of institutional welfare have largely dismissed philanthropic narratives of abusive and neglectful parents as 'discursive strategies' designed to facilitate and support Foucauldian state control of the lives of the poor.[66] Even when violence and wilful neglect is present in the records, it is marginalised in histories of institutional care. Bruce Bellingham wrote in 2016 that he saw 'little to gain' in 'rehearsing the litany of parental misdeeds cited in the 16.2 percent of the case histories' in which parental violence, neglect or drunkenness was the cause of a child's entry to the Children's Aid Society.[67] Instead he wanted to focus on the routine nature of child 'surrender' to institutions as part of broader familial strategies to promote family survival.[68] Bellingham's approach fits into the wider historiography that foregrounds the efforts of poor parents seeking to reclaim children admitted to institutions and being turned away by ruthless philanthropists anxious to permanently separate children from their unsuitable parents. It is a deliberate dismissal of the range of experiences of children and is one which privileges the voice of the parents over the child. It pays insufficient attention to whether these philanthropic decisions were made with the child's welfare in mind.

Instead, historians have emphasised the role of life cycle stresses and family breakdown in their explanations of why children ended up in institutional care.[69] This analysis has focused

[66] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 79; M. Flegel, *Conceptualizing Cruelty to Children in Nineteenth-Century England: Literature, Representation, and the NSPCC* (London, 2009), p. 11; Mahood, *Policing Gender*, p. 15.
[67] Bellingham, 'Waifs and Strays', p. 139. NB Bellingham characterises this as 'disorganization' but reference to Table 5.3, p. 135, shows that disorganization consists of violence, drinking, neglect.
[68] Bellingham, 'Waifs and Strays', pp. 140, 145-146.
[69] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 67-91.

on parents and their preferences. Lynn Hollen Lees argued that parents used institutions in 'temporary' and 'selective' ways. They regularly turned to institutional welfare as a safety net but sought to maintain their connections with their children in the long term.[70] Bellingham showed that parents used institutions for strategic purposes 'to secure for children the parental function of nurturance in times of family trauma'.[71] Shurlee Swain argued that Victorian narratives portraying parents as 'completely absent' or as 'fiendish villains' were not accurate.[72] Poor parents would have kept their children with them if they could and only turned to welfare services when the network of local and community help failed.[73] Children were looked after in residential institutions, explained Lydia Murdoch, because 'of the larger uncontrollable forces that shaped Victorian society'. Accidental death, illness, poor wages, high rent, and an inadequate social safety net were all to blame. Murdoch concluded that the 'single mother who struggled to maintain contact with her children despite having to rely on institutional care for long periods of time' was 'the more common trajectory' of parents who encountered institutional welfare.[74]

There is considerable truth in this analysis. The historiographical shift to examine a 'wider range of institutionalised children' has recovered 'the agency and voices of poor parents' and has developed a different and more complete understanding of child welfare to that which previously dominated the historiography.[75] It has served as an important corrective to Victorian dramatizations of parental behaviour and has been instrumental in developing a more comprehensive understanding of how poor parents viewed their rights as citizens. Yet,

[70] Hollen-Lees, 'The Survival of the Unfit', pp. 68-91.
[71] Bellingham, 'Waifs and Strays', p. 136.
[72] Swain, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire*, p. 24.
[73] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 90-91.
[74] Ibid. p. 3.
[75] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, Bellingham, 'Waifs and Strays', Hollen-Lees, 'The Survival of the Unfit' are the best examples of these.

it is not a complete picture. If parents only resorted to institutional care out of desperation, how bad must children's family lives have been before that point was reached? The reality of neglect, abandonment, cruelty, violence, and poverty that underpinned many institutionalised children's lives has been marginalised.

Unpicking accounts of abuse within admissions registers is difficult. Many of the reports of violence or neglect in the admissions registers are sparse. Other incidences emerge only when children's backgrounds are traced further. Murdoch, while she looked for abuse within Barnardo's records, concluded that 'documented cases of abuse' were evident in only five percent of admissions.[76] This conclusion was based on her analysis of admissions in January 1895. As she acknowledges, this number appears surprisingly low and may reflect political conflicts between the NSPCC and Barnardo that resulted in abuse victims being directed to other institutions. Yet, it led her to assert that 'it would be wrong to assume, as many Britons then did, that reformers brought children with living parents to institutions primarily to protect them from abuse'.[77]

This conclusion is not borne out in the records of the RPS and the PMVH. Analysis of their registers reveals that violence is recorded far more for girls than boys. This could reflect differential gender norms regarding violence but could also reflect the boys' status as delinquents. This would naturally bias records towards a focus on boys' rather than parental behaviour. Still, in thirteen percent of cases, it is possible to see violence in boys' backgrounds, although it is not always possible to link it to admission. Attempts to find further details have been largely unsuccessful. As Louise Jackson notes, many cases of abuse

[76] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 80. The five percent is based on her calculation that abuse featured in eight cases out of 148 admissions that month.
[77] Ibid., p. 80.

did not make it to court or into newspapers.[78] Yet, in a handful of cases it was possible to find accounts that were considered significant enough to be reported publicly, but that were not noted in admissions records.[79] This suggests that abuse was under-recorded by institutional staff. This was more probably because it was not disclosed rather than because it was considered irrelevant. Disclosures of violence and neglect would have supported reformatory narratives.

Twelve and a half percent of girls admitted to the PMVH between 1870 and 1890 came from family homes where the violence was considered beyond the level of 'acceptable chastisement' prior to their admission.[80] A further ten percent came from situations which I have defined as 'wilfully neglectful'. This was an evolving concept in the nineteenth century. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1868 introduced a clause that gave a 'statutory definition' to the word neglect.[81] This was later made less specific in the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act of 1889 but amended to include 'unnecessary suffering' or 'injury to health'.[82] It was further clarified in a 1898 court case as 'the absence of such reasonable care as an ordinary parent would ordinarily use for the protection and care of his child' and 'the failure to take such steps for the protection of infant life and health as the general experience of mankind shows to be proper'.[83] Building on these distinctions, while, as we shall see, neglect characterised many children's lives, for this study I have characterised 'wilful neglect' as

[78] L. Jackson, A. *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* (London, 2001), p. 38.
[79] SHC, 2271/10/18, fol. 698; 2271/10/9, fol. 102; 2271/10/16, fol. 169; 2271/10/11, fol. 269.
[80] Based on sample of 180 records although sample of eighty girls is comparable.
[81] Defined as 'when any parent shall wilfully neglect to provide adequate food, clothing, medical aid or lodging for his child, being in his custody under the age of 14 years, whereby the health of such child shall have been or shall likely to be seriously injured'. 'R v Sheppard', Section 10, https://vlex.co.uk/vid/r-v-sheppard-793845473 (20 July 2022).
[82] 'Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act 1889', https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1889/44/enacted (3 July 2022).
[83] R. McLeod, 'Medico-Legal Issues in Victorian Medical Care', *Medical History*, 10/1 (1966), pp. 46- 47

those situations where children suffered physical danger due to their parents' actions and inactions. This does not specifically allow for the emotional neglect that could exist within fractured or difficult familial relationships. This approach finds that overall, over one fifth of girls within the PMVH came from violent or wilfully neglectful situations. This is more than Bellingham's '16.2 percent' but both figures represent substantial proportions that should not be ignored.

This is best illustrated by the case of the Ranger sisters who were admitted to the PMVH in 1880. Ada and Ethel Ranger's young parents were both drunks. Their home life was chaotic. Their mother, Mary Ann, had been charged six times for failing to ensure their attendance at school and, according to a newspaper clipping pasted into the admissions record, she had been fined frequently for being 'drunk and disorderly and using obscene language'.[84] The children's parents quarrelled constantly, and their father, William, was having an affair with his employer's wife. Newspaper research reveals that Mary Ann tried to kill herself as a result.[85] When the girls were admitted to the PMVH by local authorities, Ada was suffering from a 'spinal complaint' and both children were described as 'terribly neglected'. Mary Ann does not appear to have wanted to give her children up. She frequently turned up at the PMVH 'the worse for drink and showing marks of fighting'. According to the register, the children, 'both extremely delicate', had a 'great dread of her violence'. Finally, and apparently reluctantly, the manager was 'compelled to forbid her visits for the future'.[86]

At the time of the girls' admission, Ada was eleven and Ethel was nearly ten. They remained in the PMVH for several years. In 1885, when Ada was sixteen, William made an application

[84] SHC, 2591/3/1, Admissions Register, fol. 384.
[85] 'Sad result of domestic infidelity', *Derby Daily Telegraph and Reporter* (24 Sep. 1881), p. 4 col b.
[86] 2591/3/1, fol. 384.

for Ada's return home. According to the register, after making enquiries about William's character, staff 'ascertained that he was much improved in circumstances and trying to lead a respectable life' and permission was granted. There was no record in the register of Mary Ann's situation, but the couple presumably reconciled as the 1891 census showed William, Mary Ann and Ada living together in Richmond, although by 1901 the couple were again living separately. No occupation was listed for William.[87]

Ethel may not have wanted to return to her family. She remained in the PMVH until 1886 when aged sixteen she left to become a domestic servant. The 1901 census shows her, aged twenty-nine, still working in service, after which she is lost to view.[88] Ada remained at home until her early twenties when she became ill. She was admitted firstly to the workhouse then returned to her parents before returning to the workhouse, from where she was sent in 1894 to Brookwood and Holloway Mental Hospital. She returned from there to the workhouse where she could be found with her mother Mary Ann in 1901 and then was readmitted to Brookwood where she remained until her death in 1928 aged forty-nine.[89]

The removal of children from their families has been widely criticised. Harry Hendrick argued that Victorian 'public child care policy' gave 'no thought to the idea that with sufficient public funds available, poor parents may well have been the best people to care for their own children'.[90] It is difficult, however, to see how money would have changed the Ranger girls' situation. What is clear is that, while Ada and Ethel were removed against their parents' wishes, it was with the intention of helping both the parents and the children. The girls were taken into a place of stability until the point at which their parents' lives were

[87] Ancestry.com, 1891 England Census, RG12/623/129/27, 1901 England Census, RG13/677/191/6.
[88] 1901 England Census, RG13/457/50/42.
[89] Ancestry.com, Lunacy Patients Admission Registers, 1846-1912, MH94/44.
[90] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 77.

believed to be on a more even keel. It is not the case as Hendrick claimed, 'that it was never policy to rehabilitate children to their parents'.[91] On the contrary, we can see that the institution, rather than seeking to sever ties between children and their parents, worked to facilitate children's return to their families if both parties wished it and circumstances allowed.

Yet, sometimes permanent separation was the only viable option. Sometimes, the violence children experienced was too great to allow them to return to their families. There were several such cases within the records of both institutions. Nine-year-old Sarah Martin was admitted to the PMVH in 1878. According to her relatively sparse admissions account, her stepfather had 'cruelly ill-treated' her, 'beating and starving her'.[92] This was not the whole picture. A newspaper search revealed an even more horrific account. Sarah's parents treated her appallingly. They had made frequent complaints to the police that she was 'drunken' and 'addicted to stealing'. This, the court, and witnesses believed, was part of a strategy to 'get rid' of Sarah by having her removed to a reformatory or school.[93] Louise Jackson has found that relations and neighbours were 'vital figures in the discovery and reporting' of abuse and Murdoch concurred arguing that 'in extreme cases of family breakdown' 'a sense of communal morality and responsibility' prevailed.[94] Yet, it appears from the newspaper reports that Sarah's physical abuse had been widely known for some months. Fellow lodgers reported being 'annoyed' by Sarah's screams. A former landlady testified that she had often offered to watch Sarah while her parents were out to prevent her being tied to the bed. One neighbour testified in court that she had previously gone into

[91] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 80.
[92] 2591/3/1, fol. 304.
[93] 'Shocking cruelty to a child at Eastbourne', *Eastbourne Gazette* (2 Oct. 1878), p. 3 col b.
[94] Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, p. 33; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 81.

the parents' lodgings in response to Sarah's screams. She reported saying 'you brute, leave off beating that child' to which Sarah's stepfather had replied 'I will beat her as often as I like'. Eventually the family's landlord approached the police. Together the police constable and the landlord entered her parents' lodgings while they were out and found her tied to her parents' bed, her body 'one mass of bruises and wheals from head to foot'.[95]

Sarah's ill-treatment took place four years before the 1882 creation of the Liverpool Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children — the forerunner of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC).[96] Her case demonstrates that in England, even before the official formalisation of what constituted child abuse, there were existing societal and legal expectations of what did and did not constitute acceptable treatment for children. Although Sarah's stepfather excused her abuse by claiming it was a punishment for her thieving and her bad behaviour, the court did not agree. While it did not deny that Sarah might have been a thief, it concluded that her thefts did not matter because her stepfather 'had exceeded the punishment a parent was allowed to make upon his child'. He had been 'cruel in the extreme'.[97] In sentencing Sarah's stepfather to prison for three months and removing her to the care of the PMVH, the court was using the PMVH as a vehicle for child protection. Unlike Ada Ranger, Sarah remained in the Home until she was old enough to leave for employment.

In other instances, children took matters into their own hands to escape violent situations. Fifteen-year-old George Woods entered the RPS in 1879 following his conviction for burglary, having stolen some money from a dwelling house. George's stepfather Henry

[95] 'Serious Charge against a stepfather', *Marylebone Mercury* (1 Sep. 1883), p. 3 col g.
[96] M. Flegel and C. Nelson, *Conceptualizing Cruelty to Children in Nineteenth-Century England: Literature, Representation, and the NSPCC* (London, 2009), p. 18.
[97] 'Charge against a stepfather', *Western Daily Press* (2 Oct. 1878), p. 7, col b.

Slucock was reported to be an 'intemperate character' and was said to 'ill-treat' his wife. Henry also 'frequently' beat George and 'turned him out of doors'.[98] The burglary was George's first conviction, but he nonetheless asked the Lord Chief Constable to send him to reformatory school because he was 'uncomfortable at home'. This request hints at the underlying desperation that must have been present for George at the age of fifteen to ask for a punishment that involved four years in a residential institution. While his mother visited him when he was in the RPS, she also wrote to him advising him to emigrate adding that 'there was no place for him at home' in Chatham, Kent.[99] George's case not only shows that parents could use institutional care in instrumental ways as Murdoch argues but demonstrates that children too took advantage of existing structures of welfare to influence the direction of their lives.

George's case was one of the few obvious cases of physical abuse of boys in the registers. Others are hinted at. William Shell was admitted to the RPS in 1880 at the age of fifteen. He and his sister Fanny had been in and out of the workhouse frequently since their father had died eleven years earlier.[100] William's mother Eliza seems to have lived a difficult and violent life. She lived in a part of Chatham, Kent described as 'the worst place in England', and, in 1883, she brought a complaint of violent assault against a neighbour who she alleged punched and kicked her.[101] She cohabited with a man called Thomas Smith and in 1884, four years after William's admission, was murdered by him in a domestic dispute.[102] At the time of his admission, William was not living at home. He had left aged thirteen and had by that

[98] 2271/10/18, fol. 657.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ancestry.com, Medway, Kent, England, Poor Law Union Records 1836-1937, G/Me/WIa/1.
[101] 'Alleged Assault on a woman', *Rochester, Chatham, and Gillingham Journal* (10 Feb. 1883), p. 3 col b.
[102] 'Alleged Death from violence at Chatham', *East Kent Gazette* (21 June 1884), p. 5 col c.

point been sleeping outdoors for two years. He had severe burns on the left-hand side of his body that he gained after sleeping on a cooling oven for warmth. We cannot know why William left his mother, but we know that his sister Fanny was also not living at home. She was in a home for 'fallen girls' in Hornsey, Middlesex.[103] William's case demonstrates that not all children had the option of choosing family life. With no relatives nearby, his options were limited — a philanthropic institution or a prison. Residential care provided the only real safety net.

Philanthropists did not just seek to protect children from violence but also from sexual abuse within the family. Despite the implementation of a series of laws in the second half of the nineteenth century that were intended to regulate sexual offences against children, and that often resulted in their removal from the family home, there is relatively little discussion of sexual abuse as a cause of admission within the scholarship on child welfare organisations.[104] This could be because, as Louise Jackson points out, admissions registers were notoriously vague when sexual abuse was a factor.[105] Sexual abuse was primarily associated with females and institutional references to actual or suspected abuse was 'usually indirect prior to 1920'. Girls were reported as wandering the streets to avoid going home or they were described as 'shockingly neglected' or 'badly knocked about'.[106] As in the cases of violence against children, sexual-abuse cases are difficult to see within the registers. Sexually abused girls were often sent to industrial schools, although Linda Mahood has argued that they constituted only a 'fraction of the total population in girls' residential schools at a given time'. Instead, she argued that it was far more common for the threat of

[103] Ancestry.com, England Census 1881, RG11/1379/99/81/826.
[104] Lydia Murdoch focuses on discourses of immorality rather than on familial sexual abuse. Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 16-17, 20-24.
[105] Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, p. 3.
[106] Mahood, *Policing Gender,* p. 81.

sexual assault' to be used to constrain girls and either to bind them morally to their homes or to justify their removal from their families.[107] While this was undoubtedly true— the records reveal only one direct discussion of sexual abuse in the registers of the PMVH – tracing work reveals several more, and in foregrounding these motives of social control, rather than those of child protection, we once again marginalise the impact of abuse within the home on children and minimise the impact of institutional intervention.

The protective role played by institutions is best illustrated through the consideration of two cases of girls of differing ages. The first is that of the MacGrath sisters. Rose, Maria, and Lily McGrath were admitted to the PMVH from the workhouse in 1881. Their father was in prison and their mother was a pauper. Rose was described as 'in very delicate health having been most cruelly treated by her own father'. Five-year-old Lily had only one eye, having had the other 'knocked out' by her father. Fifteen-year-old Rose left for employment as a servant in 1887. Maria fell ill in 1888 at the age of fourteen and at her mother's request was returned to her mother's home along with eleven-year-old Lily.[108] This was the sum of the details in the admissions register. Further research reveals more information. Genealogical records show that the girls' mother, Mary Ann, who came from Brighton had married thirty-two-year-old gunner Henry in 1872 at seventeen years of age, giving birth to Rose a year later.[109] The family were posted to India — where Maria and Lily were born — before being posted back to Aldershot, England. Their fourth child, Harry, was born in 1878 when Mary Ann was still only twenty-three but died two years later in 1880. In 1881, Henry who had by this point left the army, was charged, and convicted, of 'feloniously ravishing and carnally

[107] Mahood, *Policing Gender,* p. 81.
[108] 2591/3/1, fol. 286.
[109] Ancestry.com, Royal Artillery Records of Service and Papers, WO 69/ 582 (1852-1883).

knowing' seven-year-old Rose. This was the 'cruel treatment' referred to in the register.[110] Unfortunately, although the case was reported in the newspaper, no details were given that allow us to establish how Henry's crime came to light. Henry was sentenced to twenty years in prison in 1881 – an extremely long sentence that hints at other undisclosed aspects to his crime. We know that there must have been other forms of violence within the home given Lily's lost eye.[111] Henry's imprisonment left Mary Ann destitute, and she and her daughters were forced to enter the workhouse where they remained until the three girls were admitted to the PMVH in September 1881.[112] In 1888, Mary Ann remarried, although Henry who was still in prison did not die until 1891. Mary Ann's new husband, William Moyler, was a clerk in the City of London corporation. [113] It must have been these changed circumstances that influenced Lily and Maria's return home. It appears that with Henry still in prison and Mary Ann remarried, managers believed that the girls' home environment was now settled and safe enough for them to return.

This example demonstrates the sympathy with which the PMVH treated the girls it looked after. Although Linda Mahood reported that mothers were often blamed for sexual assault while fathers and male relatives as perpetrators were 'let off the hook', there is no indication of this behaviour within this case or within the records of the PMVH between 1870 and 1900 more generally.[114] Evidently the staff at the PMVH did not blame Mary Ann for Rose and Lily's treatment. Instead, they worked with her to return her children. While the PMVH did send away girls who were admitted while pregnant or who were perceived as

[110] The term 'feloniously' implies that 'the act was done forcibly and against the will of the woman'. This typically meant violence was involved, https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Ravished (3 July 2022).
[111] Ancestry.com, E&W Crime, Prisons and Punishment, 1770-1935, CRIM9/26.
[112] Ancestry.com, London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1930, LEBG/189/1.
[113] Ancestry.com, E&W Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916-2007, 1D/1116; Findmypast.co.uk, Gillingham, Former Grange Road Cemetery burials 1869-2007.
[114] Mahood, *Policing Gender,* p. 109.

sharing too much knowledge about sex with their innocent compatriots, there is no evidence of them blaming or rejecting assault victims as other historians have argued.[115] Instead, in all the recorded instances of abuse, although vague language was used to describe the assaults, the crime was almost always framed within the context of the father's behaviour towards the child.

The second case study regarding sexual abuse regards another pair of sisters. Sarah Rivett was admitted to the PMVH in 1883, aged eleven. Her mother, Elizabeth Colwell, was 'a very respectable and hard-working woman', who had been married, and widowed, twice by the age of twenty-seven. Elizabeth married her third husband, John Colwell, when Sarah was three and Sarah's sister – also named Elizabeth – was four. The couple had been married for seven years and had had four more children together when John confessed to indecently assaulting and causing actual bodily harm to his thirteen-year-old step-daughter Elizabeth on multiple occasions, dating back as far as five years to when Elizabeth was eight.[116] The court records are sparse and report only the assault on Elizabeth, but the PMVH register notes that Sarah too had been 'subjected to the most demoralising and depraving influence' and assaulted by her 'father'.[117] John was sentenced to eight months hard labour; Elizabeth was sent to a home for girls; and Sarah was admitted to the PMVH 'to rescue her from her father before he returned home'.[118] It has not been possible to find more details of John's

[115] J. Gammon, 'A denial of innocence': female juvenile victims of rape and the English legal system in the eighteenth century' in A. Fletcher and S. Hussey (eds), *Childhood in Question. Children, parents and the state* (Manchester, 1999), p. 81; Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse,* p. 7.
[116] 2591/3/1, fol. 386; 'John Colwell' https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/images.jsp?doc=188309100059; 'Serious Charge against a stepfather', *Marylebone Mercury* (1 Sep. 1883), p. 3 col g.
[117] 2591/3/1, fol. 386.
[118] 2591/3/1, fol. 386.

crime, but his guilty plea, and the separation of the girls in different institutions, could indicate a possible pregnancy for thirteen-year-old Elizabeth.

In this situation, the protective role of the institution is evident. With four small children, the girls' mother had limited options and it appears that both she and the PMVH staff believed that, despite his crime, John Colwell would return to his family after serving his sentence. Further research reveals that this view seems to have been justified. Court records reveal that on John's release from prison in 1884, he did return home, claiming that he 'hoped to make friends with his wife', Elizabeth. He had however, been drinking. He quarrelled with Elizabeth and threatened her and one of their children. Elizabeth took two of the children and tried to leave to 'escape his violence' but John followed and beat her 'violently', throwing her into the street. In court, Elizabeth reported that John had 'assaulted her so often she was afraid to live with him' and she wished a judicial separation. She asserted her ability to support herself by earning 25 to 30 shillings a week washing. John was sentenced to another six months in prison for the assault and Elizabeth was granted the judicial separation.[119] She appears, however, to eventually have returned to the marriage as the 1891 census shows them living together with two more children.[120] Sarah, however, remained in the PMVH until she was seventeen and safely of an age when she no longer needed to remain under parental control or return home.[121] She left the institution for a position in service where she lived until she married at the age of twenty. Her wedding was witnessed by her older half-brother John Lockyer, the child of her mother's first marriage, showing that despite her stepfather's crimes, she remained in touch with her family.[122]

[119] 'A Brutal Husband', *Marylebone Mercury* (19 July 1884), p. 3 col g.
[120] England Census 1891, RG12/2/14/20.
[121] 2591/3/1, fol. 386.
[122] Ancestry.com, London, England, Selected Church of England Parish Registers 1558-1875, P87/MMG/017.

Sarah's case provides yet another demonstration of the way in which philanthropic welfare functioned as a safety net for children at a time when poor mothers lacked the resources to forge alternate lives away from abusive partners. Looking beyond the official records reveals that violence and wilful neglect was more pervasive than historians have recognised and demonstrates that children's lived experiences in this period could be horrific. In her study, Emma Griffin wrote that 'learning that many children in Victorian and Edwardian Britain went without hot food and warm clothes owing to the actions of their fathers makes for uncomfortable reading'.[123] How much more difficult to recognise that for some children, life in an institution was preferable to life with their families. Not all parents lived up to the Victorian middle-class ideals of loving nurturing caregivers. Sometimes parents were abusive or wilfully neglectful. In these situations, philanthropic welfare offered the only viable alternative to family life or life on the streets. Philanthropists removed children from these situations as part of a strategy of protection that, while clearly articulated in their literature, has been under-recognised in the historiography.

Children's responses to family situations

While not all children came from abusive and wilfully neglectful backgrounds, as Lydia Murdoch argues, 'almost all' children 'came from backgrounds where poverty and neglect threatened their chances of survival'. [124] Much of the criticism of philanthropic intervention rests on the argument that 'institutionalisation was a symptom of widespread adult poverty and a shortage of housing', rather than of 'wanton or absent parents'.[125] Philanthropists, it is argued, would have been better placed remedying the ills of society that habitually forced

[123] Griffin, *Bread Winner*, p. 121.
[124] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 81.
[125] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 81.

parents to seek out residential care for children.[126] This framing shifts the responsibility for children's institutionalisation from parents to the social and economic structures of Victorian life. Not only does this render the child passive but it also diverts attention from how it might have felt to be the child in such circumstances. The remainder of this chapter uses children's actions to understand children's relationships and encounters with welfare. Building on the lessons of the previous section, it concentrates on how children responded to unhappy family situations by using existing structures of welfare to shape and direct their own futures.

The impact of poverty and instability

Contemporary research in the field of childhood has shown the disruptive life-long impact of poverty, illness, and unstable family lives on modern-day children.[127] Overall, thirty-one percent of boys and thirty percent of girls admitted to the RPS and the PMVH came from situations that could be characterised as 'neglectful'.[128] A striking example is that of the Cavell brothers from Ramsgate, eleven-year-old William, and nine-year-old Alfred. Their father, Horatio, was a bricklayer's labourer 'in fair circumstances' earning twenty shillings per week but, as a father of eleven children, struggled to look after them.[129] The family lived in an overcrowded, 'filthy', and 'badly ventilated', dilapidated wooden home, consisting of

[126] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 77.
[127] In 2019, UNICEF reported that poverty adversely impacts children's long-term physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual development. Some of these effects can be mitigated by 'a nurturing, attentive and emotionally supportive mother', https://www.unicef.org/social-policy/child-poverty (1 Aug. 2022); In 'Childhood poverty and its consequences' (March 1999), https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/child-poverty-and-its-consequences (6 Nov 2021) the JRF reported that children who had suffered from poverty or delinquency as children were more likely to end up unemployed, earning low wages or in prison as adults.
[128] This does not include the ten percent of girls who came from wilfully neglectful homes. Geoffrey Behlmer has argued that perceptions of neglect were associated with parental 'cruelty' or carelessness about their children's survival, fostering criminal behaviour or providing an environment so unappealing that children would forsake their home for life on the streets. G. Behlmer, *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England 1870–1908* (Stanford, 1982), p. 10.
[129] 2271/10/18, fols. 771 and 836.

three small rooms described as 'totally unfit for human habitation' with a 'wet and unhealthy floor'.[130] The children were notorious within the town as 'thorough bad boys' and William had first been charged with a crime at the age of six.[131] At the time of his admission, he had an older brother who had also been convicted of multiple crimes and was in an industrial school. The boys were frequently seen 'running about the harbour' in 'a dirty and ragged state' and William had only attended school fifty times out of a possible total of almost two hundred.[132] According to court records, Horatio 'brought up his children very badly and did not care a button what happened to them as long as he did not have to keep them'.[133] Both Horatio and his wife Mary were said to be drunks. Eventually, after the boys had been brought before the magistrates on multiple occasions, local magistrates decided to send them to reformatory school. Alfred was unusually young for reformatory but given that all three of his elder brothers had criminal convictions, the court decided to remove him from his family sooner rather than later. Alfred did not choose reformatory life, but the decision to admit Alfred turned out to be a happy one for him. At the end of his term in the school he chose not to return to his family. He maintained long affectionate relationships with the staff at the RPS and spoke positively of his experience of the institution.[134]

Other neglected children were obviously unhappy in their family situation and took matters into their own hands to remove themselves from their neglectful environment. At the beginning of 1870, seven-year-old Margaret Navin and her four-year-old sister, Julia, lived with their unmarried mother, Mary Ann and six-month-old baby sister, Jane, in the so-called

[130] 'Overcrowding in House', *Thanet Advertiser* (23 November 1878), p. 3 col a.
[131] 'Friday', *Thanet Advertiser* (29 June 1878), p. 3. col c.
[132] 'School attendance cases', *Thanet Advertiser* (29 Nov. 1879), p. 3 col c.
[133] 'Neglecting to contribute to maintenance of boys in industrial schools', *Thanet Advertiser* (17 Nov. 1883), p. 3 col a.
[134] Chapter Two, p. 109.

'Devil's Acre' in London, an area of great deprivation, disease, and overcrowding.[135] Mary Ann had a long criminal record and a string of aliases. She had several times been convicted of theft, assault, and other offences, and often sent Julia out to the streets to beg.[136] In early 1870, Mary Ann was convicted of 'wounding' and sentenced to prison. She took baby Jane with her. But, unable to take Margaret and Julia because of their age, she gave both into the care of the PMVH. When she was released from prison just before Christmas the same year, she 'violently removed' both Margaret and Julia from the institution and took them back to her lodgings in Rye Street, London.[137] Shortly afterwards, smallpox struck the family and baby Jane died. Her face scarred with smallpox and with Julia a 'pitiable object', Margaret left her mother and ran the two streets to the PMVH's Tothill Street Mission House. Reportedly 'taking hold of the hand' of one of the mission ladies, she asked if she and Julia could be readmitted to the PMVH that night 'and never leave it'. The girls were admitted under the Industrial Schools Act 1866 on the grounds of neglect and subsequent attempts by their mother to remove them were unsuccessful.

Margaret's story shows the agency children could wield and challenges us to think more deeply about the ways in which we evaluate the institutional experience. Centring the perspective of the child provides an alternative view to that gained when the perspectives of parents are privileged. Mary Ann clearly wanted her children with her and had only given them up to the care of the PMVH temporarily. The use of the word 'violently' to describe their removal could imply that either the managers of the PMVH resisted the children's removal or the children themselves did – unfortunately we cannot tell. We can see that,

[135] 2591/3/1, fol. 297.
[136] Crime, Prisons and Punishment, HO140/15, HO27/156, HO27/144; Wandsworth Prison, Surrey, Register of Prisoners, PCOM/239, PCOM/245, PCOM/246, PCOM/248, PCOM/250.
[137] 2591/3/1, fol. 297.

once back with their mother, it was a deliberate action by seven-year-old Margaret that resulted in the girls' readmission. Perhaps, Margaret was motivated by fear for her life and that of her remaining sister Julia. Perhaps, she merely seized an opportunity provided by the illness to escape the family home and seek a return to philanthropic care. Certainly, in returning to the PMVH for help, Margaret who had spent six months in the Home the previous year, understood the choice she was making. Yet she still chose the institution over life with her mother. Faced with contradictory adult demands, she made her own choice for her future welfare and for that of her sister.

This example also demonstrates the importance of considering familial backgrounds in assessing welfare intervention. Criminality was often intermingled with other factors such as neglect, abuse, or the loss or desertion of a parent. In such circumstances, while children may not have chosen welfare as Margaret did, the institutional environment may still have been preferable to the domestic one. An estimated forty-five percent of girls admitted to the PMVH had criminal mothers. Until prison nurseries were abolished in 1870, very young children could enter prison with their mother. After that date, parents relied on local friends and family to help.[138] A lack of family connections meant children were often left with few options other than institutional care. One-year-old Catherine Hall's parents were both in prison.[139] Her mother, Ellen, had been first charged with theft in 1863 at the age of sixteen and had four subsequent convictions for theft and housebreaking.[140] In 1867 she met nineteen-year-old William James and the pair were convicted of burglary in June 1867.[141]

[138] H. Johnston, 'Imprisoned mothers in Victorian England, 1853-1900: Motherhood, identity, and the convict prison', *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 19/2 (2019), pp. 221-222.
[139] 2591/3/1, fol. 194.
[140] Ancestry.com, Millbank Prison Registers, HO24/14; findmypast.co.uk, E&W Crime, Prisons & Punishment, Wandsworth Prison, Surrey, Register of Prisoners, PCOM2/241.
[141] 'Ellen Collins', https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?div=t18670610-546 (3 Jan 2021).

Catherine was born in Wandsworth Prison in early 1868.[142] Shortly after Catherine's birth, Ellen was released from prison, but soon after was reconvicted, together with William, for another incidence of breaking and entering. On this occasion William was sentenced to seven years and Ellen to two years and one-year-old Catherine was removed to the PMVH.[143]

The instability resulting from frequent imprisonment could be damaging to children. Catherine was admitted to the PMVH when she was very young. Other children, however, experienced many years of uncertainty before entering residential care. Research on modern children has found parental imprisonment to have 'profound emotional, social and economic effects' on the families of prisoners and to represent a 'strong risk factor' for adverse life outcomes for children.[144] Studies have also shown that the loss of a parent as a result of incarceration not only has 'significant and damaging consequences for the socio-emotional wellbeing of children', but also that these effects are greater than other forms of parental loss.[145] Unfortunately, there are no similar studies for the nineteenth century that allow us to historicise the emotional effect of imprisonment on the children of criminal parents, but scholarship by Julie-Marie Strange, Emma Griffin, and Ellen Ross has demonstrated the significance of parental care in nineteenth-century working-class children's lives, the absence of which could have had emotional consequences.[146]

[142] Findmypast.co.uk, England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1916-2007, 1D/538.
[143] 2591/3/1, fol. 194; Millbank Prison Registers, vol. 3; HO24/14, Crime, Prisons, and Punishment, CRIM9/16.
[144] J. A. Arditti, *Parental Incarceration and the Family: Psychological and Social Effects of Imprisonment on Children, Parents, and Caregivers* (New York, 2012), p. 97; J. Murray and D.P. Farrington, 'The effects of parental imprisonment on children', *Crime and Justice*, 27 (2008), p. 133.
[145] Arditti, *Parental Incarceration*, p. 100.
[146] Strange, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class*; Ross, *Love, Toil and Motherhood*; E. Griffin, *Bread Winner. An Intimate History of the Victorian Economy* (New Haven, 2020).

Parents also abandoned their children. Lydia Murdoch found that around twelve percent of children in Barnardo's and eleven percent of those in Chelsea and Kensington District School had been deserted by either one or both of their parents.[147] She argued that when 'parents failed to care for their children, members of the community took charge'. In her example, 'locals' shamed a woman, who neglected her eleven-year-old son, into eventually admitting her child to Barnardo's.[148] Yet, the child was still, in her example, removed from his family and Murdoch does not consider how being deserted might have felt for the child involved. Seven-year-old Catherine Coleman was admitted to the PMVH in 1873. Both her parents were convicts. Her father was serving fourteen years and her mother had been jailed in 1868 for seven years for her fourth conviction for theft.[149] While her parents had been in prison, three-year-old Catherine had been left in the care of 'some people of the name of Hart'. Four years into her sentence, in 1872, Catherine's mother was offered the opportunity to emigrate from prison to Canada under the sponsorship of a society for female prisoners. To gain her ticket, she hid from her sponsors the fact that she was leaving behind a child. Catherine's response to her abandonment can be inferred from her actions. According to the admissions register, she 'was in the habit of running away' and 'spending the money' they gave her for school. Nine months after her mother's departure, an intoxicated Mrs Hart — who was in fact Catherine's aunt and who 'wished to get rid of her' —brought her to the PMVH.[150] Catherine's behaviour had not only demonstrated her unhappiness with her present situation but had stretched the limits of her aunt's tolerance. Life in an institution was now Catherine's only option.

[147] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 75-76.
[148] Ibid., p. 81.
[149] Findmypast, Home Office, Criminal Registers, England & Wales, HO27/150, Lancs-Som.
[150] 2591/3/1, fol. 47.

Even when parents did want to keep their children at home, the family environment was not always beneficial. Child welfare literature has argued that poor parents used institutional care because it was the best option available to them.[151] Sometimes they recognised this only reluctantly and only once their child had been placed in dangerous or abusive situations. Amelia Norris's young mother, Emma was frequently in and out of prison. Amelia herself was born in Westminster prison in 1866.[152] The record does not disclose why, but Amelia did not live with her mother but with a local woman who looked after her. One day when visiting Amelia, Emma found three-year-old Amelia 'undergoing severe chastisement' from the woman, 'for having for the first time drunk some of the beer, which she was in the habit of fetching daily from a neighbouring public house'. Emma removed Amelia from the woman and placed her instead with the ladies of the PMVH who she knew from their work in the prison mission.[153]

Murdoch has argued that parents used institutional care as a 'way station' while they got back on their feet.[154] This may have been Emma's plan. It is evident that Emma's life was one of instability. The register notes that, after Amelia's admission, Emma suffered 'several reverses of fortune'. Although she married and 'did well' for 'some time', the register notes she was ultimately 'lost sight of' and was believed to be again in prison.[155] Emma never returned to the PMVH for Amelia. The question is why? Perhaps Emma, who had never looked after her daughter herself had washed her hands of Amelia once she was admitted. Perhaps her new husband did not want his wife's illegitimate daughter at home, or perhaps Emma believed Amelia to be better off in the PMVH. We do not know, but what Emma's

[151] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 69-70, 89-90; Hollen Lees, 'The Survival of the Unfit', pp. 68-91.
[152] Amelia's full name is Emma Amelia Norris but as her mother is also called Emma, we have used Amelia.
[153] 2591/3/1, fol. 309
[154] Hollen Lees, 'The Survival of the Unfit', p. 86; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 69.
[155] 2591/3/1, fol. 309.

story illustrates is that not all parents conformed to the image of the struggling caregivers working to re-establish their household. In twenty-four percent of cases within the PMVH, the parents of girls in the home show no signs of either returning to claim their daughters or seeking information on them. The same was true of twenty-five percent of boys. Institutional care represented a solution for some parents to the problem of what to do with unwanted children or unwieldy family situations. This presents an alternative perspective to that of cruel philanthropists permanently separating children from desperate parents.

In focusing on the role of neglect and instability in children's admission to institutional care, this sub-section has demonstrated that there is a need to probe beneath descriptions that foreground poor parents struggling to stay in touch with children.[156] Cases, such as that of the Ranger and Navin sisters, support an argument that even parents who fought to keep children with them were not always ideal caregivers. There was a difference between what parents wanted and what children wanted. This thesis seeks to demonstrate that children's perspectives and experiences matter as much as those of their parents. Children, like the Rivett sisters, ultimately kept in touch with their families, but were evidently safer being removed from abusive family members until they were able to live independently from their families. Other children, as we shall see, ended up in institutions because of delinquent behaviour. Sometimes, these categories overlapped.

The impact of relationships on children's behaviour

Of course, it was not just parents that had to deal with instability but also their children. Children responded in different ways to difficult family environments. One of those possible responses was crime. Delinquent children, as Heather Shore has demonstrated, immediately

[156] Murdoch*, Imagined Orphans*, pp. 97-98.

present as more agentic than the traditional pauper child.[157] A rich body of scholarship has sought to explain the apparent rise in juvenile delinquency in the nineteenth century.[158] Ground-breaking work in the 1970s by Susan Magarey argued that changes to the criminal justice system and to ideas of criminal responsibility meant that delinquency was 'legislated into existence'.[159] Yet, by the beginning of the 2000s, perspectives were changing. Empirical research by Peter King and Heather Shore into early-nineteenth-century juvenile crime showed that delinquency had long roots stretching back into the previous century.[160] An edited collection on delinquency a few years later supported this view, finding 'continuity and change' in common themes such as 'panics about urban culture', 'poor parenting' family breakdown, 'national fitness' and social 'stability' that spanned geographies other than England and time periods beyond the nineteenth century.[161]

What is clear is that Victorian reformers were concerned about the apparent rise in crime. Concerns over juvenile delinquency 'painfully' engaged 'the public mind', wrote reformer Mary Carpenter.[162] But, once again, these concerns were framed in ways that foregrounded parents rather than children. Victorian social commentator James Greenwood argued that juvenile offenders were 'thieves from infancy. Their parents are thieves in most cases; in

[157] H. Shore, *Artful Dodgers: Youth and Crime in Early Nineteenth-Century London* (Woodbridge, 2002). Shore demonstrates that while poverty played a role in youthful criminality, many juvenile offenders gave up crime as they matured.
[158] M. Magarey, 'The Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Labour History*, 34 (1978), pp. 11-27; M. May 'Innocence and Experience: The Evolution of the Concept of Juvenile Delinquency in the mid-19th Century', *Victorian Studies*, 17/1 (1973), pp. 7-29; J. Springhall, *Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain 1860-1960* (Dublin, 1986).
[159] Magarey, 'Invention', p. 25.
[160] P. King, 'The Rise of Juvenile Delinquency in England, 1780-1840: Changing Patterns of Perception and Prosecution', *Past and Present*, 160 (1998), pp. 125-128, 164-165; Shore, *Artful Dodgers*, p. 149.
[161] H. Shore and P. Cox, 'Introduction' in *Becoming Delinquent: British and European Youth 1650 -1950* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 2-10.
[162] M. Carpenter, *Reformatory Schools: For the children of the dangerous and perishing classes* (London, 1851), p. v.

others, the children are orphans, or have been forsaken by their parents'.[163] They were, wrote William Augustus Miles, 'trained to it from infancy, adhering to it from Education and Circumstances'.[164] London was seen by contemporary commentators as the epicentre of such delinquency and parental neglect one of the principal causes.[165] These arguments positioned children as passive victims of structural criminality. They were criminal because their parents were criminal, or because their circumstances dictated it. Yet surprisingly few of the boys studied for this chapter fitted this stereotype.

One of the striking conclusions of recent historical criminological studies has been that many juvenile delinquents did not come from backgrounds of extreme poverty. It was, Barry Godfrey, Pamela Cox, Heather Shore, and Zoe Alker argued, more commonly the children of the 'struggling or even the respectable working class' who ended up in reformatory institutions. Their work, examining the life courses of four hundred juvenile delinquents in the north of England, found that, of the 224 children for whom they had data, seventy-nine percent of fathers worked in skilled or unskilled occupations. Many of those in unskilled occupations were in 'low paid' but 'regular and stable' employment.[166] Genealogical tracing of boys entering the RPS reveals similar statistics. Of the one hundred and fifty boys examined for this work, only ten percent had criminal parents. Over two-thirds of boys came from families where the father earned a reasonable wage, there were other siblings in employment, or they were in employment themselves. This suggests there were factors

[163] J. Greenwood, *The Seven Curses of London* (London, 1869), p. 130.
[164] W. A. Miles, *Poverty, mendicity and crime* (London, 1839), p. 45.
[165] Shore, *Artful Dodgers,* pp. 15, 23.
[166] B. Godfrey, P. Cox, H. Shore, and Z. Alker, *Young Criminal Lives. Life Courses and Life Chances from 1850* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 78-79.

other than poverty that stimulated children's encounter with crime and reformatory institutions.

The evidence from the RPS shows that the emotional environment was important. This corresponds with Godfrey, Cox, Shore and Alker's conclusion that the 'crisis' that precipitated children's encounters with welfare could be emotional as well as economic.[167] Neglect could take many forms. It was not just physical. For these boys, who tended to enter residential care at an older age, difficult relationships lay at the heart of their encounters with welfare. Arthur Redknapp came from a family that was on the rise. His father, William, had begun his career as a lighterman on the Thames near Marlow, Buckinghamshire.[168] Lightermen worked on flat-bottomed barges transferring goods and cargo between vessels moored on the river and the shore. By the time Arthur was convicted of burglary in 1888 at the age of seventeen, William was co-owner of a boatbuilding and servicing business, and owned five motorised boats of his own. He was also town bailiff and would later become parish overseer. Arthur's crime was extensively reported in the local newspaper. Late one evening, when he and his friends had been out drinking, Arthur had broken into the local public house and stolen six boxes of cigars worth £6 and some money. He gave a box to Mr Lunnon, the father of a girl he knew, and sold some of the other boxes. Mr Lunnon told Arthur's father, William, of the crime and William sent Arthur's sister, Isobel, to report Arthur to the police, resulting in Arthur's prosecution and conviction.[169] Arthur had eight siblings, none of whom committed crimes. If he was not driven to crime by desperation and hunger as the dominant historiography suggests, there must have been

[167] Godfrey, Cox, Shore and Alker, *Young Criminal Lives*, p. 83.
[168] Ancestry.com, London, CoE Births and Baptisms, 1813-1917, p70/ctc/003.
[169] 'Daring Burglaries by a Marlow Lad', *Bucks Herald* (3 Nov 1888), p. 8 col c.

other 'factors'.[170] We need to consider why he behaved differently from his siblings, who would have been subject to the same influences.

Arthur's mother, Anne, died only four months after his conviction, aged only forty-eight. Perhaps she was ill at the time of his crime and that helps explain his drunken theft.[171] Certainly, Arthur's relationship with his father, William, does not appear to have been a close one. Not only was it William who reported Arthur's crime, but during Arthur's five years in the RPS, William visited him only once and only then three years into his term and with the purpose of encouraging him to emigrate. When it came time for Arthur to be discharged, the record reported 'Father positively refuses to allow him to come home or have anything to do with him'.[172] Was Arthur's criminality a response to an emotional loss or a consequence of a difficult relationship with a distant parent?

Parental death was common. Jane Humphries found that in between ten and twenty percent of fourteen-year-old children had lost at least one parent.[173] But across all types of institutional care it was even more frequent. Sixty-one percent of children in industrial schools across England in 1870 had lost a parent. This compared to seventy percent of the children in the RPS and the PMVH combined across the period 1850-1900.[174] Murdoch's analysis of Barnardo's institutions found that in 1887 twenty-three percent of children came from a household where the father had died or deserted the family and fifteen percent had no mother. She found comparable family structures within those admitted from poor law

[170] Godfrey, Cox, Shore and Alker, *Young Criminal Lives*, p. 2.
[171] Ancestry.com, E&W Civil Registration Death Index, 1916-2007, 3a/334.
[172] 2271/10/20, fol. 456.
[173] J. Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 172, 63.
[174] Gear, 'Industrial Schools in England, 1857-1933', p. 59. Gear notes that the statistics vary considerably across the period. For instance, in 1862 this figure was forty-five percent.

institutions.[175] Bellingham found twenty-one percent without a father and thirteen percent without a mother.[176] Within the PMVH, twenty-three percent came from households with no father and fourteen percent had no mother. Within the RPS, twenty-one percent had lost a father to death prior to their entry and a similar percentage had lost their mother to death. The higher rate of maternal loss within the reformatory category is interesting. Did the loss of a mother combined with a working father mean boys were, as Turner had argued, supervised less, and therefore, fell into bad company more easily? Or did the loss of a mother precipitate change in family dynamics that precipitated emotional turmoil enacted through criminality?

Losing a parent was an economic blow but, as the case of Arthur suggests, it could also affect children's lives in other ways.[177] In her discussion of the respectable background of 'unruly children', Murdoch concluded that her case studies hinted 'at underlying family dynamics that left youths feeling neglected and angry'.[178] Yet, she did not explore these factors further. The next part of this section discusses how some of these dynamics could be influential in stimulating children's encounters with institutions.

Stephen Smith, a 'well-spoken' boy of fifteen from Maidstone in Kent, was admitted to the RPS in 1889 after stealing his mother's bracelet and his brother's watch. Like Alfred, Stephen came from a respectable family. His father owned a coach building business and employed fourteen men at the time of Stephen's admission. Stephen was the eldest of six children and according to his own account had run away from home '10 or 12 times' during the last year. When his jewellery theft was discovered by his parents, he admitted that he had also been

[175] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 74, 75, 78.
[176] Bellingham, 'Waifs and Strays', p. 134.
[177] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour*, pp. 63, 172; Griffin, *Bread Winner*, p. 137.
[178] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 88.

stealing lead and old iron and pawning it. His parents reported him to the police and had him charged with theft and sentenced to reformatory, despite his lack of previous convictions. There is no indication of any traumatic events or poverty in Stephen's background that could have precipitated his actions. He had several uncles well situated in the town who owned small businesses, and his parents do not appear to have been ill or suffered any bereavement. Stephen had spent five years at the private Ardingly College and excused his theft by saying that he 'took things to be equal to the others' by which he meant his friends, who the account describes as 'boys free with money'.[179] This corresponds to Heather Shore's findings that 'peer pressure' played a role in youth offending.[180]

Stephen seemed also, however, to have had a difficult relationship with his family. He argued that his parents treated him 'less kindly than their other children'.[181] This could have been Stephen's perception rather than the reality, but it is worth noting that despite the fact his father eventually employed both of Stephen's younger brothers within the coach building business, he did not do the same for Stephen.[182] Instead, he encouraged his emigration to British Kaffiria (present-day South Africa). This may have indicated a desire to remove a disreputable relative but is nonetheless markedly different from the treatment received by other boys whose families both welcomed them home and arranged employment for them.[183] This difficult familial relationship provides a clear emotional rationale for Stephen's delinquency unrelated to structural or other factors.

[179] 2271/10/20, fol. 470.
[180] Shore, *Artful Dodgers*, p. 152.
[181] 2271/10/20, fol. 470.
[182] 1891 England Census, RG12/678/13/20, 1901 England Census, RG13/754/108/26.
[183] Approximately thirty percent of boys returned to the familial home.

Both Stephen's case and that of another boy, Harry Harper, demonstrate the importance of broadening our research beyond the institutional record. Harry was sixteen years old when he was admitted to the RPS in 1883 for stealing from his uncle, a bookkeeper. He lived with his widowed mother, Mary, three younger brothers, and his older brother, Charles, a stonemason, in a good-sized Victorian terraced house in the upper-working-class London suburb of Stoke Newington. According to the admissions register, Harry's father had died six years earlier, and his mother owned three houses, two of which she let out. She also reportedly let out part of the house the family lived in. Harry had three uncles listed on the register, all in respectable employment, and all living in decent neighbourhoods. This was Harry's third known crime, the first two having been relatively minor – one for stealing sweets and another for stealing a pastry – both only two months earlier. With a relatively well-off mother, few siblings, a known network of familial support, and an elder brother at home in good employment, there is little within the admissions register to explain why Harry might have turned to crime. Genealogical records show that Harry's father, a master builder, was admitted to Hanwell Lunatic Asylum in 1876 aged thirty-eight. He died one year later, when Harry was only seven years old, leaving his wife well provided for.[184] In the 1881 census, four years after her husband's death, Harry's mother Mary was recorded as living with a William Brown, an unemployed engine fitter, ten years her junior. Although the pair were not married, Harry and his brothers were listed as William's stepsons.

Despite this additional information, there are few clues to Harry's behaviour. What we can conclude with certainty is that Harry's family turned to institutional care to manage his behaviour. Although his crime involved a relative and could have been dealt with informally,

[184] Ancestry.com, Lunacy Patients Admission Registers, MH94/23; E&W National Probate Calendar, 1858-1995.

his uncle Hammond and his mother chose to involve the local police, who sent him to a reformatory. This was despite Harry being of an age to be economically useful. Again, we cannot know why they made this choice but, Murdoch argues that, when children were referred to magistrates for admission, it was often because parents hoped that institutions would provide much needed discipline.[185] Harry's behaviour while in the RPS was decidedly worse than average.[186] He was frequently punished for offences such as indecency, swearing, insolence, defacing hymn books, smoking, being irreverent in chapel, breaking into a schoolmaster's desk, concealing money, fighting, and finally for writing a 'threatening letter' to his housemaster Mr Cowen. If this was indicative of his behaviour while at home, then it provides a possible explanation for his family's decision.

These examples show that we need to consider children as individuals and agents in their own lives. These three boys made choices and behaved in ways that responded to the relationships and environment in which they were situated. They would have known the probable consequences of their actions. As Linda Mahood points out, the children of the poor had an extensive knowledge of the reformatory and industrial school system.[187] Recognising children's role in their own admission provides an important counterpoint to the focus on parental behaviour in the literature. It allows us to see the ways in which young people contributed to their encounters with the institution and encourages us to reassess characterisations of them as victims of child removal policies.[188]

Children's ability to shape and control their future was contingent on age. The boys admitted to the RPS were aged between ten and nineteen years of age, with an average age

[185] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 87.
[186] In 1889, the average number of punishments per boy pa was 1.6. 2271/1/21, Annual Report (1890), p. 23.
[187] Mahood, *Policing Crime*, p. 29.
[188] Shore, *Artful Dodgers*, pp. 48, 152.

of fourteen. The girls ranged in age from babies to sixteen with an average age of seven. Being older, gave the boys at the RPS an ability to respond to their environment in a way that some of the very young girls admitted to the PMVH could not. Yet, there were still examples of girls within the PMVH who directed their own encounters with welfare. The 1857 Industrial School's Act provided for children's admission to industrial school if parents declared the child to be beyond their control.[189] Of the ninety-seven girls admitted in the six years between 1870 and 1876, twenty-five (twenty-six percent) were categorised as juvenile offenders. This included two girls who were destitute and six girls who were convicted of vagrancy. Of the remaining seventeen, eight were categorised as 'uncontrollable' and nine were accused or convicted of theft. This represented seventeen and-a-half percent. Like the boys, these girls ended up in the PMVH because of their own misbehaviour, not that of their parents.

As we saw in the case of Harry and, as Lynn Hollen Lees has argued, parents resorted to institutional care when their children were 'troublesome'.[190] The categories could overlap. As Murdoch has shown, 'uncontrollable' children often had a reputation for truancy or stealing.[191] Of the eighty girls surveyed for this thesis between 1870 and 1890, fourteen were involved in incidences of theft or 'wild behaviour', representing eighteen percent. Thirteen-year-old Emma Brady was sent to the PMVH in 1873 by her 'very respectable' seamstress mother, who was 'utterly unable' to control her. Emma reportedly ran 'wild' in the streets of Rochester, and 'repeatedly robbed' her mother, who eventually applied to the Mayor of Rochester to have her admitted to the school.[192] Similarly uncontrollable was

[189] 'Ragged schools, Industrial Schools and Reformatories', https://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/articles/raggedschool.html (23 November 2021).
[190] Lees, 'The Survival of the Unfit'. p. 85.
[191] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 88.
[192] 2591/3/1, fol. 57.

twelve-year-old Flora Green, whose mother was a respectable servant in London, and left her at home while she was out at work. Like Emma, Flora 'spent much of her time on the streets'.[193]

Again, the girls' backgrounds provide some clues to their behaviour. As Heather Shore has acknowledged, children did not face an inexorable slide into crime, they made 'decisions of their own', 'pertinent to their situations'.[194] Studies of nineteenth-century female delinquents in the United States show that more than two-thirds of delinquent girls came from homes where either one or both parents were dead or absent.[195] Both Flora and Emma were the youngest children of widowed mothers whose fathers had died while the girls were still young. Both had familial situations that meant they received little parental supervision. Flora's fifty-three-year-old mother was respectable, but was described as 'very poor', and had to leave Flora at home alone while she went out to work. Emma's mother worked within the home but was 'almost stone deaf'. She also had to look after Emma's 'crippled' elder brother, James.[196]

Even after admission to the institution, girls continued to direct their experiences of welfare. After entering the PMVH in 1882, Flora struggled with the 'discipline and confinement' in comparison to her freedom in London, and after three months stole two shillings from her house mother and ran away. On her discovery in Vauxhall, she was returned to the PMVH. Once back, she remained for another three years and was described as having since 'done very well' and 'been very happy'. In 1885 at the age of fifteen, however, she was sent out to

[193] 2591/3/1, fol. 182.
[194] Shore, *Artful Dodgers*, p. 152.
[195] C.M. Rosenberg, and H.J. Paine, 'Female Juvenile Delinquency: A Nineteenth-Century Follow-up', *Crime and Delinquency*, 19/1 (1973) p. 73.
[196] England Census 1871, RG10/903/47/13.

a situation where she stole money once again, ran away and found her way home. Although she was once again returned to the institution, when her term of detention was up at the age of sixteen, she was allowed to return to her mother.[197] Emma was more content in the institution. She remained in the PMVH until the age of sixteen when she went to work as a servant in the PMVH's mission home in Bayswater. She emigrated to Canada under the sponsorship of the Home at the age of eighteen and married shortly afterwards. She corresponded with the staff at the PMVH, writing that she was 'doing very well'. A third girl, nine-year-old Jessie Rossiter also behaved in such a way as to influence the outcome she desired. Jessie had been placed in the PMVH at the age of six because her stepfather disliked 'having the child in his house'. When she was nine, in 1877, her mother removed her from the institution. Once at home, Jessie, however, behaved badly 'running wild for want of proper attention' and showed herself 'very anxious to return' to the PMVH. Her mother relented and returned her to the Home four months later, paying four shillings weekly for her support. Jessie remained in the PMVH until she was twelve when she left for employment with a local minister.[198]

As these examples have demonstrated, children deliberately shaped their outcomes within welfare structures either to comply with or to defy adult agendas. This reveals an alternative perspective to that which positions delinquent children as being 'at the mercy of a system that sought both to protect and to punish them'.[199] Yet, it also demonstrates the significance of relationships. Fractured bonds underpinned much of children's behaviour. Being part of a single-parent family, like Flora and Emma, could be difficult for all involved. As a result,

[197] 2591/3/1, fol. 182.
[198] 2591/3/1, fol. 373.
[199] Shore, *Artful Dodgers*, pp. 48, 152.

bereaved spouses, in particular mothers, often remarried quickly.[200] An examination of children's backgrounds reveals that just over a quarter of the children's parents had remarried by the time of the child's admission. Emma Griffin argues that remarriage 'was a powerful mechanism by which broken families could be repaired'.[201] Yet, while remarriage may have helped financially, and could also provide emotional support to the bereaved spouse, it may have looked different to the child – as the case of Jessie demonstrated. Remarriage did not always lessen the emotional impact of parental loss, and in some instances may have made it worse. It also changed family dynamics.[202] In over seventy percent of the cases in this thesis, where the parent had remarried, the children in the step-relationship showed signs of unhappiness that contributed to their admission. The introduction of new adults into the family could stretch familial bonds to breaking point.

Contemporaries recognised this dynamic. In his 1896 review of reformatory and industrial schools, statistician John Watson wrote that the admissions data appeared to 'show that being deprived of both parents is less of a calamity than to lose one'. He pointed out that the surviving parent usually remarried and described 'a step-mother or step-father among the lower orders' as being 'synonymous with harshness or cruelty'.[203] Stepparents were often blamed for both family breakdown and juvenile delinquency. Prominent reformer, Lord Shaftesbury, argued that 'very many' criminal children were 'driven from home and turned into the street by the ferocity of their step-parents', adding that there was 'no cause

[200] Griffin, *Bread Winner*, p. 141.
[201] Ibid., p. 141.
[202] C. Nelson, *Family Ties in Victorian England* (Westport, 2007), p. 7.
[203] Watson, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', p. 285.

of vice, misery or suffering more common than the domineering temper of step-mothers who will not allow their step-children to remain in the same house with them'.[204]

Given the prevalence of stepfamilies in the past, historian Peter Laslett has questioned whether it is appropriate to 'speculate' about the emotional effect of living with stepparents. He did, however, acknowledge that the tropes must have some foundation.[205] There was certainly plenty of evidence of problematic step-relationships within the backgrounds of children admitted to both the RPS and the PMVH. These demonstrate the importance of emotional turmoil in children's admission to the institution.

Fifteen-year-old William Stanford from rural Sussex was convicted of stealing coins in Brighton in 1892. He had been in the town for around five months, 'constantly associating with young thieves'. Prior to that he had spent four months employed travelling with Ginnetti's circus.[206] William's father, a railway worker, had died five years previously and just over a year later, his mother had remarried twenty-one-year-old Edmund Parsons. Edmund was sixteen years her junior and only ten years older than William.[207] Edmund had also worked on the railway — as a ticket collector — but had been dismissed, following which he had found it difficult to find work.[208] On his admission to the RPS in 1892, William refused to admit his stepfather even existed. Instead, he pretended that his father, who had died five years previously, was still alive and was a station master, when he had only been a railway porter. When questioned about this story, William's mother expressed her grief and

[204] 'Criminal and destitute children', *The Westmorland Gazette and Kendal Advertiser* (30 July 1853), p. 8 col a.
[205] P. Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*: *Further Explored*, 3rd ed (London, 2005), p. 115.
[206] 2271/10/20, fol. 742.
[207] Findmypast.co.uk, E&W Marriages 1837-1915, 2b/143. She gave birth to Edmund's son, one month before the marriage.
[208] Ancestry.com, Railway Employment Records, 1833-1956: RAIL414/775; 1881 England Census, RG11/1060/84/2; 2271/10/20, fol. 742.

concern at his reports, arguing that she could only think that his mind had become 'unhinged' by his conviction. The letter contained a glimpse into the relationship between William and his stepfather. According to William's mother 'Parsons has said a long time that he belieft he was a bit dotty (sic)'.[209] Both the resurrection of his father and his father's occupational elevation demonstrated William's resentment towards the young man by whom his mother had become pregnant a scarce five months after his father's death.

Children responded in differing ways to difficult step-relationships. Claudia Nelson has reported how social investigator and journalist Henry Mayhew identified tensions with stepmothers as a 'major factor influencing young women to become vagrants'.[210] While, as we have seen, step-relationships could result in girls being placed in the institution, the PMVH did not admit enough vagrant girls for us to test Mayhew's claim. The evidence of the RPS, however, shows that Mayhew's argument applied as much to boys as it did to girls. One quarter of the boys admitted who had stepparents had left home either of their own volition or after being thrown out. George Wallace was one example. Every time he ran away from his 'cruel stepmother', his father found him and took him home. Eventually, when caught stealing a shirt on one such adventure, George gave a false name and claimed to have no relatives. This ensured not only his escape from his home life but also his admission to reformatory school. George remained in the RPS for four years and emigrated in 1882, only revealing the truth of his background and his real name in an 1890 letter back to the RPS from Texas.[211] Records show that he never returned to Britain.

[209] 2271/10/20, fol. 746.
[210] Nelson, *Family Ties,* p. 147.
[211] 2271/10/17, fol. 552.

George's actions have parallels with those of fifteen-year-old Frederick Whiffen who was discovered sleeping rough in a market van in Holloway, North London in 1885. Frederick refused to give any account of himself other than to claim that his parents were dead and, like George, he gave a false name. This ensured his institutionalisation. It was only some months later that RPS staff discovered the truth. Frederick was illegitimate and had been placed by his mother, Charlotte, in the care of a Mrs Hart in London. Charlotte had remarried, and her husband did not know about Frederick. Mrs Hart had brought Frederick up until the age of eleven when his mother's second cousin (and possibly his father), a Mr Cole, arrived and removed him. Mr Cole placed Frederick in the home of his maternal aunt in rural Kent as an apprentice brewer to her husband.[212] For Frederick, who had been unaware that Mrs Hart was not his real mother, it was clearly a blow. He spent the next two years being so 'tiresome' that eventually Mr Cole took him to London to be apprenticed as a bootmaker instead. He promptly ran away, back to Mrs Hart. Thirteen-year-old Frederick 'stoutly refused' to return with Mr Cole and, the now-widowed, Mrs Hart refused to give him up. Mr Cole, 'annoyed with her abuse' gave up his efforts.[213] However, Frederick's behaviour may have continued to be difficult, because, two years later, Mrs Hart moved to Reading leaving Frederick behind. Now aged fifteen Frederick was forced to live on the streets, 'living on chance jobs' and 'spending nights in market vans'. On his arrest, Frederick could have chosen to disclose the existence of his numerous well-off relatives, but, instead, he pretended to be an orphan. Thus, like the Navin sisters and George Wallace, he chose institutional care. Perhaps having suffered what was in effect a twin abandonment by two mothers – his birth mother and Mrs Hart – he felt himself to be an orphan in truth.

[212] This was a different Mrs Hart to that involved in the case of Catherine Coleman.
[213] 2271/10/19, fol. 199; E&W Crime, Prisons and Punishment, HO140/82/24.

Certainly, his grandmother's letter to the RPS acknowledged that he had 'been buffeted about a great deal'.[214] Frederick's return to Mrs Hart seems to indicate that his childhood in foster care had been a happy one given that he preferred it over the two good apprenticeship opportunities offered by his new-found relatives.

These numerous examples illustrate the importance of looking beyond the institutional archive to examine as much of the circumstances of children's admission as we can. Children's actions can provide an insight into what Hendrick described as 'the meaning of rescue'.[215] In rejecting their families in favour of institutional life, children were making a statement about how they wanted their lives to look. They responded to their messy and complex lives in highly individual ways that fundamentally undermines any attempt to position them as passive within the history of welfare.[216]

In focusing on neglectful and abusive situations as well as on situations in which children sought to leave their families this chapter has sought to provide some balance to the historiography. Its concentration on the abusive, criminal, neglectful or emotionally complicated families within the case files, means it has largely ignored the cases where these were not factors. The boys primarily entered institutional care because of their own delinquency although in highlighting the forty-seven percent of cases where abuse, neglect or complete orphanage was a factor, the discussion has sought to give some perspective on why boys might have become criminal.[217] For girls, the analysis reveals that forty-eight percent of girls came from families that were not neglectful or abusive. But that forty-eight percent, included the six percent of girls who were orphans and almost eighteen percent

[214] 2271/10/19, fol. 199.
[215] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 70.
[216] H. Hendrick, *Child Welfare. Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate* (Cambridge, 2023), p. 253.
[217] This statistic excludes children who left the family home because of difficult relationships.

who were admitted because of their own delinquency.[218] Of the remainder, many had a criminal parent whose prison sentence had precipitated their entry to the institution. Overall, only thirteen percent of girls came from homes where none of these elements were a factor.

None of the above means that children were permanently separated from their families. Indeed, as we shall see twenty percent of girls and thirty-one percent of boys ultimately returned to the home of a relative. This could reflect a change in familial circumstances, as the example of the Ranger girls showed. Yet, by demonstrating the harmful environments that prevented children's return, this chapter has both provided some insight into the origin of 'popular' discourses of abusive Victorian parents and countered the narrative that has minimised their significance.[219]

Conclusion

The passing of the Children Act of 1908 was a 'great and fundamental step in child protection'.[220] It combined the flood of legislation over the preceding two decades that had sought to increasingly regulate the lives of children into one significant piece of legal intervention. It, Hendrick has claimed, epitomised the shift towards thinking of children as national investments.[221] Yet, while as a contemporary noted, the Act's significance lay in the fact that it sought to prevent and protect, as this chapter has shown, reformatory and industrial schools had been performing this function by more than half a century by this point.[222]

[218] This does not include delinquent children who also came from neglectful or violent homes.
[219] For a discussion see Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 1-3, 7.
[220] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 121.
[221] Ibid., pp. 84-5, 126; Mahood, *Policing Gender*, p. 57.
[222] Mahood, *Policing Gender*, p. 58.

In expanding our analysis to include reformatory and industrial schools, this chapter reveals the context behind a movement that was established before the later high-profile charitable institutions that dominate the scholarship. It has shown that the reformatory and industrial movement emerged from a broader intellectual current of reform within mid-Victorian Britain. Driven by an impetus to protect, as we shall see in later chapters, the founders of the RPS and the PMVH, took the NAPSS's 'progressive and liberal' ideas about the treatment of criminal and poor children and refined them through practice.[223]

The proposition that industrial and reformatory schools were designed to protect children is supported by the analysis of the backgrounds of the children admitted to the two institutions. This has shown that children lived difficult, messy, and even, sometimes, horrific lives. Not all families provided the ideal conditions for children to thrive. These alternative narratives are an important counter to revisionist trends in histories of nineteenth-century working-class families.[224] They also crucially disrupt existing historiographies of child welfare by showing that there was more to Victorian discourses of harmful parents than has been recognised by historians.[225]

The case studies also disrupt dominant presentations of children as 'passive objects' within either the family or the institution.[226] Until recently, children's role within the welfare process has been significantly under-recognised.[227] Harry Hendrick argued that children were 'exploited by adults' and were unable to 'influence their own treatment'.[228] Yet as the

[223] Goldman, *Science, Reform, and Politics*, p. 43.
[224] Murdoch is the prime exponent in relation to welfare. Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans.* For working-class lives see: Strange, *Fatherhood*; Ross, *Love and Toil.*
[225] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 3; Swain, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire*, p. 24.
[226] Pooley and Taylor, 'Introduction', p. 7.
[227] Pooley and Taylor, 'Introduction', p. 7; Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. xi.
[228] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, xii.

many case studies demonstrated, children were active participants in their interactions with welfare. There were limits to the control adults could exercise over children determined to resist their intentions. Children's actions showed both what they thought of their families and how they wanted their lives to be. This builds on work by Lynn Thomas and Mona Gleason that argues that historians of children must pay attention to 'the multiple motivations that undergird meaningful action' if we are to understand children as 'complex historical subjects'. [229] As Pooley and Taylor have observed, children wanted to and did shape their own futures.[230] Taken together, these fresh insights provide important context for evaluations of the impact of welfare on children's lives.

[229] L. Thomas, 'Historicising agency', *Gender and History*, 28/2 (2016), p. 335; M. Gleason, 'Avoiding the agency trap: caveats for historians of children, youth and education', *History of Education*, 45/4, p. 452.
[230] Pooley and Taylor, *Children's Experiences*, pp. 274-5.

Chapter Two: Boys and social mobility

In 1861, sixteen-year-old Robert Herod left England for a new life in Canada. Fifty years later, having changed his name, he was a 'millionaire bridge contractor' in Portland, Oregon, reportedly 'well known throughout the Pacific Coast'.[1] Robert exemplified a central narrative of nineteenth-century child 'rescue' – the successful transformation of a delinquent child into a prosperous member of society. He was also an early example of what would, ten years later, become a key plank of British social policy – the migration of pauper, neglected, and criminal, children throughout the world.

Child migration forms an important part of the scholarship on nineteenth-century child welfare. The separation of children from their families has been heavily criticised by a range of historians, influenced by twentieth-century narratives of the 'pain and dislocation stemming from' children's 'removal from family and birth country'.[2] A wealth of popular histories has emerged highlighting emigration's 'abusive aspects'.[3] Nineteenth and twentieth-century experiences have been conflated, as historians have sought to better understand why child removal practices took hold in a variety of countries. Historian Shurlee Swain, seeking explanations for the twentieth-century practice in Australia, has argued that 'removals had a common origin in the nineteenth-century child rescue movement' in Britain.[4] Ellen Boucher's study of child emigration to Canada, Australia, and South Africa, has been profoundly influential in foregrounding the role played by imperial ambition in child

[1] Woking, Surrey History Centre (SHC), 2271/10/11, fol.263; 'Son of Portland Millionaire Crook. Charged with Highway Robbery and Father Believes Charge', *East Oregonian* (26 March 1912) p. 1 col d.
[2] Quote from E. Boucher, *Empire's Children* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 3. Other examples of critical literature include: S. Swain and M. Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire. Child rescue discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850-1915* (Manchester, 2010), G. Wagner, *Children of the Empire* (London, 1982); R. Parker, *Uprooted. The Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867-1917* (Bristol, 2008).
[3] See Boucher, *Empire's Children*, p. 3, footnote 5 for references.
[4] S. Swain, 'Child Rescue: The Emigration of an Idea' in J. Lawrence and P. Starkey (eds), *Child Welfare and Social Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Liverpool, 2001), p. 101.

emigration policies. Yet, while her book covers the period 1869 to 1967, it concentrates largely on twentieth-century policies and experiences. Boucher's reliance on twentieth-century oral histories means that the discussion of nineteenth century emigration was described by reviewer, Geoffrey Sherington, as 'a prelude' to what is primarily a discussion of 'state-sponsored Empire Settlement'.[5]

In this chapter, I seek to address this conflation between nineteenth-and twentieth-century experiences through an examination of the post-institutional lives of 150 boys who entered the RPS between 1850 and 1895. This represents nine percent of the 1685 boys from the school who emigrated during this forty-five-year period.[6] Reformatory and industrial schools have been neglected in the scholarship on child emigration, which has focused instead on high-profile emigrationists or on organisations such as Barnardo's and the Waifs and Strays.[7] Yet, reformatories and industrial schools were important contributors to child migration — particularly to Canada, the principal destination for sponsored child emigrants. They accounted for an estimated twelve percent of Canadian child migrants between 1858 and 1914.[8] Examining their experiences provides us with important insights into the long-term impact of nineteenth-century emigration on children's lives.

It also provides us with an alternative perspective to histories of emigration which have positioned child migrants as passive in the emigration process.[9] The case studies significantly

[5] G. Sherington, 'Ellen Boucher. Empire's Children: Child Emigrants, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967', *The Journal of British Studies*, 54/1 (2015), pp. 220-221.
[6] Based on the annual emigration statistics given in the Annual Reports (1851-1900) found at SHC, 2271/1/3-2271/1/29.
[7] Boucher, *Empire's Children*; J. Parr, *Labouring Children* (London, 1980); L. Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans. Poor Families, Child Welfare and Contested Citizenship in London* (New Brunswick, 2006); Swain and Hillel, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire*.
[8] Parker, *Uprooted*, p. 190.
[9] H. Hendrick, *Child Welfare. England 1872-1989* (London, 1994), p. 211; Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 11, p. 27; J. Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools before 1933,' *History of Education*, 13 (1984), pp. 54-55.

challenge the child emigration historiography that has sought to weigh children's emotional pain against philanthropic objectives for children's lives. These have discounted the gains achieved against the harm caused.[10] As the chapter will show, boys actively chose emigration as part of an evaluation of their future opportunities. This disrupts these dominant narratives and demands that we reconsider our analysis on the effectiveness of emigration as a strategy for children's futures.

Positioning children as active participants in the emigration process also contributes to our understanding of empire. Existing depictions of children as 'being emigrated' without consent have encouraged their exclusion from larger histories of settler migration.[11] Yet, the children who emigrated grew into adults who shaped their countries of settlement. Over ten percent of the Canadian population is descended from a child or juvenile emigrant.[12] Understanding why some of these children emigrated is a fundamental contribution to the development of the more 'sophisticated approach' to the connections between child migration, social reform, and the construction of an imperially situated citizenship, called for by historians, Kent Federowich and Andrew Thompson, in their recent book on the British Empire.[13]

It is also important to our understanding of modern Britain.[14] Migration has been explained as a function of economic circumstance, as a collective mania driven by booster literature or as a consequence of a huge 'tectonic' global shift in populations that spurred mysterious yet

[10] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 139; Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 211; Parker, *Uprooted*, p. 290.
[11] M. Harper, 'Children of the Poor', in S. Constantine and M. Harper (eds), *Migration and Empire* (Oxford, 2014), p. 247.
[12] 'Who are the British Home Children?', Who are the British Home Children – British Home Child Group International (8 May 2021).
[13] A.S. Thompson and K. Federowich, 'Mapping the Contours of the British World' in K. Fedorowich and A.S. Thompson (eds), *Empire, migration and identity in the British World* (Manchester, 2013), p. 21.
[14] Fedorowich and Thompson, 'Mapping the Contours', pp. 2, 6.

evident mass mobility.[15] None of these theories reveal, however, why some people left and others remained — why we have 'extreme emigration and extreme inertia', as Eric Richards put it.[16] Stephen Constantine has argued that existing structural approaches positioning nineteenth-century migrants as 'passive victims of circumstance' limit our evaluation of why people migrated. Migrants, he believes, should be regarded as active agents who operate within certain constraints but who grasp the opportunities open to them.[17] In this chapter I seek to contribute to these debates by framing the emigration decision in the context of both the objectives of the philanthropists of the RPS and the ambitions of the boys it looked after.

To do this, the chapter firstly examines the question of how as historians we can judge the impact of institutional care on children's lives. The existing literature focuses on the work of Barnardo and on the period between 1870 and 1920.[18] This chapter builds on this important scholarship but argues that by taking a different chronology (1850-1895), and by including a different category of juvenile emigrant – the reformatory boy – we gain a new perspective on emigration policy. Focusing on institutional objectives for boys' futures, I conclude that philanthropists wanted to deliver social mobility for boys. I consider how we might think about that social mobility in a historically contingent way and explore how narratives of emigration fitted into those evaluations and what questions of consent tell us about age, agency, and ideas of citizenship. In the next section I focus on emigration in more detail, following boys' lives. An examination of boys' letters and life courses provides insights into

[15] E. Richards, 'Emigration at the Extremes', *Bridging Boundaries in British Migration History* (London, 2020), pp. 57-63; E. Richards, *The genesis of international mass migration* (Manchester, 2018), p. 8.
[16] Richards, 'Emigration at the Extremes', p. 55.
[17] S. Constantine 'Introduction' in Constantine and Harper (eds), *Migration and Empire,* p. 21.
[18] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*; Parr, *Labouring Children* and Boucher, *Empire's Children* focus on children who emigrated through Barnardo. Boucher's work concentrates on children who emigrated in the twentieth century, Swain on the 1870s onwards, Parr on children who emigrated 1882-1908.

how children thought both about life overseas and the option of remaining in Britain. Finally, I compare occupational outcomes for boys who remained in Britain with those of the sixty-four percent that migrated overseas.[19] I conclude that emigration, while much criticised, provided boys with more opportunity than remaining in Britain.[20]

Measuring outcomes

How do we measure outcomes? In *Uprooted*, a study of child emigration to Canada, Roy Parker wrestled with the same question. There were, he noted, no witnesses still alive to question; and only 'selective and sparse' information available to the historian. 'Furthermore' there was a 'danger that the past' would 'be judged through present-day-eyes'.[21] Parker was not alone in raising this concern. As Stephen Constantine, Michele Langfield, and others, have also cautioned, historians evaluating child migration schemes must be careful not to impose 'twenty-first century values on beliefs and practices of earlier times'.[22] We need, Langfield argues, to consider how sponsoring organisations themselves saw their work and 'perhaps most importantly' how children viewed such programmes both 'at the time of their emigration and later in their lives'.[23] This chapter embraces this approach and asks these crucial questions. What did the philanthropists of the RPS want to achieve through intervening in these boys' lives and how did boys judge their own success?

Philanthropic intervention was underpinned by multiple motivations, but, as discussed in the previous chapter, the reformatory and industrial school movement was conceived in a

[19] This sixty-four percent refers to the detailed sample. Overall, forty-two percent of RPS boys emigrated between 1850 and 1895, predominantly to Canada.
[20] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 159-175; Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 80-83; Swain, 'The Emigration of an Idea'. For Joy Parr's work on outcomes see Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 123-141.
[21] Parker, *Uprooted*, p. 277.
[22] Thompson and Federowich, 'Mapping the Contours', p. 21.
[23] M. Langfield, 'Righting the record?' in Federowich and Thompson (eds), *Empire, migration and identity*, p. 151.

spirit that sought to provide children with a better life than they would have had otherwise. The parliamentary authors of the 1852 select committee report that laid the foundation of reformatory schools, based on the RPS model, declared that their purpose was to convert criminal children into 'virtuous, honest and industrious citizens'. This would be achieved through the provision of training that would give such children the 'best means' of independently supporting themselves.[24]

Yet, the historiography has been generally critical of the effectiveness of institutional welfare in delivering better futures for children. Historians have tended to focus on the emotional consequences of child institutionalisation rather than on its economic benefits.[25] They have weighed the lack of occupational social mobility available to former institutional children against the 'hardships entailed'.[26] In large part, this is because of the difficulties Parker raised, but it is also because measuring social mobility is complicated and holds different meanings depending on the context. In the introduction to her 2021 book, *Snakes and Ladders*, Selina Todd defined social mobility as 'how far a person travels from their parents' social class'. Todd based much of her analysis on sociologist John Goldthorpe's pioneering 1980 work on social mobility, which used occupation as its main measure.[27] Economists, Jo Blanden and Stephen Machin, supplied an alternative benchmark – income. Both have proven to be extremely influential in driving public and political discourse.[28] Yet statistical metrics, as Peter Mandler reminds us, fail to consider the cultural and social

[24] *Parliamentary Papers* (1852), 674 674-I, Report from the Select Committee on Criminal and Destitute Children, pp. iii, iv.
[25] Swain and Hillel, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire*, pp. 159-175.
[26] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 123, 127; Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', p. 57; Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 137-139.
[27] S. Todd, *Snakes and Ladders: the great British social mobility myth* (London, 2021), p. 373.
[28] J. Blanden and S. Machin, 'Up and Down the Generational Income Ladder in Britain: Past Changes and Future Prospects', *National Institute Economic Review*, 205 (2008), pp. 101-116; J. Goldthorpe, 'Understanding – and Misunderstanding – Social Mobility in Britain', *Journal of Social Policy*, 42/3 (2013), pp. 433-434.

gradations of mobility. Within a social class there are distinctions between occupations. Different occupations command differing levels of community prestige or independence. [29] A focus on occupational classification, homogenises these subtle distinctions. Nor does occupation capture more intangible attributes that may be important to children born into destitution or neglect, such as stability or comfort. As this thesis will show neither the staff nor the old boys of the RPS saw occupation as a crucial indicator of success, they held other values.

Social mobility is historically contingent. Christina de Bellaigue has demonstrated that, to nineteenth-century middle-class families, mobility was a matter of preserving social status and of preventing downward social mobility.[30] This insight has important implications for the way we think about the philanthropic welfare intervention. As Lydia Murdoch has noted, 'all child welfare institutions placed great importance on discipline and work as the key values that would enable poor youths to escape the fates of their parents'.[31] The RPS was little different. The reformatory movement's principal aim was to return children to the status they could have occupied if they had not 'fallen' into criminality. When the foundation stone was laid for the construction of the RPS in 1849, Prince Albert spoke of extending reformatory boys a 'cordial aiding hand in their struggles to regain equality with their brethren'.[32] Sydney Turner argued that leaving poor children to roam the streets without supervision left them 'helpless' and 'undefended', vulnerable to the bad influences of the associates and circumstances that first caused them to offend, and that now prevented

[29] P. Mandler, 'Comment. Social Mobility and the Historians', *Cultural and Social History*, 16/1 (2019), p. 104.
[30] C. de Bellaigue, 'Great Expectations? Childhood, Family and Middle-class Social Mobility in Nineteenth-Century England', *Cultural and Social History*, 16/1 (2019), pp. 29-46.
[31] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 121.
[32] 'The Philanthropic Society', *The Times* [London], (1 May 1849), p. 6 col c.

them from finding 'respectable employment'.[33] Language of mobility expressed in terms of rising and falling was prominent in the institution's public Annual Reports throughout the period. In 1851, William Gladstone, first treasurer of the RPS, wrote that the reformatory boy had been 'plucked' from 'the stream of crime and guilt into which, too often, destitution, orphanage, or the vices of his relatives have plunged him'. He had been 'saved' before he could be 'stained irretrievably with its corruption'.[34] In 1900, the RPS superintendent, Marshall Vine, maintained that reformatory work was necessary to save 'erring children from sinking into later crimes'.[35]

The RPS, therefore, wanted to redeem boys by preventing their permanent descent into crime and by giving them the tools to take their place amongst the respectable working classes. These aims have traditionally been interpreted as a form of social control by historians who have argued that institutions 'situated poor children within a hierarchical national community'.[36] They have questioned why philanthropic ambitions did not extend to elevating boys beyond their social class.[37] Yet, this is an interpretation that fails to take account of how, through their criminality, these boys had already limited their options. Prior to the reformatory movement, criminal boys would have ended up in prison. Those from respectable families could, as we saw in the previous chapter, have been rejected by their families.[38] Achievement of respectable and steady employment was therefore a form of social mobility.

[33] SHC, 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 11.
[34] SHC, 2271/1/4, Annual Report (1852), p. 9.
[35] SHC, 2271/1/29, Annual Report (1900), p. 45.
[36] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 127-128, 130.
[37] R. J. Bates, 'Building Imperial Youth? Reflections on labour and the construction of working-class childhood in late Victorian England', *Paedagogica Historica,* 45/1-2 (2009), p. 145; Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', p. 56; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 134-137, 143.
[38] Chapter One, pp. 74-75

To prepare boys for employment, the RPS focused on training boys in agricultural work, which it believed gave boys the experience necessary for a life abroad. This training was comprehensive but focused on the skills it thought boys would need as emigrants. As Marshall Vine argued in 1891, the training given to emigrants needed to be such that it would 'place emigrants *on perfectly equal terms* with other colonists as regards wages and freedom of action'.[39] Boys rotated through the different training options, spending a month at a time in each skilled trade and on the farm.[40] Seventy percent of boys at any one time were employed in farm work and the remainder were occupied in workshops designed to teach skills such as brickmaking, tailoring, carpentry, shoemaking, blacksmithing, laundry, and baking and cooking.[41]

Although not all boys would become emigrants and work on farms, the institution believed that the physical labour of farm work prepared boys for the industrious labour necessary to live successful and stable adult lives.[42] Industrial training was regarded as most important for boys' futures, but the employment of trained teachers as house masters demonstrates that the RPS also valued education. The boys entering the RPS were generally poorly educated. In 1857, seventy percent could neither read nor write on admission. Almost half of those admitted in 1868 and 1869 did not even know their alphabet on admission.[43] Given these poor beginnings, even the limited schooling the RPS could provide made a substantial difference.[44] In 1867, the school reported that twenty-nine percent of children currently in

[39] SHC, 2271/1/21, Annual Report (1891), p. 64.
[40] *Parliamentary Papers* (1882), Cm 3876-I, Royal Com. on Reformatories and Industrial Schools. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Appendices, Index, pp. 145-6.
[41] SHC, 2271/1/16, Annual Report (1871), p. 19.
[42] SHC, 2271/1/15, Annual Report (1867), p. 15.
[43] 2271/1/16, Annual Report (1870), p. 15.
[44] In 1870, boys received three hours schooling a day in summer and five hours in winter. 2271/1/16, Annual Report (1871), p. 19.

the school could read and write well and forty-one percent could do so fairly. This was a substantial improvement in educational standard from the level of those same boys at admission when fewer than two percent could read and write well and only twenty-one percent could read and write fairly.[45]

The educational offering changed over time to reflect wider societal values. By 1885 the Inspector was reporting 'real progress and solid attainment' in educational standards, describing the master of Garstons House as 'intelligent and anxious to get his boys on', the teaching at Gladstones house as 'searching and individual', the number of boys in the higher standard at Gurneys House as 'highly creditable' and the progress of the younger boys in Waterlands as 'steady'.[46] In 1883, seventy-four percent of the RPS boys had passed on of the first four Standards in reading and writing compared to forty-seven percent nationally and twenty-six percent were in Standard VI. By 1895, eleven percent were in Standard VI.[47]

As the focus on education helps to show, the RPS did not just want to save boys from downward social mobility, they also emphasised their potential futures. Notable by its absence was any discussion of imperial ambition. Nineteenth-century campaigners were motivated by an 'optimistic belief that early intervention in the lives of the poor could break the cycle of poverty'.[48] Institutions, positioned boys as blank slates, able to be inscribed anew as 'virtuous, honest and industrious citizens', trained into occupations of 'practical usefulness' and 'productive citizenship'.[49] This was the language of the middle of the

[45] SHC, 2271/1/16, Annual Report (1867), p. 12.
[46] SHC, 2271/1/20, Annual Report (1885), pp. 43-44.
[47] SHC, 2271/1/19, Annual Report (1884), p. 20; 2271/1/26, Annual Report (1896), p. 27; D. Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture. England 1750-1914* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 90.
[48] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, p. 7.
[49] 2271/1/4, Annual Report (1852), pp. 7- 8; SHC, 2271/1/5, Annual Report (1853), p. 7; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, p. 135; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 121.

nineteenth century, yet it was still the overarching aim of the reformatory, as the century drew to a close. In 1900, Vine noted that the RPS's objective for boys was to 'give them new starts in life'.[50] While staff valued demonstrations of boy's steadiness (or stability) of character, language of opportunity pervaded the RPS's public literature and conveyed a sense of possibility. The 1858 Annual Report discussed how past pupils had become 'orderly members of society', 'happy' and 'prosperous'.[51] This was a clear reference to upward mobility from boys' pre-welfare circumstances of poverty or criminality. These objectives were congruent with those of parents and boys, who, as Lydia Murdoch has argued, were focused on the economic benefits of welfare. Working-class parents expected institutions to provide the training necessary for their boys to pursue a trade. They wanted their children to escape poverty and forge stable family lives.[52] Removing a boy into the care of an institution like the RPS, Turner argued, would give him that 'fair opportunity'.[53] This was intertwined with a recognition of boys' own agency. The 1852 report stated that the boys who entered the reformatory were those who were 'desirous of an opportunity of rescuing themselves from evil courses' and wished 'to change their course of life'.[54] They did this through 'voluntary self-exertion and self-restraint'.[55] Later Turner argued that boys understood and appreciated the opportunity the school offered to them.[56] This was particularly pertinent, as we shall see, when it came to emigration. Emigration offered both redemption and possibility for reformatory boys.

[50] 2271/1/29, Annual Report (1900), p. 45.
[51] SHC, 2271/1/10, Annual Report (1858), p. 15; 2271/1/21, Annual Report (1888), p. 35.
[52] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 121.
[53] 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 17.
[54] Ibid., pp. 19-20.
[55] Ibid., p. 8.
[56] Ibid., p. 23.

How did boys think about these opportunities? As Joy Parr acknowledged in her analysis of Canadian migrants, it can be difficult to access children's voices from the past. [57] We began this chapter with the example of Robert, the former delinquent, now millionaire, bridge builder. Robert typified the institutional emigrant success story, yet his was not an account lifted from the pages of the RPS's Annual Reports or publicity literature. Robert's story emerged as a product of the tracing process carried out on the lives of the 150 boys studied for this thesis. This act of reconstructing boys' lives provides important insights into their responses to the opportunities offered to them.

The letters boys sent also tell us what they wanted for their future. The warden, secretary, and housemasters at the RPS received hundreds of letters each year from boys who had either emigrated or had joined the army.[58] The school faithfully recorded the substance of these letters in a letters book and in notes in either the boy's admission or discharge record. Selected letters were then published in the Annual Reports, with the warden endeavouring to include those that were both interesting and covered a wide range of geographies.[59] These letters form the source basis for this chapter and, as we shall see, children's choices and responses varied widely.

Seizing the opportunity of emigration

While the school had 'no objection' to returning children to respectable parents, the RPS perceived emigration to be the most effective way to achieve its aims.[60] From the outset of the school in 1849, Turner had argued that the 'best hopes' for reformatory boys lay in their

[57] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 124.
[58] 42% of boys emigrated between 1850 and 1895. A further 5% joined the army immediately on leaving.
[59] 2271/1/29, Annual Report (1901), pp. 50, 55.
[60] *Parliamentary Papers* (1882), Cm 3876-I, Royal Com. on Reformatories and Industrial Schools. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Appendices, Index, p. 147.

settlement in colonial dependencies.[61] The institution was a prominent advocate for emigration, which it believed had the advantage of preventing reoffending by separating children from harmful home influences of poverty, disease, and criminality.[62] In 1858, the RPS's new superintendent, Charles Walters, argued that boys should be separated from their 'their old haunts and companions' 'at least until the age of manhood shall have been attained'. This could of course be achieved by encouraging boys to work in new neighbourhoods in Britain but, given the difficulty of this, he believed that emigration was 'necessary in order to make our work permanent and complete'.[63] Throughout the fifty-year period the school quoted statistics that, it claimed, demonstrated boys who emigrated were less likely to reoffend than those who remained in Britain.[64]

John Hurt, writing in 1984, described juvenile emigration as 'convenient' and a 'means of ridding the country of an undesirable element'.[65] Yet, throughout the period 1850-1895, the RPS regarded emigration as providing the opportunity the school was seeking for boys. It was a 'privilege' accorded to those deserving in conduct and character, wrote Turner in 1851.[66] Almost forty years later, in 1889, Vine wrote that emigration was only for 'our most promising lads'.[67] As school secretary, John Trevarthen, pointed out in 1882 that it was an expensive option. In his evidence to an 1882 Commission on Reformatory Schools, he noted

[61] M. Whitten and M. Allen, *Nipping Crime in the Bud: How the Philanthropic Quest was Put into Law* (Waterside, 2011), pp. 200, 222.
[62] SHC, 2271/1/10, Annual Report (1859), pp. 17-18; *Parliamentary Papers* (1882), Cm 3876-I, Royal Com. on Reformatories and Industrial Schools. Report, p. 146.
[63] 2271/1/10, Annual Report (1859), pp. 17-18.
[64] *Parl. Pap.* (1882), Cm 3876-I, p. 146.
[65] Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial schools', p. 55.
[66] 2271/1/4, Annual Report (1852), p. 5.
[67] SHC, 2271/1/21, Annual Report (1889), p. 62.

that it cost four times as much to send boys overseas as it did to 'dispose' of them at home.[68]

Given the relative scale of this investment, it was important for emigration to achieve its aims. Private, and public reports highlighted the successes of former pupils. Importantly, this was typically in terms that foregrounded independence and financial, rather than occupational, mobility. In his 1870 report to the school's management committee, Charles Walters told of previous emigrants who possessed 'considerable savings', had 'purchased land or are farming or brick-making on their own account' and added 'some have married wives there'. Walters' report included an extract from the Canadian representative responsible for placing boys. He had written: 'just think for a moment, boys being proprietors of farms after being in the province some 6 or 7 years – boys from the streets of London and the provincial towns in England – well may they bless the day they were put on the Red Hill farm, to be taught to work and earn an honest living'.[69] Emigration was, according to Charles Walters, the 'key-stone' of the RPS's strategy for boys' futures.[70]

Narratives of financial social mobility drew on wider nineteenth-century discourses of overseas opportunity that James Belich has described as a 'settler revolution'.[71] The types of opportunities available overseas did not necessarily materialise in improved occupational standing, but rather in opportunities to make money or to own property.[72] Encouraged by booster literature, an estimated 140-150,000 Britons a year emigrated in the second half of

[68] *Parl. Pap.* (1882), Cm 3876-I, p. 147.
[69] 'Red Hill' was one of the ways staff referred to the RPS; C. Walters, *Emigration as a Mode of Disposal of Reformatory School Boys, and Its Results in Ten Years. A paper read to the Treasurer and Committee of the Philanthropic Society's Farm School, Redhill* (Surrey, 1871).
[70] Walters, *Emigration*.
[71] J. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World 1783-1939* (Oxford, 2009), p. 153.
[72] Ibid., pp. 130-131, p. 310, p. 358.

the nineteenth century. They were in search of what Stephen Constantine has described as the 'material advantage' that they believed life overseas offered in comparison to life in Britain.[73] The boys who left the RPS were no different. They too, as we shall see, sought economic opportunity overseas.

Yet, traditional narratives of child and juvenile emigration have not framed emigration in this way. This is largely because historians have focused on the image of the young child emigrant.[74] Younger children are seen as less agentic. Joy Parr's formative work on Canadian child migration described child migrants as being shipped out before the age of consent.[75] But, although Parr's examples focused on younger children, most juvenile migrants in this period were older. Parr's own evaluation of Barnardo's records revealed an average age of fifteen for boys and eleven for the girls who emigrated between 1882 and 1908.[76] Emigration inspector, Andrew Doyle's 1875 report on child migrants to Canada stated that children aged '11 to 15' constituted the 'great bulk' of emigrants.[77] Roy Parker's analysis found that seventy-seven percent of boys sent between 1894 and 1905 were over twelve. Young children were certainly sent, but, prior to the late 1890s, most were twelve or over and a great many were over fourteen.[78]

Questions of age are intermingled with those of consent. A focus on Barnardo, the highest profile child philanthropist in the scholarship, has influenced a perception that most

[73] Constantine and Harper, 'Introduction', p. 4.
[74] The cover of both Boucher's book, *Empire's Children* and Parr's *Labouring Children* show pictures of young children, while, as Swain has discussed, philanthropic discourses focused on 'little creatures', 'mites of humanity', 'little ones', p. 43.
[75] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 11.
[76] Ibid., pp. 91, G.J. Parr, 'The Home Children: British Juvenile Immigrants to Canada, 1868-1924' (D.Phil. thesis, Yale University, 1977), p. 178.
[77] A. Doyle, *Copy of a report as to the Emigration of Pauper Children to Canada* (London, 1875), p. 31.
[78] Parker, *Uprooted*, p. 71; Doyle, *Emigration of Pauper Children*, p. 31.

children 'were emigrated' without parental agreement or knowledge.[79] Barnardo was prosecuted on over eighty occasions for not following the laws on consent.[80] The laws were complicated and changed as the century progressed. Children over sixteen could consent on their own behalf.[81] Children aged under sixteen needed parental consent unless their parents could not be found, in which case they needed to consent under examination from two magistrates.[82] In the Child Custody Act of 1891, a clause was introduced that empowered charities to overrule parental wishes where abandonment or cruelty could be proven.[83] Even then, the right of children to decide was upheld and, by 1894, the law was amended to include the need for the Home Secretary's consent before a removed child under sixteen could emigrate.[84] This was normally forthcoming and 889 children were sent overseas under this process between 1894 and 1907. While this was not a small number of children, at an average of sixty-eight per year it was around two percent of annual child emigrants.[85]

Consent is central to any consideration of children as active agents in their own future. Although this thesis has not studied in detail the case files of all 1761 boys who emigrated between 1850 and 1900, a review of five hundred of them reveals no instances of boys emigrating involuntarily. In 1885 in his speech at the institution's annual feast day, superintendent Arthur Jackson noted regarding emigrants, that the RPS 'made a point of

[79] Langfield, 'Righting the record?', p. 155; Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 81; Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 67-68; R. Lamont, E. Moss and C. Wildman, 'Who Cares? Welfare and Consent to Child Emigration from England to Canada, 1870 to 1918', *Liverpool Law Review*, 41 (2020), pp. 45-65.
[80] Lamont, Moss and Wildman, 'Who Cares?', p. 49.
[81] Lamont, Moss and Wildman, 'Who Cares?', p. 49. Parker, *Uprooted*, pp.5, 40-41, 241. *Parl. Pap.* (1882), Cm 3876-I, p. 147.
[82] Parker, *Uprooted*, p. 196.
[83] Ibid., p. 239; Lamont, Moss and Wildman, 'Who Cares?', pp. 53-55.
[84] Lamont, Moss and Wildman, 'Who Cares?', pp. 51, 54.
[85] Parker, *Uprooted*, pp. 40-1, 241.

never sending them out without their parents' consent'.[86] The school sought parental consent where necessary and, in many cases, where it was not.

When parents wanted their children to go overseas it was often because they felt that there was no opportunity at home. 'Home' in these cases typically referred to the location or neighbourhood in which the immediate family was situated. While girls' institutions, as we shall see in Chapter Three, frequently sent girls for positions as servants to locations within Britain that were far removed from family, it does not appear to have been the case for boys. They either returned to family, emigrated, or joined the army. Emigration was an alternative to poverty. Fifteen-year-old Benjamin Hill emigrated in 1874 because his father, an agricultural labourer and father of twelve living children wrote 'that he would rather he [Benjamin] emigrated'. The local minister, Reverend Gresley, agreed stating that there was no opportunity at home for Benjamin.[87]

Parents may not have wanted children to return to the family home for other reasons. Twenty-year-old George Woods' mother wrote that she wished him to emigrate as there was 'no opening at home'.[88] George's mother may have had an alternative motive. As we saw in the previous chapter, George had entered the RPS largely because he wanted to escape his abusive stepfather.[89] Perhaps, the lack of 'opening at home' referred to an absence of physical and emotional space for George rather than employment.

Other parents refused to let their children go. John Trevarthen, the school secretary complained to the government commission investigating reformatory schools that 'one

[86] 'The Philanthropic Society's Farm School. The Harvest Home', *Surrey Mirror* (19 Sep 1885) p. 5 col f.
[87] SHC, 2271/10/16, fol. 33.
[88] SHC, 2271/10/18, fol. 657.
[89] Chapter One, p. 57.

important difficulty very often with regard to emigration is that we cannot get the leave of the parents'.[90] Even when children were old enough not to need parental consent, they were often reluctant to go without their parents' blessing.[91] Instead, they returned to their friends and family. The school despaired of those who failed to see the opportunity that emigration offered. In 1882, Arthur Jackson, introduced a half-yearly magazine, *The Hive of Bees*, that was sent to old boys and to parents of children currently in the school. The magazine contained news of the school, and of emigrants, and was designed to act as a link between emigrants and the school. It had the effect, as Jackson acknowledged, of encouraging applications for emigration and, in some instances, persuading parents to withdraw 'their mistaken and unreasoning objection to their son's emigration'.[92]

Returning home could result in an inability to find employment or even just a recognition that life there did not match up to their nostalgic ideal. Boys often regretted their choices after a few weeks or months at home and returned to the school seeking assistance. [93] As Marshall Vine pointed out in 1895, the school could not 'afford encouragement to this vacillation of purpose and rejection of advice'. He added that boys had unfortunately 'thrown away a chance' which they would never get again and 'which no amount of parental or family promises of plenty of work can compensate'.[94] Boys' decisions not to emigrate were equally puzzling to those who had taken up the offer of emigration. Twenty-four-year-old James Elmore wrote to his former school master in 1873 enquiring why more boys did

[90] *Parl. Pap.* (1882), Cm 3876-I, p. 147.
[91] *Parl. Pap.* (1882), Cm 3876-I, p. 147.
[92] 2271/1/19, Annual Report (1883), p. 32 -33.
[93] 2271/1/26, Annual Report (1896), p. 23.
[94] SHC, 2271/1/24, Annual Report (1894), p. 28.

not choose to emigrate, adding: 'I am sure they cannot better themselves by going home. Why do not more of them come out than do?'[95]

Children did on occasion defy their parents' wishes. Seventeen-year-old Frederick Mushtchen emigrated without his father's consent in 1867 and his father, previously categorised as 'drunken', visited the school 'objecting to his having gone'.[96] Alfred Cavell, aged thirteen, and one of nine children was one of the youngest boys to emigrate. Alfred's father and three brothers were convicted criminals. Alfred and his brothers were often seen 'running about the harbour in a dirty ragged state'.[97] After four years in the RPS, Alfred chose to emigrate to Canada in 1886 rather than return home. As Alfred was under sixteen, his father refused to give his permission but 'the Home Secretary on reading the letter from the Police gave his consent'. It turned out to be a happy choice for Alfred who wrote back to the school many times and who stated in 1888: 'I am glad I made up my mind to come out here, for if I had stopped at home in England, I should never have got on so well'.[98] Sometimes boys chose not to emigrate, despite their parents wanting them to. Nineteen-year-old Stephen Smith's record contains a signed letter from his father who was 'anxious for his emigration'. However, Stephen instead enlisted in the 3rd Battalion, 'being unwilling to wait for emigration'.[99] Stephen's venture into the army was short-lived, he deserted five months later.[100]

[95] SHC, 2271/1/17, Annual Report (1874), p. 53.
[96] SHC, 2271/10/13, fol. 248.
[97] 'School Attendance Cases', *Thanet Advertiser* [Thanet], (29 November 1879), p.3 col c; 2271/1/20, Annual Report (1886), p. 40.
[98] 2271/1/21, Annual Report (1888), p. 86.
[99] 2271/10/20, fol. 470.
[100] Findmypast.co.uk, British Army Service Records, WO97/3906/35.

Parental objections were duly recorded, and it is evident that parents did not feel that they had abdicated their parental rights just because their child was in a reformatory. This corresponds with Lydia Murdoch's work demonstrating that parents actively involved themselves in their children's welfare, even when their children were in institutions.[101] In 1882, Charles Young's father wrote 'very civilly' to the school enquiring whether seventeen-year-old Charles had gone 'of his own free will', as he had understood that his son had no wish to emigrate. The chaplain responded that he had gone 'in consequence of his own repeated urgent request'.[102] Such a response of course was only to be expected in the circumstances, but Charles's letter to the school in 1883 seemed to bear out the chaplain's version of events. He wrote: 'many thanks for the kindness you have done for me in getting me over here'.[103]

The communication between Charles's father and the school reveals a difference between what Charles wanted and his father's knowledge of those wishes. Anna Davin has argued that tensions and conflicts between children and parents can reveal the importance of age.[104] Charles, at seventeen was a young man, yet he was still his father's child with the emotional bonds that entailed. His failure to inform his father of his emigration decision could have reflected both a desire not to directly confront his father's authority and a wish to escape the familial hierarchy. The school's response revealed that, even in this period before the Children Act enshrined children's civil rights in law, they were placing Charles's wishes ahead of those of his parents.[105] This could have been because Charles' desires were

[101] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 94-95.
[102] 2271/10/18, fol. 675.
[103] 2271/1/20, Annual Report (1884), p. 60.
[104] A. Davin, 'What is a child?' in A. Fletcher and S. Hussey (eds), *Childhood in Question, children, parents and the state* (Manchester, 1999), p. 15.
[105] S. Olsen, *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen 1880-1914* (London, 2014), p.125.

congruent with those of the school. But the evidence of Stephen Smith's decision to enlist, rather than emigrate, would seem to indicate that the school took boys' wishes for their future seriously. This demonstrated a recognition of the child as an independent citizen separate from his parents.[106]

Two fascinating letters survive that provide further insights into the conflict between parental authority and a child's autonomy in the second half of the nineteenth century. Albert Durack was admitted to the RPS in 1891, aged fourteen. He had two previous convictions for stealing money and had been charged several times, including for stabbing his mother. He was a repeated truant, unable to read or write on admission, and had been secretly spending the money his parents gave him to pay for school. After four years in the RPS, Albert emigrated to Canada, aged eighteen, supposedly to join his uncle, who farmed there. But he did not arrive. Shortly after his departure in 1895, his father, Samuel, a house painter, wrote to the school complaining that Albert had not arrived at his uncle's farm. Samuel threatened: 'if I do not get his address and know where to find him in the next 48 hours, I shall take other steps'. Samuel did not list what these would be, but he did make it clear that he would 'not forget to let the world at large know how they [the children] are treated and sent away and the parents are kept in the dark'.[107] In making these threats, Samuel was asserting his rights as a parent and as a citizen and using the resources that he, as a relatively poor working-class man, had at his disposal.[108] As Murdoch has demonstrated, parents were far from powerless in their relationships with institutions. They often turned to police and magistrates to intervene and, if those failed, to the local press to raise public

[106] J. Springhall, Coming of age: adolescence in Britain, 1860-1960 (Dublin, 1860), p. 24.
[107] 2271/10/20, fol. 694.
[108] For a discussion of the relationship between parenthood and citizenship, see: S. Pooley, 'Parenthood, citizenship and the state in England c. 1870-1914' in H. Barron and C. Siebrecht (eds), *Parenting and the state in Britain and Europe, c. 1870-1950* (Cham, 2017), pp. 28-31.

awareness and engender support.[109] Barely two years earlier, Barnardo had been prosecuted through the press and the courts by parents for his 'philanthropic abduction' of pauper children in a series of scandals.[110] Samuel may have been drawing on his knowledge of these recent events.

Siân Pooley has shown how concepts of citizenship were founded in 'adults' authority as self-regulatory and responsible parents'.[111] Samuel made a strong articulation of his parental rights. He proclaimed, 'do not forget that I did not give my consent for him to go away'.[112] At nineteen, Albert was considered in law able to seek out his own future and make his own decisions – as indeed it appears he had – but in the eyes of his father, he was a child still, under his father's control. Perhaps his presence in reformatory school, long beyond the age of other formal schooling, had created this impression. John Springhall has noted that the nineteenth century marked an institutionalisation of adolescence, and Davin has argued that exemption from work created an extension of childhood.[113] Albert was occupying a liminal space – simultaneously a child in the eyes of his father and an adult in terms of his citizenship.

The school's response to Samuel's letter was one of instant indignation. The philanthropic abduction scandals had brought Barnardo's organisation to the point of financial crisis in 1893 and the author of the letter (likely the chaplain Marshall Vine, although the letter is unsigned) may have had this in mind.[114] The school's letter clarified that Albert had been 'offered the opportunity of going to his uncle, which we should have preferred being a

[109] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 104-110.
[110] Ibid., pp. 104-105.
[111] Pooley, 'Parenthood', p. 31.
[112] 2271/10/20, fol. 694.
[113] Davin, 'What is a child?', p. 22; Springhall, *Coming of Age*, p. 36.
[114] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 113.

shorter distance to pay for' but that instead he had 'begged that he might go with two schoolfellows who were going to Wapella'.[115] It further asserted: 'It is not only ridiculous but you must know it is quite untrue your son has been "sold like a slave"'.[116] The school's assertions provide an important insight into the power dynamics between parents and institutions by the late nineteenth-century. While boys' wishes for their futures still took priority, the school also clearly felt under pressure to provide an explanation to working-class parents who, as Pooley and Murdoch have shown, had an increasingly clear sense of their own rights as citizens.[117] The school wished to make clear that it had not been financial motives that drove their decision but Albert's own agency.

As it had for Charles Young, thirteen years earlier, the school further asserted the primacy of Albert's choice. Their response showed they, too, had ideas of children's citizenship related to their age. Vine wrote: 'but for giving him a freedom which you appear to object to he would have been sent to your brother which however he declined'. He added, Albert was 'quite a free citizen in his new settlement' who could go where he liked 'if he thinks he can do better for himself'. Albert's status as an adult and citizen therefore appeared unambiguous in the eyes of the school. However, Vine's reply could equally have been positional, given his additional comment to Samuel that 'he [Alfred] knew quite well what he had decided to do when he took farewell of you'. This pointed reminder that Albert had concealed his intentions questioned the parental bond that Samuel was trying to assert as the source of his authority over Albert. It simultaneously strengthened the authority of the

[115] 2271/10/20, fol. 694. Wapella was in the North West Territories of Canada now called Saskatchewan.
[116] 2271/10/20, fol. 694, Original emphasis.
[117] Pooley, 'Parenthood', p. 29; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 104-110.

school as the repository of Albert's real desires. It was intended to demonstrate the integrity of the school's actions in giving Albert 'a good chance of getting on in the world'.[118]

The cases of Albert and Charles illustrate several key themes within the research on the RPS that engage with current child emigration literature. In both cases, while separating boys from harmful influences may have underpinned the school's desire for emigration, it is notable that the school also presented emigration as an opportunity. It is evident that the boys emigrating from the RPS were doing so voluntarily. The boys were not 'being emigrated', as is traditionally portrayed, they were behaving as active participants in their own futures, making decisions about whether and where to go. The boys' decisions to conceal these choices from their parents not only reveals their autonomy but could also be indicative that they too shared the school's desire to remove themselves from the unhelpful influence of their relatives. Boys were shaping their own futures. Recognising this not only changes the narrative of philanthropic child emigration but demands that we adapt and alter the lens through which we examine boys' outcomes.

How emigration was understood

Including the RPS within our analysis of the impact of emigration provides a different perspective on outcomes and allows us to identify how these changed over time. The inclusion of these emigrants is important because the RPS was the first charitable organisation of any scale to mount a regular emigration programme for its children. It campaigned in favour of emigration in its evidence to governmental enquiries and in the newspapers and laid the groundwork for subsequent philanthropists.[119]

[118] 2271/10/20, fol. 694.
[119] Parker, *Uprooted,* p. 28; Hurt, 'Reformatory Schools', p. 55.

Unlike later institutions, the RPS did not operate receiving homes overseas.[120] Instead, it used a network of agents in each territory. These sought out opportunities for boys and acted as the school's eyes and ears in following up with emigrants, once they were settled in their new country. These agents were typically local ministers or farmers who provided regular updates on boys' lives to the RPS. The school argued that this approach presented the best probability of success for boys by planting them 'gradually and discreetly in localities already possessing a nucleus of successful and respectable colonists'.[121] This demonstrated the care the school had for emigrants and underpins the school's claims regarding opportunity.

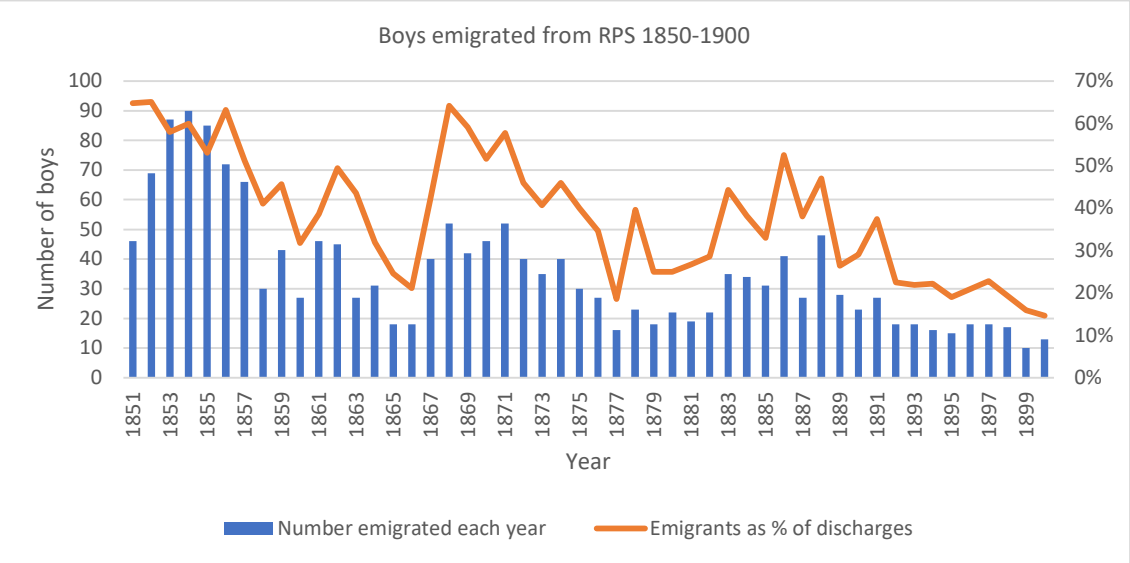
The chronology of emigration is important. The peak years for emigration from the RPS were the 1850s (Figure One). This was almost thirty years before large-scale child emigration began. Between 1850 and 1882 the RPS accounted for sixty-six percent of all reformatory children assisted abroad. Rates of emigration fluctuated according to government dictates and opportunities available in destination countries. Between 1850 and 1895, 1685 RPS boys went overseas, representing forty-two percent of those who left the school during those years.

Yet, most existing studies of juvenile migration rest heavily on the so-called 'Big Three' children's homes: Dr Barnardo's, the National Children's Home (NCH) and the Waifs and Strays. Yet, both Dr Barnardo's and the Waifs and Strays were relatively late adopters of emigration as a strategy.[122] A total of 2157 children emigrated from the National Children's Home (NCH) between 1873 and 1909 and 2250 from the other big player, the Waifs and

[120] Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 46-49 for a discussion.
[121] 2271/1/21, Annual Report (1891), p. 64.
[122] Dr Barnardo's began emigration in 1882 and the Waifs and Strays in 1885. Source: P. Higginbotham; *Children's Homes* (Barnsley, 2017), pp. 79, 112.

Strays, between 1887 and 1914.[123] This means that historiographical analysis of emigration that draws principally on these records risks being unrepresentative of nineteenth-century emigration.[124]

Figure One: Number of boys emigrated each year and percentage of discharges represented



Source: 2271/1/3-29

An analysis of emigration by the RPS reveal why narratives of social mobility were so dominant in child-savers' discussions of emigration.[125] It also provides an explanation for the apparent disconnect between these discourses and the analysis carried out by historians. At first, the RPS favoured Australia as a destination, sending c. 250 boys there, between 1851 and 1861. From the 1860s onwards, most boys went to Eastern Canada, principally Quebec and Nova Scotia, later followed by Ontario, Saskatchewan and ultimately British Columbia.

[123] Higginbotham, *Children's Homes*, p. 113, p. 98.
[124] Boucher's book, *Empire's Children* focuses on Barnardo and NCH but is principally about 20th century emigration. Parr's *Labouring Children* draws on Dr Barnardo's and on Waifs and Strays' records. Although Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire* look at the period from 1850, their concentration on Barnardo, Stephenson, Maria Rye, Annie McPherson etc means their analysis of outcomes concentrates on the 1880s onwards. Gillian Wagner's *Children of the Empire* is the broadest based in approach.
[125] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, pp. 40-1.

By the 1880s, wider emigration had accelerated. Nearly one million Britons left for British colonies in the 1880s and 1890s.[126] By 1882, RPS secretary, John Trevarthen, was already reporting that the market for child emigrant labour in the eastern parts of Canada had 'become so thick' that the advantages of emigration had been much diminished.[127] Given this, it is unsurprising that local labour organisations began protesting against child emigration in the late 1880s. It is also unsurprising that emigration did not offer the 'opportunity for substantial advancement' that had been promised.[128] This effect was recognised by fellow emigrationist James Fegan who complained that '[the effect] of rushing out big parties one after the other…is an underselling of colonial labour in certain parts, and the necessity of getting rid of the boys by placing them out on low terms as are unfair to the little fellows'.[129] Yet, Dr Barnardo's and the Waifs and Strays continued to concentrate on placing children in southern Ontario, in western Quebec, and just south of Montreal, in the very parts of the country where the labour market was saturated.[130]

These dynamics help us to understand why existing histories have concluded that emigration was ineffective in delivering the social mobility it promised. By 1891, Marshall Vine of the RPS was noting that the eastern territories of Canada no longer offered the 'best prospects' and that there appeared to be more demand in British Columbia. As this was further away, it was more expensive, and the institution could not afford to offer it to all those who wanted to go. Hence the opportunity for emigration was restricted to the 'most promising lads and of these the biggest, strongest and healthiest'.[131] The numbers of those

[126] J. Tosh, *Manliness and masculinities in nineteenth-century Britain* (London, 2016), p. 197.
[127] *Parl. Pap.* (1882), Cm 3876-I, p. 147; Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 160.
[128] Ibid., p. 54, p. 130.
[129] Quoted in Parker, *Uprooted*, p. 82. James Fegan was responsible for the emigration of 2563 boys to Canada between 1884 and 1915.
[130] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 48.
[131] 2271/1/21, Annual Report (1891), p. 62.

emigrating from the RPS in the 1890s fell to fewer than twenty a year – a fraction of the children emigrating in this period.

As Roy Parker has acknowledged, the scholarship on the impact of residential welfare on children's lives has been hampered by a lack of sources.[132] Most accounts rely on either first or second-hand twentieth-century oral histories or on snapshot glimpses of individuals collected by reformers. Parr's 1980 work remains the principal quantitative scholarship on outcomes and is the basis for most analyses, yet her account is based on children emigrating between 1882 and 1908.[133] Many of the subsequent histories of child emigration have drawn upon Parr's detailed analysis of outcomes and taken the tentative 'occupational gains' she discovered and weighed them against the 'earlier hardships and anguish' experienced.[134] Yet, Parr's evaluation of children's mobility in adulthood was limited by the records provided by the institution.[135] Her files contained letters from employers in Canada and assessments by staff of the emigrants, but she had limited access to emigrant's voices.

By using life course methodology that traces boys' lives through to death where possible, it is possible to address this gap in the scholarship. This approach takes advantage of the mass digitisation of data in recent years – an option not open to Parr forty years ago. The life course methodology is complemented by detailed analysis of boys' letters. This allows us to evaluate how they thought about mobility. Of the one hundred and fifty boys' lives traced for this thesis, ninety-six (sixty-four percent) emigrated.[136] The research traces the lives of

[132] Parker, *Uprooted*, p, 278.
[133] Ibid., pp. 278-282.
[134] Ibid., pp. 53, 54, 59, 72, 138, 139, 141, 143, 167, 170, 280-283; Swain, pp. 120-121; Wagner, *Children of the Empire*, xii; Boucher, *Empire's Children*, pp. 25-52.
[135] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 160.
[136] This is a higher proportion than the total who emigrated throughout the period but reflects the constraints of the sampling process discussed in the 'Introduction'. pp. 25-26.

these ninety-six boys as far as possible. Tracing boys through to death is complicated by poor and inconsistent record keeping overseas. The thirteen boys within the sample who travelled to Natal or Australia are almost impossible to trace beyond the point at which they no longer maintained contact with the school, although they are often the source of some interesting and useful letters home. Of the remaining eighty-three boys who went to Canada or the United States, eighty percent are traceable into middle or old age.[137] The analysis uses the corpus of emigrant letters — both published and unpublished —to reveal a series of themes. There are letters from fifty of the ninety-six emigrant boys. These letters from the boys are contextualised and integrated with letters from emigrants, whose cases are not followed in detail, to draw out common themes.

In deciding in favour of emigration, children and parents drew on personal and familial networks in much the same way as adult migrants did.[138] Letters formed an essential part of the network of migrant communication that revealed the transnationality of the employment market for Britain's young men in the second half of the nineteenth century. Normally, these were letters from emigrants and soldiers, but the Annual Reports also contain a few examples of letters from recruiting agents seeking to encourage the RPS to send boys overseas. James Belich has described this kind of letter as 'booster literature'.[139] One early example was a letter from a Mr TCB from Cook County, Ohio, who wrote in 1853 to the RPS, asking if they were able to send out groups of boys to him. He already had three RPS boys working on his farm, two of whom it appears from his letter had come to join their

[137] This is often because they have a common name such as George Wright or Thomas Cook or a surname where the spelling is uncertain and variable e.g. Page, McKeown, Gaynor, Hayes. It is known also that some boys changed their names and unless they disclosed that change of name then they are also lost from sight.
[138] A. Thompson, 'Overseas migration' in G.B. Magee and A.S. Thompson (eds), *Empire and Globalisation. Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850-1914* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 65.
[139] Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p. 153.

friend there. His sales pitch is revealing. Although he was a native of Vermont, he believed Ohio was the 'most, moral, intelligent and wealthy' of the states and together with Indiana and Illinois, it was 'a giant of the West'.[140] Ohio was rapidly expanding at this time and urgently seeking labour. In the 1840s and 1850s it spent $140 million building railways. In the same period, its population grew by fifty-four percent from 1.52 million to 2.34 million.[141] Mr. TCB argued that the people of Ohio were 'industrious, virtuous, brave and free' with district schools in every township, 'all free to rich and poor' and importantly there were 'no tyrants here'.[142] His description of Ohio is notable because of the way it draws on narratives of opportunity and egalitarianism that were particularly American in tone and longstanding in nature.[143] Unfortunately, the response from the school is missing, but we can gain some insight into the school's care for its boys by Mr TCB's acknowledgement that he understood that the school wished 'to be well certified that my application is a bona fide one'.[144] We have no indication of what the school or the boys thought of the opportunity, but there is no evidence that any more boys went. While almost one third of emigrants ended up in the United States, the school never favoured it as an initial destination, perhaps because it was not a colony, or, perhaps, because they lacked the network of agents there to both receive and monitor the boys.

Andrew Thompson has argued with respect to adult migrants that they tended to have more confidence in migration schemes when an encouraging letter was received from a friend or relative who had already emigrated.[145] It was the same for the boys at the RPS.

[140] 2271/1/6, Annual Report (1854), p. 32.
[141] Belich, *Replenishing the Earth,* p. 225, p. 228.
[142] 2271/1/6, Annual Report (1854), p. 32.
[143] Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p. 157.
[144] 2271/1/6, Annual Report (1854), p. 32.
[145] Thompson, 'Overseas migration', p. 74.

Letters from boys to staff at the school or to family and friends were an essential source of information. Boys acted as recruiters, encouraging others to follow. Sixteen-year-old Albert Edmonds emigrated to Fredericton, New Brunswick, in 1854, where he was placed with Dr Odell. He was a frequent correspondent with the school and in a letter back in 1857 when he was nineteen wrote 'I should advise every boy to come abroad that gets the chance'. He added 'It was some time before I could make up my mind to come; ad it not been for Mr Bilcliffe [the farm bailiff at the RPS] I suppose I should not be hear now (sic)'.[146] In recruiting school fellows, many boys favoured those from their own house in the school. William Rosin who had emigrated to Canada in 1863 aged nineteen, wrote to the school a year later asking the school to send some more boys to join him. He stated: 'I can get a couple of good places for two boys in the Waterlands' adding 'if those boys that you send turn out well, I can get plenty of places'.[147] These examples of old boys who had successfully emigrated served as advertisements to persuade others to follow.

The boys, as well as the school, framed emigration as a source of opportunity. Like adult migrants, a major motivation was to improve their standard of living.[148] For adult emigrants, this motivation made them, according to the Emigration Information Office, indifferent to location 'they go to the country where they think they can do best, or where they may have friends'.[149] It was irrelevant whether that country was part of the empire or not. Thompson has questioned this assertion, asking how was it that a prospective emigrant 'came to know that wages in one location were more attractive than another?' and arguing that, in the nineteenth century, such information was incomplete and selectively generated.[150] Yet,

[146] 2271/1/7, Annual Report (1856), p. 40.
[147] Waterlands was one of the five school houses. 2271/1/14, Annual Report (1866), p. 35.
[148] Thompson, 'Overseas migration', p.75.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.

money was the most common theme articulated in boys' correspondence. Over seventy percent of letters mentioned the wages boys were earning or hoped to earn. These were often linked to location or type of job.

This information was particularly important for prospective emigrants. In the 1850s, several accounts from Australia detailed the money to be made at gold diggings. James Shea, who had emigrated to Australia in 1851 aged eighteen, had engaged with a schooner captain but then 'caught the gold fever', left the ship at Port Albert, Victoria, and made his way more than two hundred miles around the coast to Melbourne, and a further one hundred miles up country to the diggings. After much hard work and several months, he earned one hundred and fifty pounds of gold and sent twenty pounds home to his mother. Unsurprisingly, therefore, James, thought of Australia as 'a fine country' where, although you needed to work hard, every man could 'be his own master if he likes'.[151] In New York, according to eighteen-year-old George Burrell, who had emigrated in 1852, 'there is plenty of work in this County and farmers inquiering of me of boys. I ham getting ten dollars per month, it amounts to one hundred and twenty for the year (sic)'. George asked the school to send out three or four more 'good boys' to join him on the farm.[152] In 1854, new emigrant, Thomas Harris, who was working at a butcher's shop, wrote to his father from Adelaide asking him to tell his brother and sister that there was 'plenty of work for them – servants are getting from 15 to 20 shillings a week; and Tailors from 1s. 3d to 1s. 6d a hour and there is loads of Places for them'.[153]

[151] 2271/1/5, Annual Report (1853), p. 29.
[152] 2271/1/6, Annual Report (1854), p. 30.
[153] Ibid., p. 42.

These letters highlighted the financial appeal of certain locations, but boys also wrote when circumstances were less promising. The detail provided serves to answer Thompson's question about how migrants knew about the economic situation in specific territories. By the late 1850s, the Australian letters were highlighting that gold mining was more difficult than it appeared.[154] At the same time the economy, both in the United States and in Canada, was performing less well and while opportunities still existed, money was more difficult to obtain. George Martin emigrated to Canada in 1854, aged seventeen, where he took up employment with Mr Geddes, a local farmer. Having initially written to tell the school that he was comfortable and doing well, he wrote in 1857 to say that 'times are getting very hard here at present and shew us no prospect of getting any better… the crops last year was poor and everything is dear at present (sic)'.[155] John Rogers wrote 'wages is not very good at present. I am getting about 10 dols a month, mens wages is £4 to £5 a month board and lodging'.[156] Pessimistic letters such as these were also published, as were many letters of hardship.

Boys' correspondence also revealed future employment opportunities. Harry Boyce wrote from Ontario in 1899 to tell his old school mates of the potential of Fort William, the 'Golden Gateway' to the North West, revealing that it would soon be the site of a large pig iron smelter as well as a large mill that would take 300 men to build. In an attempt to persuade his school mates to follow him, he added,

> 'There is not only those sorts of work, but there is plenty of fine land to buy and it wants a lot of vegetables to be grown for so many people next

[154] 2271/1/10, Annual Report (1859), p. 23, pp. 37-39, pp. 40-43.
[155] 2271/1/9, Annual Report (1858), p. 23; 2271/10/9, fol. 90.
[156] 2271/1/9, Annual Report (1858), p.24; 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 212.

> summer. I have ten acres of land, all ploughed, ready to plant anything and I can earn lots of money here. Canada for me – nowhere else'.[157]

Harry's letter not only revealed his personal circumstances but, through detailed accounts of employment opportunities and potential wages, he provided vital information to young men back in England that allowed them to compare earning opportunities at home with those overseas.

Money was a sign of status and seems to have been more important than occupation in terms of how the boys measured their success. Twenty-three-year-old Harry Dare, who had emigrated to Australia aged eighteen rejected the agricultural ideal privileged by philanthropists, writing in 1898 that farming 'is not paying enough for me'. Harry, who was working in timber loading in a port near Freemantle, was eager to compare average wages in Canada to those in Australia. He reported that he was getting 7s 6d a day 'the next highest wage to the foreman, who gets 8s, so I think myself that I am doing pretty well'.[158] Boys were keen to report on others' wages and used them comparatively to judge relative success. Twenty-one-year-old John Ryan's gossipy letter to the school, from the United States in 1858, wrote that: 'John Wright has got a place at six York shillings a day; he is doing very well'. 'MF [Martin Fenning] is doing very well, but can't get half the money he earns, he is going to work in the starch factory till his trade does brighten up a little better'.[159] This was a change for Martin, aged twenty-two, a wagon wheel maker. His own letter only a year earlier had proclaimed that he was sure the wagon making trade 'would be the making of me, for a tradesman need never to stand still a day out here'.[160] Tracing Martin into adulthood reveals that his reversal of fortune in his trade appears to have been temporary.

[157] 2271/1/29, Annual Report (1900), pp. 85-87.
[158] 2271/1/27, Annual Report (1897), pp. 90-91.
[159] 2271/1/10, Annual Report (1859), p. 36.
[160] 2271/1/9, Annual Report (1858), p.43.

On his becoming a naturalised American citizen, nine years later in 1867, Martin still listed wheel carpentry as his occupation.[161] Another boy who was happy to give up skilled work in pursuit of money, was Robert Herod, the boy who began this chapter. On his arrival in Canada in 1861 at the age of seventeen, Robert worked initially for a farmer on a year's contract. In 1863, aged nineteen, he signed a three-year apprenticeship contract with Henry Ginger, a 32-year-old married cabinetmaker from England who lived in Melbourne, Quebec.[162] At the end of his apprenticeship, although he was now a qualified cabinetmaker, he did not consider his wages to be sufficient at $1 a day. Instead, he left for Chicago where he could earn $3.50 a day working on the railroad. After twenty years in Chicago he moved to Portland, Oregon where he became a bridge builder.[163]

The flexibility that Martin and Robert displayed in their employment was typical of young emigrant men. Boys who went overseas demonstrated far more variety in their jobs than was evident for those who remained in Britain, as we shall see in the next section. They seemed unafraid to change position in search of more money. It was common for boys to move through different occupations throughout their twenties, before settling down in their mid-thirties. This reflected the openness of the overseas job market and the seasonality of much employment, which encouraged movement. Emigrants were able to move with relative ease into trades that may have been closed to them in Britain.[164] Walter Marshall emigrated to Canada in 1872 aged sixteen. Like many of his fellow emigrants, he began his Canadian working life on the farm, receiving compliments for his skills at milking cows.[165] A

[161] Ancestry.com, U.S., Naturalization Records 1791-1992, Roll F-540; F-616.
[162] Ancestry.com, 1861 Census of Canada, Roll: C-1313.
[163] 'Robert Wakefield, Pioneer Contractor Dies at Age of 75', *The Oregon Daily Journal* [Portland, Oregon] (13 Feb 1920), p. 3 col e.
[164] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 133.
[165] 2271/1/17, Annual Report (1873), p. 56; 2281/33, Emigration Book, p. 380.

year later he moved to work as a bricklayer, to earn 'twice as much as if I had stayed on a farm'.[166] Marrying in 1878 at the age of twenty-two, he moved shortly afterwards into the city of Montreal, where he pursued a series of jobs, before settling down as a fruit trader and dealer, a job he remained in until his death.[167] Fifteen-year-old William Shotter, who emigrated to Canada in 1868, progressed from farming, to working in a livery stables, both in Canada and in America, before — shortly after his marriage in 1880, aged twenty-seven — opening his own confectionary store in Hamilton, Ontario, where he remained until his death in 1933 at the age of 74.[168] Such transitions in employment were not unusual. Almost all the boys who arrived in Canada changed position at least once during their first five years. This was often for similar farm work with a different employer, albeit with better conditions or wages, but, in over a third of cases, there were radical changes in the type of employment. Boys moved away from farming or labouring into jobs such as shop keeping, journalism, clerking or even in two cases, preaching.[169]

Parr interpreted the move of young men away from the farm as being driven by the 'monotony, the loneliness and the quietness of the work, and by the dullness of the life'.[170] As she acknowledged, migrant boys were no different in this from Canadians, who also drifted towards urban settings, particularly as Canada's towns expanded in the twentieth century. Parr argued that philanthropists, who promoted the rural idyll of emigration, would regard this as a failure.[171] Agricultural life was central to the transformation narratives that

[166] 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 390.
[167] Ancestry.com, 1911 Census of Canada, Place:35-St Antoine Ward, Montreal, p.83; Fam.767.
[168] 2271/10/14/46, 2271/33, Emigration Book, pp. 15; 1911 Census of Canada, Place:11-Ward four, Hamilton West, Ontario, p.22, Fam.208; Ancestry.com, 1891 Census of Canada, Place:5-Ward, Hamilton City, Ontario, Roll:T-6341; Ancestry.com, Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869-1948, Coll. MS935, Reel 476.
[169] 2271/10/20, p. 592; 2271/10/13 p. 251.
[170] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 131.
[171] Ibid., p. 130.

abounded in child rescue literature.[172] Barnardo and others sought funds to support emigration with stories of 'hyper-environmental change' in rural life overseas. Farming, historians have argued, was a nostalgic ideal that defused concerns about the impact of industrialisation on working-class life and garnered financial support.[173] Yet, it is important to disentangle the rhetoric about agricultural opportunity, from the realism that underpinned expectations for those agencies involved in emigration. By the 1880s, there is little doubt that, given the myriad forms of information available, organisations would have been very aware that children were not remaining on farms.[174] Certainly, although RPS boys were trained for farm work as way of transitioning them into independent adulthood, it is evident that after their early years, they openly pursued a variety of occupations. There is no indication of any fear of censure in any correspondence about their decisions to move away from the farm and into alternative occupations.[175]

This section has provided an insight into how boys thought about the opportunity of emigration and what they considered to be important. Crucially, given criticisms of the training provided to children, it has demonstrated that, while visions of agricultural or artisanal life may have appealed to benefactors back home, these expectations did not constrain the employment decisions made by the RPS boys. Although staff foregrounded the importance of stability, this was about boys' character not their occupational choices.[176] They were unafraid to move away from the farm and unashamed in their pursuit of money. Money-making opportunities formed an important part of the decision-making process and

[172] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, pp. 38-41.
[173] Ibid., pp. 30; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 112, 115, 118.
[174] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, pp. 79, 80.
[175] Too many examples to enumerate. Some include: 2271/1/29, Annual Report (1900), Letter from PW, p. 84; 2271/33, Emigration Book, pp. 141, 290, 293, 303, 371.
[176] See Chapter Four for a discussion of training for character.

were clearly relayed to potential emigrants at home. This reveals the transnationality of the employment market for Britain's young people in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, it was the British Empire and the United States that offered the opportunity of 'personal riches, great escapades and operating beyond the law'.[177] Whether it also fulfilled philanthropic aims of providing an escape from poverty and preventing downward mobility will be evaluated in the remainder of this chapter.

Outcomes for emigrant boys

Recognising the role played by consent and money in juvenile emigration presents a challenge to the existing historiography. As we can see, the boys from the RPS consented to emigration with the principal aim of seeking more lucrative employment and, by implication, a higher standard of living overseas. This ambition conformed to the institutional aims of the RPS, which positioned emigration as an opportunity for social mobility. Yet, there have been few attempts to measure whether these aims were achieved.[178] Joy Parr's work has been the only significant statistical-based study. Parr considered a range of factors relating to child migrants' lives overseas including health, school attendance, pregnancy and punishment and contained one chapter on their 'circumstances in adulthood'.[179] Her research, while ground-breaking, was handicapped both by a lack of comparison with those who did not emigrate and the question of representativeness. Written before the emergence of twentieth-century abuse scandals, it did not dwell on the emotional impact of emigration and concluded that there were occupational gains.

[177] Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 185.
[178] Parker, *Uprooted*, p. 278.
[179] Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 123-141.

Roy Parker also carried out a comprehensive study of juvenile emigration to Canada. Writing thirty years after Parr, his analysis of outcomes focused on the trauma and isolation caused by emigration. His source base was a collection of one hundred and five personal testimonies from men and women who had emigrated to Canada as children, sixty-nine percent of whom had emigrated between 1870 and 1915. This collection, as he acknowledged, contained a mixture of good and bad experiences, many of which were no different from other non-emigrant child experiences of the period.[180] However, he followed the common path of many other historians of child emigration in drawing on studies of later twentieth-century emigration as supporting evidence for the trauma caused by the isolation of children overseas in the nineteenth century.[181] Given the documented changes in investments in childhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it would have been surprising if the emotional responses of children who grew up in the 1840s were the same as those who grew up in the 1910s.[182] Nonetheless, Parker concluded that the evidence of these psychological effects in twentieth-century adults was the key criterion through which nineteenth-century emigration schemes should be judged.

But was that how contemporaries and child emigrants themselves judged the success of emigration? Studies of letters suggest not. While boys' letters are not replete with expressions of emotion, there is sufficient discussion of loneliness, homesickness, regret, gratitude, and happiness for us to conclude that those who wrote were able to express their emotions. Life for many was difficult at least initially, however, as Chapter Four demonstrates, such adverse emotions were often transient.[183] Of course, it is important to

[180] Parker, *Uprooted,* pp. 284–88.
[181] Parker, *Uprooted,* pp. 284–88; Boucher, *Empire's Children*, pp. 4, 243-44, 246, 248; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 1-3, 159, 163
[182] See Hendrick, *Child Welfare,* pp. 71, 97, 101, 106-108, 110.
[183] Chapter Four, pp. 266-271.

recogni se that those who were very unhappy or who wished to sever all ties with the school were more likely to be those who did not remain in touch—in much the same way that contributions to child abuse inquiries into child emigration are likely to have been dominated by those who had bad experiences.[184]

This chapter concentrates on tangible measures of outcomes. Although boys prioritised financial gain, it follows Parr's approach in focusing on occupation as a measure of mobility. Parr used Barnardo's records to create a table categorising emigrants' adult employment. There are three significant differences between her data sample and that used in this chapter. The first relates to the representative nature of Parr's sample. Parr's data is self-selecting, in that her occupational information was taken from letters received from boys who emigrated between 1882 and 1908. It was therefore based on those who chose to communicate with Barnardo, the majority of whom, according to Parr, did so either in search of kin or when seeking proof of age when aiming to collect their pension. The latter group could have skewed her sample. The Canadian pension was only payable to Canada's poorest residents – those earning less than $365 per annum.[185] Barnardo emigrants who were looking to qualify for the Canadian pension would be those who had done the worst in life.

The data on which this chapter is based is different. It does not rely on autonomous communication but, instead, traces boys throughout the life course using genealogical data. It is based on the overall sample of one hundred and fifty boys who left the RPS between

[184] 'Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse' https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/our-inquiry (1 Aug. 2022).
[185] 'History of Pensions in Canada' https://nupge.ca/sites/default/files/publications/Pensions%20Documents/History_of_Pensions.pdf (1 Aug 2022), p. 4.

1850 and 1895, ninety-six of whom emigrated. This represents six percent of all emigrant boys from the RPS in this period. This includes both those who chose to remain in touch with the RPS and those who did not.

The second key difference results from the methodology. Parr's reliance on self-reporting means that her sample degrades more rapidly over time. This, as Parr acknowledged, meant that her analysis was weighted towards those who 'adapted most easily' and were 'neither the most restless and ambitious…nor the slowest and most defeated'.[186] Only twenty-one percent of Barnardo boys' occupations were recorded at the age of thirty-six and only thirteen percent by the age of forty-six.[187] Based on the average age of emigration for RPS boys of sixteen, this equates to twenty and thirty years after emigration. This allows us to compare. We have occupational data for seventy percent of RPS men after thirty years. The Barnardo sample falls off dramatically after the age of fifty-six when, only fifty-eight men (eight percent) are still visible. This is less both in absolute number and percentage terms, than the sixty-seven RPS men (seventy percent of emigrants), for whom we have information.

The third difference lies in the time period. As previously discussed, Parr's work focuses on boys emigrated between 1882 and 1908. The RPS boys studied for this thesis emigrated between 1850 and 1895. In the RPS sample, care was taken to try to include a broadly even spread of boys admitted by decade. This was intended to enable comparison in the impact of welfare intervention over time and, importantly, captures the various economic and political fluctuations that affected nineteenth-century employment opportunities. The

[186] Parr, *Labouring Children*. p. 125.
[187] Ibid., p. 126.

young men traced by Parr reached their twenties in the last decade or so of the nineteenth century or in the first couple of decades of the twentieth. In comparison, over sixty percent of RPS boys were comfortably into their forties by the year 1900. These important variations mean that the RPS sample gives a more representative picture of the occupational progression of philanthropic emigrant boys in the nineteenth century. It includes the 'ambitious' and the 'defeated'.[188]

Parr constructed her own table of hierarchy, which distinguished between agricultural occupations, seasonal and extractive occupations, and skilled and unskilled occupations. Occupational hierarchies differed between Canada and Britain. To compare the results of this research with that of Parr, this section therefore looks firstly at the occupational status of the RPS boys grouped according to Parr's approach (Table One).[189]

Despite the differences in period, approach, and sponsoring institution, there are several similarities between Parr's data and the analysis of RPS emigrants. A comparable proportion of young men occupied professional roles in later life – six percent of RPS emigrants after twenty years, compared to four percent of Barnardo men over the age of thirty-seven. Similarly, almost sixteen percent of Barnardo and just over eighteen percent of RPS emigrants became owner-farmers.[190] However, there were also important differences. The largest differences are found in the comparison between the proportions working in seasonal extractive industries and those working as agricultural labourers.

[188] Parr, *Labouring Children,* p. 125.
[189] Ibid., p. 131.
[190] Ibid.

Table One: Occupations, RPS men across the life course. Emigration between 1850 and 1895

Occupation	After 3 years	N	After 10 years	N	After 20 years	N	After 30 years	N
Unemployed	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
Agricultural labourer	29%	28	9%	7	4%	2	2%	1
Other labourers, extractive, seasonal (a)	13%	12	11%	9	12%	6	13%	6
Unskilled service (b)	16%	15	8%	6	6%	3	4%	2
Factory labour (c)	8%	8	22%	16	23%	11	20%	10
Artisan, foreman, clerk	2%	2	6%	5	14%	7	22%	10
Police, RCMP, fireman, military	6%	6	9%	7	6%	3	2%	1
Sharecropper, renter in agriculture	0%	0	5%	4	8%	4	9%	4
Agricultural proprietor	4%	4	8%	6	18%	9	18%	8
Professionals	1%	1	5%	4	6%	3	7%	3
Prison	8%	8	1%	1	0%	0	0%	0
Total	-	84	-	65	-	48	-	44
Returnees	11%	11	-	13	-	13	-	13
Dead	-	-	-	1	-	6	-	10
Traceable cases	99%	95	82%	79	70%	67	60%	67
Total number of cases	-	96	-	96	-	96	-	96

a. Labourers in logging, mining, fishing, lake boats, railroad hands, seasonal labour in several sectors

b. Domestic service, waiter, postman, stableman, truckdriver, janitor, street railway worker, telephone or electrical line man

c. Railroad foreman, conductor, telegraphist, skilled craftsmen including engineers, blacksmiths, mechanics, carpenters, barbers, painters, clerks, secretary, salesman.

d. RCMP is Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Agricultural labouring was the most common initial occupation for both groups. There were, however, far fewer RPS emigrants to be found on the land after three years than was the case in Parr's study. Over half of Barnardo boys aged between fifteen and twenty-one were employed as agricultural labourers and thirty-seven percent were still labouring on the land by age 26.[191] This compared to only twenty-nine percent of RPS boys working as agricultural

[191] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 131.

labourers after three years and nine percent after ten years. These differences are surprising and striking. Given the earlier chronology of the RPS sample we would have reasonably expected to see more boys on the land. Although it fell in importance over time, agriculture remained the largest sector of employment in Canada through to 1931 and beyond.[192] This may have been an artefact of the sample. In Parr's group those who were poorer may have been more likely to get in touch. This would be more likely to be those still working as agricultural labourers into middle age.

The difference could be explained by age. Parr grouped her boys into age buckets such as '15-21', '22-26' and so on. Unfortunately, we do not know how many of Parr's sample of '15-21' year-olds were fifteen and how many were twenty-one. Parr reports that Barnardo boys were typically indentured until the age of eighteen and, elsewhere, acknowledges that, once boys were past the age of indenture, Barnardo did not systematically keep track of them.[193] This would imply that her '15-21' age group was probably skewed towards the younger end of that spectrum and, therefore, more likely to be employed as agricultural labour. In the RPS data, boys who emigrated aged sixteen tended to remain in agricultural labour, where they had a more familial relationship with their employer, for longer than boys who emigrated aged twenty and who may have felt more ready to strike out on their own.

Another possible explanation could be that it was a consequence of differing values and aims. Parr argued that British 'child-savers' measured their success by 'the proportion of young people they permanently separated from urban life' and Swain has shown that the

[192] I. Bothwell, J. Drummond and J. English, *Canada 1900-1945* (Toronto, 2018), p.55.
[193] Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 92, 125, 131.

rhetoric of the agricultural ideal was central to discourses of child 'rescue'.[194] We saw, earlier in this chapter, that RPS boys prioritised wages rather than occupation in their decision making. There is no indication of them being ideologically wedded to the rural life. Many of the examples of agricultural ideology given by key historians are from the very late nineteenth and early twentieth century and are strongly linked to broader concerns about child health and imperial ambition.[195] This could explain some of the differences we see in occupational choices in this earlier period when the emphasis was on independence and hard work and opportunity.

However, it is difficult to assert that divergent occupational objectives lay at the root of the employment variations seen. A desire to separate children from 'urban life' did not necessarily equate to a desire for them to work as agricultural labourers. Parr supports her assertion that philanthropists wanted to 'bind' emigrants 'to the soil', with a 1909 quote from the director of emigration at Barnardo, Alfred Owen, who stated: 'we do not want the cities and towns for them'.[196] Yet, a 1908 Barnardo publication, also by Owen, showed that at Barnardo's agricultural employment fell at the bottom of the hierarchy of occupations. The publication entitled *Our March Past* visualised a procession of the emigrants of the preceding almost thirty years. The parade was led by professionals such as teachers, doctors, lawyers followed by railroad workers and firemen with at the end the farmers and 'farm boys' who had only recently arrived and were on the road to independence.[197] This hierarchy of occupations strongly implies that farm work was seen as a good initial route for

[194] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 124; Swain*, Child, nation, race and empire*, p. 115.
[195] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, pp. 63-67, 72-73, 77, 91; Swain, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 118-119, 121-3.
[196] Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 124, 130.
[197] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, p. 42.

young emigrants and not as the ultimate aim, as Parr suggests. Like the staff at the RPS, those at Barnardo expected emigrant men to demonstrate social if not geographic mobility.

Despite these hierarchies, far more Barnardo emigrants than RPS emigrants appear to have remained working in seasonal and extractive labour. According to Parr, seasonal work was common in Canada for those seeking to build their fortunes during their twenties. It suited young men's need for variety and independence and supplied the necessary labour for industries, such as lumbering or fishing.[198] Canadian-wide census data shows that in 1931 almost twenty-one percent of Canadian-born men and eighteen percent of British-born men were working in extractive and seasonal occupations.[199] Initially, the proportion of boys employed in this type of work was similar between the two sample groups. Fourteen percent of Barnardo boys aged '15-21' were employed in such work, as were thirteen percent of RPS boys — as measured three years after emigration (average age nineteen). This remained broadly constant for the RPS boys over the years. The same did not occur in the Barnardo sample which instead demonstrated an increasing proportion of young men employed in such work.[200] Twenty-three percent were engaged in this work between the age of twenty-seven and thirty-six and over eighteen percent were employed in seasonal industries at the age of thirty-seven and upwards compared to only thirteen and fourteen percent of the RPS group respectively.[201]

Parr attributed the persistence of seasonal labour amongst her Barnardo group to some of them being 'sturdy British street arabs grown to rugged wandering men who never seemed

[198] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 133.
[199] Ibid., p. 138.
[200] 37.1% of Barnardo boys aged 22-26 were employed as agricultural labourers while 15.5% were employed in extractive and seasonal work. In the 27-36 age group only 10.6% of boys were employed as agricultural labourers and 23.2% in extractive and seasonal work. Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 131.
[201] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 131.

to crave more security than they had as boys'.[202] By that logic the failure of RPS emigrants to embrace seasonal employment in adulthood would seem to reflect a desire for stability in comparison. It is worth noting though that the average age of her sample of '28.5 years' puts her emigrants firmly into the itinerant twenties. If Parr had been able to trace her emigrants into their older years, she may have observed them settling down.[203] However, she may not. Given the later end date of Parr's study, a higher proportion of her sample reached their thirties and beyond, during the agricultural crisis of the Canadian prairies in the late 1920s and early 30s. Canada was particularly hard hit during the Great Depression and, by 1930, thirty percent of the workforce was out of work. Thousands of farmers left their homesteads, farms, and towns, and travelled west between 1914 and 1937.[204] Such workers may have resorted to seasonal and extractive work, such as mining and logging which grew in importance from the 1890s, following the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway.[205]

While fewer RPS boys can be seen in seasonal work in later life, they were nonetheless, as Robert Herod demonstrated, very geographically mobile during their twenties. Another example is William Lockyer from London who had entered the RPS after his second conviction for theft in 1864. William had been younger than usual on admission at the age of eleven, but, according to the register, had been 'turned out of doors' six months previously by his mother. He spent three years in the home, emigrating aged only fourteen. He was a frequent correspondent with the school, writing of how much he liked Canadian

[202] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 133.
[203] Ibid., p. 137.
[204] C. McManus, *Happyland: A History of the "Dirty Thirties" in Saskatchewan, 1914-1937* (Calgary, 2011), pp. 175-176.
[205] 'History of Commercial Logging', https://opentextbc.ca/geography/chapter/7-3-history-of-commercial-logging/ (25 July 2022); '140-year history of Canadian mining', https://www.mining.com/cbha-presents-140-year-history-of-canadian-mining/ (25 July 2022).

life. Two years after his arrival, aged sixteen, he moved from Mr Wade, the RPS agent with whom he had been living, to a new employer and reported that he was 'growing like a currant bush' and as 'fat as a pig'. He was happy in his place but not with the money he was earning, complaining that 'it takes me all I can earn to keep me in clothes'. He wanted to be able to 'save like a man' and thought that if he moved to the 'States' then he might be able to.[206] Within a year he was working as a carpenter in Hudson, New Jersey. Ten years later he was in Eustis in Maine, where he married Maine native, Lucy Sylvester. Now he was married, he settled down and remained in Eustis buying his own farm and taking up employment as a forester, a sawyer and lumber man. He remained there until he died in 1927.[207]

It is evident that occupational and geographic journeys like William's were typical. Young men tended to seek out unstable and, therefore, higher paid employment, and were prepared to move to achieve it. Once they had families, they settled into jobs and began to establish roots, and only in middle life did they reach the higher-status occupations. This is demonstrated by Table One. Boys began working life as agricultural labourers or unskilled service. In their twenties they sought out extractive seasonal work or ended up in what Parr described as 'factory labour'. This rather broad term included relatively high-status jobs, such telegraphy or clerking, as well as skilled trades such as blacksmithing, carpentry, engineering. Many remained in these occupations through to old age or death. Overall, though the proportion of men employed in these trades fell as the years progressed, while the percentage of those employed as foremen or artisans rose. This mirrored an increase in the number of those owning land or becoming professionals in this period – a clear

[206] 2271/1/16, Annual Report (1869), p. 40, 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 241.
[207] Ancestry.com, Maine State Archives 1908-1922, Roll: 341900; 1900 Federal Census, Eustis, Maine, p. 1, enum.0089; 1910 Federal Census, Eustis, Maine, Roll: T624_540, p. 1B, enum.0123; Maine, Nathan Hale Cemetery Collection, 1780-1980.

demonstration of social mobility over their life course. Overall, forty-eight percent of the RPS boys for whom we still had data after thirty years of employment achieved the relative security of 'commercial, industrial or agricultural proprietorship or of foreman, artisan or clerk at some time in their working lives'. This compared to just under twenty-three percent of Barnardo men.[208] The difference is most likely to be accounted for by the broader more representative sample used for this thesis. Still, even for Parr's purposes this was still almost a quarter, sufficient for Parr to conclude that child emigrants were 'materially better off' in Canada than they would have been in Britain.[209]

Comparing outcomes to non-emigrants, fathers, and siblings

In this section, I test this assertion through a comparison of the lives of the RPS emigrants with those of the fifty-four boys who did not emigrate. I also compare the occupational social mobility of emigrant boys with that of the fathers and the siblings they left behind. The analysis uses W.A. Armstrong's categorisation of social class.[210] This is a different structure to that used for Table One, reflecting the different societal structures of the two countries. This has some obvious drawbacks. The vast majority of former RPS pupils remaining in Britain fall into what Armstrong defines as Class C. The large size of this class, as Jason Long points out masks the meaningful intergenerational and wage mobility that occurs within it.[211] As historians, we need to decide: is the police constable, ship builder or the blacksmith equal in social status to the glover or the sawyer? As Armstrong puts it, an assessment of social gradation contains a strong element of 'intuitive or subjective

[208] Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 138.
[209] Ibid., p.137.
[210] W. A. Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupation' in E.A. Wrigley (ed), *Nineteenth Century Society* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 191-310.
[211] J. Long, 'The surprising social mobility of Victorian Britain', *European Review of Economic History*, 17/1 (2013), p. 10.

judgement' although some approximation can be achieved by dividing classes between skilled and semi-skilled.[212] This has been done within the data here.

We are also faced with the question of whether occupational hierarchies like this are appropriate in assessing nineteenth century workers given that, as we have seen, the boys from the RPS seemed to prize financial gain over artisanal or occupational progress. This challenge is particularly pertinent when trying to compare social mobility on a transnational basis, given the lack of comparability of occupational status across countries. The standard of living for men occupying class C was demonstrably higher in Canada than it was in Britain.[213] Analysis of emigrant boys' lives for instance showed that most occupied separate dwellings with small gardens, many owned livestock and several were able to travel back to England for visits, indicating a degree of disposable income not available to their peers who had remained in Britain.

[212] Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupation', p. 200.
[213] For discussions of relative living standards see: http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/management/423.pdf (25 July 2022); D. Jacques, 'Stretching a Slender Purse in Mid Nineteenth-Century Ontario: Mary Gordon Copleston's Narrative', *Social History,* 50/101 (2017), pp. 30-36; M. Harper, 'Obstacles and opportunities: Labour emigration to the "British World" in the nineteenth century', *Continuity and Change,* 34/1 (2019), pp. 43-62.

Table Two: Occupations: RPS men leaving the school (1850 to 1895) compared to fathers

	Emigrants		Non-emigrants	
	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)
Better occupational status than father	61%	51	34%	23
Same occupational status as father	11%	9	38%	26
Worse occupational status than father	16%	13	24%	16
Unknown	12%	10	3%	2
Total	**100%**	**83**	**100%**	**67**

a. Based on the 150 boys traced for this thesis.
b. Unknown refers to boys whose fathers were untraceable (4 emigrants, 1 non-emigrant) or who were untraceable themselves (7 emigrants, 1 non-emigrant). There was one emigrant boy who fell into both categories.
c. Of the 96 emigrants, 13 returned to Britain. Their results are included in the data for non-emigrants.
d. Percentages are rounded to nearest decimal place.

Table Two evaluates the intergenerational social mobility experienced by boys who entered the RPS. It compares both emigrant and non-emigrant boys to their fathers. The occupation chosen is the latest occupation recorded for the relevant boy compared to their father at the equivalent age. One quarter of all boys came from households where the father was in social class D or E (partly skilled or unskilled labour).[214] None came from social class A but five percent came from households where their father was in social class B. The remainder were from class C, although from a wide variety of occupations ranging from semi-skilled to skilled. The table reveals that RPS boys overall did better than their fathers – meeting the social mobility objectives set out by their parents and their benefactors.

Table Two also shows that emigration offered a greater degree of intergenerational social mobility than remaining in Britain. Seventy-two percent of emigrant boys ended up in higher or equivalent status occupations to those occupied by their fathers. Only sixteen percent

[214] Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupation', p. 205.

ended up in occupations of a lower status. On average, the three who re-emigrated did as well as their peers who never returned.

The RPS was, it noted, happy to return boys to their families provided those families were happy to provide them with employment.[215] For those boys who remained in Britain, thirty-four percent of boys achieved higher status occupations than their fathers. This was better than average. While the period is only comparable for the first two thirds of my sample (1851-1881), Long found that almost twenty-eight percent of sons in his study experienced upward social mobility.[216] RPS boys appear to have achieved greater social mobility than the average for the wider population. This could reflect the fact that many RPS boys were educated at a time when mass education was not compulsory. Alternatively, it could be that discipline and character instilled in them during their time in the school inculcated habits of industriousness that stood them in good stead during their careers.[217]

The number of non-emigrant boys at the RPS who suffered greater downward mobility, however, was larger than average at twenty-four percent compared to twenty percent for the population between 1851 and 1881.[218] There are several possible reasons for this. The most obvious is the boys' difficult backgrounds. As Chapter One discussed, boys ended up in reformatory care because of a series of unhappy factors. When boys returned home to their families they returned to the environment and 'corrupting' groups that had influenced their criminal behaviour initially.[219] They may also have found it difficult to find employment when faced with the stigma of reformatory life.

[215] *Parl. Pap.* (1882), Cm 3876-I, p. 147.
[216] Long, 'The surprising social mobility of Victorian Britain', p. 12.
[217] See Chapter Four for a discussion.
[218] Long, 'The surprising social mobility of Victorian Britain', p. 12.
[219] 2271/1/10, Annual Report (1859), p. 16.

Of the sixteen non-emigrant boys who did worse than their fathers, seven left the RPS in the 1850s and six left in the 1890s. The remaining three were spread across the intervening thirty years. This implies that there may have been specific factors that influenced underperformance in those decades. Those who left in the 1850s had fathers who occupied predominantly low status unskilled occupations, such as labouring or gardening. Boys trained in the RPS ought to have been able to do better in life than these low-skilled occupations. However, for the first few years after it began operations in 1850, the RPS was still refining and reforming its regime. There was staff turnover as the institution looked for staff who could deliver on, what Sidney Turner described as, the 'peculiar and varied duties' of managing such a diverse cohort of boys with kindness and 'patience rather than force'.[220] As Turner acknowledged every change of master disrupted the discipline in the school and unsettled the boys for some months.[221] Given the average stay of a boy in the 1850s was around two years, this disruption could have been significant.

Another possible explanation could be generational. From the tone of the Annual Reports, the 1890s appear to have been more problematic in terms of either achieving emigration for boys or finding work for them within Britain. Employment opportunities for general and casual labourers deteriorated sharply in the two decades prior to the First World War.[222] This difficult beginning influenced boys' longer-term prospects. In 1890, Marshall Vine reported that 'the present scarcity of employment, low wages and the various strikes have brought great distress upon many of our old boys as well as upon the labouring classes in general'.[223] Nor did things improve. In 1892, he acknowledged that 'times are so bad and work is so

[220] 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 6, p. 25; 2271/1/5, Annual Report (1853), pp. 13-15.
[221] 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 7.
[222] G. R. Boyer and T.J. Hatton, 'New estimates of British Unemployment 1870–1913', *The Journal of Economic History*, 62/3 (2002), pp. 659, 661.
[223] 2271/1/21, Annual Report (1890), p. 53

slack that many are not weeks but months before they can obtain work when they leave' adding that he had 'information that no less than 11 of those who last year returned home to their friends have since enlisted'.[224] Similar observations were made throughout the 1890s.[225] The unemployment rate amongst unskilled labourers was higher than ten percent in all but four years of the period 1893-1913 – almost twice the level observed between 1871 and 1891.[226] Four of the six boys who left in the 1890s came from families with fathers in high status or skilled professions and the same four all became soldiers. Of the remaining two, one ended up in factory work and the other prison. Their fathers all occupied skilled trades that were in decline by the 1900s.[227]

Not all the boys who did not emigrate remained in Britain. Approximately five percent of RPS boys each year entered the army. This was sometimes driven by a desire for adventure, but more commonly by an absence of alternative employment opportunities. The army was often a last resort for boys who had exhausted other options.[228] Overall, sixteen boys returned from emigration, three of whom then re-emigrated. Of the remaining thirteen, six enlisted in the army. These boys are included amongst the non-emigrant outcomes. Similarly, many of those who returned to their families later joined up, particularly towards the end of the century, when popular enthusiasm for the Boer War was high and employment difficult to find. In 1900, Marshall Vine reported that of the 319 boys who had

[224] 2271/1/22, Annual Report (1892), p. 23.
[225] 2271/1/21, Annual Report (1891), p. 43; 2271/1/22, Annual Report (1892), p. 23; 2271/1/23, Annual Report (1893), p. 25.
[226] See Boyer and Hatton, 'New estimates of British Unemployment', pp. 643-675, for a discussion. Also 'Long-term trends in UK employment: 1861-2018' https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/uksectoraccounts/compendium/economicreview/april2019/longtermtrendsinukemployment1861to2018 (4 Aug. 2022).
[227] J. Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 218, 223-227.
[228] 2271/1/27, Annual Report (1897), p. 42; 2271/1/21, Annual Report (1890), p. 58,

left the school in the preceding four years, eighty-four, just over one quarter, were now serving in the army or navy.[229]

Given the significance of soldiering as an occupational choice by the end of the century, it requires further exploration. Although, classed by Armstrong as category C, soldiers were traditionally regarded as being of a low social status within that classification. Jane Humphries' analysis places soldiers second from bottom in terms of prestige.[230] However, not all soldiers were created equal and, with opportunities for emigration declining by the early 1890s, Marshall Vine was soon encouraging boys to become soldiers rather than languish in the ranks of the unemployed.[231] This reflected growing demand within the army for men who were well educated or who had skilled trades, such as tailoring, cooking, clerking or smithing. These soldiers were excused almost all military duties and paid more money to use their skills for their regiment.[232] Often those with key skills, such as clerking or music, were promoted to more privileged better-paid ranking posts.[233] Musical training was particularly favoured by many industrial schools as a route into army life.[234] Letters and military service records reveal that several of the sample group fell into this category. Of the one hundred and fifty former pupils, who were reported as being in the army in 1896, seventeen were in regimental bands and ten had made it to the rank of non-commissioned officers.[235] This progression was appealing to RPS boys who recognised that their possession of these skills could result in them avoiding the traditional drudgery of life at the bottom of

[229] 2271/1/29, Annual Report (1901), p. 53.
[230] N. Mansfield, *Soldiers as workers: Class, employment, conflict and the nineteenth-century military* (Liverpool, 2016), p. 29; Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour*, p. 228.
[231] 2271/1/22, Annual Report (1892), pp. 58-59.
[232] Mansfield, *Soldiers as workers*, p. 71.
[233] 2271/1/27, Annual Report (1897), p. 26.
[234] Mansfield, *Soldiers as workers*, p. 109.
[235] 2271/1/26, Annual Report (1896), p. 73

the military hierarchy. Such boys may still have been regarded as of low status outside of the service but within the military they possessed prestige.[236] This status was not maintained into post-army life. Army pensions were small and men leaving the army had to seek further work.[237] In the late nineteenth century, ex-soldiers were often employed in 'menial' posts such as porters or park keepers or increasingly on the railways. By 1889, 11,000 ex-soldiers were railwaymen. This doubled to 23,724 by 1913.[238] Such career paths were not inevitable, however, and of the fifteen RPS boys who served as soldiers and survived, seven achieved higher status jobs after leaving the army.

Despite all these factors, on average the boys who left the RPS experienced greater social mobility than their fathers. But they were living and working in different times. As Roxanne Connelly, Vernon Gayle and Paul Lambert have pointed out, making comparisons over time is difficult when the underlying structure of the labour market has changed.[239] Table Three therefore compares boys' employment throughout the life course to that of their brothers, where possible. For comparison purposes, the highest status occupation after occupational maturity is used.[240] Not all the boys had brothers, nor were the brothers sufficiently traceable in all instances. Victorian families could be large and, depending on birth order, a boy's brother could be twenty or more years older than him. As we saw in Chapter One, family circumstances might have substantially deteriorated in the years between siblings resulting in altered opportunities. Where multiple brothers exist, the preference has been to

[236] Mansfield, *Soldiers as workers*, pp. 70-154.
[237] Ibid., p. 138.
[238] Ibid., pp. 148-149.
[239] R. Connelly, V. Gayle and P. Lambert, 'A review of occupation-based social classifications for social survey research', *Methodological Innovations*, 9 (2016), p. 9; Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour*, pp. 218, 224.
[240] Occupational maturity is assumed to occur at c. 25 years.

take the brother closest in age to the boy admitted to the school. The results are shown in Table Three.

Table Three: RPS men leaving the school between 1850 and 1895 compared to brothers

	Emigrants	Number (N)	Non-emigrants	Number
Total number of boys	-	83	-	67
Boys with male siblings	81%	67	79%	53
Of which				
Better occupational status than brother	52%	35	36%	19
Same occupational status as brother	13%	9	23%	12
Worse occupational status than brother	10%	7	23%	12
Unknown	24%	16	26%	10

a. Based on the sample of 150 boys surveyed in detail for this thesis.
b. Percentages calculated based on total with siblings whose outcomes were known

It is clear from Table Three that those boys who were admitted to the RPS outperformed their brothers who were not admitted to residential welfare. Overall, in occupational terms eighty percent of RPS boys did as well as or better than their non-criminal brothers. This demonstrates that the RPS achieved its aim of returning boys to the status they would have occupied if they had not become criminal.

Emigration still conferred an advantage. Only ten percent of all emigrant men did worse occupationally than their brothers, while twenty-three percent of non-emigrant men ended up in worse jobs than their brothers. Again, their criminality could have made the difference. Where young men had criminal brothers or families, they invariably outperformed these criminal relatives on leaving the RPS. We are also discussing small numbers. Of the twelve non-emigrant boys who did less well, three came from well-situated families: one's father was an auctioneer's clerk, the second an organist, and the third, a

coastguard master. In these cases, the advantages of patrimonial capital and the absence of criminality helped the sibling to outperform. The brothers became a clerk, an organist and a quartermaster sergeant respectively.

These results bolster Parr's conclusion that emigration offered young men economic gains compared to their peers in Britain. However, by incorporating the whole life course they expand on Parr's work to fill in the limitations caused by a forced reliance on institutional records and in so doing reveal a more positive picture than the marginal benefit she demonstrated. This challenges analysis that pitches Parr's 'marginal gains' against images of the abused 'lonely and abandoned child' to conclude emigration was not worth it.[241] Admission to the RPS transformed boys' occupational prospects. It not only largely prevented downward mobility as a result of their criminality, but it also gave them possibilities they may not otherwise have had. Through the opportunity of emigration, a majority of boys were able to achieve higher occupational status, and an implied higher standard of living. Only a handful of boys achieved as highly as Robert Herod, but many achieved the philanthropists' objectives of becoming honest, steady, industrious workers who through their own efforts avoided the poverty that was the lot of their peers.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided several important new insights. Firstly, in narrowing its focus to the nineteenth century, and broadening its source base to include reformatory boys, it has shown that the nineteenth-century experience of emigration was different to that of the twentieth. Children who emigrated in the mid-to-late nineteenth century tended to be older, emigrated via a broader range of agencies, and entered a different economic

[241] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire,* p. 175; Parker, *Uprooted*, p.282.

environment to those who emigrated later. Unpicking these factors helps us understand why there has been such an apparent disconnect between nineteenth-century narratives of opportunity and the twentieth-century experiences highlighted by historians.

Secondly, the focus on children's voices has revealed the role that boys played in the emigration process. Emigrants provided information on the opportunities available overseas to those still in Britain and encouraged each other to emigrate. In making the decision, boys weighed up the merits of family and employment in Britain, versus the attractions of life overseas. In recognising children's agency in the emigration decision, the chapter challenges the dominant historiographies of child emigration and argues for the inclusion of this neglected category of emigrants within broader histories of migration and empire. Evaluating the reasons why young people chose to emigrate in this period provides scope for considerable insights into working-class life, empire, and the transnationality of the late nineteenth-century employment market.

Thirdly, as the first comparative study of the impact of residential welfare and emigration across the life course, this chapter has looked beyond the limitations of the institutional archive to isolate the consequences and impact of emigration and welfare intervention on boys' life paths. It has added to, and challenged, existing critiques of institutional training by revealing that philanthropic intervention did allow boys to experience mobility gains. These benefits were evident whether children remained in Britain or not but, importantly, were at their greatest when children emigrated.

Fourthly and finally, the chapter has brought together these insights to show that we need to think more critically about social mobility in this period. Through exploring children's letters, together with philanthropic discourses, we can see that philanthropists, parents, and

children viewed social mobility in different terms to those that we concentrate on today. The sources reveal the value placed on preventing children's permanent descent into criminality. This, I argue, was also a form of mobility. Yet, the case studies also show that ambitions for institutional children were not limited to their reform but foregrounded discourses of opportunity. These were framed around ideals of financial, rather than skilled labour, progression. This recognition questions our reliance on occupational measures in assessing mobility in the past.

Chapter Three: Girls and social mobility

The previous chapter demonstrated that institutional intervention delivered social mobility for boys, but what did it do for girls? This chapter evaluates why philanthropists intervened in girls' lives and considers how they measured success. It shows that, although expectations were gendered, the RPS and the PMVH shared similar objectives. They wanted to protect children from the circumstances of their lives before the institution and improve their lives in the future. The existing historiography relies, firstly, on contemporary criticism of philanthropic training, and, secondly, on snapshots of girls' initial destinations, in its assessment of the effectiveness of institutional welfare.[1] Tracing girls' lives before and after the institution questions this evaluation. It reveals that despite a focus on stability rather than opportunity, institutional welfare did deliver social mobility for girls when considered across the life course.

Women's experiences of social mobility, as Christina de Bellaigue has pointed out, have been neglected in the literature.[2] As Selina Todd argues, most studies of women's lives 'concentrate not on their employment', but on their 'leisure, courtship and domestic life'.[3] Nor has women's mobility been granted the same degree of statistical examination as that of men.[4] Instead, debates have centred around the extent to which 'separate spheres'

[1] L. Murdoch, 'From Barrack Schools to Family Cottages: Creating Domestic Space for late Victorian Poor Children' in J. Lawrence and P. Starkey (eds), *Child Welfare and Social Action* (Liverpool, 2001), pp. 159-166; S. Swain and M. Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire* (Manchester, 2010), p. 121; J. Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools before 1933', *History of Education,* 13/1 (1984), pp. 49, 56.

[2] C. de Bellaigue, 'Great Expectations? Childhood, Family and Middle-Class Social Mobility in Nineteenth-Century England', *Cultural and Social History,* 16/1 (2019), p. 30.

[3] S. Todd, Young *Women, Work, and Family in England 1918-1950* (Oxford, 2007), p. 21.

[4] C. de Bellaigue, H. Mills, and E. Worth, "'Rags to Riches?' New Histories of Social Mobility in Modern Britain - Introduction." *Cultural and Social History*, 16/1 (2019), p. 3; P. Lambert, K. Prandy and W. Bottero, 'By slow degrees: two centuries of social reproduction and mobility in Britain', *Sociological Research Online*, 12/1 (2007); J. Goldthorpe, 'Understanding – and Misunderstanding – Social Mobility in Britain: The Entry of the Economists, the Confusion of Politicians, and the Limits of Educational Policy', *Journal of Social Policy*, 42/3 (2013), pp. 431-50; A. Miles, 'How open was nineteenth-century British society? Social mobility and equality of opportunity, 1839-1914', in A. Miles and D. Vincent (eds), *Building European Society, Occupational Change and*

ideology penetrated into the working classes and on the scope of female withdrawal from the workforce.[5] Theories that women's employment decreased in the late nineteenth century have been challenged by Ellen Ross, and others, who have argued, firstly, that few working-class households could afford a non-working mother and, secondly, that industrialisation offered increased opportunities for women in some regions.[6] Sara Horrell and Jane Humphries also found that industrialisation led to regional variations in female employment but argued nonetheless that there was an overall increase in female dependence on the male breadwinner wage as opportunities outside the home decreased.[7] Yet as Humphries also pointed out, our historical assessment has been hampered by consistent undercounting and by the political marginalisation of women's work. She argued that 'deep ideological preconceptions' renders 'women's work invisible'.[8]

The experiences of girls leaving institutions and entering the workplace are even more marginalised. Contemporary commentators highlighted concerns over the training received by pauper girls but centred this criticism on the physical structure of schools, rather than on the purpose of the training provided. While boys could thrive in large institutions, because

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Social Mobility in Europe, 1840-1940 (Manchester, 1993), pp. 18-39; A. Miles, *Social mobility in nineteenth and early twentieth-century England* (London, 1999).

[5] C. Hall and L. Davidoff, *Family Fortunes: men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850* (Chicago, 1987); K. Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 2017), p. 42; J. Bourke, 'Housewifery in Working-Class England, 1860-1914', *Past and Present*, 143 (1994), pp. 167-197; E. Ross, *Love, toil and motherhood in outcast London* (Oxford, 1993), p. 4.; M. Gomersall, *Working-class girls in nineteenth-century England: life, work and schooling* (Basingstoke, 1997), pp. 14-15.

[6] For withdrawal see: E. Roberts, *Women's Work, 1840-1940* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 22; E. Higgs, 'Women, Occupation and Work in the Nineteenth-Century Census', *History Workshop Journal*, 23 (1987), pp. 59-80; S. McGeevor, 'How well did the nineteenth century census record women's 'regular' employment in England and Wales? A case study of Hertfordshire in 1851', *The History of the Family*, 19/4 (2014), pp. 489-512. For working mothers, see: Ross, *Love and Toil*, p. 45. For regional opportunities see: E. Ross, *Women's Work 1840-1940* (Cambridge, 1988); P. Hudson and W. R. Lee (eds), *Women's Work and the Family Economy in Historical Perspective* (Manchester, 1990); E. Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford, 1995); Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 42.

[7] S. Horrell and J. Humphries, 'Women's labour force participation and the transition to the male breadwinner family, 1790-1865', *Economic History Review*, XVIII/1 (1995), pp. 89-90, 112-113.

[8] J. Humphries and C. Sarasúa, 'Off the Record: Reconstructing Women's Labor Force Participation in the European Past', *Feminist Economics,* 18/4 (2012), pp. 44-49.

these were little different from the public schools provided for middle-class boys, girls had no such replicable environment. They needed to be housed in smaller cottage homes, where gendered ideals of domesticity could be played out.[9] These ideas have been extensively explored by child welfare historians, who have criticised the spatial structures of girls' institutions for reinforcing existing gendered social hierarchies.[10] Much of this criticism has concentrated on the way spaces functioned to train girls for a future as domestic servants and has drawn on a broader historiography which positions philanthropy within a framework of discipline and class hierarchy.[11] These assumptions underpin the analysis of both boys' and girls' outcomes but are particularly relevant in the discussion around girls, which often begins from a presumption that domestic service was a poor outcome for institutional girls.[12]

This chapter questions this evaluation through a discussion of the occupational training given to girls within the PMVH. This is combined with an analysis of girls' post-institutional social mobility throughout the life course. The chapter begins with an examination of what the managers of the Home wanted to achieve for the girls in their care, before considering how class, family background, and relationships affected girls' destinations on leaving the Home. It then focuses on girls' occupational social mobility throughout their lives both within Britain and overseas. It concludes that, while institutionalised girls were significantly

[9] N. Sheldon, '"Something in the Place of Home": Children in Institutional Care 1850-1918' in N. Goose and K. Honeyman (eds), *Childhood and Child Labour in Industrial England* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 271-272.
[10] Murdoch, 'From Barrack Schools', p. 149.
[11] M. Foucault, *Discipline and punish*: *The birth of the prison*, trans. A. Sheridan (London 1991); L. Mahood, *Policing gender, class, and family: Britain, 1850-1940* (London, 2005), pp. 1-2; M. Ignatieff, 'Total Institutions and Working Classes: A Review Essay', *History Workshop Journal,* 15/1 (1983), pp. 167-173.
[12] L. Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* (New Brunswick, 2006), p. 139; Sheldon, '"Something in the Place of Home"', p. 264.

more constrained in their opportunities in adulthood than institutionalised boys, intervention nonetheless achieved the objectives set out for it by philanthropists.

Measuring outcomes

How was girls' success in life measured? Analyses of the nineteenth century have highlighted the importance of ideals of domesticity and femininity in middle-class assessments of womanhood.[13] Yet, as Ellen Ross and Emma Griffin have shown, working-class women had little time to indulge in such luxuries. Instead, their life was characterised by the exhausting, intensive, and dreary work of running a household and family. Many also had to take up waged employment.[14] Yet the latter decades of the nineteenth century were also characterised by growing opportunities for working-class girls, from 'supportive or more prosperous backgrounds', to become teachers, shop assistants or clerks.[15] A 'caricature' of the 'New Woman' emerged — adopting 'masculine' behavioural traits, rejecting woman's 'traditional role', and demanding emancipation.[16] Historiographical representations of the 'New Woman' as reflective of the lived experience of Victorian women has been dismissed by Gillian Sutherland as 'wide of the mark'.[17] Instead, Sutherland points out, the 'real change in the labour force' occurred with the entry of thousands of middle and upper-working-class women into the ranks of white collar workers.[18] This, Laura Schwartz suggests, was a group that 'might, a generation earlier have gone into domestic

[13] S. Morgan, 'Between Public and Private: Gender, Domesticity, and Authority in the Long Nineteenth Century', *The Historical Journal*, 54/4 (2011), pp. 1197-1210.
[14] E. Griffin, *Bread Winner: An Intimate History of the Victorian Economy* (New Haven, 2020), p. 87; Ross, *Love and Toil*, pp. 8-9, 58; Gleadle, 'Working-Class British Women', pp. 42-44.
[15] Gleadle, 'Working class British Women', p. 46. G. Sutherland*, In Search of the New Woman: Middle-class Women and Work in Britain, 1870-1914* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 87-105.
[16] Sutherland, *In Search of the New Woman*, p. 3.
[17] Ibid., p. 7.
[18] Ibid., p. 161.

service'.[19] It is possible that this belief in improving employment opportunities is what lies beneath criticisms of domestic service as a choice for institutional girls. But it is a view that is difficult to reconcile with the reality of a society in which up to one third of women worked for at least part of their life as servants.[20]

The PMVH, run by its founder, Susannah Meredith, had its own definition of success for girls and structured its training within the Home accordingly. Its ambitions were principally preventative. As we discussed in the previous chapter, the most interesting and significant work on social mobility in recent years has focused on the question of 'downward social mobility'. Scholarship by Christina de Bellaigue, and more recently by Andrew Popp, has emphasised the role of the family in maintaining social status and 'respectability'.[21] As both establish, these desires were concentrated predominantly around the 'boundaries between the lower middle and upper working classes'.[22] Yet, as the work on the RPS demonstrated, this concept can be stretched to include philanthropic concerns about maintaining the boundaries between the 'respectable' working classes and the criminal and feckless classes at the bottom of society.[23] For girls, this typically involved upward mobility from the state of their parents, who were either criminal or destitute.

Meredith's philosophy regarding girls' development was influenced by her long experience as a prison missionary and by her beliefs as an evangelical Christian. Evangelical Christianity underpinned most philanthropic efforts in the second half of the nineteenth century,

[19] L. Schwartz, 'In Search of the New Woman: Middle-Class Women and Work in Britain 1870–1914, by Gillian Sutherland', *The English Historical Review*, 132/558 (2017), p. 1370.
[20] L. Schwartz, 'A job like any other? Feminist Responses and Challenges to Domestic Worker Organising in Edwardian Britain', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 88 (2015), p. 30.
[21] de Bellaigue, 'Great Expectations?', pp. 29-46; A. Popp, '"But to cover her shame:" Respectability, Social Mobility, and the Middling Sort in Early Nineteenth-century England', *Cultural and Social History*, 18/4 (2021), pp. 501-516.
[22] Popp, '"But to cover her shame:"', p. 502.
[23] Chapter Two, pp. 97-98.

especially when it came to children.[24] Shurlee Swain has shown that biblical imagery and scripture was used extensively to bolster support for philanthropic efforts. Many prominent philanthropists explained their 'mission' to save children in evangelical and religious terms.[25] But as a member of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, Meredith blended her evangelical views with the evidence she had gathered through observation. Her interest in reforming and providing aid to prisoners may have stemmed, both from her father's role as governor of Cork gaol, and from her position as editor of the feminist journal, *The Alexandra*.[26] As discussed in Chapter One, this brought her into contact with prominent feminists, as well as with the juvenile reform movement.[27] In 1866, four years prior to the founding of the PMVH, Meredith published a book of her experiences in prison mission work, called *The Sixth Work or the Charity of Moral Effort.* In 1881, she published *A book about criminals.* Both discussed her views of criminality and the poor. Meredith's writings reveal extensive personal contact with criminals of all types and a realistic understanding of the irresistibility of crime for many. She was critical of popular theories presented by French psychologist Prosper Despine that argued criminals had nothing in common with the ordinary person.[28] Instead, she argued that the criminal was 'exactly' like her 'in all the elements' of character, except that he or she lived an unstable life because

[24] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, p. 29.
[25] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire,* pp. 26-27; J. Parr, *Labouring Children* (London, 1980), pp. 35-7.
[26] J. Schroeder, 'On the *English Woman's Journal*, 1858-62', *Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*, (22 Feb 2022), https://branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=janice-schroeder-on-the-english-womans-journal-1858-62; M.A. Lloyd, *Susanna Meredith: a record of a vigorous life* (London, 1903), p. 46.
[27] Chapter One, p. 43.
[28] J. Verplaetse, 'Prosper Despine's Psychologie Naturelle and the Discovery of the Remorseless Criminal in Nineteenth-century France', *History of Psychiatry*, 13/50 (2002), pp. 153-75.

they did not have the barrier of 'respectability'.[29] This instability, she argued, was the principal cause of crime.[30]

This belief was fundamental to the PMVH's ambitions for girls' futures. Meredith believed that criminal tendencies, such as 'volatility, levity' and 'excitement', were inherent characteristics that made some people more prone to criminality, but which could be countered by 'early training, moral company and good social regulations'.[31] This argument blended popular views of criminal heredity with a recognition, formed of experience, that not all criminals seemed to correspond, in either behaviour or appearance, to popular preconceptions.[32] Inherited tendencies, Meredith argued, did not obviate the need for the individual to take responsibility for their actions. 'All heredity, moral and physical' could be dealt with by moral and religious instruction in childhood.[33] Taking these arguments further, Meredith argued that 'In the upper ranks of society no one expects a child to "be good" unless it is made to be so by a regular process of some sort'. Why then apply different standards to the lower classes? If the source of criminality was instability, then bringing children up in a stable environment, and ensuring that they had the training to live stable lives following the institution, would prevent them becoming criminal like their parents.[34]

There were several key elements to this process of creating stability for the girls at the PMVH. The first was the inculcation of moral and religious principles, which Meredith believed would provide the scaffolding necessary to prevent criminality. Success in this area

[29] S. Meredith, *A book about criminals* (London, 1881), pp. 8, 20, 17.
[30] Ibid., pp. 8, 17.
[31] Ibid., pp. 235, 28.
[32] 'The Prisoner's Friend', https://vauxhallhistory.org/mrs-susanna-meredith-prisoners-convicts-laundry/ (23 Feb. 2022).
[33] Meredith, *A book about criminals*, p. 18; 'A Prisoner's Friend'.
[34] S. Meredith, *The Sixth Work* (London, 1866), p. 101.

was assessed by Christianity in adulthood. This was the 'triumph of the work', which gave 'the Managers the greatest pleasure'.[35] In her 1866 book, Meredith had been surprisingly philosophical about her ability to impart religious conviction to the adult criminals she encountered. While she hoped to convert them to Christianity, she argued that it was sufficient to teach them to resist temptation.[36] Perhaps owing to her experience with the parents from the PMVH, her views changed over time. By 1881, she was arguing that, with God's help, the criminal and drunkard could be redeemed as easily as other sinners.[37] It is important to note that many elements of the PMVH's religious teaching were not compulsory. There was daily prayer and a Bible lesson, but, although other Bible meetings were held regularly, these were voluntary and only around one third of girls joined in.[38]

It is difficult to evaluate how successful the school's attempts to impart religion were. Of the few letters published in the Annual Reports, around two-thirds contained multiple references to God and Christianity. In August 1895, sixteen-year-old Clara Bone wrote 'I am trying to live as you taught us all to live, looking unto Jesus and trying to follow in His steps'.[39] Catherine Hall wrote about her young son 'Just as soon as he gets large enough, I will learn him to say his prayers every night. I want to try to raise him up right like I was raised'.[40] Meredith's evangelicalism was of the practical sort. Highly energetic, she felt that people who attended religious meetings every day, but were idle, lived a 'feeble Christian

[35] Surrey History Centre (SHC), 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1887), p. 4.
[36] Meredith, *The Sixth Work*, pp. 131-133.
[37] Meredith, *A book about criminals*, p. 16.
[38] SHC, 2591/1/15, Twenty-Sixth Annual Report, p. 43; 2591/1/14, Princess Mary Village Homes, Manager's Report 1883, p. 8.
[39] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Fourth Annual Report, pp. 7-8.
[40] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Second Annual Report, pp. 7-8.

life'. It was more important to exemplify Christianity through actions than through speech.[41] Faith was intertwined with industry.

Given this, the second important measure of girls' success in life was employment. Meredith's analysis of female prisoners had revealed that forty-six percent came from the ranks of those 'with no occupation'. A further twenty-nine percent from the 'overworked, poor needlewomen, etc' who broke down 'under their temptations'.[42] She claimed that 'few domestic servants and less still from higher employments' were in prison.[43] While these statistics were in a book about adults, not children, they reveal much about Meredith's theories on female occupation. Girls should be trained for domestic service, where possible.

Historians of childhood and of welfare have been critical of the institutional focus on training girls as servants. While Shurlee Swain recognised that the purpose of training was to provide 'for the children a work ethic which their parents had lacked', she believed the goal was to ensure 'social stability' by transforming children into 'useful citizens'.[44] Linda Mahood asserted that philanthropists seldom thought of girls as anything other than 'agents of domesticity, as future maids or mothers'.[45] There was much truth in these arguments. The PMVH did see domestic service as a source of stability for girls and did believe that the most significant opportunity for girls lay in their being different from their parents. As the PMVH acknowledged, their principal aim was to 'train up' as servants, girls whose parents 'have never done anything so creditable or so good for the well being of society as to serve in the ranks of respectable servants (sic)'.[46]

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[41] Lloyd, *A vigorous life*, p. 58.
[42] Meredith, *The sixth work*, p. 138.
[43] Ibid., p. 139.
[44] Swain, Child, nation, race and empire, p. 134, p. 138.
[45] Mahood, *Policing gender*, p. 90.
[46] 2591/1/15, Twenty-Ninth Annual Report, p. 2.

Stability was celebrated. Public rewards were given to girls who retained their positions for more than two years. Twenty-year-old Sarah Judge, who had first left for service aged sixteen, received a prize from 'the hands of the Princess Mary' in July 1882 for keeping her place.[47] The 1891 Annual Report stated that, at the annual 'Old Girls Day', girls were asked to reveal how long they had remained in the same position. Many reportedly remained for periods of 'five, three and two years', with nine years being the longest. This, the report argued, showed 'the steady way' they conducted themselves and the 'value of the training'.[48] Girls' correspondence with the PMVH demonstrated the extent to which girls themselves absorbed this message as a measure of their success. Margaret Watson prefaced her 1887 letter to the Home with 'I am afraid you will be surprised to see a different address at the top of my letter; but I have left Mrs D'. Margaret had moved positions but only after six years in the same place.[49] Diana Fuller was more explicit, writing in 1891, 'I think you will be very pleased when I tell you that I have been in my situation two years today'.[50] The fact that girls gave excuses for leaving their positions also indicate the importance attached to stability. Margaret explained that she had thought she would 'like a change', while Carrie Farmer explained that 'Mrs G was so mean to me. I was bound to leave them'.[51]

The third measure of success was contentment. Managers believed that girls were more likely to be stable if they were happy.[52] Meredith argued that girls needed 'individualising' and a 'close personal loving interest in their welfare and conduct'.[53] This reference to

[47] SHC, 2591/3/1, Admissions Register, fol. 223.
[48] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Second Annual Report, pp. 5-6; 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1888/9), p. 4
[49] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1888/89), p. 5.
[50] 2591/1/14, Twenty-First Annual Report, p. 10.
[51] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1888/89), pp. 5-6.
[52] 2591/1/14, PMVH Annual Report (1887), p. 3.
[53] 2591/1/14, PMVH Annual Report (1886), p. 7.

'individualising' was common among proponents of the cottage home system, and rested on an argument that allowing children to remain anonymous in the 'mass of paupers' within barrack schools was harmful.[54] Like the RPS, staff at the PMVH kept track of its former pupils as much as possible, regarding this process as a 'most important factor in all work for the young'.[55] The aftercare this provided, and its implication for girls' relationships with the Home, are discussed in more depth in Chapter Four. Meredith believed that a demonstrable interest in girls' wellbeing after the institution would help them be happy and useful. This would make them 'valuable servants' and good members of society'. [56] Meredith's experience with reformed and discharged prisoners had taught her the importance of providing reformed women with emotional support and 'supervision'.[57] Regular correspondence with 'Christian women', she argued, provided former prisoners with evidence that someone cared what happened to them. This imbued them with a sense of responsibility and guilt that helped keep them from criminality.[58] As Emma Church, who had left England for America in 1881, noted in a letter back to the PMVH in 1894: 'your letters were so good, and helpful to me. I know you wrote them so they would help me and now if you would only write again I would return them by one of my own'.[59]

Stability and happiness could also be achieved through marriage, providing a fourth measure of success. There are no explicit references in the Annual Reports to marriage as an objective, but it is evident that managers considered marriage an acceptable alternative to

[54] L. Murdoch, 'From Barrack Schools to Family Cottages', p. 161.
[55] 2591/1/14, Twenty-First Annual Report, p. 4.
[56] 2591/1/14, PMVH Annual Report (1887), p. 3.
[57] Meredith, *A book about criminals*, p. 53.
[58] Ibid., p. 54-55. For a discussion of prisoner aftercare see J. Turner, 'Female Prisoners, Aftercare and Release: Residential Provision and Support in Late Nineteenth-Century England', *British Journal of Community Justice*, 13/3 (2016), pp. 35-50.
[59] 2591/1/15, Twenty-Third Annual Report, pp. 9-10.

employment. Comments in public accounts of the PMVH hint that staff were trying to prepare girls for their probable futures, as working-class wives, as well as potentially for domestic service. The 1885 Annual Report noted that 'old girls' brought their husbands and children to Sunday services and that some had 'such good homes as working people whose wives had been well brought up should enjoy'. It added that if only potential donors could see 'the motherly young women and hear the evidence of their husbands' this would prove the success of the 'Family System'.[60]

This 'Family System' was a reference to the spatial configuration of the PMVH, which consisted of a series of cottages laid out around a village green, laundry, school, and other buildings. Cottage homes have been criticised by historian, Lydia Murdoch, who has argued that they were used as a way of incorporating 'pauper children into the social hierarchy as labourers'.[61] She based her evaluation on the system in place at Dr Barnardo's girls home where around eighteen working-class children were divided spatially from a 'mother' of a 'distinctly higher class', in an arrangement that was more akin to a mistress and servant relationship rather than the domestic family intended by the PMVH.[62]

Yet, the cottage home system within the PMVH was different. The accommodation provided was not 'luxurious' and was laid out in a way that replicated an upper-working-class home.[63] Each cottage was home to around ten girls (ranging from two to ten years old) all of whom slept in one or two shared rooms. The 'mother' at the PMVH was typically a working-class widow with children of her own and, importantly, was 'required to eat, sleep and sit in the company' of the children and to 'make her home with them'. Girls were expected to

[60] 2591/1/14, PMVH Annual Report (1887), p. 4.
[61] Murdoch, 'From Barrack Schools', p. 149.
[62] Ibid., pp. 163-4.
[63] 'The Princess Mary's Village Homes for Little Girls', *London Journal* (1878), p. 216.

undertake domestic tasks, such as helping prepare food or clean the house, and to look after the younger children, much as they would within the working-class household. They were taught to perform simple repairs and 'handicraft' that would be expected of a wife and mother within the home. They were taught to make their own clothing, in part as a strategy against 'thriftlessness' and in part to prevent them benefiting from the 'sweated' labour of other women.[64] They learned to 'cultivate habits of economy' and 'exercise their powers of contrivance with the limited means at their disposal'.[65] As Davidoff points out, the 'budgeting of money and materials' was not usually part of the servant's responsibilities, while it did form a core part of the wife's role.[66] Such tasks formed part of the marital contract undertaken in return for the husband's wage.[67]

Evidence that the PMVH celebrated marriage as prominently as it did employment, indicates the acceptability of marriage as a choice for girls. Letters from married young women featured as frequently in public reports as those from women still in service. These letters provide insights into the qualities that women considered to be valuable in a spouse and can be read against the grain to give us an insight into the lessons about marriage imparted within the Home. Both the man's character and his ability to provide financially were crucial. The importance of the breadwinner narrative, in driving the perception that a man who could provide was a 'good' man, has been highlighted by several historians.[68] Ellen Ross has demonstrated that a man's character and virtue was often judged by how much of his wage he gave to his wife to manage the household and has revealed the conflict that

[64] 2591/1/15, Twenty-Sixth Annual Report, pp. 5-6.
[65] 'The Princess Mary's Village Homes for Little Girls'.
[66] L. Davidoff, 'Mastered for Life. Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England', *Journal of Social History*, 7/4 (1974), p. 420.
[67] Griffin, *Bread Winner*, p. 86.
[68] J-M. Strange, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class* 1865-1914 (Cambridge, 2015), p. 23 notes many contributions to this argument. Ross, *Love, toil and motherhood*, pp. 73-74; Griffin, *Bread Winner*, pp. 86-106.

could arise within households over its distribution.[69] Emma Griffin has argued that a woman's need to work depended on whether her husband was a good provider.[70] These ideas are also evident in the letters from the PMVH. MGL wrote in 1894 that, although there was little work around for 'the poor working class of people', her husband had been 'very fortunate so far this winter'. She emphasised that her husband was 'very kind and good' and 'willing to do anything he can to make me happy'.[71] Maggie Smith also described her husband of three years as 'good', adding that she did not 'know what it is to want'.[72] Marriage was, of course, no guarantee of stability. Carrie Farmer, who had entered the PMVH aged two and had no other family, was reportedly a frequent correspondent with the PMVH from her home in Texas, although the Annual Reports contain only two published letters from her. The first published letter was written a month after her wedding, in 1890, and reported that she was married and 'doing well'. Her husband, Reuben, she said, was 'mighty good' to her.[73] In contrast, in her second published letter, two years later, Carrie's letter contained several references to financial constraints. Reuben, she reported, was 'working by the month'. Carrie thanked her correspondent for the 'photo' that they had sent, stating that 'when we get more able we will have it framed'. Later in the same letter, she added: 'we will have our photo taken when I can get the money'. There are hints that this lack of money was related to her husband's behaviour or character. Her letter asked her correspondents at the PMVH to pray that Reuben would 'change his way of living'.[74]

[69] Ross, *Love, toil and motherhood*, pp. 76-77.
[70] Griffin, *Bread Winner*, p. 163.
[71] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Fourth Annual Report, p. 8. Possibly Mabel Long.
[72] Ibid., p. 7.
[73] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1888/89), p. 6.
[74] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Second Annual Report, pp. 7-8.

Girls' correspondence also reveals that ideas of home, marriage, and motherhood were entangled with judgements of character, respectability, and, ultimately, stability. Carrie, who had entered the PMVH at the age of two, had framed her initial description of Reuben as much in terms of his relationships, as in his ability to provide. She wrote that he was 'a preacher's son' and was 'well respected by everybody' and had 'got the best mammy in the world'.[75] This positioned Reuben and, by extension Carrie, as part of a network of established relationships. Sarah Wallis' letter in 1892 was similar. Although she, too, wrote that she had a 'very good husband', her letter spent more time discussing his family, 'very nice people', and his brother-in-law's stable employment as a gardener in a good situation than it did describing her husband. Her postscript noted that her father-in-law – 'such a dear old father, he is 73 years old' — lived with them.[76] Through Sarah's emphasis on the characteristics she considered important for staff to know — respectability, affection, and family relationships — we can recognise the values the Home imparted to girls.

Lydia Murdoch has suggested that welfare 'officials' based their training programmes 'on ideals of citizenship rather than practical economic concerns'.[77] Yet, as this section has shown, the PMVH had a view of girls' futures that was grounded in experience and pragmatism. Many of the girls within the Home came from abusive, neglectful, or criminal families.[78] Preventing girls from replicating the experiences of their parents was a key aim. This, Meredith believed, could best be achieved by giving girls the tools for 'stability'. Moral habits, a belief in God, employment *or* marriage was the key to successful adulthood.

[75] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1888/89), p. 6.
[76] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Second Annual Report, p. 9.
[77] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 121.
[78] See Chapter One, pp. 49-63.

A life of service?

As discussed in the 'Introduction', historians have been critical of the training provided by institutions, arguing that it neglected children's futures in favour of imperial or anti-industrial aims.[79] John Hurt argued that children 'existed for the benefit of the institution', while Lydia Murdoch suggested, that the institutional preference for domestic service training 'recalled the English preindustrial past' and was aimed at reinforcing 'hierarchical communal ties'.[80] But as this section will argue, domestic service did not represent a poor choice for girls, but a pragmatic one that bore in mind the aims outlined in the preceding section. Nor, importantly, was it the only choice available. By tracing girls' life courses, I demonstrate that a girl's choice of occupation depended on a combination of her character, constitution, social class, or family situation.

Just over half the girls who left the PMVH between 1870 and 1892 went directly into domestic service (Figure Two and Table Four).[81] This proportion varied over time depending on various factors.[82] Domestic service was a common destination for girls from institutions mainly because it was one of the principal categories of employment open to working-class females. Up to one third of the female workforce worked as servants in the latter half of the nineteenth century.[83] Training girls as domestic servants was therefore a pragmatic option that reflected the constrained choices open to girls in the late nineteenth century.[84]

[79] Introduction, pp. 6-7
[80] Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools before 1933', p. 49; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans,* p. 121.
[81] This number excludes girls who died, were transferred to other schools, discharged because of illness, or who left with cottage mothers. SHC, 2591/1/14, Twentieth Annual Report, p. 6.
[82] The high number of emigrants in 1886 is discussed on page 192.
[83] J. Burnette, *Gender, work and wages in industrial revolution Britain* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 4; A. J. McIvor, *A History of Work in Britain, 1880-1950* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 177. See Sutherland, *In Search of the New Woman* for a discussion, especially Chapters Two and Three.
[84] Schwartz, 'A job like any other?', p. 30.

Table Four: Initial destination of the eighty girls from the PMVH

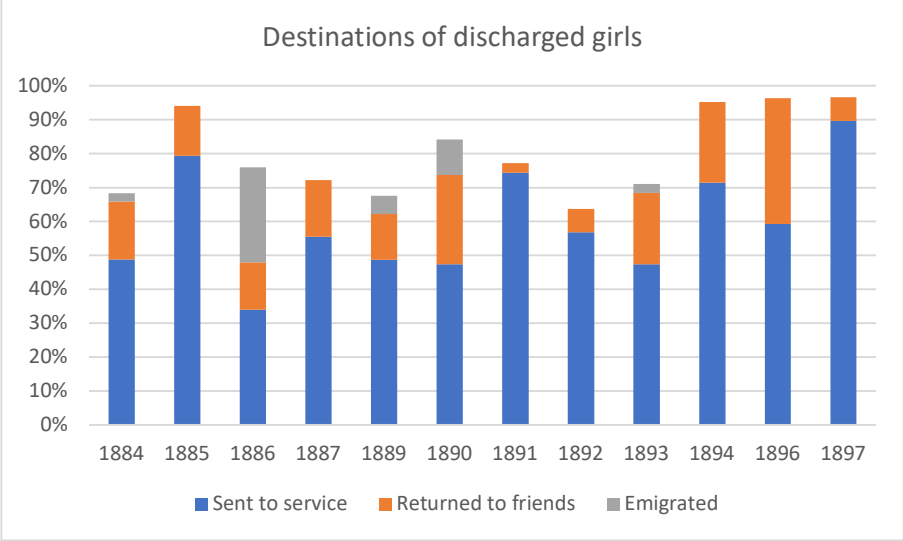
Girls	**1870-1880**	**1880-1892**	**1870-1892**
Domestic service	18	24	42
Returned to friends	3	12	15
Emigrated	5	15	20
Transferred	1	0	1
Adopted		1	1
Total	**27**	**53**	**80**
Percentage of total	**%**	**%**	**%**
Domestic service	67	46	53
Returned to friends	11	23	19
Emigrated	19	29	25
Transferred	4	0	1
Adopted	0	2	1

Source: PMVH

a. Based on the eighty girls reviewed for this thesis
b. Dates refer to admission years
c. These statistics differ from those given in the Annual Report for the period 1870-1890.[85]
d. Transferred refers to children moved to another institution.

[85] The 1890 Annual Report (2591/1/14) reports thirty-nine percent of girls returned to friends and fourteen percent of girls emigrated 1870 and 1890 compared to fifteen and twenty percent of girls respectively within the sample of eighty. The differences could be due to: a) Girls tended to emigrate in sibling groups and each sibling group had one entry in the register. The register is alphabetical not chronological. So, one entry might consist of three girls on a half-page, while another entry could consist of one girl taking up the whole page. Random sampling could result in uneven spread. b) when a girl first left for service or returned to friends but then subsequently emigrated under the sponsorship of the PMVH, the PMVH did not record these girls as emigrants, whereas my analysis does. Although, no explanation is provided by the PMVH, the number of emigrants does not otherwise match up.

Figure Two: Initial destination of discharged girls by year



a. No data is given for girls' destinations in 1895.
b. This is based on initial destination on leaving the PMVH.
c. This is per Annual Reports

Yet, it is important to recognise that the PMVH was generally selective about who it sent out to service. Demand for PMVH girls as servants remained high between 1870 and 1900. By the last few years of the century, the managers were regularly noting that they had more applications for servants than they could supply.[86] Employers were carefully chosen for their ability to support and train the PMVH girls. As the 1887 Annual Report explained, too many employers expected 'too much from the young and none but the young would undertake the amount of work that too many of them require'.[87] The 1892 Annual Report stated that girls were retained in the Home until the age of sixteen 'unless fitted for service sooner'.[88] The average age at which a girl left the PVMH was fourteen and a half years. This was

[86] 2591/1/15, Twenty-Eighth Annual Report, p. 3; Thirty-Second Annual Report, p. 4
[87] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1887), p. 4.
[88] 2591/1/15, Twenty-Third Annual Report, p. 5.

younger than the age at which boys left the RPS but was still older than the age at which girls from their backgrounds would normally have expected to begin work.[89]

This could have been indicative of the responsibility that the PMVH felt for those in its care. The records show that girls who went into service were more likely to be those from absent or problematic families.[90] Lacking familial support, their employment options were limited. Leonore Davidoff argued that domestic service represented 'the only legitimate and respected (or respectable) alternative to living with one's own family'.[91] The managers of the PMVH were keen to emphasise that they considered domestic service 'the very best for the girls themselves'. As they noted, the girls were 'children still on leaving us, whose power of steering through the shoals of life is necessarily very limited'.[92]

The importance of age has been under-recognised in the discussions of welfare children's occupational choices. As Leonard Schwarz notes, 'female domestic service was highly age-specific'. It was an occupation primarily adopted by girls and younger women. In 1851, fifty-two percent of female domestic servants were aged fifteen to twenty-four. A further fourteen percent were aged twenty-five to twenty-nine.[93] While historians have criticised the master/servant relationship as paternalistic or oppressive, as Lucy Delap points out, it could also contain 'connotations of entitlement and protection'.[94] Domestic service could, like emigration for boys, solve the question of supervision and protection, as girls

[89] Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 19-21; Amanda Milburn's study of female employment in coalfields of Wales pinpointed fourteen as the age at which women were most likely to begin employment and no longer be categorised as 'children'. A.J. M. Milburn, *Female Employment in Nineteenth-century Ironworking Districts: Merthyr Tydfil and the Shropshire Coalfield, 1841-1881*, (D.Phil. thesis, University of Swansea, 2013), p. 9.
[90] Sixty percent had criminal parents compared to the average of fifty-five and nine percent were orphans compared to an average of six percent.
[91] Davidoff, 'Mastered for life', p. 414.
[92] 2591/1/14, Twenty-ninth Annual Report, p. 1.
[93] L. Schwarz, 'English servants and their employers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', *Economic History Review*, LII/2 (1999), p. 250.
[94] Davidoff, 'Mastered for Life', p. 410; Delap, 'Twentieth-Century Servants', p. 35.

transitioned into womanhood. Having benefited from the initial stability of service, sixty percent of PMVH girls, who initially worked as servants, left domestic service within five years — mostly for marriage. A further fifteen percent of PMVH girls married after ten years in service. Most of the girls who left the PMVH seem to have taken up positions in households connected to Mrs Meredith in some way; either working within one of the other organisations related to the PMVH or with local households or clergymen.

It is important to recognise that even though domestic service represented the practical solution for girls whose families were unable to aid them, it was not necessarily a bad outcome for a young girl. There has been widespread historiographical criticism of domestic service as a 'low status occupation' and an 'aspiration-free zone'.[95] Kathryn Gleadle described the desire to create 'dutiful servants' as a 'patent desire to control and tame plebeian women'.[96] Feminist and Marxist historians portrayed domestic service as a 'total institution', assuming that positive accounts of life in service were the product of 'false consciousness' or a 'survival mechanism'. Yet, as Delap argues, there was a 'more complex emotional landscape' involved.[97] Nor was service necessarily the hierarchical structure pictured in Murdoch's critique.[98] As Siân Pooley demonstrated in her study of Lancashire servants, there were often indistinct boundaries between household responsibilities, which reflected the slight gradations of class that could exist.[99]

Published letters from girls to the PMVH together with the life course analysis of girls' lives provide support for this complexity. While letters were anonymised, it has been possible to

[95] L. Delap, *Knowing their Place: Domestic Service in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2011), p. 27.
[96] Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 45.
[97] Delap, 'Twentieth-Century Servants', p. 31.
[98] Murdoch, 'From Barrack Schools', p. 149
[99] S. Pooley, 'Domestic servants and their urban employers: A case study of Lancaster, 1880-1914', *The Economic History Review*, 62/2 (2009), p. 421.

definitively trace some of the authors.[100] Some girls wrote positively of life in service. In 1889, MW who had remained in her first position for six years, wrote from her new role, where she was trying out as a nursery maid to see 'how I can get on with children', that 'I like being here very much. It is a very easy place and very healthy'.[101] ER, who was already working as a nursery maid, wrote that, although she had been very busy, because the baby she looked after had been ill, that 'my mistress and master are very kind to me. I should not like to leave my place'. ER was about to be given a holiday, while her employers were away in Scotland, and she planned on returning to the PMVH to spend it in her former cottage there.[102] Diana Fuller was admitted to the PMVH from the workhouse in 1884, aged eleven.[103] She left in 1889 for a position as a servant in Bedfordshire. In 1891, now eighteen, she wrote to the PMVH that, although she had wanted to come and visit, she had been unable to, because she had been very busy. Her mistress and two of the children were in bed with influenza and, while they had been ill, she had had to look after them, as well as 'manage' both of her employer's businesses – the dairy and the shop – giving her 'plenty to think of.' Diana added 'it was go here and go there, till I did not know if I was going in the shop or up stairs'.[104] It is evident that her employer normally shared these tasks with her and it was the burden of performing them alone that was so challenging. Diana was, like other nineteenth-century servants, engaged in productive labour as well as domestic work.[105] While evidently a temporary situation, Diana's comments show us how hard young women were expected to work and how varied their experiences could be.

[100] Methodology discussed in the 'Introduction', pp. 23-25.
[101] 2591/1/14, PMVH Annual Report (1888/1889), p. 5. Probably Margaret Watson who left for service aged twelve and would be eighteen at this stage.
[102] 2591/1/14, PMVH Annual Report (1888/1889), p. 5. Probably, fourteen-year-old, Emma Rushman.
[103] Findmypast.co.uk, National School Admission Registers & Log Books 1870-1914, SDGRTBARFORD1, p. 1
[104] 2591/1/14, Twenty-First Annual Report, p. 10.
[105] Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth-Century*, p. 45.

Another writer, sixteen-year-old Clara Bone, gave some insight into the complicated relationship that could exist between mistress and servant. She very much enjoyed her current position in Buxton, Yorkshire, which she described twice in her 1894 letter as being 'very comfortable'. She had left her previous situation, despite it being a 'very nice place' because there was 'always such a lot of drink about' and she 'did not care to stay amongst it'. Her previous employer appears to have been upset about her departure. Clara wrote that her employer had written a letter to Clara's mother 'giving her a bad character' and complaining Clara could do nothing but sew – a criticism, which Clara emphatically denied as 'untrue'. Clara's concern and desire to prove her worthiness is evident from her recitation, both of her domestic skills — 'I can now both cook, wash and clean and wait at table, and in short I can do almost everything to keep a place clean and comfortable and I have you to thank for it all' – and her assertion of her current mistress's appreciation of her. Clara's eagerness to please both her employer and Mrs Meredith, to whom she was writing, shines through. According to her letter, her mistress reportedly commented that if every girl was as thankful and appreciated the kindness as much as Clara, philanthropic ladies would do even more to help girls in need.[106] As we can see from these letters, some of the girls at least were content with their roles as servants, even if the work was hard.

When girls were not happy, they demonstrated their discontent in multiple ways. Much of the criticism of institutional training has focused on instances of resistance.[107] In her analysis, Lydia Murdoch highlighted reports from the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants (MABYS) that she claimed demonstrated 'substantial resistance'

[106] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Fourth Annual Report, pp. 7-8.
[107] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 139-140; R. J. Bates, 'Building Imperial Youth? Reflections on labour and the construction of working-class childhood in late Victorian England', *Paedagogica Historica*, 45/1 (2009), p. 151.

to service among girls from poor law schools in the years following their initial placement.[108] She reported that while these cases did not 'represent the majority', they documented 'a common trend' away from domestic service into 'factories, laundries, shops, public houses and restaurants', along with other less typical female work which allowed girls more independence and did not require them to be separated from their families.[109] Yet, there was no evidence of such a trend within the life courses of the girls who left the PMVH. This could have been attributable to several factors. We have seen that the PMVH carefully selected girls for service and tended to send them to employers they knew. PMVH girls tended to spend longer in the Homes than the poor law children that Murdoch considered, which could mean their training was better. Murdoch's work was also focused only on London, whereas one third of the girls in the PMVH came from rural areas outside of London. Finally, and importantly, Murdoch's analysis was based on a snapshot of case reports from MABYS, rather than a systematic study of girls' life courses. Girls' responses to service could have been transient and indicative of a dislike for a particular employer or situation rather than the occupation as a whole.

There were certainly girls within the PMVH, who behaved badly in their positions or who ran away from the places found for them. However, judging the motivations behind such actions is difficult and cannot necessarily be attributed to resistance to domestic service as opposed to dislike of a particular mistress. Pooley has shown that while power imbalances did exist within mistress/servant relationships, servants were nonetheless aware of their ability to leave situations.[110] We saw earlier the explanation from Carrie Farmer that she had

[108] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 139.
[109] Ibid., p. 140.
[110] Pooley, 'Domestic Servants', p. 422.

left her previous place because she had been badly treated. It is important to recognise that the girls who left the PMVH were old enough to make these choices. This is evident throughout the records of the PMVH.

Around five to ten percent of girls sent out to service returned to the Home from their first or even their second place because they were discontented. Yet, a number of those nonetheless eventually settled into domestic service. Eliza Larner, a convicted thief, was sent out as a laundry maid in 1878, aged sixteen, to the Princess Mary of Teck's own laundry in Kensington but 'did not behave well' while there so lost her place. She returned to her family where she behaved 'very unsteadily' for some time. 'After a time' she went to the PMVH's Nine Elms laundry in London asking for employment and was taken in.[111] 'While there she greatly improved' and eventually returned to her family, before taking up a position as a general servant to a solicitor, where she remained until she married a man from her home village in 1883.[112] Eliza Goulden, who was sent out to service in 1876 aged sixteen, behaved so badly there, even stealing things, that she was returned to the PMVH for further training, this time in the laundry, before being sent out to another position two years later where she was reported by the managers as doing well.[113] In both cases, it may have been that the girls found they had few alternative employment options. Eliza Larner did ultimately marry but later took up laundry work.[114] For Eliza Goulden, service may or may not have been her choice, but given her mother's role as a professional beggar, it

[111] Meredith had established the Nine Elms laundry in the late 1860s as a solution to the problem of providing employment for discharged prisoners.
[112] 2591/3/1, fol. 274; Findmypast.co.uk, 1881 England Census, RG11/832/129/18; E&W Marriages 1837-2005, 2C/622.
[113] 2591/3/1, fol. 168.
[114] Ancestry.com, England 1901 Census, RG13/1171/37.

represented at the least an improvement in stability compared to the life of her mother.[115] Research into her later life revealed that, aged thirty-one, she was still working as a general servant. By the age of forty she was living independently in a small house in Weybridge and working as a monthly nurse.[116]

A third example is provided by Anna McManus who, according to the PMVH's Annual Report, was 'one of our least promising girls' and 'one who gave much trouble in every way'.[117] Yet Anna, after leaving the Home to return to her family, surprised the school one day by visiting in her 'nurse's uniform' to reveal to them her position as an assistant nurse in the Eastern Fever Hospital in Hackney, London.[118] She had, according to the report, asked for her younger sisters to also be admitted to the PMVH. Anna remained in nursing throughout her life, progressing firstly to the position of ward sister, before taking up a private nursing role within the household of Martha Dudley, retired Mayfair milliner.[119] Anna evidently did well for herself. By 1921 she was living independently in the prestigious Albert Hall Mansions in Kensington and working as a private nurse.[120]

These case studies demonstrate the transience of emotion experienced by girls. They serve as a counterpoint to those provided by MABYS and demonstrate the pitfall of judging children's happiness with institutional care using snapshot evidence.[121] They also show the willingness of staff to re-admit girls who had behaved badly. This was a broader characteristic of Susanna Meredith's ventures. At Nine Elms, several commentators

[115] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans,* p. 139; Selina Todd puts the percentage of women workers in domestic service in 1881 at 43%, S. Todd, *Snakes and Ladders. The Great British Social Mobility Myth* (London, 2021), p. 17 Ancestry.com, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1930, ISBG/280/002.
[116] Ancestry.com, 1891 England Census, RG12/407/71/38.
[117] 2591/1/14, Twenty-First Annual Report, p. 9.
[118] 2591/1/14, Twenty-First Annual Report, p. 9; 1891 England Census, RG12/203/106/4/15.
[119] Ancestry.com, 1911 England Census, RG14/2420/260/80; 1881 England Census, RG11/95/66/36.
[120] Ancestry.com, UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1898-1968, p. 344
[121] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 139.

remarked on Meredith's willingness to readmit former employees, even if they had left prison and reoffended.[122] This showed once again the pragmatism and understanding Meredith brought to her work and demonstrates that the PMVH's actions supported its rhetoric about the need to understand the people it helped.[123]

For girls whose temperament or experience appeared unsuited to becoming servants, laundry work offered an alternative.[124] Laundries have traditionally been associated with the punitive and abusive regimes of Magdalene asylums for 'fallen women', which acted as penitentiaries for women who had been involved in sexual activity outside of marriage.[125] Davidoff highlights that laundry work could consist of 'intensive domestic work' that could be used to control and discipline, to provide 'moral training and moulding of character'.[126] This appears to have been equally true at the PMVH. Laundry trainees were often housed separately from the other girls in the 'Laundry House'. The house was supervised by one of the 'sisters' of the association and was also home to the schoolmistress and an additional 'Mother'.[127] The ten percent of girls who became laundresses on leaving the PMVH spanned the social spectrum, ranging in class background from B (middle-class) to E (the bottom possible class, which included beggars, scavengers and the unemployed).

Yet, while laundry work was a disciplinary form of labour for some, it was also a practical route to an alternative occupation. The demand for laundry services had expanded in the second half of the nineteenth century in response to growth in the leisure industry.

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[122] 'The Prisoner's Friend'.
[123] Ibid.
[124] 2591/1/14, PMVH Report for the Year 1883, p. 9.
[125] J. Thor, 'Religious and Industrial Education in nineteenth-century Magdalene Asylums in Scotland', *Studies in Church History*, 55 (2019), p. 352.
[126] Davidoff, 'Mastered for Life', p. 414.
[127] 2591/1/14, PMVH Report for the Year 1883, p. 9.

According to Kathryn Gleadle, the number of women employed as laundresses increased by one fifth between 1861 and 1901.[128] Meredith's experience with female prisoners through her Discharged Female Prisoners Aid Society, which she had established in 1865, had shown her that not all women could work successfully as domestic servants. Yet they still needed employment.[129] Meredith's solution was to open a laundry in Nine Elms, South London, where former prisoners could earn a living rather than return to the streets or crime. The laundry was a non-sectarian organisation that was willing, unlike other aid societies, to accept women who had reoffended. The regime was 'firm rather than strict'. Women arrived in the morning seeking work and returned to their lodgings at night.[130] The laundry grew in popularity over the thirty years of operation and in 1882 Meredith noted that it had employed 572 women in the last year. Meredith tracked the lives of many, reporting in a table how long they had remained at the laundry for and what subsequent employment they had taken up. Several stayed years, showing the appeal of laundry work for some. [131]

Tracing work has revealed that around ten percent of the girls leaving the Home became laundresses, at least initially, although most then married or moved into other domestic service roles. In choosing which girls to place in the laundry at the PMVH, behaviour and age seem to have been significant determining factors. Laundry girls were often those who had been admitted at an older age, or those who had 'been in early childhood exposed to evil influences' and might provide bad examples to the younger children in the cottages.[132] We have already seen that it was often an option given to girls, like Eliza Larner and Eliza

[128] Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century,* p. 41.
[129] Lloyd, *Record of a Vigorous Life*, pp. 36-37.
[130] 'The Prisoner's Friend'.
[131] Nine Elms Ladies' Association, *Record of Christian labour connected with Prison Mission and other work At Nine Elms, and at Addlestone, Surrey* (London, 1883), pp. 66,69.
[132] 2591/1/14, PMVH Report for the Year 1883, p. 9.

Goulden, who had misbehaved. Reports mention that staff used its 'discipline' as an occasional punishment for cottage girls found to be 'idle'.[133] Fourteen-year-old Harriet Huggitt was 'very troublesome' and 'inclined to be lazy'. She was sent to Mrs Meredith by her mother for discipline purposes. Initially, she was placed at Nine Elms but had to be removed and taken into the PMVH because she was 'rheumatic'. After two years, aged sixteen, she was discharged to a situation as a laundress.[134] Harriet may have initially been assigned to laundry work as a form of discipline, but even after leaving the Home she pursued the work, and at the age of twenty-one was still working as a laundress in Tunbridge Wells.[135]

For the twenty-five percent of girls from the PMVH who did not marry, domestic service offered stability. For a handful, it even offered career opportunity. It was not always the 'aspiration free zone' it has been portrayed as.[136] Domestic service was a diverse employment category and could, in large homes, cover a broad range of roles.[137] These, as Jacob Field has demonstrated, carried gradations in status and pay and some of the girls who left the PMVH followed this path.[138] Ten percent of the girls who left the PVMH for service progressed from positions as housemaids or kitchen maids to higher status positions within households, such as cook or nurse. Others – the majority — took up a succession of roles as general domestic servants, moving to better neighbourhoods, and more affluent employers, for presumably better pay or circumstances.[139] As journalist and domestic authority, Mrs Beeton, pointed out, a general servant often started her career in households

[133] 2591/1/14, Manager's Report 1885, p. 7.
[134] 2591/3/1, fol. 204.
[135] 1881 England Census, RG11/915/106/14.
[136] Delap, *Knowing their Place*, p. 27.
[137] Schwarz, 'English servants and their employers', p. 236.
[138] Field, 'Domestic service', p. 257.
[139] Pooley, 'Domestic Servants', pp. 405-406

where the employer was 'just a step above her in the social scale' containing some 'rough specimens of the feminine gender'. By the time she had learned her trade she would progress to a 'respectable tradesman's house'.[140]

Girls did not need to transition into different categories of domestic service to experience mobility. They could experience progression and pay within the same role but with different employers. This was evident for a few girls. Martha Greenham, whose mother was a beggar and in prison, and whose father was dead, was brought to the PMVH by a policeman.[141] Although she had at least five siblings, the family had been split up by the time of her admission. One of her brothers was in the Navy, another in an industrial school in Somerset, while a third half-brother was living with her eldest half-brother, a barman in a poor neighbourhood in Marylebone.[142] Her only sister Louisa had died, aged three, in the workhouse six months before Martha's admission.[143] Martha remained in the PMVH for nine years and spent all her career as a general domestic servant. She left the PMVH for service in 1884 aged fifteen.[144] By 1891, she was working in a modest lower middle-class home in Streatham, as general servant to Frederick Alpe, a solicitor's clerk, his two sisters and their cousin, a draper's assistant. By 1901, the census shows her living in a larger house in more suburban Carshalton as the general servant to a civil servant at the Board of Trade. Ten years further on, now aged thirty-eight, the census shows that she was living in a large nine room house in rural Sutton as a general servant to sixty-year-old stationer and paper

[140] Mrs Beeton, *The Book of Household Management*, (London, 1866), p. 1001.
[141] 2591/3/1, fol. 174.
[142] Ancestry.com, Royal Navy Registers of Seamen's Services, ADM 188/79; London, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1930, STMBG/154/01, STMBG/193; England Census 1881, RG11/2430/22/37, RG11/144/35/9.
[143] Ancestry.com, Deaths: STMBG/195.
[144] 2591/3/1, fol. 174.

merchant, Alfred Jones and his wife and adult son.[145] She seems to have become what Pooley described as 'a more permanent or significant participant in the household'.[146] She remained with the Jones family until 1932 when her employers died.[147] She then seems to have retired aged sixty-three and is recorded, first living by herself, and then with other people of a similar age and background.[148] Martha's life as a domestic servant was considerably more stable than that of her brothers, all of whom spent their entire lives in poor circumstances and one of whom entered the workhouse in his fifties.[149] We have no insight into whether or not Martha was happy with her life, but through her consistency of employment and progress to comfortable circumstances, she epitomised what the PMVH was hoping to achieve with the girls that they admitted from poor backgrounds.

As we have seen, training girls for domestic service offered several advantages. Firstly, it provided skills that were in demand in a chronically short-staffed domestic service sector. This ensured that employment was available to those who wanted it. Secondly, it offered a transition to independence for girls who were old enough to leave the Home but lacked familial support. Thirdly, it provided what Kathryn Gleadle has called 'a stop gap' before marriage and for some the opportunity to work alongside other women in both productive and domestic labour.[150] Fourthly and finally, it provided scope for career and wage progression for those who did not marry and whose temperament, circumstances, or connections, did not position them for other work.

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[145] Ancestry.com, 1891 England Census, RG12/457/89/2; 1901 England Census, RG13/579/15/2; 1911 England Census, RG14/2930/195.
[146] Pooley, 'Domestic Servants', p. 421.
[147] Findmypast.co.uk, England & Wales Deaths 1837-2007, 2A/25.
[148] Ancestry.com, Surrey Electoral Registers; Ref:CC802/48/3.
[149] Ancestry.com, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, HOBG/541/098; Ancestry.com, E&W Civil Deaths, 1837-1915, 1B/175; Ancestry, 1891 England Census: RG12/117/153/57, E&W Civil Deaths: 1D/25; Findmypast.co.uk, 1901 England Census, RG13/130/73/67.
[150] Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 45.

Returning to friends

Despite its many advantages, only slightly over half of the eighty girls studied went directly into domestic service. Nineteen percent returned to 'friends'. As we saw in Chapter One, despite the troubled background of many girls, the staff at the PMVH worked to facilitate girls' return to their families where possible. Girls, who returned to 'friends' were statistically more likely to have originally come from a higher class (Table Five). This could indicate that their wider families retained sufficient respectability or resources for their return to be facilitated by the institution. When girls' families did not retain enough financial or social capital, they were treated in a similar way to girls from lower social classes. Often, girls in this category, as we saw in Chapter One, had ended up in the PMVH because of a life event.

Table Five: Girls' destination on discharge by socio-economic status of father

Number (N)	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**U**	**Totals**
Returned to friends	0	5	5	1	3	1	15
Domestic service	0	2	9	8	12	13	44
Emigrated	0	0	4	2	7	6	19
Adopted	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Transferred	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	**1**	**7**	**19**	**11**	**22**	**20**	**80**
Percentages (%)	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**U**	**Totals**
Returned to friends	0	33	33	7	20	7	19
Domestic service	2	5	20	18	27	30	55
Emigrated	0	0	21	11	37	32	24
Adopted	100	0	0	0	0	0	1
Transferred	0	0	100	0	0	0	1

Notes:

a. Classification based on: W.A. Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupation' in E.A. Wrigley (ed) *Nineteenth Century Society* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 203-23.

b. Social Class A is defined by W.A. Armstrong as the professional or upper and middle-class. B is intermediate between the middle and working-class and is primarily employers, C is capacious and includes both white collar employment (e.g., clerks, shopkeepers) and skilled artisanal occupations such as carpentry or blacksmithing, D is semi-skilled working class, E is manual working class and beggars, vagrants, criminals etc. Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupation', pp. 203-204.

c. Fathers who have no occupation prior to their conviction are allocated to class E.

d. If Father has a conviction then socio-economic status is defined as at time prior to father's first conviction if after girl was born.

e. U refers to the large number of fathers who are unrecorded for girls.

f. Girls who emigrated normally ended up placed as servants overseas.

Yet, while, where possible, staff sought to return girls to their families, they did make value judgements about which families were suitable for girls to return to. The 1885 Annual Report noted that some parents were 'the enemies of which the children have to beware as

they grow up'.[151] Harriet Gooding, admitted aged sixteen, on the application of her local vicar's wife, was not returned to her mother when ready to depart a year later because, according to local residents, 'it would be simple ruin for the girl to go home, she would be on the streets directly'.[152] Instead Harriet, who was from Bath, went to service in London in 1884. Despite the Home's precautions, this did not, however, sever the relationship between her and her mother, who can be seen living with Harriet and her labourer husband in both the 1891 and the 1901 census.[153] It is worth noting here that, despite the PMVH's desire to separate Harriet from her mother, it did not pursue the option of emigration.

Of the girls who returned to friends, forty-seven percent, subsequently went into domestic service anyway, supporting the earlier argument about girls' limited employment options in this period. The remainder took up a variety of occupations. Several went into tailoring or needlework, which was the other principal occupation for which girls were trained.[154] In 1895, managers reported that thirty girls were employed in the needlework department, of whom fifteen girls were being taught dressmaking and two girls machine knitting.[155] Girls employed in machine knitting tended to be 'sickly' or 'physically deformed' girls, regarded as physically incapable of the heavier labour of domestic service.[156] The type of sewing within the school ranged from the domestic to the more skilled work such as garments for wedding trousseaux.[157]

[151] 2591/1/14, PMVH Annual Report (1885), p. 10.
[152] 2591/3/1, fol. 185.
[153] 1891 England Census, RG12/457/34/60, 1901 England Census, RG13/477/10/11.
[154] 2591/1/14, PMVH Manager's Report, 1883, p. 8
[155] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Fifth Annual Report, p.5.
[156] 2591/1/15, Twenty-Sixth Annual Report, p. 5.
[157] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Fifth Annual Report, pp. 5-6; 2591/1/15, Twenty-ninth Annual Report, p. 3.

Needlework could be very difficult work, as staff recognised. Managers emphasised that they tried to make it 'as pleasant as we can' and that the sewing room was 'one of the brightest and happiest rooms in the Institution'.[158] They asserted that needlework was an important discipline because it gave girls 'habits of order' and a 'sense of appreciating things beautiful, which is very good for them'.[159] It was also, as Mrs Beeton's book on household management points out, an essential skill for the 'housemaid in a small family'.[160] The conflict between the hard work and beauty of dressmaking was highlighted in a letter from nineteen-year-old Sarah Smith in 1893. Sarah, who had left the PMVH some time previously, was living in Soho in London with her widowed charwoman mother and her siblings.[161] She was clearly working at a prestigious tailors, because, although her letter noted that she was 'very glad' she had been taught to 'get my living at needlework' because it was relatively well paid, she also complained of the tediousness of sewing gold and silver lace onto the coats she was making for the royal wedding.[162] Sarah married musician, George James, in 1898, but the skills she learned within the PMVH stood her in good stead throughout her life.[163] She was still working as a tailoress after her marriage in the 1901 census and in the 1911 census is noted as being a 'petticoat maker'. This work was carried on from her recently built five-room home, now in the working-class suburb of Bruce Grove, Tottenham.[164] The flexibility of this work allowed her to look after her five children who, in 1911 ranged in age from seven months to thirteen years old.[165]

[158] 2591/1/15, Thirtieth Annual Report, pp. 5-6.
[159] Ibid., p. 5.
[160] Beeton, *The Book of Household Management*, p. 997.
[161] 1891 England Census, RG12/88/147/27.
[162] 2591/1/14, Twenty-third Annual Report, p. 11.
[163] Ancestry.com, CoE England Parish Registers, STA/PR/4/25.
[164] A. P. Baggs, D.K. Bolton, E.P. Scarff and G. C. Tyack, 'Tottenham: Growth after 1850', in T. F.T. Baker and R. B. Pugh (eds) *A History of the County of Middlesex*, Volume 5, ed. (London, 1976), pp. 317-324.
[165] 1911 England Census, enumeration. 22, schedule 71.

It tended to be older girls who learned dressmaking, although all girls learned needlework. The decision about who to train in dressmaking appears, at first glance, to have been driven by social class. Historian W.A. Armstrong classed domestic servants as social class D, the unskilled working class. Dressmakers, categorised as class C, therefore occupied a higher social status than domestic servants, although, needlework itself covered a wide range of occupational positions ranging from the respectable to the disreputable — demonstrating the difficulty of homogenising occupations within one social class. At the bottom, was the sweated labour, often associated in Victorian melodrama with a descent into prostitution, illness, or death.[166] At the top was millinery and dressmaking, a skilled trade regarded as a respectable occupation for a young woman from a middle-class family.[167] Of the eighty girls studied in detail for this thesis, four pursued careers as dressmakers or tailoresses. Three of the four came from backgrounds where their parents had been in Class C, the skilled or higher status working class. Elizabeth Haines was the daughter of a cheesemonger, Olive Barnes' widowed mother was a dressmaker, and Sarah Smith's deceased father had been a police constable.[168] The fourth girl, Elizabeth Ginevan, had parents who were both criminals, in and out of the workhouse, but her baptism certificate lists her father as a 'gentleman' implying that while her parents were currently in class E, at least one of them may have been born into a higher social status.

However, basing conclusions on a sample of four girls is difficult. It could have been that the girls trained as dressmakers showed a particular aptitude for that skill or had connections

[166] S. Blackburn, '"To be Poor and To be Honest…Is the Hardest Struggle of All": Sweated Needlewomen and Campaigns for Protective Legislation, 1840-1914', in B. Harris (ed), *Famine and Fashion: Needlewomen in the Nineteenth Century* (Florence, 2005), p. 243-5.
[167] B. Harris, 'Introduction' in Harris (ed), *Famine and Fashion: Needlewomen in the Nineteenth Century* (Florence, 2005), p. 4.
[168] Ancestry.com, Metropolitan Police Pension Registers 1852-1932, Number 6081; E&W Civil Death Index, 1D/28.

that could help them. Support for the argument that class was not the principal determining factor is provided by an examination of the social background of girls sent to domestic service. This reveals that of the twenty-seven girls who originally came from social class C or above, twenty-seven percent entered domestic service immediately on leaving the institution (Table Five) and forty-two percent of that class overall did, including those who initially returned to friends.[169] The fact that plenty of girls from higher social classes became servants implies that there were factors other than class that were more important in shaping girls' futures.

Tracing girls' backgrounds in more depth provides us with some clues as to what these factors might be. Focusing on individual cases allows us to look beyond the blunt categorisation of social class to the nuanced realities of negotiating nineteenth-century working-class life. Historians have been critical of the failure of welfare institutions to train girls for the newer professions that were emerging towards the end of the nineteenth century.[170] Yet, there were girls within the PMVH, who did end up in 'higher' positions. The 1893-94 report noted that one girl had gained her 'parchment' to become a fully qualified school teacher, 'several are hospital nurses and probationers, one is in an office as a secretary, and one is qualifying for an appointment in a Post Office'.[171] The 1899 report emphasised that 'those who show the ability to rise in any special way get the opportunity to do so' although managers still believed that for many girls who came from criminal or destitute backgrounds, life in service was the preferable option.[172]

[169] Defined as those whose fathers had been in that social class prior to their first conviction if that conviction took place after the girl was born.
[170] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 139, 121; Sheldon, '"Something in the Place of Home'", p. 264; Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', p. 49.
[171] 2591/1/14, Twenty-third Annual Report, p. 6.
[172] 2591/1/15, Twenty-ninth Annual Report, p. 1.

This is an important point. In their criticisms of girls' occupational choices, welfare historians have failed to recognise the difficulties of gaining access to these professions without familial support.[173] As Kathryn Gleadle has pointed out, most female shop assistants for the new department or high street stores that were emerging in the late nineteenth century, were drawn from the upper-working or lower-middle classes. Training as a teacher was also beyond the reach of girls from labouring families.[174] Girls from welfare institutions therefore stood little chance of gaining these coveted roles. Even if — like thirty-four percent of girls in the PMVH — they were from families, which had at one point in the past, occupied a position within the 'respectable' skilled working or middle class, their families had forfeited their social capital through the disgrace of criminality or poverty. This left them in the main unable to help their daughters even if they wanted to.

When girls did end up in skilled working-class or better positions, it was normally through familial intervention, not because of philanthropic action. An example is provided by Gertrude Weaver, who entered the PMVH in 1884, aged twelve. The youngest of four sisters, from a middle-class family, Gertrude ended up in a residential institution, not because her family had no resources, but because her accountant father had been sent to prison for defrauding the Gospel Society of a large sum of money. In her father's absence, Gertrude's stepmother, who was reportedly 'in good circumstances', refused to look after her, saying that she did not believe Gertrude had 'any claim on her'. Gertrude had other options. Her maternal uncle, John Ayfliffe, a 'very respectable' commercial traveller lived in a large house in Richmond, with his three children and domestic servant. Yet, he, too,

[173] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 139, 121; Sheldon, '"Something in the Place of Home'", p. 264; Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', p. 49.
[174] Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 46-47.

disclaimed responsibility as he told the PMVH that his own family was too 'large' for him to offer any help at that point. John suggested he would do anything he could in future but there is little evidence that he did.[175] Gertrude left the PVMH in 1890 for a position in Devon, as a housemaid to the Reverend James Munday, diocesan inspector of schools.[176]

Yet, Gertrude's family connections did ultimately help her. Another older sister, Winifred, who had been working as an assistant manager in the Black Swan Hotel in Winchester, married wealthy divorced bookmaker, Richard Dunn, 'one of the leading bookmakers on the English Turf' in 1897 and, after six years in service, Gertrude was able to come and live with her sister.[177] Gertrude later moved in with another elder sister, Constance, who had by this point opened a boarding house and 'assisted her in the business'.[178] Gertrude's case demonstrates the limits of familial affection. Yet, it also demonstrates the resilience of sibling ties and the way in which familial connections were more important in helping girls gain social status than the efforts of the PMVH.

What then did it mean if those networks had been destroyed or adversely impacted in some way? We can consider this question through an examination of the life courses of the Lindsay sisters. The four middle-class Lindsay girls (Bessie, eleven, Marian, seven, Gertrude, five, and Hope, four) entered the PMVH in May 1878, four years after their father, a bookkeeper in a solicitor's office, was convicted of forgery. This precipitated their father's decline from class B to class E. A ten-year-old sister, Florence, remained with their mother, Elizabeth, and another, nine-year-old May, lodged with her uncle, an ironmonger, and his

[175] 2591/3/1, fol. 482.
[176] 1891 England Census, RG12/1043/124/22.
[177] 1891 England Census, RG12/1724/50/10; 'Interment of Mr Dick Dunn', *The Sportsman* (5 Aug. 1905), p. 4 col e.
[178] 1911 England Census, Sch. 207, Enum. 02.

family.[179] Three years after the girls' admission, their father, James, was released from prison. Yet, the girls remained in the PMVH until the point at which they were ready for employment. Bessie was the first to leave, in 1883, and took up employment as a cashier at a dyer's shop, a respectable middle-class profession. The two sisters closest to her in age, neither of whom had entered the PMVH, also pursued shop work. Florence became a dyer's shop woman, while May married her ironmonger cousin.[180] The next sister, Marion, became in 1887 a pupil teacher at the PMVH before, in 1889, leaving to become a teacher at the local infant school in Addlestone.[181] However, the two youngest sisters, Gertrude, and Hope, who had left the family home as infants, took different paths. Both left the PMVH in 1890 having spent twelve years there. Gertrude became a laundress in a nearby girls' school, Byflete Hall, owned by a connection of Mrs Meredith, and Hope became an under-housemaid for Mrs Meredith in Clapham. Hope died aged nineteen and Gertrude married a gardener, aged thirty-four, remaining in the lower working-class for the remainder of her life.[182]

Unfortunately, the records do not state why the two younger girls ended up in lower working-class occupations, while their four older sisters did not, but further tracing of family records suggest an answer. The girls' mother, Elizabeth, came from a respectable middle-class family from Deal, Kent. Her father was a retired mariner, who had taken up the victualling trade, and who kept several servants.[183] He died in 1878, in the same year that his son-in-law, James Lindsay was convicted of his crime. Elizabeth's sister, Amelia, had married

[179] 1881 England Census, RG11/997/78/1; 2591/3/1, fol.
[180] Ancestry.com, London, CoE Marriages and Banns, 1754-1938, p84/tri2/022; 1891 England Census, RG12/553/139/1; Census: RG12/553/117/2.
[181] Ancestry.com, E&W Register 1939, RG101/1847H.
[182] London, CoE Marriages and Banns, 1754-1938, p80/sim/006.
[183] 1871 England Census; RG10/1008/32/8.

an ironmonger and it was she who gave May a home, and whose son May subsequently married. It seems to have been these merchant connections that helped Bessie and Florence gain their positions as shop assistants. By the time the younger two girls, Hope and Gertrude, left the PMVH in 1890, this social capital appears to have waned. Their mother Elizabeth seems to have left their father. The 1891 census shows James Lindsay, was living in the Lambeth workhouse. His wife Elizabeth appears to be 'visiting' the household of a widower with a large family in Streatham.[184] By 1901, Elizabeth was living and working as a domestic servant in a hotel in Waltham Abbey, Essex.[185] It appears that by 1891 the family had split up and there was no longer the wealth or connections to help the younger girls. Instead, Mrs Meredith used her connections to find Hope and Gertrude positions in domestic service.

As these examples show, for the handful of girls who moved into higher status occupations, it was external familial connections that secured these opportunities. Christina de Bellaigue's analysis of middle-class social mobility has demonstrated how relationships were a crucial part of the social mobility process. Parents, de Bellaigue argued, sought to prevent downward social mobility by leveraging 'networks of acquaintance and recognition constructed through sociability' to the benefit of their children.[186] Most of the parents of girls in the PMVH either lacked or had squandered those networks. Where they had not, they were able to use them for the benefit of their daughters and it was this that enabled some girls to enter higher status professions, not the actions of the PMVH.

[184] 1891 England Census, RG12/457/136/62.
[185] Ibid., RG12/397/139/5/3; 1901 England Census, RG13/1276/118/18.
[186] de Bellaigue, 'Great Expectations', p. 32.

This discussion has demonstrated the importance of considering philanthropic training in conjunction with children's individual backgrounds and circumstances of admission. There has been a tendency in the literature, firstly, to accept too readily contemporary critiques of industrial training and, secondly, to apply a cynical view of philanthropic motives in securing girls' employment.[187] Domestic service may well have been an unappealing option for a young girl, but it was, nonetheless, one of the few options available to most lower-working-class girls — whether in an institution or not. [188] Nor was it a decision made indiscriminately by philanthropists who consistently had much greater demand for servants than they could supply. The evidence discussed so far has made it clear that philanthropists made decisions for girls' futures based on their temperament, class, age, family circumstances, and behaviour. There was a much greater degree of 'individualising' than has been recognised historically.

Girls' emigration

Further evidence of this process of 'individualising' is provided by an analysis of the PMVH's policy towards emigration. The Annual Reports of the PMVH made little mention of emigration and lack the narratives of social mobility and opportunity so prevalent in the RPS. Yet, other writings by Mrs Meredith demonstrate that she thought of emigration in similar terms to the staff in the RPS, as a beneficial step for women in the right circumstances.

Following a trip to North America in 1880, Meredith wrote an article for the *Sunday at Home* Christian journal, which discussed the benefits of emigration. The article appears to

[187] Mahood, *Policing gender*, p. 90; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 139-140; Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', p. 49.
[188] Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 47.

have been a response to Andrew Doyle's criticisms of emigrationist Maria Rye's activities.[189] While in Canada, Meredith spoke with children who had emigrated with Rye, as well as with married women who had emigrated with the Juvenile Emigration Company. Her article claimed that all those she spoke to were happy, stating 'they had ample opportunity to tell us if it was otherwise'. She argued that this happiness came from the contrast with the 'bare subsistence' and absence of 'family joy' in England. This drew on narratives of a higher standard of living similar to those promoted by the RPS. She wrote of emigrants who had become part of families, another who had become 'nurse governess', one who had progressed from 'lower domestic life' to that of daughter/housekeeper for an elderly family, and of a boy who as a farm labourer would someday be 'making a fortune'. There were 'many more ways of escape open to girls by means of socialities (sic)'. She pointed out that 'many' girls 'marry soon and have wealth early'.[190]

Yet despite this vote of confidence in the principle of sending children overseas, throughout the period 1870-1900, the PMVH records barely mentioned emigration or imperial ambition. Nor did the PMVH, unlike the RPS, mount a systematic emigration programme, instead, taking advantage of ad-hoc opportunities. The exception was 1886, when a group of fourteen girls, representing twenty-eight percent of girls leaving that year, emigrated to the Boston area.[191] According to the 1887 Annual Report, this 'experiment' was unsuccessful. The girls had gone straight into domestic service but had not met the standards expected by the Americans and showed a 'disposition to revolt under the strict discipline of the New England homes'. The report remarked that: with 'patience and

[189] Following government inspector Andrew Doyle's critical report of 1875 on Maria Rye's programme of emigration, pauper emigration was suspended between 1875 and 1883. P. Higginbotham, *Children's Homes. A History of Institutional Care for Britain's Young* (Barnsley, 2017), p. 211.
[190] Mrs Meredith, 'Juvenile Emigration', *Sunday at Home* 1369 (July 24, 1880), pp. 477-478.
[191] Ancestry.com, Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Boston, Massachusetts, 1820-1891, 36/ M277.

kindness' from their employers, the girls were improving, but it was clear from the report that the experiment was unlikely to be repeated.[192] This seems to have deterred managers from any further efforts to emigrate large groups and following this they seem to have returned to their previous approach of sending girls in small groups. Excluding 1886, an average of two to four percent of girls per annum, emigrated immediately on leaving the PMVH. This was far fewer than the RPS, which emigrated an estimated forty-two percent of its boys over the period 1850-1895. Altogether, of the eighty girls traced between 1870 and 1895, seventy-six percent remained in Britain, either taking up positions in domestic service or returning to friends. The remaining twenty-four percent went overseas. This was higher than the PMVH's report of fourteen percent of girls emigrating between 1870 and 1885, but the Home's official numbers are difficult to reconcile with the admissions register.[193]

If girls had siblings they often emigrated together, depending on their age. Most went to America rather than Canada, raising the question of whether we could assert any imperial underpinning to their emigration.[194] Several girls were sent to Le Mars in Iowa. Le Mars was founded in 1869 and had become popular with elite British families as a destination, where younger sons could learn farming, and indulge themselves in golf, polo, and riding to hounds. Hundreds of British immigrants arrived in the 1880s and it is probable that Mrs Meredith had a connection there, who acted to receive her emigrant girls.[195] This could have been the Reverend Herbert Cunningham, Oxford graduate, and Episcopalian chaplain of Le Mars who also acted as an agent of the Women's Emigration Society which was based there.

[192] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1887), p.4.
[193] See Table Five for a discussion of differences.
[194] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire,* pp. 118-122.
[195] 'History of Le Mars, Iowa', https://www.lemarsiowa.com/401/History (2 March 2022).

According to Curtis Hamack's study of pioneer Iowa, servant girls were much in demand and usually married quickly.[196]

Unlike the records of the RPS, the PMVH gave very little information about how girls were chosen to go overseas. However, through tracing children's backgrounds, we can find some clues. Sixty-eight percent of girls who emigrated had criminal parents compared to the average across the eighty girls of fifty-five percent. Yet, when compared to the boys, who we saw competed for the option to emigrate, fewer emigrant boys than average had convict parents.[197] A lack of family seemed to be a more significant factor. Ten percent of girls who emigrated were orphans, compared to the average of six percent. A further sixteen percent had lost one parent to death and had been deserted by the other. Within the cohort of male emigrants, twenty percent were orphans, compared to only eight percent overall. In fact, eighty percent of orphan boys emigrated. This implies either, that philanthropists selected those from the most disrupted or absent families to emigrate, or that those children with the fewest ties were keener to emigrate. This would support the interpretation that emigration was a solution for children with absent or no families rather than a strategy for separation from problematic families, as the historiography has claimed.[198]

There were exceptions. Five-year-old Mary Anne Hall, 'a remarkably pretty child', had entered the PMVH in 1870. She had been left with strangers, while her mother was undergoing one of her frequent imprisonments. After ten years in the institution, aged fifteen, she took up a position as an under-nurse in a large home in Eltham, Southeast London. Three months later, her mother having discovered her address 'waylaid' Mary Ann,

[196] C. Hamack, *Gentlemen on the Prairie: Victorians in Pioneer Iowa* (Iowa, 2011), p. 118.
[197] Ten percent of emigrant boys had convict parents compared to eleven percent for the cohort.
[198] Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 67, 70, 77; Hendrick, *Child Welfare,* pp. 81-82.

while she was 'on her way home from church' and persuaded her to come with her. Mary Ann was found three days later in her mother's lodgings in 'one of the worst parts of London' by one of the prison mission ladies. As her initial admission had been under the Industrial Schools Act, she was still under licence and so was removed 'after a great deal of trouble' and sent three months later to a situation in Canada.[199] Unfortunately, Mary Ann is one of the few girls who was impossible to trace and we have no insight into what happened to her after her arrival or indeed whether she remained in Canada or returned once again to her mother. The records also give no indications of consent. As Mary Ann was below sixteen, the Home must have obtained permission for her emigration from the Home Secretary although this has not been recorded. It is important to note that, despite Mary Ann's background and family, the PMVH's first choice was not to encourage Mary Ann to emigrate. Emigration was only seen as a solution when the institution feared Mary Ann to at risk from the efforts of her mother.

Yet Mary Ann's case was unusual and, while the PMVH lacks the records of consent of the RPS, its files seem to indicate that the older girls, at the very least, made a deliberate decision to emigrate. Thirty percent of the girls who emigrated, did so after spending some time in domestic service in Britain. One such child was Rose Foley. Rose was admitted in 1871, aged eight, after reportedly being found 'wandering the streets'. According to her file, Rose's mother was dead, and her father had married again and was 'probably in prison'. The woman, with whom her father had left her, appeared to have deserted her.[200] Rose's elder brother, John, was in a poor law orphanage.[201] At the age of fifteen, Rose was sent to a

[199] 2591/3/1, fol. 193.
[200] 2591/3/1, fol. 142.
[201] 1871 England Census, RG10/1314/141/3.

position in service at a girls' school in Putney, run by an acquaintance of Mrs Meredith. She spent eight months there, before, in 1879, joining a party of girls emigrating to Canada with Maria Rye. Rose did not like Canada and soon moved on to Le Mars to work as a servant near some of the other PMVH girls.[202] The records do not tell us why Rose emigrated. But passenger records indicate that she was sixteen at the time of her emigration and, like many of the boys in the previous chapter, old enough to give her consent. It may be that, lacking any family ties in Britain, Rose thought emigration would provide a fresh start. Given she emigrated under the PMVH's sponsorship, it could be she saw the opportunity to go overseas with some of her fellow pupils. Sixteen-year-old orphan, Jane Armstrong, who would later name her first born child after manager, Martha Lloyd, travelled in the same party of emigrants. Jane, too, emigrated after almost a year in domestic service and she too moved down to Iowa after some time in Canada.[203] This indicates that like the boys, girls were able to experience geographic mobility.

The decision of some girls to emigrate to join their siblings supports this perspective. Eighteen-year-old Eliza Rushman had been in domestic service for three years in 1886, when she chose to emigrate with her fifteen-year-old sister Ellen who was leaving the Home directly for America as part of the large group of girls going to Boston. The siblings left behind a third sister, ten-year-old Emma. Emma remained in the PMVH until she was fifteen, when she was sent to service in the nearby girls' school at Byflete Hall. Evidently unhappy to have left the PMVH where she had lived since the age of two, Emma was found to be stealing and hiding things 'of no use to her' and was re-admitted to the PMVH. She remained there for another year before in 1891 being again sent out to service, where she

[202] 2591/3/1, fol. 142.
[203] 2591/3/1, Jane Armstrong.

seems to have been happier.[204] In 1893, aged eighteen, Emma, with the help of the PMVH, emigrated to join Ellen, who had married three years earlier and was now living in the cotton boom town of Fall River in Massachusetts. [205]

The historiography has been highly critical of the motives behind juvenile emigration and has foregrounded philanthropists' desire to separate children from harmful families.[206] Yet, as the evidence in this and the preceding chapter demonstrates, emigration was viewed principally as an opportunity for financial gain and happiness for young emigrants. Emigration appears to have been prioritised for those who wished actively to go and who lacked family ties in Britain. Only occasionally was it used as a method of last resort to protect children from families that philanthropists believed to be harmful.

Social mobility

As the first two sections of this chapter have shown, philanthropic aims for girls were multi-faceted. Overall, they were underpinned by a desire to provide girls with the stability in adulthood that their childhoods had lacked. This, philanthropists believed, would prevent girls from descending to the messy circumstances that characterised their parents' lives. This was not the 'rags to riches' social mobility articulated so often by the Victorians, but one that recognised that domestic service, while a relatively low status occupation within society, was still a better outcome than a life on the streets or in prison.

Existing studies of social mobility focus on occupation as an indicator of social status. While, as discussed in Chapter Two, occupation has its issues as a measure, given the complexity of

[204] SHC, 2591/3/1, fol. 376.
[205] Ancestry.com, Massachusetts, U.S., Marriage Records, 1840-1915, image:878; 1900 US Federal Census, Weedham, Mass, p. 13, enum.1052.
[206] Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 77-78; Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 81.

philanthropic ambitions for children, it remains the simplest marker of the progress that institutional children made relative to their parents.[207] It enables measurement across the life course and allows us to assess the trajectory of individual lives within the constraints of decennial data. It also facilitates comparison with the existing scholarship.

Beyond the work by Joy Parr, discussed extensively in the preceding chapter, there is very little work on occupational outcomes for children who left welfare.[208] Within Britain, the only significant study has been undertaken by Barry Godfrey, Pamela Cox, Heather Shore and Zoe Alker, whose book tracing the life courses of delinquent children considers the question of 'what was a successful life for these children?' As the authors acknowledge, the study considers only delinquent children, not those who encountered welfare for other reasons, and thus is less applicable to the girls in my study.[209] It also only considers boys.[210]

The lack of scholarship is largely a reflection of the difficulties involved in tracing women in official data. As Godfrey, Cox, Shore and Alker highlighted, marriage often meant girls were lost to sight. Not all parish marriage registers are digitised, and civil marriage records generally contain insufficient information to enable the historian to verify that they have the right person. This, as they acknowledge, is a 'critical methodological constraint' on historians' ability to track girls and women through the life course.[211] This thesis has faced similar challenges, with the added complication that the girls under review were admitted with an average age of eight between 1870 and 1892. This meant that they were more likely to get married or become employed during the first few decades of the twentieth century,

[207] Chapter Two, pp. 139-140.
[208] Parr, *Labouring Children.*
[209] B. Godfrey, P. Cox, H. Shore, and Z. Alker, *Young Criminal Lives. Life Courses and Life Chances from 1850* (Oxford, 2017), p. 113.
[210] Ibid., p. 114.
[211] Godfrey, Cox, Shore and Alker, *Young Criminal Lives*, p. 46.

when there are fewer digitised records available for examination. I was unable to trace twenty-five percent of the girls within five years of their leaving the PMVH. This increased to around thirty-six percent by the thirty-year stage (Table Seven). My ability to trace girls was affected by whether they came from London or not, whether they had surviving relatives who might show up in households or on registers, and of course whether their names were distinctive – Johanna May Goldschmidt being easier to trace than Annie Smith.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the way children thought about social mobility was not determined by occupational hierarchy but based on more nuanced changes in status within a social class. This could be defined in different ways, as the earlier example of Martha Greenham demonstrated. Within the spectrum of domestic service there were clear hierarchies and behaviours that determined someone's relative social position. In Martha's case, her progression to more impressive houses and higher-status employers can be reasonably regarded as reflecting on her desirability and prestige as a servant. It would probably have resulted in higher wages and better conditions. While the girls' letters contained fewer references to money than those of the boys, there are indications that they, too, regarded financial status as important. Sarah Smith highlighted how while her wages as a seamstress were good, she needed to be prudent and 'put by a few shillings for a rainy day'.[212] Ellen Scott reported that she was 'getting on very nicely'. She had '£6 10s in the bank and mistress has just raised me another £1'.[213] ER who had only recently left for a position as a nursemaid wrote asking for her bank book as she was 'going to begin to put my money in the bank'.[214] Carrie Farmer wanted to prove how well she had done in financial

[212] 2591/1/14, Twenty-third Annual Report, p. 11
[213] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1888/89), p. 5.
[214] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1888/89), p. 6. This is almost certainly Emma Rushman.

terms through marriage, by highlighting that her 'wedding dress cost about twelve dollars' while her husband's suit had cost 'twelve and a half dollars'.[215]

Table Six shows the social class of the eighty girls reviewed for this thesis, based on their father's known occupation prior to their first conviction for a crime, if that crime took place after the girl was born. In twenty percent of cases, because girls' fathers were not recorded or they were untraceable, no class was assigned. In these instances, their desertion or lack of known parentage meant their status was equivalent to the lowest social class, E — categorised as the unskilled manual working class, beggars, vagrants, and criminals. A substantial proportion of girls (thirty-four percent) originally came from the skilled working-class or higher (A-C). Yet, through their father's criminality, twenty-two percent experienced a decline in social status prior to their entry to the institution meaning that seventy-five percent of girls were in Class E at the point they entered the institution.

[215] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1888/89), p. 6.

Table Six: Girls' social class

Social class	N	%
Class A or B	8	10
Class C	19	24
Class D	11	14
Class E	42	53
Total	**80**	

a. Source: 3591/3/1, Admissions Registers and individual life tracing work.
b. Class is father's social class prior to first conviction if that was after the girl was born or if no conviction, social class at point of entry.
c. Classification based on: W.A. Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupation' in E.A. Wrigley (ed) *Nineteenth Century Society* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 203-23.
d. Social Class A is defined by W.A. Armstrong as the professional or upper and middle-class. B is intermediate between the middle and working-class and is primarily employers, C is capacious and includes both white collar employment (e.g., clerks, shopkeepers) and skilled artisanal occupations such as carpentry or blacksmithing, D is semi-skilled working class, E is manual working class and beggars, vagrants, criminals etc. Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupation', pp. 203-204.

Table Seven: Girls' class trajectory by number of years after leaving the institution

Years/Change	3	3	5	5	10	10	20	20	30	30
5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
4	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
3	2	3%	3	5%	2	4%	3	7%	4	11%
2	3	5%	11	20%	14	29%	16	39%	14	37%
1	32	54%	18	33%	15	31%	9	22%	6	16%
0	8	14%	14	25%	9	19%	10	24%	11	29%
-1	14	24%	8	15%	6	13%	3	7%	3	8%
-2	0	0%	1	2%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%
-3	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
-4	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
-5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Dead	1		5		6		12		13	
Untraceable	25%		25%		33%		34%		36%	

a. Time is measured in years since leaving the PMVH.
b. Left hand column represents the number of moves from father's class at time of admission.
c. Percentages calculated excluding those dead and untraceable in each year.

Table Seven provides a heat map table of the trajectory of girls' social class over time measured as the number of classes a girl had moved by a certain point from the social class that she occupied at the time of admission to the PMVH. A 'heat map table' is a visual representation that can allow the reader to interpret a dataset more easily. The colours correspond to the percentage of people that are in a particular category. The colours progress from green which means no change through yellow and amber to red. Red equates to a large number. Presenting the data in this way allows the fluctuations in girls' trajectories over time to be more easily interpreted. Girls' starting position is based on the class their fathers occupied at the time of the girls' entry into the institution. As noted above, fathers who were previously in a higher social class moved into class E on their imprisonment. This reflected the loss of social status and financial position commonly associated with imprisonment and demonstrated through the case studies. This new social status was the basis on which philanthropists were judging girls' social mobility when they sought to prevent girls permanently descending to the positions of their parents.

The table shows that, in aggregate, sixty-four percent of girls had improved on the social class of their parents after thirty years. Given the decline in social status they had experienced as a result of their parents' criminality this was relatively easy as even domestic service fell into Class D. Sixty-six percent of girls pursued domestic service either immediately or within a few years of leaving, while five percent took up positions in dressmaking. Eleven percent married before their occupation could be recorded and two and a half percent died or entered asylums within the first three years. The remainder became variously teachers, lodging house managers, nurses, and shop girls.

Measuring girls' mobility in the three years immediately after leaving the institution paints a less-than-positive picture, which might help explain some of the negative historiography on the mobility achieved for institutional girls.[216] Although Pooley's work on domestic servants in Lancashire has shown that class gradations between domestic servants and their nominally higher-status employers were in many cases very fine or 'subtle', domestic service was nonetheless ranked by W.A. Armstrong as manual working labour.[217] Twenty-four percent of girls experienced a decline in social status in occupational classification terms.

Yet, as we also found when examining boys' social mobility, the first ten to fifteen years of a girls' working life was generally characterised by the greatest changes in occupational trajectories. Given girls' average leaving age of fourteen and a half years, this initial decline in occupational class experienced on leaving the institution largely reflected a life-cycle stage and could be expected to change over time. Within five years, the number who had experienced a decline had improved to seventeen percent and by the twenty-year mark, only seven percent of girls were in a lower social class to that they had been in at the time of admission.

The 1892 report from the PMVH noted that around ten percent of girls did not do well after leaving, although it did not define how that was measured.[218] The evaluation of the life courses of the eighty girls, studied for this thesis, found two girls to have left employment for begging or prostitution, representing two and a half percent, but that nine percent overall were recording as misbehaving in some way (for instance running away, thieving,

[216] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 139; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, p. 121; Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', pp. 49, 56; Mahood, *Policing gender*, p. 90.
[217] Pooley, 'Domestic servants', p. 426; W. A. Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupation' in E.A. Wrigley (ed) *Nineteenth Century Society* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 222.
[218] 2591/1/14, Twenty-First Annual Report, p. 8.

being dismissed from their positions) in the first few years after leaving. Some girls experienced negative trajectories over time as result of life events such as unemployment or the loss of a spouse.

Yet Table Seven demonstrates that most girls continued to progress up the social scale over time. Within five years, twenty-five percent had moved two or more upward gradations from their social class at the time of admission to the institution. This reflected both the effects of marriage and those of progression within employment, for instance, from kitchen maid to cook.

Marriage was a key driver of higher social status. Overall, seventy-eight percent of girls who can be traced are known to have married at some point in their life. When married, many women either stopped waged work or the census enumerators stopped recording it. In cases where no occupation was given for a married woman, her husband's occupation was used as a proxy for her social class.

When women did not marry, they often still moved up a social class from the position of their birth through their occupational choice but as Table Eight shows most then made little further social progress in occupational class terms throughout the life course.[219] There were exceptions: Annie Abrahams worked initially as a domestic servant, before becoming firstly a cook, then a domestic nurse and then a maternity nurse, moving from class D to class C as her career progressed. Some girls, like Diana Fuller, left domestic service for other occupations where they could have more independence or at least more sociability. Diana can be seen in the 1901 census working as a ward maid in a sanitary hospital in

[219] Seventy-five percent of girls who began their working life as servants married.

Christchurch, Bournemouth, 145 miles from where she was working previously.[220] This was a step-up from her role as a general servant.

Some women's careers were interrupted by marriage but were resumed after their spouse's death. May Goldschmidt began life as a housemaid to an East India Company merchant before marrying commissionaire, clerk, and freemason, William Driver, at the age of twenty-one in 1902. By the time of the 1911 census, William's fortunes had declined, and he was 'out of employment'. He and May were living on the premises of a tailoring firm in Baker Street and May was working as the housekeeper.[221] The couple had no children. William's lack of employment may have been due to illness; he died the following year in University College Hospital at the age of forty-two.[222] William left May £473 in his will, and she put this money to good use, retraining as a midwife and qualifying in 1913.[223] By 1915 she was operating her own midwifery practice from her large terraced Georgian home in south-east London and, by 1921, she was employing two other midwives and a servant.[224] The business was successful. May never married again and when she died in 1959 aged seventy-nine, she left £2734 in her will, equivalent to £350,000 today.[225] This shows not only that training in domestic skills could provide an important safety net throughout life but also that placing a girl in domestic service in no way constrained her future. Girls could and did leave service for marriage or alternate careers.

[220] 1901 England Census, RG13/1043/21/34.
[221] Ancestry.com, London CoE Parish Registers, DRO/150/010; Freemasonry Membership Registers; London J 2545-2738 to K 2739-2946, reel 6; 1911 England Census, enum.18.
[222] Ancestry.com, Civil Deaths, 1B/75.
[223] Ancestry.com, E&W National Probate Calendar, 1858-1995; The Wellcome Trust; Midwives Roll, b24389596_i13779540.
[224] Findmypast.co.uk, 1921 England Census, sch. 208.
[225] E&W National Probate. Based on average inflation of 3.15% pa between 1880 and 2018.

Table Eight: Unmarried girls' trajectory by number of years after leaving the institution over time

Years/Change	3	3	5	5	10	10	20	20	30	30
5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
4	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
3	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
2	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	20%	1	20%
1	3	33%	3	43%	3	60%	2	40%	2	40%
0	3	33%	2	29%	1	20%	1	20%	1	20%
-1	1	11%	1	14%	1	20%	1	20%	1	20%
-2	2	22%	1	14%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
-3	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
-4	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
-5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

a. Time is measured in years since leaving the PMVH.

b. Left hand column represents the number of moves from class at time of admission.

May's example also shows that the social status gained through marriage could be fragile. While marriage could boost a woman's occupational status, the loss of a partner could, as Emma Griffin has shown, mean the need to take on menial work such as charring or hawking. This would tip her once again into a lower social class, when measured on an occupational basis.[226] In these instances, the training women had received as girls in the institution could stand them in good stead, by providing them with an occupation. One such girl was Esther Gain, illegitimate daughter of a shopgirl who had spent some time in prison for concealing the birth of a previous child. Esther worked as a domestic servant for more than ten years upon leaving the PMVH, before marrying storekeeper George Aylott in 1894, propelling her into social class C. After twenty-two years of marriage George died, leaving Esther a widow but with no children. The following year, Esther married again, aged forty-eight, and left London for Northamptonshire, where her new husband, an unemployed

[226] Griffin, *Bread Winner*, p. 161.

carman, came from. Yet he, too, died and the 1939 census recorded Esther, aged sixty-two, working as a domestic servant having returned to the social class in which she had begun her working life. In this way girls' training provided them with resources that could support them in later life. It allowed them to avoid the workhouse. Yet, Esther was in a minority. Only one percent of girls lost the social standing they had gained throughout the life course (Table Seven).[227] Most achieved the life of stability cherished by philanthropists.

The question is how much of this social mobility can be attributed to institutional intervention as opposed to changes in the labour market? When answering this question with respect to the boys, we were able to consider boys' mobility, relative to their brothers, as well as their fathers. This was a more difficult task for girls, primarily because of the seventy-four percent who had known siblings, forty-one percent had siblings who were also in PMVH. This left thirty-five girls with siblings who were not admitted to the institution. Of these thirty-five, ten either had only male siblings or the girl or her sibling died before adulthood. This left a total of twenty-five girls. Of these twenty-five, forty-eight percent did better than their female siblings who did not enter institutions, twenty-eight percent did as well as their non-institutionalised siblings and twenty-four percent did worse (six girls). This would imply that, as the case study evidence suggests, institutional intervention boosted the prospects of girls who remained in Britain.

Did emigration confer greater social mobility?

In the last chapter, when we examined boys' social mobility, emigration offered clear and substantial mobility benefits compared to the alternative of remaining in Britain. Was the same true for the girls? It is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions given the small number

[227] Measured comparing their status after ten years to their status at thirty years.

of female emigrants. Tables Nine and Ten compare the social progress of emigrants to non-emigrants. Overall, seventy percent of emigrants were in a higher social class thirty years after leaving the PMVH versus sixty-two percent of non-emigrants. As can be seen, less than a handful of emigrant girls moved three class categories from their birth class, while no non-emigrants did. This implies at first glance, both greater mobility and a fluidity in class boundaries overseas not replicable in Britain. But these results are influenced by the fact that eighty-four percent of emigrant girls came from families where their fathers were unknown or were in social class E. This compared to seventy-five percent for the cohort overall.

All the girls who emigrated from the PMVH went to placements as domestic servants. Domestic service overseas provided, as it did in Britain, a much-needed transition to independence. It was a source of stability. Becoming a servant meant 'a roof over one's head, food on the table, a family environment and a steady wage'.[228] Barnardo girls were often indentured for four years, but it is unclear from the records of the PMVH, whether that was the case with their emigrant girls.[229] Indenture, as Parr pointed out, protected both the child and the employer by setting out fair and legally enforceable terms and conditions of employment, although it tied young people to their employer until the age of eighteen.[230] Eighty percent of the girls who left the PMVH for North America were aged over fourteen and the average age was fifteen, meaning that unlike the stereotypical emigrant child paid 'in kind', they would have been able to command wages for their work.[231]

[228] J. Lintelman, 'Making service serve themselves: Immigrant women and domestic service in North America, 1850-1920' in D. Hoerder, & J. Nagler (eds), *People in transit: German migrations in comparative perspective, 1820-1930* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 261.
[229] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 126.
[230] Ibid., pp. 84, 92.
[231] Ibid., p. 84.

In her review of adult outcomes for emigrant girls from Barnardo, Parr was able to gather information on only forty percent. In common with the prevailing historiography at the time, she was critical of domestic service as an option. Drawing on evidence of native Canadian girls, Parr argued that many emigrant girls escaped domestic service after their indenture for life in the city. They left the countryside sooner and headed principally for the large Canadian cities, rather than the small towns nearby. Parr argued they wanted their 'own room, their own wage and their own choice of what to do on a Saturday night'.[232] Such work was physically demanding and rarely paid well but girls' aim was to achieve a few years of independence before marriage and 'enough time after work to look about for a suitable mate'. [233]

Yet, this is an incomplete picture of the opportunities of emigrant life. A series of studies of independent Scandinavian, Finnish and German female migrants that has revealed the complex motivations and opportunities that faced emigrant women travelling as independent migrants.[234] Important scholarship on immigrant domestic service has shown that single women from northern Europe sought out emigration as an economic opportunity. They reported that domestic service overseas offered more attractive working conditions and pay than domestic service back home and that emigrant women encouraged others to come.[235] These dynamics are similar to those reported by boys.

Emigration also offered a broader range of occupations than domestic service. Industrial work may have been long hours but it provided higher wages and the opportunity of

[232] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 127.
[233] Ibid., p. 127.
[234] Hoerder and Nagler (eds) *People in Transit*; R. Donlon, *German and Irish Immigrants in the Midwestern United States, 1850–1900* (Cham, 2018), p. 212.
[235] Lintelman, 'Making service serve themselves', pp. 253-254.

independence and a more varied social life.[236] According to Regina Donlon, unmarried emigrant women in America often ended up in the dressmaking or garment industry.[237] For the girls from the PMVH, their needlework training could have helped them make a similar occupational progression from their training as domestic servants into higher paid garment work.[238] We saw earlier in the chapter, the example of Emma Rushman, who had spent some time in domestic service in Britain before travelling across the Atlantic to join her married sister, Ellen, in Massachusetts. Emma became a stocking knitter in a factory when she first arrived in 1893 living with her sister and brother-in-law and nieces and nephews.[239] She progressed to a role as an underwear finisher and, never marrying, she eventually rose to the position of 'forelady' of a local machine knitting factory.[240] Despite their long separation, the siblings were close. Emma remained living with her sister and her family for over twenty years, and when she died aged one hundred, she was buried in the same grave as her niece Myrtle, Emma's daughter, who had died twelve years earlier.[241]

There is one surviving letter from Ellen, which was published in the 1894 Annual Report and was sent to Emma from Ellen prior to her travel to America. The letter is one of advice from Ellen to Emma about how to 'be a good girl' on the boat, 'be sure to have nothing to do with the sailors or captain', and, if she can, to make a 'nice lady friend', but still to be 'very careful'. Unfortunately, it says nothing about Ellen's life in America that can give us an insight into what she thought of her life out there.[242] Ellen had travelled out to America with her sister Eliza in 1886. All three girls had been in the PMVH but Eliza had left a position in

[236] Donlon, *German and Irish Immigrants*, p. 207.
[237] Ibid., p. 212.
[238] Ibid., p. 212.
[239] Ancestry.com, US Federal Census 1900, Needham, Mass, p.13, enum.1052.
[240] Ancestry.com, US Federal Census 1930, Needham, Mass, p.19A, enum.0070.
[241] 'Emma Rushman', https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/107643518 (28 July 2022)
[242] 2591/1/14, Twenty-third Annual Report, p. 10.

service to emigrate. However, within a year Eliza had 'become insane' and returned to Britain, where she was placed in an asylum, firstly in Brookwood near the PMVH, where after a year she was transferred to Banstead and then in Darenth in Kent.[243] Despite this Emma travelled out to America to join Ellen, rather than remain in Britain near Eliza. Given Ellen's encouragement to Emma to join her, it would be reasonable to conclude that Ellen must have been content to remain in America.

Table Nine: Emigrant girls' class progression over time

Years/ Change	3	3	5	5	10	10	20	20	30	30
5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
4	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
3	0	0%	1	8%	2	17%	3	27%	3	30%
2	0	0%	4	31%	4	33%	3	27%	3	30%
1	9	16%	4	31%	3	25%	2	18%	1	10%
0	1	2%	2	15%	1	8%	2	18%	2	20%
-1	3	5%	2	15%	0	0%	1	9%	1	10%
-2	0	0%	0	0%	2	17%	0	0%	0	0%
-3	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
-4	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
-5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Dead	0		1		1		4		4	
Untraceable			26%		32%		21%		26%	

a. Time is measured in years since leaving the PMVH.
b. Left hand column represents the number of moves from class at time of admission.
c. Percentages exclude dead and untraceable.

[243] 2591/3/1, Eliza Rushman; SHC, 3043/5/1/1/5, Brookwood Asylum, 1884-1888, Register 5, Admission 5001-6200; 1901 England Census, RG13/707/89/4.

Table Ten: Non-emigrant girls' class progression over time

Years/ Change	3	3	5	5	10	10	20	20	30	30
5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
4	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
3	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
2	1	2%	2	5%	9	26%	12	36%	11	34%
1	24	55%	20	53%	10	29%	10	30%	9	28%
0	6	14%	10	26%	11	32%	8	24%	10	31%
-1	11	25%	4	11%	4	12%	2	6%	1	3%
-2	2	5%	2	5%	0	0%	1	3%	1	3%
-3	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
-4	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
-5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Dead	1		1		1		4		4	
Untraceable	20%		30%		38%		34%		36%	

a. Time is measured in years since leaving the PMVH.

b. Left hand column represents the number of moves from birth class.

c. Percentages exclude dead and untraceable.

Eliza Rushman's return from emigration was relatively unusual. While thirty-seven percent of boys returned from emigration, girls who emigrated appear to have in general been much less mobile. It is worth noting that, unlike the boys who seem to have returned to Britain out of restlessness or disappointment or homesickness, the girls returned for very specific reasons. This could have reflected financial constraints. Boys were, as higher wage earners, more able to save the return fare or to be able work their passage home.[244] Only one other girl in the study returned from emigration. Beatrice Ward had been sent to the PMVH in 1877 at the age of twelve after her father, a respectable butcher, remarried. She emigrated in 1880 with three other girls to Canada but, after seven years, she came back to Britain in 1887, aged twenty-two, to keep house for her father following her stepmother's death. Her time with her father was short-lived, however, and she married James Hutson, a funeral

[244] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 128.

coachman the following year. Beatrice's return demonstrates the persistence of familial obligation and connection even after long separation and supports the argument that emigration was not necessarily irrevocable even for girls.

One possible explanation for why girls did not return may have been marriage. Fifty percent of girls who emigrated when aged fifteen or over, married within five years of arrival and eighty-eight percent were married by the fifteen-year mark.[245] This was a higher rate of marriage than for girls who remained in Britain. Emigrant girls married both American-born men and fellow immigrants, but in all cases married men whose heritage was British like their own. As in Britain, once married, the American and Canadian censuses did not tend to record an occupation for women. Domestic service often ended at marriage, but that did not necessarily mean that married women did not work.[246]

As juvenile emigrants, with the stigma and lack of social network that accompanied that status, girls from the PMVH could have been expected to marry poorly. Certainly, Parr concluded that the husbands of female Barnardo emigrants were 'drawn from the ranks of working men'. They also, she argued, appeared to be the poorer sort, as their lives were characterised by their husbands' mobility in search of work.[247] Using that measure, it is important to note that while the majority of PMVH girls did marry working men, most did not display this same geographic mobility. Instead, they generally remained throughout their life in the same area to which they had emigrated. They married labourers on farms or in lumber yards or mills. And emigrant girls were keen to ensure that those back home knew that they had married sensibly. They wrote back to let the PMVH know who they had

[245] Calculated as a percentage of the girls that I was able to trace.
[246] Lintelman, 'Making service serve themselves', p. 261.
[247] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 129.

married and what profession their husband occupied. Rose Foley, the girl who had emigrated to Le Mars in 1879, along with Jane Armstrong, wrote back to the PMVH at least twice. Her 1883 letter notifying staff of her marriage does not survive, but her admissions register notes that she had married a 'butcher named Maud'. Further tracing work reveals that Rose's husband, Thomas Maude, had emigrated from England with his parents and siblings in 1882.[248] Having married Rose relatively soon after his arrival, he subsequently became a farmer and together with Rose and their six children moved to Dakota in the early 1890s. Later censuses show Thomas owning and operating a decent size farm and employing three farmhands. The couple eventually retired and moved into the local town where in their seventies they were living in their own house, valued at $10,000 in 1930, equivalent to just over $160,000 in today's value. After Thomas's death in 1937, Rose moved in with her youngest son, Noel, and his wife in Sioux City. Noel was a laboratory man earning $1250 a year in 1940, thirty-one percent above the average wage.[249] A sizeable minority of emigrant girls (thirty-six percent), like Rose, married relatively well and improved their social status and standard of living. Their husbands' professions ranged from surveyor to farmer to saloon keeper.

Yet, those who did not improve their social class on marriage could still, through emigration, achieve a higher standard of living than that available in Britain at least in terms of housing. Occupational social mobility is a blunt tool and fails to reflect the gradations within classes or the international differences in living standards that could make life more bearable. Life

[248] Ancestry.com, Iowa Marriage Records, 1880–1922, Vol. 324.
[249] 1900 Federal Census, 1241548; Ancestry.com, 1910 Federal Census, T624_1478/11A; 1915 Dakota State Census, 2283620/95; 1920 Federal Census, T625_1716/7B; 1930 Federal Census, Vermillion/4a/00015; 1940 Federal Census, Roll: m-t0627-01216, p. 12A, Enum. 97-89; 'The 1940 Census. 72-Year-Old Secrets revealed', https://www.npr.org/2012/04/02/149575704/the-1940-census-72-year-old-secrets-revealed?t=1646306463981 (3 March 2022).

course analysis of emigrant girls shows that, like the boys, once settled, most lived in small, one family, wooden, detached homes within towns, often with their own small patch of garden. Life was, as Mrs Meredith had pointed out, better on a relative basis.[250] Even Carrie Farmer's letter bemoaning her husband 'working from month to month' disclosed that the man who tilled her husband's farm was going to build them a house shortly, and that she had a 'nice garden' with lots of vegetables to eat.[251] This was vastly different to the housing available to their British peers of similar social status. Wages were in general higher than those available in European countries and labour more in demand given the amount of land that needed farming.[252] For unmarried women, domestic servants, particularly in Canada earned a premium and there was wide supply of factory work.[253] While emigration was not positioned by staff within the PMVH as an opportunity for girls in the way that it was for boys, it could still offer a better lifestyle than the alternative of remaining in Britain.

Conclusion

The philanthropists of the PMVH cared deeply about the futures of the girls they looked after. Their wide experience of working with female criminal adults influenced their approach. Mrs Meredith's identification of 'instability' as a key cause of adult criminality and unhappiness led her, and her fellow workers, to prioritise stability for girls as they moved into adulthood. That this stability was found in marriage or domestic service reflects the gendered and classed constraints of society, more than it does any desire for social control

[250] Mrs Meredith, 'Juvenile Emigration', *Sunday at Home* 1369 (July 24, 1880), pp. 477-478.
[251] 2591/1/14, Twenty-second Annual Report, p. 8.
[252] S. A. Wegge, 'Occupational Self-selection of European Emigrants: Evidence from Nineteenth-century Hesse-Cassel', *European Review of Economic History,* 6/3 (2002), pp. 365-94.
[253] Lintelman, 'Making service serve themselves', pp. 253, 255; Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 127-128.

by philanthropists.[254] For girls from working-class and poor backgrounds there were few alternatives.

This chapter has argued that it is these backgrounds that matter when evaluating the effectiveness of welfare in delivering social mobility. Criticisms of institutional training are underpinned by a presumption that girls would somehow have lived better or other lives if only they had remained with their families. These analyses are hampered by a reliance on snapshot data that fails to consider individuals' whole lives. As the evaluation of girls' social background and circumstances of admission has demonstrated, many girls faced lives of pauperism or menial work such as charring or matchstick making if they remained at home. Yet, for the girls taken into the PMVH that was not their experience. The skills girls learned in the Home provided them with an alternative future. In occupational terms they did better than their siblings and better than their parents. Emigration made little difference to individual prospects but provided a broader range of choices and the possibility of an enhanced standard of living.

Too often, historians have evaluated working-class girls' achievements with a sceptical eye, imposing what Lucy Delap describes as the 'subordinating gaze of sympathy' on their lives as domestic servants, or marginalising their study altogether. Yet, through an examination of girls' life courses and an evaluation of their social mobility, we gain alternative insights. We see that domestic service was a valuable way of transitioning girls from neglectful, absent, or abusive families to adulthood. It provided a stepping-stone to marriage and a safety net for married or widowed women in times of stress. For some women it offered a life-long and valued career. We need to think more about how those careers developed and in a

[254] Mahood, *Policing gender*, p. 90.

more nuanced way about how mobility was evaluated by the individuals who experienced it.

This chapter has demonstrated that working-class girls could, and did, experience social mobility and that it is possible to track this across the life course. Girls were not encouraged, like the boys, to seek financial opportunity but rather to embrace the stability of marriage or domestic service. They demonstrated much less geographic mobility than boys, although the evidence from emigration suggests that was a choice rather than a constraint. Nor, as the evidence shows, were they trapped in the occupational choices made for them by philanthropists. Most girls left domestic service for marriage or alternative careers. They may not have had all the freedoms of the boys, but in those they had, they were little different from the middle-class girls discussed by historian, Gillian Sutherland, who 'made diverse choices, using what freedoms they had to try to shape and to assert priorities of their own choosing'.[255]

[255] Sutherland, *In Search of the New Woman*, p. 165.

Chapter Four: Character and the influence of relationships

No study of the impact of welfare on children's lives would be complete without a consideration of how children themselves responded to the interventions they experienced. In the preceding chapters of this thesis, we have seen the ways that children navigated their family situations and sought out care and the decisions they made about the occupations they pursued or the country they would live in. This chapter takes this analysis further by asking what children said and did after they left the institution and what those words and actions can tell us about how children felt about the impact of welfare in their lives.

At the centre of this analysis are relationships. Relationships underpinned nineteenth-century discourses of philanthropic 'rescue' and are integral too to criticisms of institutional life.[1] Yet, despite a growing trend in discussions of children and childhood to consider 'the child as 'the principal actor in its own story' there has been very little written about how the welfare child navigated, developed or maintained relationships both within and beyond the institution.[2] Where relationships have been discussed, historians have focused on policies that 'censored or prohibited contact between children and family members' and not on how these policies may have been shaped by what Siân Pooley and Jonathan Taylor called 'local worlds and small communities'.[3] Yet, relationships underpinned children's separation from their families, their response to institutional training and their successes and failures in adulthood. The sources brim over with insights into the multi-faceted, complex,

[1] S. Swain and M. Hillel, Child, nation, race and empire. Child rescue discourse, England, Canada and Australia (Manchester, 2010), p. 20; L. Murdoch, Imagined Orphans (New Brunswick, 2006), pp. 147-73.
[2] A. Levene, 'Family breakdown and the "Welfare Child" in 19th and 20th century Britain', *The History of the Family*, 11/2 (2006), p. 76.
[3] C. Soares, 'Dear Sir, remember me often if possible': family, belonging and identity for children in care in Britain, c. 1870-1920' in S. Pooley and J. Taylor (eds), *Children's Experiences of Welfare in Modern Britain* (London, 2021), p. 76; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans,* pp. 1-11; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, p. 130; S. Pooley and J. Taylor, 'Introduction' in Pooley and Taylor (eds), *Children's Experiences of Welfare*, p. 9.

affectionate, neglectful, admiring, sorrowful and nostalgic connections between the children who form the centre of this study and the families, benefactors, teachers, and friends who they encountered throughout their lives. Recent work in child welfare argues that these relationships with institutions, peers and family were significant in determining the impact of institutional care on children's lives.[4]

Yet, the historiography on institutional children's relationships is almost universally negative. There is a focus either on the aims of philanthropists in severing relationships or on the long-term 'displacement, alienation and rootlessness' experienced by children who encountered welfare.[5] 'Admission to a home separated children from the circle of family affection' argued Joy Parr when analysing Barnardo's interventions.[6] Steven Taylor went even further in his discussion of child welfare, stating that 'For nineteenth-century philanthropy the breaking of family ties was *essential* to rescuing children and improving the poor'.[7] In her discussion of the alternative of boarding out children in Scotland, Lynn Abrams noted that 'Long-term residential care it was believed had a deleterious affect (sic) on children's ability to form sound relationships with others'.[8] These interpretations of children's welfare sat within a broader historiography that viewed all Victorian institutions with suspicion.[9] Institutions were variously instruments of 'social control', a 'system of

[4] S. Pooley and J. Taylor, 'Postscript' in Pooley and Taylor (eds), *Children's Experiences of Welfare*, p. 277.
[5] Levene, 'Family breakdown', p. 72; L. Abrams, *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh 1998), p. 164; G. Frost, '"Your mother has never forgotten you": illegitimacy, motherhood and the London Foundling Hospital, 1860-1930', *Annales de Démographie Historique*, 128 (2014), pp. 45-72.
[6] J. Parr, *Labouring Children* (London, 1980), p. 62.
[7] Author's own emphasis. S. J. Taylor, 'Conceptualising the 'Perfect' Family in Late Nineteenth-Century Philanthropic Institutions' in C. Beardmore, C. Dobbing and S. King (eds), *Family Life in Britain 1650-1910* (Cham, 2019), p.167.
[8] L. Abrams, 'Lost Childhoods' in A. Fletcher and S. Hussey (eds), *Childhood in question. Children, parents and the state* (Manchester, 1999), p. 160.
[9] For scholarship focusing on institutional scandals, see: C. Dobbing and A. Tomkins, 'Sexual abuse by superintending staff in the nineteenth-century lunatic asylum: Medical practice, complaint and risk', *History of Psychiatry,* 32/1 (2021), pp. 69-84; S. Shave, '"Immediate Death or a Life of Torture are the Consequences of

domination and resistance', motivated by a desire for profit and a place where, according to Foucault, autonomy was lost.[10]

Only recently, have historians began to discuss alternative viewpoints. Steven King and Peter Jones have argued for a 'more objective understanding of the lived experiences' of workhouse poor, urging welfare historians to look beyond the 'well-worn cultural tropes' that focus on the misery and scandal of workhouse life.[11] Similarly, Peter Higginbotham showed that some members of the poor used workhouses like free lodging houses, discharging themselves at will.[12] Drawing on detailed analysis of experiences within two Surrey asylums, Anna Shepherd argued that for many patients life within the asylum was better than at home.[13] In the field of child welfare, Laura Mair has shown that affective relationships were maintained between some ragged school pupils and their former schoolmaster.[14] This focus on individual response and experience has challenged the

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the System": The Bridgewater Union Scandal and Policy Change' in J. Reinarz and L. Schwarz (eds), *Medicine and the Workhouse* (Rochester, 2013), pp. 164-191; J. Humphries, 'Care and Cruelty in the workhouse: Children's Experiences of Residential Poor Relief in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century England' in N. Goose and K. Honeyman (eds), *Childhood and Child Labour in Industrial England: Diversity and Agency, 1750-1914* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 115-134. For more specific categorisations of institutions as vectors of social control, see: L. Mahood, *Policing gender, class and family. Britain 1850-1940* (Abingdon, 2017), pp. 77-103; H. Hendrick, *Child Welfare. England 1872-1989* (London, 1994), pp. 76-78; C. Smith, 'Parsimony, Power, and Prescriptive Legislation: The Politics of Pauper Lunacy in Northamptonshire, 1845-1876', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 81/2 (2006), pp. 359-385.

[10] Mahood, *Policing gender*, p. 2; M. Ignatieff, 'Total institutions and working classes: a review history', *History Workshop Journal,* 15 (1983), pp. 168-169; J. Hurt, 'Reformatory Schools before 1933', *History of Education,* 13/1 (1984), p. 48; M. Foucault, *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*, trans A Sheridan, (London 1991), p. 164.

[11] P. Jones and S. King, Pauper Voices, Public Opinion and Workhouse Reform in Mid-Victorian England. Bearing Witness (Cham, 2020), p. 2.

[12] P. Higginbotham, 'How gruelling was the Victorian workhouse?', *History Extra*, https://www.historyextra.com/period/victorian/how-gruelling-victorian-workhouse-life-like-reality/ (23 March 2022).

[13] S. Chaney, 'Review of Anna Shepherd, Institutionalizing the Insane in Nineteenth-Century England', Medical History, 60/3, pp. 437-438.

[14] L. Mair, Religion and Relationships in Ragged Schools (London, 2019), p. 208.

monolithic view of institutional life by revealing the regionality that drove institutional approaches and interactions.[15]

This chapter builds on these revisionist analyses. It focuses on relationships between children, their peers, and the institution. There have been relatively few studies of these long-term relationships. The present-day lack of aftercare provision in welfare systems for children is reflected in its absence in the scholarship on nineteenth-century institutions. The chapter draws on both the rich body of letters held within the institutions and the connections evident through tracing individual life courses to reveal how relationships grew, altered, developed, and declined as children aged and passed into adulthood. It shows the importance of peer relationships in driving children's agency and allows us to explore agency 'as relational and contextual'.[16] This understanding extends to our examination of children's varied and altering responses to relationships over time. In revealing that relationships were more multifaceted than the historiography suggests and that children could and did maintain affectionate relationships with institutional staff it shows the significance of institutional relationships in forming children's 'character' and how that was responded to in adulthood. This, it argues, reshapes our understanding of institutional care.

Important individuals

Before examining how these relationships were created and reinforced, we need firstly to consider with whom children were interacting. Who were the principal individuals that mattered in the lives of institutional children? Existing discussions of child welfare

[15] G. Frost, *Victorian Childhoods* (Westport, 2009), p. 123; C. Newman, 'To Punish or Protect: The New Poor Law and the English Workhouse', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 18/1 (2014), pp. 122-145; J. Hamlett and L. Hoskins, 'Comfort in Small Things? Clothing, Control and Agency in County Lunatic Asylums in Nineteenth-and Early Twentieth-Century England', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 18 (2013), pp. 93–114.
[16] M. Gleason, 'Avoiding the agency trap: caveats for historians of children, youth, and education', *History of Education,* 45/4 (2016), p. 457.

organisations have tended to focus principally on a handful of high profile philanthropic personalities. Shurlee Swain claims that the 'extraordinary energy and effectiveness' of the child rescue movement 'derived primarily from the activities of four men': 'Barnardo, Stephenson, Rudolf and Waugh'.[17] Geoffrey Sherington's analysis of the Fairbridge Homes noted that these institutions were characterised by founder Kingsley Fairbridge's 'own values and sense of imperial mission'.[18] It is true that philanthropic institutions tended to reflect the personality, ambitions and values of the founder or principal manager of the organisation. At both the RPS and the PMVH it was no different. At the RPS the superintendent/warden oversaw the whole institution and set the tone for the school, while at the PMVH Mrs Meredith reigned supreme.[19] But, while important, below these key personalities were many individuals who interacted with children daily, teaching, disciplining, guiding, and mentoring them.

In focusing on high-profile institutional founders, the existing child welfare historiography leaves a gap. Relationships are largely absent from the analysis. This may have been born of necessity. Without examining the records of other institutions, it is impossible to know whether their archives reveal more about the key individuals responsible for children day-to-day than the records of the RPS and the PMVH, where they are largely hidden from view. If key individuals are present, then they should be examined. Laura Mair's work on

[17] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 16-17. Throughout Swain and Hillel concentrate on the founders of institutions in their analysis of the discourses surrounding child welfare. In G. Sherington, 'Fairbridge Child Migrants' in J. Lawrence and P. Starkey (eds), *Child Welfare and Social Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Liverpool, 2001), pp. 53-82. Sherington also concentrates on the character of Kingsley Fairbridge in his discussions.

[18] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans,* Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire,* E. Boucher, *Empire's Children* (Cambridge, 2014) all concentrate on Barnardo. G. Wagner concentrates on the same personalities as Swain in her work. *Children of the Empire* (London, 1982); Geoffrey Sherington noted that the Fairbridge Society Homes were governed by founder Kingsley Fairbridge's 'own values and sense of imperial mission' in Sherington, 'Fairbridge Child Migrants', p. 67.

[19] For a discussion of the founders and their ethos see Chapter One, pp. 41-48.

correspondence in the Ragged Schools reveals the importance one master could have and gives insights into other relationships. Martin Ware, the schoolmaster at the Ragged School studied by Mair, was 'an important constant' in children's lives.[20]

The housemasters at the RPS were similarly important. The RPS, created by Cambridge graduate, Sydney Turner, mirrored the modern public school or the Oxbridge university in its organisational structure.[21] The Managing Committee consisted of members of the aristocracy and political classes. Although Turner described it as a 'family system', John Trevarthen, who joined the institution in his mid-twenties as secretary and remained for over fifty years described its structure as 'more like that of a university made up of colleges than of one big school'.[22] Overseen by a university-educated superintendent, the RPS was divided into five houses of sixty boys. Each house was supervised by a housemaster and his wife and each house operated almost as an independent entity. This gave the housemaster great significance in the day-to-day life of the boys. It was a difficult balance. Turner wanted the tone of the school to be 'kindly', 'helpful' and 'sympathising'.[23] He did not want housemasters who were 'lax and irregular' but nor did he want those who were 'harsh or illtempered'. They should be married, so that the wife would 'interest herself in the domestic comfort and cleanliness of the boys'.[24] The ideal housemaster needed to be a 'man of personal influence', of 'a moralized tone of mind' with a 'kindly disposition, a patient and

[20] L. Mair, 'Give my love', p. 177.
[21] There is no record of where Turner went to school, but we know that he graduated from Cambridge in 1836 aged twenty-two. This was too late for him to be influenced by the modernisation of the public schools. For a discussion of public school ethos see F. Neddam, 'Constructing masculinities under Thomas Arnold of Rugby (1828-1842): gender, educational policy and school life at an early-Victorian public school', *History of Education* 16/3 (2004), pp. 304-308; G. Dishon, 'Games of character', *Paedagogica Historica*, 53/4 (2017), pp. 367-368.
[22] *Parliamentary Papers* (1886), Cm 3876, Royal Commission on Reformatories and Industrial Schools, p. 144.
[23] SHC, 2271/1/17, Annual Report (1875), p. 15.
[24] Woking, Surrey History Centre (SHC), 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1852), p. 13.

forgiving temper', 'considerable discernment of character' and 'especially' 'sincere religiousness of heart'. A housemaster must not 'merely be able to *teach* religion. He must *believe it* and *exemplify it* in himself'.[25] Turner argued that, without this deep internal faith, the master would be unsuccessful in his attempt to change boys' character.[26] The housemaster must be one with whom boys could build long-lasting relationships and he needed to demonstrate a higher behaviour through words and actions.

Experience had taught Turner that these qualities were more important than housemasters' social background. Unlike public school staff, who tended to come from professional backgrounds, all the RPS's teachers came from upper working-class or lower middle-class backgrounds.[27] As Turner told an 1852 Select Committee, he found it difficult at first to find suitable staff.[28] As an initial solution, he had experimented with moving to what he described as a 'collective system'. This placed more boys under the control of one master working with an assistant. The results, he reported, had been to the detriment of boys' 'character and conduct' and after several months of this 'experiment', he returned to the 'family system', which he believed allowed masters to exercise greater moral influence over the children.[29] In looking for masters, he turned to those who were trained teachers. Several of these had trained at England's first teacher training colleges, such as Kellner Hall, which as Christopher Bischoff has shown, sought to 'genuinely uplift' its working-class recruits to

[25] SHC, 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 7.
[26] Ibid., p. 7.
[27] C.B. Bischof, "A Home for Poets": The Liberal Curriculum in Victorian Britain's Teachers' Training Colleges, *History of Education Quarterly,* 54/1 (2014), pp. 44-45; J.T. Smith, 'Merely a growing dilemma of etiquette? The deepening gulf between the Victorian clergyman and Victorian schoolteacher', *History of Education,* 33/2 (2004), p. 158.
[28] SHC, 2271/1/6, Annual Report (1853), p. 15; *Parliamentary Papers* (1851), Cm 674, vol. 23/567, Select Committee on Treatment of Criminal and Destitute Children. Report, Proceedings, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, Index, pp. 244-245.
[29] *Parl. Pap.* Cm 674, pp. 242-246.

middle-class status.[30] John Butcher, who was housemaster at Garston's House from 1854 to 1890 was the son of a farmer and had trained as a teacher in London. Jabez Howe, master of Waterland's House from 1854 until c. 1900 and a good friend of Butcher, was the son of a stone mason but had trained as a schoolmaster in the innovative St John's teacher training college in Battersea.[31] John Cowen, master of Queen's house for more than fifty years was the son of a tailor from London but had also worked as an assistant schoolteacher in London before coming to the RPS.[32] William Hearne trained at the RPS before leaving for employment in Southwark. He returned to become master of Gurney's House in 1861 and remained until his retirement some time after 1901. Thomas Benfield was the stepson of George Benfield, college servant at the University of Cambridge. He joined as head of Gladstone's House after its master George Lawson died in 1863 and remained there until 1885, when he left for a position as superintendent of an orphanage in Oxfordshire.[33] Jesse Jones who trained at the progressive and liberal St Mark's training college in Chelsea took over Benfield's post in 1885 and remained until his death in 1894.[34] John Trevarthen was a particularly important figure. He was the son of a foreign trade agent in Cornwall where he was educated locally. He became a pupil teacher and then a certified school master in Stoke before becoming secretary of the school. In 1877, he became a lay reader in the dioceses of

[30] C. Bischof, 'Masculinity, Social Mobility, and the Plan to end Pauperism in Mid-Victorian England: Kneller Hall Teacher's Training College', *Journal of Social History*, 46/4 (2013), pp. 1046-1047.
[31] Ancestry.com, Westminster, CoE Births and Baptisms, 1813-1919, SJSS/PR/1/5; London, CoE Births and Baptisms, 1813-1921, P85/LUK/009; 1851 England Census, HO107/1577/283/19. St John's training College in Battersea was a private training college opened in 1840. Like St Mark's it promoted the Pestalozzi system of pedagogy. For more detail on its background and ethos see: 'Kay Shuttleworth's vision: St John's College' https://marjon.repository.guildhe.ac.uk/id/eprint/17599/1/A%20founding%20vision%20for%20modern%20times%20the%20case%20of%20St%20Mark's%20and%20St%20John's,%20and%20the%20campaign%20against%20the%20Revised%20Code.pdf (13 June 2022).
[32] 1851 England Census, HO107/1528/138/7; 'The history of the Philanthropic Society' http://www.redhill-reigate-history.co.uk/philanth.htm (29 May 2022).
[33] 'Royal Philanthropic Society' https://www.geni.com/projects/Royal-Philanthropic-Society/14656 (29 May 2022).
[34] 'Royal Philanthropic Society'.

London, Rochester and Southwark.[35] Trevarthen served as choirmaster and organist to the school and one former schoolboy wrote about him that 'I often think of when he first came there, what life he put into our service with his musical talent, I remember every tune I learned when there, I thank him for this'.[36]

Often the welfare regime is considered in isolation from other institutional settings but examining the similarities between the training process within two of England's earliest teacher training colleges and the routine at the RPS is informative. St Mark's teacher training college was established in 1840 by Derwent Coleridge and St John's was founded in 1841 by James Kay-Shuttleworth and Edward Tuffnel.[37] Both men were, like Turner, interested in new methods of social science and statistics.[38] Although there was a difference in teaching content and method, St Mark's, like St John's, worked its student teachers hard.[39] They rose at 5:30am and worked in laborious agriculture or studied all day until bed at 10pm. Their only free time was on Wednesdays and Saturdays after 4pm. This focus on agricultural labour was echoed at other teacher training colleges operating at the time and was regarded as important for inculcating 'important virtues of middle-class masculinity such as self-discipline and a healthy work ethic'.[40] Field work was considered valuable for exhausting 'the young men's bodies' and keeping them in the open where they could be

[35] 'A Life Devoted to the Church and the Farm School', *The Surrey Mirror and County Post* (1 Feb 1918), p. 3 col a, b, c.
[36] SHC, 2271/1/18, Annual Report (1878), p. 52.
[37] M. Leather, G. Fewings and S. Porter, 'Outdoor Education: the Romantic origins at the University of St Mark and St John', *History of Education Review*, 49/1 (2020), p. 5.
[38] P.R.D. Corrigan, 'Tuffnel, Edward Carleton (b. 1806)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)* (Oxford, 2008), https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/48877 (31 July 2022); Selleck, R.J.W., 'Shuttleworth, Sir James Kay- (b. 1804)', *ODNB* (Sep. 2004), https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/15199 (31 July 2022)
[39] P. Grosch and D. Harris, 'A founding vision for modern times: the case of St Mark's and St John's and the campaign against the Revised Code', *Critical and Reflective Practice in Education,* 4 (2015), p. 34.
[40] Bischof, 'Masculinity, Social Mobility', p. 1047.

observed.[41] As we saw in Chapter Two, this strict regime was similar to that followed by the boys at the RPS and was valued for the experience and empathy it imbued in teachers towards their pupils. The principal of St Mark's argued that it would give the teacher 'an additional title to their confidence when he comes to act among them, not merely as their teacher, but as their adviser and friend'.[42] The nature of these relationships must have changed over the fifty years examined. Housemasters who were in their early twenties in the 1850s were in their seventies as the century drew to a close. Methods that were innovative in the middle of the century were probably no longer cutting-edge by the end. Yet, the relationships formed between boys and their housemasters were, as we shall see, affectionate and long-lasting.

There were other relationships that seem from the correspondence to have been significant. The farm bailiff, James Bilcliffe, and his wife were often mentioned in boys' correspondence.[43] Bilcliffe was a local man with experience of farm labouring and was employed as bailiff when the Farm School opened in 1851. He remained at the RPS until his death in 1880 at the age of sixty-eight. His children were brought up on site and, following his death, his wife Sarah became school matron.[44] Labourer, William Brown, oversaw the boys' farm work in the 1850s and was mentioned by several former pupils, as were the masters responsible for teaching boys their trade.[45] Also popular were Edward Holman and

[41] Bischof, '"A Home for Poets"', p. 59.
[42] Ibid., p. 60.
[43] 2271/1/10, Annual Report (1860), pp. 25, 30-34; 227/1/11, Annual Report (1861), pp. 28, 31, 33-34 are just some examples.
[44] 'The history of the Royal Philanthropic Society', https://www.redhill-reigate-history.co.uk/philanth.htm?msclkid=fde9440cd07011ec8131947ac4edcabd (12 March 2022); 'James Bilcliffe', https://www.geni.com/projects/Royal-Philanthropic-Society/14656 (12 March 2022).
[45] RPS, 2271/10/10, fol. 283; 2271/1/10, Annual Report (1860), pp. 36-37; 2271/33, Emigration Book, pp. 11, 31.

Henry Mallinder. Holman had been discharged from the army as unfit in 1857 after being injured in India and acted as both bandmaster and clerk at the school from 1858 to 1882.[46] Mallinder, the son of a soldier, had joined the army as a drummer boy in 1853 rising to the rank of drum major.[47] He took the post as bandmaster at the RPS in 1882 after his thirty-year army service was complete and remained until 1907. All these men were working class and had similar backgrounds to the boys they were training.

Within the PMVH, it was the 'mothers' in the cottages that spent most time with the girls. Mrs Meredith described these 'mothers' as the 'key of our arch'.[48] While, as we saw in Chapter Three, they were involved in girls' day to day domestic training, they were also responsible for their spiritual guidance. They lived in cottages alongside girls and were expected to 'exercise direct personal influence over the minds' of the girls in their cottage.[49] We know little about the house mothers, but girls do seem to have formed affectionate bonds with them. Twenty-one-year-old Annie Foster noted that she was 'very fond' of 'Mrs K', who was probably house mother Sarah Ann Kemball.[50] Another letter dated 1890 from Emma Rushman noted that when she visited the PMVH for a holiday she 'should like very much to be with Mrs K for the short time I am there as I lived with her'.[51]

The PMVH was also characterised by the presence of several young middle-class women who interacted with the girls on a day-to-day basis. The PMVH was just one strand of Mrs

[46] 'Edward Holman', https://www.geni.com/people/Edward-Holman/6000000025308074862 (10 March 2022).
[47] Ancestry.com, 1851 England Census, HO107/1695/388/10; 'Henry Mallinder' https://www.geni.com/people/Henry-Mallinder/6000000025307781278 (10 March 2022).
[48] The key in an arch is the wedge stone that holds together the two sides of the arch without which the arch will collapse.
[49] F. Peek, 'Hereditary Pauperism and Pauper Education', *The Contemporary Review*, 31 (1877), p. 142; SHC, 2591/1/14, Twenty-Third Annual Report (1894), p. 4.
[50] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Second Annual Report (1892), p. 8; Ancestry.com, 1891 England Census, RG12/553/139/1.
[51] 2591/1/14, Nineteenth Annual Report, p. 6.

Meredith's charitable and evangelical work, which included overseas missions, prison visiting and prisoner correspondence, and aid for discharged prisoners.[52] The Women's Missionary Institute, as the umbrella organisation was known, targeted 'Christian Young Women of Education' to train as 'deaconesses' for a variety of purposes. Some, influenced by lectures from Elizabeth Blackwell and Frances Hoggan, trained as doctors in the London School of Medicine for Women or in the Royal Free hospital in London, with the intention of becoming medical missionaries overseas.[53] Others still trained as 'Missionary Nurses' to the sick, while many spent time working at the PMVH. Women paid their own expenses for this training. The requirements for these positions were that they be 'Women of Education' aged between eighteen and thirty with a 'special seal [sic] for the conversion of souls' and in 'good bodily health'. [54]

Most of these female workers came from middle-class well-educated or religious families. They were far from the 'low calibre staff' cited by John Hurt in his critique of reformatory and industrial schools.[55] Some used the PMVH as a stepping-stone to other pursuits, others remained in the institution for many years. Elizabeth Penrose became PMVH manager aged twenty-six and remained in post for over twenty years. The daughter of a minister and the niece of the headmaster of Rugby school, Elizabeth and her siblings were repeatedly taught by their father, the Reverend Penrose, the importance of doing their duty – 'to God and to man'.[56] This idea of duty was, as Kristine Moruzi has highlighted, central to Victorian moral

[52] 'Christian Women's Union. Meetings at Clifton', The Western Daily Press [Bristol], (26 Sep 1883), p. 6 col b.
[53] Nine Elms Ladies' Association, *Record of Christian labour connected with Prison Mission and other work At Nine Elms, and at Addlestone, Surrey* (London, 1883), p. 90.
[54] Nine Elms Ladies' Association, *Record of Christian labour*, p. 2.
[55] Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', p. 52.
[56] C. Orr, *Procession of Penroses* (Morrisville, 2019), p. 296.

philosophy.[57] Elizabeth helped her father by visiting and delivering tracts to parishioners before being sent to a boarding school in Kensington at the age of fifteen.[58] She could have been one of the many middle-class girls highlighted by Christina de Bellaigue as being educated for the purpose of teaching.[59] Several of the girls' letters are addressed to Miss Penrose or mention her and it is reasonable to assume that Elizabeth would have brought the values she had learned from her father to her interactions with girls.

Others were part of the newer generation of middle-class women who sought to build careers towards the end of the nineteenth century.[60] Helena Gertrude Jones was an 'officer' in the PMVH in 1891 by the age of twenty. Jones became known as a prominent suffragette and as one of a 'pioneering generation of impressive women doctors'. She qualified in 1901 and later becoming Assistant Medical Officer of Health in charge of maternity and child welfare in the Rhondda Valley in Wales.[61] The headmistress in 1891, Margaret Cruickshank, had trained in the Pestalozzi-influenced Home and Colonial Society School, in London, under the Froebelian system, which discouraged rote-learning and encouraged self-expression.[62] All were examples of the growing opportunities open to middle-class women in the late nineteenth century.[63] Yet, there is no indication that the more modern ideas of these young women translated into their relationships with the working-class girls within the institution.

[57] K. Moruzi, 'Higher Education and Home Duties: The Morality of Self-Interest in the Periodical Press, 1880–1910', *Victorian Periodicals Review,* 50/4 (2017), p. 689.
[58] Orr, *Procession of Penroses*, p. 296; Ancestry.com, England Census 1891, RG12/553/139/1.
[59] For a discuss see: C. de Bellaigue, 'The Development of Teaching as a Profession for Women before 1870', *The Historical Journal,* 44/4 (2001), p. 967.
[60] For literature on the 'New Woman' and education and attitudes in late Victorian England see: C. Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late-Victorian and Edwardian England* (London, 1981); J. Springhall, *Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain, 1860–1960* (Dublin, 1986); F. Hunt (ed), *Lessons for Life: the Schooling of Girls and Women, 1850–1950* (Oxford, 1987).
[61] 'Helena Jones (Dr)', https://map.mappingwomenssuffrage.org.uk/items/show/146 (11 April 2022).
[62] Ancestry.com, 1881 England Census, RG11/194/97/11.
[63] K. Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century* (2001), Chapter IV (electronic resource).

Instead, as we saw in Chapter Three, the institution's approach to girls' futures remained focused on preparing girls for domestic service or marriage.

Thinking about these men and women leaves many questions unanswered. Girls spent an average of six years in the PMVH and boys three years in the RPS. The people they met in the institution, who taught, fed, trained, disciplined, and sheltered them, had huge potential influence. Tracing these important men and women in the records unfortunately reveals only the bare bones of their lives. We can gain only an impression of what kind of people they were. Yet, these glimpses tell us much about the atmosphere and aims of the institutions they worked in. Their background tells us that many were exposed to modern ideas of training. Those who remained for a long time in the institution may have stagnated in their approach, resulting in less innovation as time went on. Whether that affected their relationships with the children is impossible to say, although it seems probable. The letters from the children who wrote to them and about them provide us with further insights into the relationships that developed between the children and the staff.

Moulding character

Why did these relationships matter? Relationships were important in part because they were fundamental in shaping character. While the Victorians believed that elements of character were hereditary, they also recognised that children's natures could be moulded by religious, educational and moral influences.[64] Nathan Roberts has argued that educating for character was 'the process by which the young were instilled with those qualities of citizenship that would guarantee the vitality and efficiency of the social organism'.[65] This

[64] N. Roberts, 'Character in the mind: citizenship, education and psychology in Britain, 1880-1914', *History of Education*, 33/2 (2004), p. 188; G. Brewis, 'From working parties to social work: middle-class girls' education and social service 1890-1914', *History of Education,* 38/6 (2009), pp. 762-763.
[65] Roberts, 'Character in the mind', p. 178.

process has been generally regarded as gaining impetus in the last decade of the nineteenth century as concerns grew over imperial decline.[66] It has also been tied to the development of public schools and intertwined with discussions of masculinity.[67] Yet, as John Tosh highlights, it was 'particularly relevant' in evangelical circles from the middle of the century. 'Evangelicals elevated *character* – by which they meant the inner resources of heart and mind transformed by God's saving grace'.[68]

The evangelical focus on character has been marginalised by the historiographical concentration on the role that children occupied as 'promises of wealth, power and opportunities' or as threats to the social system.[69] While historians such as Shurlee Swain have recognised that there were multiple motivations in the 'child rescue' movement and that a desire to redeem children formed one possible rationale, 'child rescue' is still predominantly interpreted through its connection with colonialism and the consequent racialisation of poor children.[70] Yet, as Abigail Green has highlighted, this fails to address the genuine spirituality that underpinned some philanthropists' actions.[71] The philanthropists of the RPS and the PMVH had a profound and deep faith that, as we shall see, directed their interactions with the children. Their aims for children's character development may have

[66] Roberts, 'Character in the mind', p. 179.
[67] J. Tosh, Manliness and Masculinities in nineteenth-century Britain : Essays on gender, family, and empire, (London, 2016), p. 3; G. Dishon, 'Games of character', Paedagogica Historica, 53/4 (2017), p. 368.
[68] Tosh, Manliness and Masculinities, p. 74.
[69] Hendrick, *Child Welfare,* p. 42.
[70] See Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire* for a full discussion of the connections between evangelicalism and the racialisation of children, pp. 63-70; see Boucher, *Empire's Children*, pp. 31-32 for a discussion of religion and colonialism in child welfare; S. Swain, 'Child Rescue: The Emigration of an Idea' in J. Lawrence and P. Starkey (eds), *Child Welfare and Social Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Liverpool, 2001), p. 102; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 32-37.
[71] A. Green, 'Rethinking Sir Moses Montefiore: Religion, Nationhood, and International Philanthropy in the Nineteenth Century', *The American Historical Review,* 110/3 (2005), p. 648.

been rooted in ideals of citizenship but were also directed by their desire for children to live satisfactory and content adult lives.

Discussions of character within the institutions were highly gendered. Within the RPS it was intrinsically connected to ideals of manliness while in the PMVH it was predominantly re-cast as 'temperament'.[72] The evidence of the RPS shows that character development was important from the inception of the school in 1850 and was articulated in a way that prioritised certain traits and facilitated them through relationships. In the first Annual Report, Sydney Turner noted that the school sought to use 'kindness and patience' not 'force' to 'effect a settled alteration in the temper and character' of boys.[73] Boys were encouraged to take responsibility for their own development. After a visit in 1852, Charles Dickens claimed that 'boys are trained to think for themselves; each is judged on his own merits and guided as far as possible with a strict view to the development of his own character.'[74] This drew on both broader concepts that character could be modified and evangelical ideas that children could and should be redeemed through faith.[75] Sydney Turner described this as 'Reformation and Conversion'.[76] The articulation of how boys were trained changed over the fifty years but the underlying principles did not. In 1900, superintendent Marshall Vine noted that 'the chief means of reformation are religious influence, personal kindness, exact justice, education and constant employment'.[77] He added 'our one great

[72] Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 76; SHC, 2591/1/14, Twenty-First Report (1892), p. 9.
[73] 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 6; SHC, 2271/1/9, Annual Report (1858), p. 14.
[74] C. Dickens, 'Boys to Mend', *Household Words* 5/129 (1852), p. 599.
[75] Roberts, 'Character in the Mind', pp. 182-185, 187; For a discussion of evangelicalism, see: D. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to The 1980s* (London, 2005), p. 16. Bebbington identified the four key aspects of evangelicalism as conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism.
[76] SHC, 2271/1/6, Annual Report (1854), p. 6.
[77] SHC, 2271/1/29, Annual Report (1900), p. 7.

aim' 'is to fit our boys for any posts they be capable and called upon to fill and thus manliness combined with mental vigour is the basis of our curriculum'.[78]

The centrality of religion as well as relationships to forming character is evident. Turner and his successors were Anglicans. All ordained ministers, they ensured the boys were baptised and confirmed. Roman Catholic boys were normally sent to Catholic reformatories.[79] As historian Kathleen Martin has highlighted, there were strong links between the popular Protestant story of struggle narrated in *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the influential nineteenth-century Samuel Smiles classic *Self-Help*. 'Bunyan's imagery of the moral journey of Christian becomes the topography of the Victorian narrative of a life's progress'. This was accompanied by an assumption that 'virtue will be rewarded with success while vice will result in failure'.[80] Indeed letters from boys show that they had been sent *The Pilgrim's Progress*.[81] Yet, as Turner's successor Charles Walters noted, staff did not 'dream of making all these lads godly'.[82] Instead, the school used 'simple Bible teaching and reading' and attempted to make religion 'as interesting to the boys as possible' by adapting it to their 'age and circumstances' so that they might 'find pleasure in it'. Staff believed their duty was 'to place the truths of the Gospel' before boys and 'leave the seed, thus sown, to germinate and grow'.[83] Sydney Turner noted that he wanted staff to discourage 'hypocrisy and religious pretence' and judge boys not by 'what they say, but by what they do'.[84]

[78] 2271/1/29, Annual Report (1900), p. 26.
[79] *Parliamentary Papers* (1882), Cm 3876-I, Royal Com. on Reformatories and Industrial Schools. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Appendices, Index, p. 151.
[80] K. C. Martin, 'Hard and Unreal Advice: Mothers, Social Science, and the Victorian Poor Law' (D.Phil. thesis, London School of Economics, 2004) p. 53.
[81] SHC, 2271/1/18, Annual Report (1877), p. 53.
[82] SHC, 2271/1/11, Annual Report (1861), p. 26.
[83] SHC, 227/1/10, Annual Report (1859), p. 15.
[84] 2271/1/6, Annual Report (1854), p. 20.

It is in this spirit that Turner's proclamation, after he became Inspector of Reformatories in 1859, that boys needed to be 'really taught and required to work, their industrial training as laborious as possible, and the Apostle's rule adhered to, "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat"' ought to be considered. Interpreted by Hurt as an indication of the 'low regard that society had for these children', it could instead be understood within an evangelical framework of redemption through suffering that applied as much to the better-off Victorian as it did to the poor.[85] Turner argued that 'the fair spoken and well taught' boy was more likely to 'play' with his 'reformation' and relapse when compared to the 'hard, rough and neglected lad' who 'yielded to religious influence' and gave 'himself with his whole strength and energy to the course of self-improvement opened to him'.[86] In asserting that the child needed to go beyond the outward display of the virtues to a true, evidenced, living of them, Turner was echoing the concerns of middle-class educators about inculcating only the facsimile of character in pupils.[87] Contrary to John Stack's assertion that 'outward conformity' was what was desired, the alteration in behaviour needed to be real.[88]

Numerous published and unpublished letters exemplified this narrative of change and demonstrate how it was grounded in relationships. An 1851 letter from one of the RPS's first Canadian emigrants, Thomas Styles, noted that, when he had first been appointed 'monitor' in the school, he had had 'a shocking temper and was some what cruel'. Yet, he claimed, that through his teacher's 'mild and calm advice and persuasions, I got quite an altred (sic) Boy'. He soon became 'head monitor' and thought that 'there is not a Boy in the School that knew me, but will say that I was as kind and good natured a Boy as was ever

[85] Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools', p. 52.
[86] 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 26.
[87] Roberts, 'Character in the mind', p. 196.
[88] Hurt, 'Reformatory and industrial schools', p. 49.

among them'.[89] Many boys wrote in a similar vein. Charles Marlow, who had emigrated to Australia in 1852, wrote of how he regretted the 'many chances' he had thrown away but that it was not 'too late' and he planned to keep 'industrious and honest and saving' having 'left all my bad ways behind me'.[90] Letters such as these, provided those editing the Annual Reports with plenty of evidence to support their larger claims of successful reform. Yet, the evidence of unpublished letters shows that these were sentiments genuinely pronounced.[91]

The theme of redemption before it was too late was a common one in letters. William Farrington wrote to his father from Australia in 1856 on the death of his mother to say 'I am very unhappy to think I was such a bad boy to her when I was at home, but it is now I feel it when it is too late'. William wanted his father to know that he bore 'a good character' wherever he went, 'both for honesty and industry, quite (sic) and steady' and was about to get married.[92] Another William, William Neal, who had emigrated to New South Wales in 1858, wrote several letters back to the school. In one long reflective letter, aged twenty-two, he wrote of how he owed his 'present prosperity and happiness to the school' and that without it he 'might have been on my way to the Gallows'. William added that 'I often laugh when I look at myself now and then picture to myself what I was before I came to the School'. William had, according to his letter once been described in the newspapers as a 'Hardened Looking Young Urchin' and was now 'a soft young man'. He worked as a signwriter during the day and as a bookkeeper for two cricket clubs in the evening and played in a band in his leisure time.[93]

[89] 2271/1/4, Annual Report (1852), p. 12.
[90] 2271/1/6, Annual Report (1854), p. 34.
[91] These early Australian letters were not anonymised in Annual Reports. For other similar letters see: SHC, 2271/33, Emigration Book, pp. 11, 31, 35,36-37.
[92] SHC, 2271/1/8, Annual Report (1857), p. 47.
[93] SHC, 2271/1/14, Annual Report (1866), pp. 49-51. 2271/33, Emigration Book, pp. 35-37.

Our principal insights into the interaction between character and relationships for girls come from the writings and statements of Mrs Meredith rather than from institutional documents. Meredith's writings on crime reveal the values she considered to be important. These were 'self-restraint', 'human uprightness and amiability'. These qualities, she argued, were exercised by many whose 'conduct and character commands our respect'. [94] It was important to be diligent, kind and honest.[95] Girls were treated with kindness and the philanthropists of the PMVH sought to 'reach girl's hearts' through the happy 'home-life' they gave them.[96] This approach, while criticised by historians, was similar to that adopted by middle-class girls' schools which sought to provide a 'homely' or family-like environment to their charges.[97] As we saw in Chapter Three, the PMVH wanted girls to be prepared for futures that were stable because they believed that stability was the route to happiness.[98] Steadiness of behaviour was celebrated as a sign of success and implicitly of contentment. The 1893 Annual Report noted that the girls the PMVH had sent out as domestic servants were 'more steady' than the typical domestic servant. Staff lauded examples of girls like Diana Fuller who 'was of a delicate temperament' and who 'at one time did not give promise of much strength for future work' but who had shown 'a steady perseverance in doing her duty and a warm affection to those who befriended her'.[99] These ideas of self-sacrifice echoed the lessons imparted to middle-class and working-class daughters as part of what Carol Dyhouse has described as the 'dominant theme in the understanding about

[94] S. Meredith, *The Sixth Work* (England, 1866), p. 132.
[95] Meredith, *The Sixth Work*, p. 149.
[96] SHC, 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1886), p. 7; 2591/1/14, Twenty-Second Annual Report, p. 6.
[97] C. Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London, 1981), p. 46.
[98] For a more in-depth discussion of stability, see Chapter Three, p. 156-165.
[99] 2591/1/14, Twenty-First Report, p. 9.

femininity'.[100] Women of all classes were expected to be dutiful. '"Femininity" was socially defined in terms of dependency, self-sacrifice, and service'.[101]

As we saw in Chapter One, religion was a fundamental part of the PMVH's approach to children, although the school does not appear to have restricted admission based on religious denomination. While there is evidence that some Catholic girls were transferred to Catholic institutions on parental request, there were also several girls within the institution who had been baptised Catholic.[102] The daily Bible study was led by one of the female staff of the Home and Sunday service by a local male chaplain. Sunday school was conducted by the ladies of the institution.[103] Although religion was fundamental to Meredith's beliefs, like Turner, Meredith believed religion had to be genuinely felt and demonstrated through actions. This translated into her approach within the institution, both with the girls and with staff. According to her sister, Martha Lloyd, she could not bear 'idle people' and felt strongly that it was essential to do practical Christian things rather than merely profess Christian faith. '"Be in earnest" she frequently said to the young', "anything is better than being neither hot nor cold"'.[104]

These ideas are evident in some of the girls' letters to the institution. Harriet was a passionate born-again Christian. Her letter contained only effusive exclamations of Christianity and gives us an insight into the depth of faith some girls experienced. Harriet noted that she did 'indeed thank God' for bringing her to her current place. She added 'I don't think he meant to let me go until I came to the Cross. What great love God does show

[100] Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up*, p. 26.
[101] Ibid., p. 30.
[102] 2591/3/1, Margaret Flynn, Mary Foley, Eliza Mary Goulden came from a non-conformist family, Ancestry.com, Shoreditch, Holywell Mount Chapel (Independent), 1819-1837 baptisms, RG/4/4412.
[103] 2591/1/14, PMVH Report for the Year 1883, pp. 8-9.
[104] M.A. Lloyd, *Susanna Meredith: a record of a vigorous life* (London, 1903), p. 58.

to me! I don't deserve it, I am so weak and sinful'.[105] Her letter contained many more expressions of her love for God and her intention to follow religion, all passionately intermingled with her love and gratitude for the staff within the Home. Maggie B's letter was less effusive but displayed that religion was still an integral part of her life. She wrote that she was still going to Sunday School and the Young Women's Christian Association meetings, which she enjoyed 'very much'. She added that 'I do not know what I should do if I did not go. I should be like a fish out of the sea. It helps to keep me near to my Saviour, which I could never do without'.[106] Carrie Farmer wrote that 'I read a chapter every day in the Bible that you sent me'. She added that she went to church 'a heap here lately and will go every chance'. These demonstrations of continued faith could have stemmed from a desire to please the staff at the Home, but Carrie's faith seems to have been genuine. She was concerned about her husband, Reuben, who, despite being a preacher's son, seems not to have been following a religious path. Carrie wrote 'I am going to do my best to get Reuben to do better this summer, when big meetings commence and join the Church'. She signed her letter 'your Sunday School scholar' implying she was writing to one of the three founders.[107]

Letters from boys similarly contained assertions of church attendance but in general they lacked the enthusiastic religious expressions of the girls' letters. They were also less frequent in their discussion of religion. Fewer than five percent of boys' letters discussed their faith in similar terms and when they did, it was in the context of their religious experiences after leaving. In 1850, fourteen-year-old Thomas Merrett wrote from New

[105] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1886), p. 5.
[106] Ibid., p. 10.
[107] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Second Annual Report, pp. 7-8.

Brunswick, Canada, where he was working for the Reverend Charles Fisher, that 'thou we cannot hear your words in chapple, we must pray to God and there we will find his grace and happiness to lead us in the wright path (sic)'.[108] William Powell emigrated to New York state in 1857, aged nineteen. He had spent two years in the RPS between 1854 and 1855 before being discharged to employment in London, firstly with a portmanteau maker and then with a biscuit maker. After a year, he had lost his job. He returned to the RPS in late 1856 seeking readmission and emigrated four months later.[109] William wrote from Oswego in the United States that he had experienced a religious conversion into the Baptist faith. He wrote: 'a revival has spread abroad our land, and there is not a church in our country but what has got 80 to 100 converts'. William proclaimed, 'for the first eight months in this country I served the devil, but for two months I served God'.[110]

Yet, religion was still central to around one third of the narratives of change. William Rosin, an orphan who had been admitted to the school aged seventeen in 1861 for committing embezzlement, wrote to superintendent Charles Walters several times after his emigration in 1863.[111] In 1867 aged twenty-three he wrote a long letter which contained many tales of difficulty, including lost pay and frozen feet. Despite his tribulations, it is clear he had a strong faith and had been greatly influenced by his school master Mr Howe. William wrote that he would 'never forget to go to a place of worship'. They had a 'most splendid Church of England' in New London, Ontario where he was living. At the church they sang the same hymns as at the RPS which always made William think of Reverend Walters.[112] William Miller

[108] SHC, 2271/10/7, fol. 151; 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 46; Findmypast.co.uk, 1851 Census of Canada, M-7482.
[109] 2271/10/10, fol. 168.
[110] 2271/1/10, Annual Report (1859), p. 28.
[111] Ancestry.com, Criminal Registers, E&W, HO 27/127/106; SHC, 2271/10/12, fol. 242; SHC, 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 109; SHC, 2271/1/16, Annual Report (1868), pp. 34-35.
[112] 2271/1/16, Annual Report (1868), pp. 34-35; 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 269.

also spoke with fondness of the Reverend Walters' sermons, asking him to come out to Canada to preach as he was sure 'lots of people' would come to hear him. Nineteen-year-old William reported that he attended a church near his place of work not to 'please anybody' but because he liked to go to church.[113]

Also central to the reformation of boys' character were ideas of what it meant to be a man. As John Tosh has pointed out, manliness was a 'slippery concept' in Victorian Britain.[114] Yet it contained certain long-standing core values. Some of these were physical, others were moral. The moral qualities included 'decisiveness, courage and endurance', 'loyalty to one's peers', 'independence', 'frank straightforwardness' and 'sincerity'.[115] These were underpinned by the idea that 'self-realization' came from 'purposeful work'. Victorian manliness was founded in a 'work ethic' that set standards of 'self-discipline' for men and that detested 'idleness' because it undermined 'moral vigour'.[116] These traits came together in 'character', epitomised by individuality and self-reliance.[117]

These ideas were evident in the traits the RPS emphasised as important. Drawing on the values they themselves had learned at home and at school, staff sought to treat boys at the RPS as 'responsible' and teach them to exercise self-control. Boys should display 'cleanliness, neatness and order', 'good manners, self-respect, self-reliance, and truthfulness'.[118] The school wanted to encourage 'confidence' and 'self-respect'.[119] 'The aim was for boys to 'shake off all the lounging self-indulgent habits of their past' and become

[113] 2271/10/14, fol. 265; 2271/1/17, Annual Report (1872), p. 54.
[114] Tosh, Manliness and Masculinities, p. 87.
[115] Ibid., pp. 87-88.
[116] Ibid., pp. 89, 91.
[117] Ibid., p. 94.
[118] 2271/1/11, Annual Report (1861), p. 22.
[119] 2271/1/6, Annual Report (1854), p. 14.

'diligent and industrious'.[120] Traditionally cast as middle-class qualities, Tosh has argued that these characteristics in fact transcended class boundaries, influencing ideas of manliness among the upper working-class.[121] The evidence of the RPS shows that their reach extended further.

The school used various mechanisms to inculcate these values. The institution of drill practice from the beginning, run by the bandmaster, promoted ideals of discipline that pre-dated the enthusiasm for militarism that later infused all levels of society and education.[122] Hard physical labour was, as we saw in Chapter Two, favoured as a way of cleansing the mind and forming character. Towards the end of the century, sports began to be important. However, throughout the forty-five-year period, the school sought to maintain the ethos set out by Turner.[123] This argued that to reform criminal boys, staff needed to exert influence over boys' 'minds and feelings'.[124] Boys would, Turner argued, respond to the 'trust reposed in them'.[125] The aim was to 'inspire the boy with feelings of attachment and confidence'.[126] Relationships were crucial.

Philanthropic efforts to mould children's character have traditionally been interpreted as indicative of a desire for social control of the lower classes or as constituting a rhetorical device aimed at eliciting financial support for charitable endeavours.[127] Yet, in teaching boys to be industrious, brave, independent, and truthful and, in encouraging girls to be loving,

[120] 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 20.
[121] Ibid., p. 95.
[122] J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Ebook, 2000), xlvi, xlvii.
[123] SHC, 2271/1/29, Annual Report (1900), pp. 6-7, 14-15.
[124] 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 6.
[125] 2271/1/4, Annual Report (1852), p. 13, p. 15.
[126] Ibid., p. 15.
[127] Murdoch, 'From Barrack Schools to Family Cottages', pp. 160-161; Swain and Hillel, *Child nation, race and empire*, pp. 40, 46.

self-sacrificing, and steady, philanthropists were inculcating in their charges the same traits that middle-class parents were teaching their children. This was more than social control. It was, as J.A. Mangan has pointed out, also moral control and it applied to middle-and-upper-class children too.[128] Critics of the welfare institution have highlighted its harsh discipline and oppressive regime, but the school life of higher-class boys was no more appealing.[129] Public school life was one of 'discouragement rather than encouragement, failure rather than success, humiliation rather than dignity'.[130] Rob Boddice has made clear that 'Godliness' and 'manly character' and 'diligence' formed part of the training given to boys at England's public schools by their masters who acted as 'moral guides' to their pupils.[131] A similar transfer of values has been identified by Colm Hickey in his evaluation of the spread of athleticism from public schools into elementary schools via Oxbridge and teacher training colleges.[132] Teachers and staff brought with them to the institution the values that they themselves had been taught. This questions the extent to which we can characterise children's welfare institutions as principally aimed at eradicating 'the alleged defects' of poor and criminal children's characters, rather than as an extension of Victorian character and citizenship building across the class boundaries.[133]

[128] Mangan, *Athleticism*, p. xxxii, 8, 9, 14, 18, 33 as well as Chapters One through Four.
[129] For criticisms of the regime at reformatory and industrial schools see: Hurt, 'Reformatory Schools before 1933', pp. 45-58; Mahood, *Policing gender*, pp. 77-104; Frost, *Victorian Childhoods*, p. 123; Abrams, *The Orphan Country*, pp. 103-105.
[130] J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism*, xxviii, xxxvii;
[131] R. Boddice, 'In loco parentis? Public school authority, cricket and manly character, 1855-62', *Gender and Education*, 21/2 (2009), p. 167.
[132] C. F. Hickey, '"A Potent and Pervasive Ideology": Athleticism and the English Elementary School', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 28/13 (2011), p. 1859.
[133] Hurt, 'Reformatory Schools before 1933', p. 49.

The importance of institutional relationships

The sense that it was important to philanthropists to build affective relationships with children runs through the records of both the PMVH and the RPS. Most of the historiography of children's welfare has portrayed children's institutions as 'totalising in nature', focused on discipline and reform.[134] Research on emigrants from institutions has highlighted the poor practices and the lack of interest taken in children's outcomes by emigrationists.[135] This has been bolstered by literature based on twentieth-century experiences, which has highlighted the problems of identity suffered by emigrant children, who experienced 'no aftercare whatsoever'.[136] In these histories, emigrant children were encouraged to 'give up past attachments in order to focus on forging new lives overseas'.[137] Separated from their families, they were sent overseas where little effort was made to keep track of them longer term.[138]

Yet not all philanthropic organisations were the same. While Dr Barnardo may have made little effort to remain in touch with the children he placed, those who came from other organisations had a different experience.[139] Claudia Soares' study of the Waifs and Strays has argued that the major residential institutions in many cases facilitated contact between children and their families and often maintained relationships with both.[140] Supporting this argument, archival evidence suggests that both the PMVH and the RPS spent a considerable amount of time on aftercare. They maintained the relationships that developed during

[134] C. Soares, Neither Waif nor Stray: Home, Family and Belonging in the Victorian Children's Institution, 1881-1914 (D.Phil. thesis, University of Manchester, 2015), pp. 14-16.
[135] Mair, 'Give my Love', p. 171; R. Parker, *Uprooted: the shipment of poor children to Canada* (Bristol, 2008), pp. 45-52; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 160-162; Boucher, *Empire's Children*, pp. 23-25.
[136] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, p. 241; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 159-175.
[137] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, p. 242.
[138] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 125.
[139] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, pp. 23-25.
[140] Soares, 'Dear Sir, remember me', p. 98.

children's time in the institution and articulated a personal interest in children's lives. This is a strong indication that, for the staff at these institutions, children's lives after the institution mattered.

There were several reasons why this was the case. The most obvious is that children's post-institutional lives were the fruit of philanthropists' work. It was — as both Turner and Meredith acknowledged — demanding, relentless labour, caring for an endless stream of abandoned, neglected, difficult or delinquent children.[141] It was unsurprising that the institution would try to establish whether these efforts had been a success. To do so, staff maintained an extensive correspondence with former pupils and checked the information they received with 'trustworthy correspondents' overseas and with 'Parochial Clergy and Employers and the Police'.[142] But the post-care relationship was also important in and of itself. As we saw in Chapter Three, the PMVH wanted girls to achieve stability and happiness in adulthood. To do that they deliberately fostered affective relationships with the girls they admitted. This drew on Meredith's experience in reforming prisoners, which had demonstrated the value in building long-term relationships.[143] They argued that the tie between pupils and staff needed to be 'strong' and act as an 'anchor attaching the voyager's boat to a friendly shore'.[144] But a post-care relationship also served as evidence that the 'family system' worked by showing that 'old girls' thought of staff with affection and maintained relationships over the longer-term. This was made easier by the lengthy employments of many at the RPS and the PMVH.

[141] 2271/1/24, Annual Report (1894), p. 4; 2271/1/9, Annual Report (1858), p. 11; 2591/1/14, PMVH Manager's Report 1883, p. 7.
[142] SHC, 2271/1/11, Annual Report (1863), p. 19.
[143] Chapter Three, p. 161.
[144] 2591/1/15, Annual Report (1900), p. 5.

Letters were the principal means of maintaining relationships. They acted, as Liz Stanley has noted, as a 'material expression of connection and continuing relationship'.[145] The PMVH's 1887 Annual Report proudly stated that: 'the love' girls 'bear the Institution they call their "Old Home" is attested by the active correspondence kept up with us both at home, when in situations, or when married and in like circumstances when they go abroad'.[146] By 1893, over one hundred and seventy girls were in correspondence with the school, representing twenty percent of the girls who had left over the previous twenty-two years.[147] Over half of the boys kept in touch with their former school in some way. Many of the letters were sent within the first decade after departure, but some former pupils kept in touch for ten or twenty years after leaving or sometimes even longer. In asserting that the correspondence was 'kept up with us more by their efforts than ours' Mrs Meredith made clear that the letters they received represented a voluntary expression of girls' affection for their former Home.[148]

Analysis of the letters – published and unpublished – that remain in the archives provide us with plenty of evidence for the affectionate and familial relationships that existed between former institutional children and the staff at those institutions. As the staff at the PMVH wrote, letters demonstrated 'the happy relationship' that existed between the institution and the girls who left them. Girls' letters contained 'accounts of marriage, births of their children and of their pecuniary circumstances, mixed up with strong expressions of attachment to the Homes and to all their friends in them'.[149]

[145] L. Stanley, 'The Epistolary Gift, the Editorial Party, Counter-Epistolaria: Re-Thinking the Epistolarium', *Life Writing*, 8 (2011), p. 141.
[146] SHC, 2591/1/15, Annual Report (1897), p. 5.
[147] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1894), p. 6
[148] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1894), p. 8.
[149] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1893), p. 6.

Boys' letters focused less on relationships and more on discussions of their employment, their friends, their adventures, and their financial prospects. Yet, their letters also contained multiple 'expressions of attachment' and familial connection to staff members.[150] Letter-writers frequently asked for their love to be given to a variety of individuals. William Yeoman wrote from India, where he was serving in the army in 1872, to say how sorry he was to hear of the death of Mrs Walters, the superintendent's wife, adding 'I hoped she would have been one of the first to welcome me when I return to England'.[151] Twenty-year-old Rose Foley's letter from Iowa, where she was working as a servant, also sent her love 'to all the girls and mothers I know', as well as to Miss Lloyd to whom the letter was addressed.[152] Some correspondents were more demonstrative. Reuben Shepherd asked 'please kiss all the little ones from me'.[153] In his letter to Sydney Turner, George Williams stated that 'I feel in writing to you I am sending to one who has been more than a father to me and one who I shall ever have cause to bless'.

Other correspondents revealed a closeness of relationship that extended beyond the pupil-teacher relationship. Michael Whiffen, who left the RPS in 1850 for a life in New Brunswick, wrote that leaving Sydney Turner and Mr Moxon (the school accountant) 'were more cutting to the heart than anything else'.[154] William Neal was devastated to hear of his former housemaster George Lawson's death. He wrote that he was 'very sad – very sad – to hear of the death of my poor dear Master. I loved him as I do my Father and many is the time I weep when I am alone'.[155] William's letter reminds us that, as we discussed in Chapter One,

[150] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1893), p. 6.
[151] 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 287; 2271/10/12, fol. 306.
[152] Nine Elms Ladies' Association, *Record of Christian labour*, pp. 102-103.
[153] 2271/1/16, Annual Report (1871), pp. 40-41; 2271/10/14, fol. 57.
[154] 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 44.
[155] 2271/1/15, Annual Report (1867), p. 49; 2271/10/11, fol. 173; Emigration Book, p. 36.

not all children had bad relationships with their families. William had entered institutional care because of his delinquent behaviour, not because of his family.[156]

Nor was children's affection for the institution short-lived. Charles Farron wrote from Australia in 1878 at the age of fifty-three to say that the image of his former superintendent Sydney Turner 'was stamped on my heart and my body' and he would never forget his kindness 'while I have got life in my body'.[157] Even as adults, they sought comfort from staff. James Thompson wrote after the death of his wife from a seizure. His heart-breaking letter frankly recounted his grief. He said, 'there is no more earthly comfort for me', adding movingly 'I feel like a man going to war without arms'. He ended his letter 'I have not wrote half what I wanted to, because I do not feel hardly able to write (sic)'. Laura Ishiguro's analysis of letters between British Columbian settlers and their families in Britain has shown that the 'act of sending and receiving letters shrank senses of distance' and allowed people to feel closer to the relatives they had left behind. Correspondence 'made challenging lives' seem easier by enabling correspondents to reinforce a sense of connection and providing a space to articulate difficult emotions.[158] In revealing his vulnerability and despair to his former superintendent and his former housemaster, and in seeking their comfort, James demonstrated the depth of his relationship with the institution.[159]

Linked to this desire to reinforce connections was a language of remembrance and forgetting. Forty percent of PMVH letters and ten percent of RPS letters contained expressions of fear about being forgotten or gave reassurances that they had not forgotten

[156] See Chapter One, pp. 86-88.
[157] 2271/1/27, Annual Report (1897), p. 47; 2271/10/8b, fol. 104.
[158] L. Ishiguro, Nothing to Write Home About. British Family Correspondence and the Settler Colonial Everyday in British Columbia (Vancouver, 2019), p. 91.
[159] 2271/1/17, Annual Report (1873), p. 42.

their correspondent. This, Laura Mair has found, was common to letters from ragged school emigrants and similar language was used in the letters published by the Waifs and Strays. Historians of welfare have argued that these might have been fictionalised but Mair's unpublished letters together with the unpublished letter records in the RPS archives suggest rather that these were important themes in genuine correspondence.[160] Mair interpreted this language of remembrance as stemming from a concern that emigrants were experiencing an 'estrangement' from their 'English past and a loss of personal history'.[161] Yet, the evidence of the PMVH shows that it was as apparent in the letters of girls who had remained in England as it was in those who had emigrated. It was also much less evident in the letters from boys. This indicates that it was not necessarily the loss of Englishness that was concerning correspondents but more a desire to emphasise the ongoing importance of the relationship. The new PMVH superintendent, Miss Wilkinson, noted in 1905 that 'it is all times a pleasure to them [the girls] to feel that we do not forget them'.[162] Rose Foley's 1883 letter, four years after her emigration to Miss Lloyd began by saying 'I think you have quite forgotten me, but you see I have not forgotten you'. At first glance this could be interpreted as evidence of a one-sided relationship between Rose and the institution, but later in her letter it is evident that Rose corresponded regularly with Miss G, who she noted was 'always very good in answering my letters'. She did not habitually write to Miss Lloyd but was doing so on this occasion to find out why Miss G (probably Elizabeth Gilbertson, the school nurse) had not written for a couple of weeks.[163] Importantly, the desire to be remembered was reciprocal. Mrs Meredith noted proudly that the Home received letters covering long

[160] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and* empire, p. 160; Soares, 'Dear Sir, remember me', pp. 215-216.
[161] Mair, 'Give my love', p. 172.
[162] SHC, 2591/1/16, The Princess Mary Village Homes magazine 1 (1905), p. 8.
[163] England Census 1881, RG11/768/84/22.

periods of girls' lives showing that girls 'do not forget us'.[164] Language of remembrance then served as a bond between correspondents.

Often letters contained a mix of longing and affection. As managers themselves noted, 'the long residence in the Home' was 'sometimes a disadvantage to the girls, making it often a great trial to them to leave'. They recounted the case of one girl who had spent eight years in the PMVH eventually becoming assistant sewing mistress. The girl had left in 1900 for a 'better situation in another institution' but reportedly 'felt leaving us much, saying it was going from a happy home to unknown difficulties and strange people'.[165] This comment emphasised how much the Home had become a 'home' to the girls who resided there and demonstrated the strength and attachment they felt towards the institution. Carrie Farmer, who, as Chapter Three demonstrated was worried about her husband's behaviour, attached a great deal of sentimental weight to a Bible given to her by her correspondent, Miss P.[166] She wrote: 'I'll love it and care for it till it will be a good Bible when I am in my grave'. It was not the only reminder of her previous life in the PMVH. She had also asked for a photograph of the Home and its staff, which she was going to have framed for the wall. Her focus on these material objects as visible reminders of her time at the PMVH indicate her enduring affection for her former institution. Yet, her letter also provides indications of loneliness. Perhaps, she yearned for someone with whom she could share the burden of her responsibilities as a young mother and wife. Her son being ill and in bed with fever, she asked for 'you all to write me a long letter, so it will take me a long time to read it'. Her affection for the staff and her homesickness was clear when she wrote: 'I wish I could see

[164] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1893), p. 6.
[165] 2591/1/15, Annual Report (1900), p. 5.
[166] Miss P is probably Elizabeth Penrose who was one of the three Honorary Managers of the Home in residence alongside Mrs Meredith's sister Miss Lloyd and Miss Cavendish.

you all once more, but I don't reckon ever will in this troublesome world. But I hope we will meet in Heaven'.[167] Later in the letter, which was written over the course of several days, she wrote 'I don't see why some of you could not come over in this part of the world'. For Carrie, a frequent letter writer, the letter seems to have served as a confessional repository for her mixed feelings about her life.

Even when children were not obviously lonely, they wrote nostalgic letters. These contradict descriptions of the institution as 'oppressive'.[168] Instead, they foreground positive memories. Twenty-one-year-old Annie wrote from Yorkshire five years after leaving that whenever she received correspondence from the PMVH, she longed to 'go to Addlestone to see my kind friends'.[169] She often pictured 'every stick and stone of the dear old place' and wanted to know whether certain traditions were still taking place. Although she was happy in Yorkshire, noting that she 'hardly' knew whether she liked Surrey or Yorkshire best, she added 'It was a happy time when you taught us in the School. That was the best time to me of all'.[170] Sarah Wallis was contentedly married and settled yet wrote 'those were my happiest days when I was in the Home' ending her letter from 'one of your loving old girls'.[171] Sarah Smith, who had returned to live with her mother and older sister in London wrote that when she had some time from work she must 'come and have a look at my old home again. I often wish I was a child there once again'.[172]

Despite their evident happiness in the Home, not all girls felt a longing to return. Rose Foley although she wrote affectionately to the PMVH, was evidently happy in her new situation in

[167] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Fourth Annual Report, p. 7.
[168] Hurt, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools before 1933', p. 49.
[169] Addlestone was where the PMVH was located.
[170] 2591/1/13, Twenty-Second Annual Report (1893), p. 8.
[171] Ibid., p. 9.
[172] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1894), p. 11.

Iowa, which she stated she much preferred to Canada, where she had first been sent. She found the country 'very nice in the summertime', 'had learned to ride and drive' since her arrival and often borrowed her master's horse and rode for 'miles' – something else she found 'so nice'. She noted that 'servants here are treated like anyone else; they are more free than in England'. She had made many friends and sang in a choir. She 'often' thought of everyone in the Home but, although she would like to 'go on a visit' to England, she declared that she would not like to live there.[173]

Discussions of returning 'home' for a visit was a common theme for former institutional children. The PMVH's Annual Report of 1899 told the story of how 'last Easter' staff had found at the gate a 'decent-looking working man in holiday clothes carrying his baby and the wife – formerly one of our girls – leading a little boy by the hand'. Reportedly, when asked why they were there, the young woman replied: 'I wanted my husband to see where I was brought up and the green where I played many a game', while the husband said: 'I have brought her to see her old home again'. The tale ended with the comment 'it is not school-life that tells most strongly on character, it is that of Home'.[174]

Historians have been sceptical about the veracity of such reported incidents, regarding them as rhetorical devices intended to foster impressions of close affective relationships between the institution and children.[175] Claudia Soares found that the Waifs and Strays commonly published accounts of return visits to the institution, describing them as propaganda designed to show 'the effectiveness in fostering enduring familial bonds with children'.[176] It is impossible to know whether the incident documented by the PMVH ever occurred. Yet,

[173] Nine Elms Ladies' Association, *Record of Christian labour*, pp. 102-103.
[174] 2591/1/15, Annual Report (1900), p. 2.
[175] Soares, 'Give my Love', pp. 223-225.
[176] Ibid., p. 225.

from the private admissions register, there are signs that girls did return to visit their former 'home'. One such visitor was twenty-three-year-old Ellen Hart. Ellen had entered the PMVH in 1871, aged eleven, after being found selling match boxes in the street on behalf of her mother. She must have enjoyed life in the Home as according to the record she requested that her sister Charlotte also be admitted. Ellen remained in the Home for five years before she left for employment as a servant first in Yorkshire and then in Sussex. She married George Beard, a miller's son in 1880 at the age of twenty. George was relatively affluent and, in 1883, Ellen returned to the Home for a visit, bringing with her her new baby. The record notes that she looked 'well and happy' but made no mention of her husband's 'independent means'.[177] This important omission could imply that Ellen's happiness was more important than her financial status.

The records show that boys too returned to the RPS for visits when they were able. George Dent, who had joined the merchant navy service after emigrating to Australia, visited several times whenever his ship was in London.[178] Stephen Dunk also came back often. Stephen had joined the army in 1893 straight from the school. In his first six months he visited on two occasions. On his next leave in 1894 he visited again and stayed in the superintendent's house for 'several days'.[179]

Further weight to institutional claims of continued contact can be found in the accounts of annual institutional reunions. In 1886, the PMVH instituted an 'Old Girls Day' with the aim of finding out 'how many of the girls who have passed through these homes would be found ready to attend on invitation to spend a day in their old home'.[180] The event allowed former

[177] 2591/3/1, Ellen Hart; 1881 England Census, RG11/266/42/77.
[178] 2271/10/9, fol. 215.
[179] 2271/11, Registers of Discharges, fol. 97; 2271/10/20, fol. 584
[180] 2591/1/14, Annual Report (1887), P. 4

pupils to 'see their friends, the ladies connected with their earliest memories and in many cases the Mothers who brought them up and the cottages where they lived'.[181] The RPS similarly welcomed former pupils to their 'Harvest Home' festival noting, in 1861 that 'nearly 20' had attended the previous year and that one of the emigrants from the preceding year had donated £2 from his first six months earnings. This, Charles Walters noted, provided evidence of 'the light in which our old Boys continue to regard us'.[182] These 'Old Girls' and 'Old Boys' days were documented in local newspapers and, while only a small proportion of former pupils attended, the distance and cost involved for many in travelling to their former institution must have been a barrier. In 1886, around fifty girls came to the PMVH for lunch, tea, and a tour and to listen to current inhabitants sing and perform.[183] Over time as girls left the school, these events grew in popularity. By 1905, sixty-three former girls attended the day and the local newspaper noted that 'among them was a middle-aged woman, who was the first girl admitted to the Homes. She left 35 years ago'.[184]

Linda Mahood in her discussion of children's reformatories and industrial schools claimed that 'ample evidence suggests that very few children ever became enamoured with their circumstances'.[185] Yet, from these examples we can see that expressions of love were not fabricated to prove the effectiveness of the institution but reflected genuine affection between staff and children that persisted into adulthood. This supports recent findings from Claudia Soares and Helen Rogers of similar relationships in other institutions.[186] This

[181] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Second Annual Report, p. 5.
[182] 2271/1/11, Annual Report (1861), p. 24.
[183] SHC, 2591/1/15, Twenty-Sixth Annual Report, p. 5.
[184] 2591/1/16, Princess Mary Village Homes Magazine 1, p. 12.
[185] Mahood, *Policing gender*, p. 149.
[186] Soares, 'Dear Sir, remember me', p. 197; H. Rogers, '"Kindness and Reciprocity": Liberated Prisoners and Christian Charity in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Journal of Social History*, 47/3 (2014), pp. 732, 736.

affection was demonstrated both in literary form and through the pragmatic and practical efforts made by staff to look after children even after they had left.

The historiographical view of the aftercare provided by institutions has been generally critical.[187] Shurlee Swain foregrounded the loneliness experienced by many and argued that a 'sense of abandonment echoes through many of the surviving letters'.[188] Historians have interpreted repeated pleas for news from emigrant children, as evidence of deliberate separation by institutions or a failure to care.[189] Yet, the records of the PMVH show that the institution routinely passed on letters to relatives when requested. William Page's letters show what Roy Parker has described as 'the deep need to know about family and friends'.[190] William, who had emigrated to Australia in 1855, aged eighteen, wrote back to the RPS for the first time in 1859 aged twenty-two. He had been in prison for three years after committing a robbery and asked the institution to 'find my father or my brother and write to me'. The secretary of the RPS, noted that the letter and William's address had been sent on to his father, as per William's request. William sent another long letter to the RPS three years later in 1862, enclosing a letter to be given to his father. This time, the RPS record noted that his father was dead and so the letter had been sent to his brother. A subsequent letter, dated 1865, when William was twenty-eight complained 'I have never heard from you or my friends. I am very well but sad my many letters have not been answered'. William, who was shepherding 'in the Bush, 400 miles from Sydney', does not seem to have

[187] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 161-162; Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 82, 92-96; L. Delap, *Knowing their Place: Domestic Service in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 33-34.
[188] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 161-162.
[189] Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 73-74; Parker, *Uprooted*, pp. 209-212.
[190] Parker, *Uprooted*, p. 212.

thought about the distance or unreliability of the Victorian postal system in Australia.[191] The file in the RPS notes 'boy's father dead, brother and sisters doing well. They have written twice but the letters were returned, as was also mine to the boy (Charles Walters). They will write to him again'.[192] This exchange, which took place both ten years after William's emigration and his subsequent criminal conviction demonstrates the serious and long-term nature of the institution's engagement with its former pupils. It challenges any interpretation of individual letters as indicative of widespread institutional attitudes towards their former pupils or their relatives.

Claudia Soares' analysis of the Waifs and Strays acknowledged that its approach to aftercare reflected the organisation's 'obligations' and 'responsibility over the children it had raised' but suggested that this support was age limited.[193] Yet, the records of both the PMVH and the RPS show demonstrable practical aftercare for children into their twenties or thirties or even longer. When boys were out of work, the RPS gave them money in aid. When girls struggled in a situation, the PMVH took them back in for further training or housed them in Mrs Meredith's establishments in London while they found them a new place. Many girls corresponded with the PMVH for some years and returned to visit. Chapter Three also showed that girls were helped to emigrate some years after going out to service.[194] Institutional staff supported former pupils through letters of advice or encouragement. They sent gifts of newspapers, books, tools, and clothing to emigrants when requested. They acted as conduits between former pupils and their families, passing on messages or

[191] For a discussion of the various difficulties in the Victoria postal service see: 'Report on the Post Office Department, Victoria' (30 Sep 1862), https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/papers/govpub/VPARL1862-63No33.pdf (2 June 2022).
[192] 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 35.
[193] Soares, 'Dear Sir, remember me', pp. 211, 214, 233.
[194] See Chapter Three, p. 195.

arranging for siblings to either enter the institution or join emigrants overseas. It is evident that the institution felt an ongoing responsibility for the children who had been in their care.

Unlike the boys' records, the girls' files contain few useful notes of their lives after leaving. Details have been gleaned principally from the combination of letters and tracing work. Their sense of after-care was demonstrated in other ways. Elizabeth Cook was admitted to the Homes from Lowestoft in 1878, aged eleven. She had suffered from opthalmia and, despite an operation, had lost the sight in one eye. Her father was dead but her presence in the Home was sponsored by a Miss Rutherford, who had supervised the infirmary where Elizabeth's operation had taken place. After only a year, Miss Rutherford wrote to tell the PMVH that she could no longer financially support Elizabeth, as she was going to India as a missionary. The PMVH decided to retain Elizabeth, now twelve, for free. She remained for another four years until 1884, when her mother asked for her return. Given that she was now sixteen and, although not yet 'quite blind', was 'quite unable to earn her living', the PMVH argued that it had little choice but to return her to her mother 'as it was not just to others' to allow her to occupy a place at the PMVH, when there were 'so many pressing applications and she had a home to go to'. Yet, the records note that in 1890, six years after leaving and when Elizabeth was twenty-two that she was readmitted to the PMVH 'until some home could be found for her'. She was reportedly 'in grave moral danger at her mother's house'. It has not been possible to discover what the Home meant by that comment, but the records do tell us what solution was found for Elizabeth's well-being. In 1891 aged twenty-three she was found a place in the St Mary's Seaside Home of Rest for the Blind in St Leonards-on-sea in Sussex, a charitable institution that provided 'home comfort

for the blind'. [195] In Elizabeth's case, her disability may have rendered her more child-like and dependent but even so, taken together with the previous examples, it shows that staff retained a sense of responsibility for and connection with children until they felt they were appropriately settled, even when individuals were no longer legally children.

The longevity of staff within the institution supported this sense of connection but there was also an institutional culture that transcended individual personnel and was connected to the idea of belonging to the institution as an 'Old Girl' and 'Old Boy'. This is best demonstrated through the example of Alfred Whitmore, whose contact with the school spanned the superintendency of three chaplains, and two secretaries. Alfred was admitted to the RPS in 1852 on his fifth criminal conviction. He was twelve years old. His father was an omnibus timekeeper.[196] Soon after his admission, Alfred ran away but was caught and returned. Thus began a pattern of running away that was to persist for years. A year after his entry to the RPS, Alfred was released to take up a butcher's apprenticeship arranged by his parents. He ran away again. This time he could not be found, and his distraught parents placed an advert in the newspaper imploring him to return and promising he would be forgiven. A year later, he was discovered and returned to the RPS.[197] Now aged fourteen, he once again ran away but was again caught and returned. Alfred seems from the record to have then settled down and remained in the RPS until his discharge in 1857 aged seventeen.[198] He was placed in employment at a tailor's shop and ran away from that, choosing instead to join the army, but deserting a month later in early 1858.[199] In 1862, five years after leaving the RPS, he visited the institution along with his brother. They were on

[195] 2591/3/1, fol. 81.
[196] England Census 1851, HO107/1491/30/52; 2271/10/9, fol. 187.
[197] 2271/10/9, fol. 187.
[198] 2271/10/9, fol. 187.
[199] Ibid.

their way to Brighton and had been earning their living singing on the road. Alfred admitted to having been in prison several times but does not seem to have been discouraged from visiting as he visited again later that year.[200] Staff did not then hear from him until 1866, when he wrote from the slum street of Drury Lane in London 'in great poverty asking for help'. This began a cycle of aid that was to persist throughout adulthood. Following Alfred's letter, the school sent one of their officers to see him and, finding twenty-six-year-old Alfred in hospital, offered him one shilling per week in aid until he was well. In August 1867 he visited the school again 'dirty and wretched' and the record simply notes 'Helped him'.[201]

Whatever help was given was not enough. Two years later, in August 1869, Alfred wrote a letter to the RPS asking for help because 'I am in great distress on account of not being able to do any work for a long time'. He had according to his letter 'walked all over England'. He noted that he was 'dischifit to look at and to do (sic)' and all his 'things worn off from my back and shoes from off my feet'. Yet, Alfred's letter also provided some clues as to a potential cause of some of his misfortune. He asked for forgiveness for his 'ungratefulness' towards the school excusing himself as it was the 'drink that done it'.[202] If he was repentant, it did not last. Court records note that he was convicted barely a month later of stealing ale.[203] A year later, in 1870, now aged thirty, Alfred visited the school again 'very wretchedly clad'. The RPS record noted he was 'sleeping in Union' and wintering 'in London', 'was in very low spirits' and 'seemed very miserable and unhappy'. Once again, the school 'helped him'. Alfred continued to write to the institution and the institution continued to send

[200] 2271/10/9, fol. 187; Metropolitan Police: Criminal Record Office: Habitual Criminals Registers and Metropolitan Police Pension Registers 1852-1932, PCOM2, 1855-1863, p. 12.
[201] Alfred was twenty-seven at this point. 2271/10/9, fol. 187.
[202] 2271/10/9, fol. 187.
[203] Ancestry.com, Metropolitan Police: CRO: Habitual Criminals, PCOM2/271.

help.[204] Over the next two years, Alfred was convicted of various offences including assault, drunkenness and begging.[205] For a ten-year period Alfred then disappeared from view and it appeared as if his life might have been on track. Yet in 1884, almost thirty years after leaving the RPS, the records note another visit from a 'down at heel' Alfred and once again monetary aid being given by the school. Over the next four years Alfred visited the school on four more occasions and on each occasion was given financial help. Alfred's last recorded visit was in 1889 when he was forty-nine years old.[206] But, although there is no note of him seeking further help, his troubles appear to have continued. On two occasions (1891 and 1894) he was brought before magistrates for being found 'dead drunk' by the side of the public road.[207] Finally, in 1895, aged fifty-five, he was admitted to Holborn infirmary and, although no record of his death can be found, he vanishes from the records.[208]

Alfred's case reveals that the RPS approached its responsibility to Alfred in an almost familial way. His case was typical in that there were multiple other examples in the records of boys returning to the RPS for decades after leaving to ask for monetary help. Normally this was given. When it was refused, we cannot tell why.[209] It may have been about attitude. Alfred's example would suggest that it cannot have been about behaviour. Despite Alfred's frequent lapses and his persistent criminality – to which he freely admitted – the RPS continued to help him into middle-age. The money they offered may not of course have been very much but that he bothered to tramp from London to Reigate, a journey of over

[204] 2271/10/9, fol. 187.
[205] PCOM2/271.
[206] 2271/10/9, fol. 187.
[207] 'The full penalty this time', *Sussex Agricultural Express*, (4 July 1891), p. 6 col b; 'Subject to fits', *Surrey Mirror* (24 January 1891), p. 3, col 2.
[208] Ancestry.com, Holborn Board of Guardians, HOBG/541/059.
[209] For an example of a refusal to help see: 2271/11, Discharges, fol. 41. An example of a returned emigrant to whom further help was given see: 2271/11, Discharges, fol. 144.

twenty miles, implies that it must have been sufficient to make it worth his while. That Alfred believed the institution would continue to help him shows that he perceived the relationship between him and his former Home to be long-standing and important. It questions assertions made by historians of child welfare that position institutions as washing their hands of their former pupils once the child was beyond the age of being transformed into the ideal citizen.[210]

Changing emotions and changing relationships

As the example of Alfred demonstrated, children's relationships with the institution were not static. Historians have often used emotions expressed in emigrant letters as evidence of children's unhappiness in their new country.[211] This supports assumptions that feelings of loneliness and abandonment translated into abnormal or troubled adulthoods.[212] Yet such an approach marginalises the other positive emotions expressed within letters, many of which were equally significant. It also fails to acknowledge that an individual letter provides only a snapshot of emotion. Contextualising these letters within the broader life course and linking letters together reveals a different picture.

It is clear that children's responses to their new life changed over time. David Bailey was one of many children to write of how their thoughts about emigration had changed. Three years after emigrating to the United States he wrote 'When I first came over I thought I could never live in it, but now you could not drive me from it'.[213] Maggie Smith emigrated to Iowa in 1881. One of her early letters home showed signs of loneliness. Iowa, she noted, 'was a wild place' although it was 'lovely and green'. The family she was with had moved out to the

[210] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 161-162; Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 82, 92-96.
[211] Peters, *Orphan* texts, p. 95; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 161-162.
[212] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, p. 173.
[213] SHC, 2271/1/20, Annual Report (1884), p. 61.

countryside and she could now go to church only once a month, compared to twice a day when in town. The lack of sociability was apparently telling on her as she wrote that she would 'like another letter from you so much; it would cheer me so much'.[214] Thirteen years later, a married mother of two she wrote of how she had 'much to be thankful for' and had a 'good home and a good husband'.[215] Maggie's sentiments were not unusual among settler correspondents and we should be cautious about interpreting children's expressions of loneliness as unique to child emigrants. As Ishiguro's study of British Columbian settler letters has shown, descriptions of boredom and loneliness were commonplace in correspondence from adult settlers, even those who had travelled with families. They represented an important part of the transition from the initial excitement of a new country to the banality of the everyday.[216]

The evidence that children's responses changed demonstrates the importance of considering age in our analysis. The passage of time could provide children with the space and maturity to reflect. Children's nostalgia for the institution was often mingled with regret for past behaviour. Nineteen-year-old Sarah Smith wrote fondly of how much she missed the Home and that she thought 'often' of the 'little punishments I used to have when I was there, but now I am older, I see it was all for the best'.[217] Similarly, twenty-nine-year-old Maggie Smith, now married and a mother herself admitted 'I in particular used to be very trying at times' but that she now often thought 'about the dear old school where everybody was so good to us all'.[218]

[214] Nine Elms Ladies' Association, *Record of Christian labour*, p. 98.
[215] 2271/1/19, Annual Report (1882), p. 98.
[216] Ishiguro, *Nothing to Write Home About*, pp. 114-115, 119.
[217] 2591/1/14, Twenty-third Annual Report, p. 11.
[218] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Fourth Annual Report, p. 6.

These expressions of regret in published letters have been dismissed as rhetorical devices that 'neutralised children's complaints' and alleviated external concerns about the institutional regime.[219] Yet, the private records of unpublished letters reveal that such sentiments were frequently expressed by former pupils. William Smith or 'Happy Jack' as he had been known when in the school wrote back in 1878, thirteen years after leaving the RPS. He was working as a shipping clerk in a wholesale dry goods store in Canada. 'Happy' told a story of hard work and trials during the years since he had left the RPS, but he spoke affectionately nonetheless of his old school. He wrote

> 'I must say it was better than a home to me and I have found out what good it has done me, you must remember I am not a Boy now, I am a Man, the Father of Three Children and I do say now and have every reason to believe the Philanthropic F.S. has been the means of making me what I am to day'.[220]

Many children found life beyond the institution to be hard work. While institutional life had had its constraints, it has also offered shelter, food, clothing, education, and company. Life afterwards without that support was more challenging and letters dwelled on this contrast. Historians have highlighted children's isolation after the institution as a cause of unhappiness.[221] But we need to recognise that many children's networks were damaged or absent before the institution intervened in their life. As we saw in the earlier chapters, many institutionalised children lacked familial networks to ease their transition into adulthood. In these circumstances, the institutional relationship acted as a sounding board allowing children to manage these emotions.

[219] Soares, 'Dear Sir, remember me', p. 226.
[220] 2271/1/18, Annual Report (1878), pp. 51-53.
[221] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 116. For discussions of philanthropic strategies of separation see: Parr, *Labouring Children*, pp. 77-78; Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 81; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 30, 115; Frost, "'Your mother has never forgotten you'", pp. 45-72.

Through writing letters children were able to articulate, indirectly and directly, the challenges of their new lives. Girls' expressions of longing and nostalgia were juxtaposed with discussions of the difficulties of marriage, work or motherhood. Annie McManus wrote to the Home in 1892 from her position as a nurse in London detailing her hard work looking after patients. Her days were long, up at 6am and 'staff-gases' (lights) out at 10:30. She had been by her own admission a troublesome pupil at the school but had nonetheless on a recent visit to the PMVH asked for her two younger sisters to be admitted to the PMVH and hoped they would be 'less trouble to those over them than I was'.[222]

Boys also reflected on how their sentiments had changed. William Neal was content in Australia. He had a good job and was getting on 'very well indeed'. He had friends and played in a band. On reflecting on his life, he admitted that he had thought himself hard done by, when at the school, adding that he had resolved while there 'as most of us did' to leave and never come back. Yet he asserted now that, although 'we considered ourselves so illtreated if we were punished for any misconduct', 'ask me whether I was not a great deal happier then than now. I should say yes. You don't consider and you don't know when you are well off'.[223]

Letters, like William's, are red flags for historians. Over the last twenty years, there have been a series of high-profile inquiries into abuse within a range of children's organisations, across the globe.[224] These have provided the context for discussions of historical abuse. Both Swain and Boucher discussed twenty-first-century government apologies for abuse in the

[222] 2591/1/15, Twenty-First Annual Report, p. 9.
[223] 2271/1/14, Annual Report (1866), p. 51.
[224] See G. Lynch, P. Markkola, E. O'Sullivan, J. Sköld and S. Swain, 'The uses of historical research in child abuse inquiries', https://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/the-uses-of-historical-research-in-child-abuse-inquiries (1 Aug. 2022) for a review of inquiries across six countries. Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 1-2, 67.

introductions to their books on child welfare and highlighted horrific nineteenth-century examples in their analyses.[225] Such incidents are profoundly disturbing. Yet, as Roy Parker noted in his assessment, 'there is no way of knowing now' how many children in institutional care or in situations overseas were ill-treated.[226] Although, I have tried to track down evidence of allegations of abuse within the RPS or the PMVH, I have been largely unsuccessful. I have found no incidences of sexual abuse within the home. Historian, Mary Thompkins, however, found two allegations of physical abuse against the RPS between 1849 and 1900. The first, in 1860, was investigated and found to be untrue. According to four witnesses, which included fellow pupils, the boy's injuries resulted from accidental injuries caused in a 'scuffle' between him and a teacher.[227] The second, in 1870 appears to have been true. A labour master, Mr Shore, was witnessed by a local resident 'abusing boys as they worked'. Thompkins noted that while we do not know what subsequently happened, its report and investigation by the Inspector of Reformatories indicated the seriousness with which allegations were taken.[228] The Royal Commission of 1886 reported that in its visits to numerous schools, it found 'no instances of ill-usage' although it also acknowledged that the absence of an obvious person to report ill-use to made it more likely abuse would be hidden.[229] That more incidences were not uncovered, does not mean that more did not exist. Children were reluctant, as our investigations of familial violence demonstrated, to report episodes of abuse.

[225] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 1-2, 67, 167-172; Boucher, *Empire's Children*, pp. 3, 23-24, 82, 172; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 92.
[226] R. Parker, The Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867-1917 (Bristol, 2008), p. 221.
[227] M. Thompkins, 'The Philanthropic Society in Britain with particular reference to the Reformatory Farm School, Redhill 1849-1900' (MA thesis, University of Western Australia, 2007), p. 38.
[228] Thompkins, 'The Philanthropic Society', p. 41.
[229] *Parl. Pap.* (1886), Cm 3876, p. 16.

William was probably, however, referring to punishment he had received in the RPS. Corporal punishment was commonplace across all types of institutions in the nineteenth century.[230] The records of the RPS show that, despite Turner's claim to want to discipline with kindness, 'flogging' did occur. Yet, it was a relatively infrequent punishment, reserved principally for incidences of 'desertion' or assault, and was reported annually from 1860.[231] Between 1860 and 1900, the number of 'birchings' or floggings a year varied between a low of two in 1877 and a high of twenty-four in 1875.[232] This was a small percentage of the 300 boys in the school and, as Vine noted, in 1900 an average of 96 per cent were on the good conduct list during the year.[233]

There is no surviving record of punishment in the PMVH. All we have is a scrap of paper relating to a girl called Elizabeth Smith admitted in 1886 because of her violent behaviour towards her mother. Elizabeth's violence continued within the PMVH towards fellow pupils and staff. The Home seems to have tried a range of punishments from 'forgiveness' to tying her hands. No mention was made of physical punishment beyond this, limiting our ability to form an assessment. As Parker pointed out, corporal punishment was 'appropriate discipline' in the nineteenth century and, yet, as William's letter shows, children resented it.[234] Yet, it is also evident from letters, such as William's and Annie's that children's perspectives on their experiences and past behaviour changed as they aged.

Saxby Slater also highlighted how his feelings had altered. He had emigrated to Canada at the age of sixteen and reported being very happy in his employment as a farm labourer. A

[230] Parker, *Uprooted,* p. 225.
[231] Thompkins, 'The Philanthropic Society', p. 37.
[232] 2271/1/29, Annual Report (1900), p. 23; 2271/1/17, Annual Report (1876), p. 18; 2271/1/18, Annual Report (1878), p. 20.
[233] 2271/1/29, Annual Report (1900), p. 24.
[234] Parker, *Uprooted,* p. 225.

frequent correspondent, in one letter he wrote of a 'little parity dancing (sic)' he was about to attend where 'we will all dance to the fidle an keep good time to it (sic)'.[235] He noted that his master was very kind and bought him gifts, yet, he also wrote, 'I wish I was in the old Philanthropic Society Farm School, boy say when they are the School they wish they was away out of this place, and you tell them if they dont wish themselves back in School again, they never had a better home then that (sic)'.[236] Neither William nor Saxby had lives of unrelenting hard work, with no leisure time or entertainment. Both expressed contentment with aspects of their lives. Yet, as young men with the responsibilities that brought, they yearned to be back, not with their families but with the institution that had looked after them.

Yet Saxby, while at the RPS, had been one of the many boys who 'absconded' from the institution. Admitted at the age of eleven after his sixth conviction, Saxby came from a criminal family. Searches of court and prison registers reveal that his father, as well as two of his brothers, had criminal records. Saxby was a troublesome pupil. He was punished seven times in his first year and absconded at the end of 1859 with another boy, only two days after being fined two shillings for 'disorder at drill'. He was recaptured the same evening and returned to the school where he remained until late 1862. During that time, he was punished on fourteen more occasions often for fighting and impertinence.[237] At the expiry of his term and, just before his sixteenth birthday, Saxby returned to his 'filthy' 'neglected' and 'thoroughly wretched' home, his parents having refused to consent to his emigration. Yet, despite his record of trouble within the RPS, four months later he returned

[235] 2271/1/13, Annual Report (1865), p. 48.
[236] Ibid., p. 48.
[237] These punishments consisted predominantly of lost marks.

'voluntarily' to the institution because he was 'out of work and in poverty'. Once there he asked if he could emigrate after all. While this may have been because of the absence of any other viable choice, his decision to keep corresponding with the institution over the next few years seems to indicate that his sentiments towards the school had undergone a change.

The example of Saxby indicates, as we highlighted in Chapter Three, that we should be cautious in using instances of resistance as a guide to children's settled views of institutional life.[238] There are many similar cases in the records. Around ten percent of boys ran away each year, although most, like Saxby, were recovered. The number of runaways varied considerably. In some years there were no desertions or only one or two, while in 1861 there were as many as fifty-six, all but four of whom were recovered.[239] It was not just boys who ran away. Girls also abandoned the PMVH although in much smaller numbers. Four ran away between 1870 and 1890 while one or two others persuaded their families to remove them.[240] Some of these, such as Eliza Larner, asked to return to the Home, rather than remain with their families.[241] Another, Harriet Wardell, had been placed in the PMVH aged thirteen by an aunt who had looked after her since her parents' death. She was admitted under the Industrial Schools Act of 1866. The record does not note what age she was when sent out at first to service but she must have been under sixteen as when she ran away from the first situation found for her she was captured by the police and returned to the institution.[242] Harriet remained in the PMVH for at least three more years before emigrating

[238] Chapter Three, pp. 173-74.
[239] 2271/1/12, Annual Report (1862), pp. 14, 17.
[240] Girls who ran away included: Annie Locke, Ellen Myers, Annie Ralph. SHC, 2591/3/1, fols. 281, 299, 374.
[241] For a fuller discussion of Eliza's case see Chapter One, p. 174.
[242] The 1866 Industrial Schools Act allowed children who had been committed by magistrates to be released on licence to live with trustworthy and respectable people. Licences could be renewed quarterly until children

to Canada aged nineteen.[243] Harriet wrote several letters to the school, one of which from 1882 survives. Aged twenty-four, happily married with two small children and 'getting on very nicely' the letter expressed her affection for the school and sent her love to several members of staff. She signed off 'from yours, as ever'.[244]

As an expression of children's agency, the decision to 'abscond' appears to be the ultimate indication of children's unhappiness.[245] Yet, tracing boys throughout their interaction with the RPS rather than focusing on that single action raises questions about the accuracy of that assumption. The school attributed 'desertions' to the combination of a 'boy's natural restlessness', 'bad and foolish friends', 'discontent at the labor and discipline enforced upon him (sic)' and the fact that 'evasion is so easy'.[246] Superintendent Marshal Vine described the decision to abscond as 'not altogether an unnatural or even heinous offence' because 'liberty is ever dear to boys as well as men'.[247] Around two thirds of runaways were repeat offenders. Around a quarter returned of their own volition. Frank Fink, who was admitted at the age of fourteen, ran away twice at the age of sixteen, eventually joining the army in 1892 at the age of seventeen. Despite his episodes of running away he was a frequent correspondent with the school and came back to visit many times over the years. His last visit was in 1912 aged thirty-seven just before he emigrated to British Columbia with his wife and child. He continued to write after his emigration.

reached the age of sixteen. See C.G. Gear, 'Industrial Schools in England, 1857-1933: "Moral Hospitals" or "Oppressive Institutions"?' (D.Phil. thesis, University of London, 1999), pp. 187-188.

[243] 2591/3/1, fol. 461.

[244] Nine Elms Ladies' Association, *Record of Christian labour* (1882), pp. 101-102.

[245] Linda Mahood has argued that 'subcultures of resistance' both active and passive demonstrated children's unwillingness to be in the institution. Mahood, *Policing gender,* pp. 149-150.

[246] 2271/1/6, Annual Report (1854), p. 14; 'The history of the Royal Philanthropic Society'.

[247] 2271/1/21, Annual Report (1891), p. 26.

Sixty-four percent of those who absconded, like Frank, resumed contact with the school through visits or correspondence. Their letters often expressed gratitude about the transformation they believed the school had wrought in their lives and made explicit mention of how their feelings had changed as they matured. Many of the boys who managed to run away successfully, joined the army – one of the few alternatives available to boys without support networks or employment options. Letters from soldiers form an important body of evidence on children's thoughts about their relationship with the institution. The army was much stricter than the RPS and a common theme in letters was that of regret for past behaviour or ingratitude. Two boys, Henry Batchelor and William Harbour, who had run away from the RPS together, wrote separate letters after leaving. William, from Maidstone in Kent, had been sent to the RPS in 1855 aged fifteen for stealing lead. His father had been transported to Australia for seven years and his mother had deserted her children. William's time in the school was a torrid one. He was punished several times for stealing and absconded twice, both times being recaptured, before his successful 'desertion' with Henry in September 1858.[248] He joined the army four months later. William wrote to the school from the West Indies in 1860 to say that he had been 'a great fool for deserting' adding: 'when I look into it I find you [Mr Trevarthen, school secretary] and Mr Howe [his former housemaster] were my best friends'.[249] Fellow runaway, Henry, who had also joined the army and was serving in India also wrote back in 1860 at the age of twenty. He wrote of how 'grieved' he was to think of 'how ungrateful I have been to my best friends that ever I had in the world', adding that he was ashamed of 'turning his back' on staff who were 'trying to make me a respectable member of society'.[250] He

[248] RPS, 2271/10/10, fol. 283.
[249] 2271/1/10, Annual Report (1860), p. 31.
[250] 2271/1/10, Annual Report (1860), p. 44. 2271/10/10, fol. 220; 2271/33, Emigration Book, pp. 281-282.

regretted his previous lack of patience and inability to resist temptation and resolved to do better in future. He aimed to earn his place on the army's good conduct register.[251] In another letter he wrote: 'I have a far stricter schoolmaster over me now than I had at Red Hill [the RPS] and often think what a fool I was to throw away my chance'.[252]

Middle-class ideals of self-help and evangelical notions of trial through tribulation intermingled with the narratives of maturity and regret that boys recounted. William Harding's letter conformed to this pattern. William had been sent to prison in 1850. In 1851, as part of the experimental establishment of the RPS, he accepted an offer to enter the RPS as an alternative to serving his sentence. A year after entering the institution he ran away. He was caught and returned to prison where he was offered the chance of returning to the RPS but refused. He then served out the remainder of his seven-year sentence.[253] In 1858, aged twenty, he wrote to Sydney Turner to update him on what had happened since he ran away. He reported that on his release a year earlier, he had returned to his family. But on his arrival, he found that 'his dear father' had died three years earlier and that 'the last words he spoke' were about William. William wrote that he was 'very much grieved and resolved to do better in future'. He had joined the army where he had risen quickly to the rank of lance corporal. In his letter to Turner, William recognised and regretted his mistakes. He said: 'I often think if the history of your scholars could be told, there would be some useful, some mournful and some pleasant histories among them'. He added 'I passed your school coming here on the train, but I could not stop. I almost wished I were again a child – not to go through what I have gone through but that I might show myself more sensible to

[251] 2271/1/11, Annual Report (1861), pp. 38-39.
[252] 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 282.
[253] Findmypast.co.uk, HO24/5, Millbank Prison Registers, vol. 5.

kindness'.[254] William remained in the army for almost twenty years rising to the rank of Battery Sergeant Major, receiving two good conduct badges and never having his name placed in the defaulters book or being court martialled – all measures of his continued good behaviour.[255] He had lived up to the resolution he had made after his father's death.

These examples demonstrate the importance of tracing the whole life course when we are evaluating the impact of the institution on individual lives. Using isolated letters or reports of children's behaviour or emotional responses to welfare provides a particular snapshot in time. It is evident from these case studies that children's view of the institution changed over time as they matured and gained more experience of the world. Their emotions too changed. Momentary impulses to abscond were bitterly regretted. Although boys, as former criminals, had more to repent, girls, too, apologised for 'naughty' or 'troublesome' behaviour. The discipline of institutional life that seemed restrictive or harsh to the child could seem blissfully free of responsibility to the young man or woman making their own way in life. It was only then that they realised the value of the lessons they had been taught.

There would, of course, have been those who did not feel that way about the institution. Those cases will be included in the forty-eight percent of boys who did not remain in touch with the RPS or the larger proportion of girls who did not contact the PMVH.[256] But there was a significant cohort who did feel that the institution had been of value to them and who communicated that recognition through their letters, their gifts, and their visits.

[254] 2271/1/10, Annual Report (1859), pp. 32-33.
[255] Findmypast.co.uk, Chelsea Pensioners British Army Service Records 1760-1913, WO97, Box. 1797/19.
[256] The PMVH reported in 1893 that 170 girls were still in touch, representing around one sixth of girls who had passed through the institution.

Relationships and their effect on character

Claudia Soares has described the relationships fostered between children and carers as reflecting 'a concern to provide institutional inmates with a sense of home, family and belonging'.[257] The question is for what purpose? Staff appeared to genuinely care about the children they looked after and, as we have seen, to feel a lifelong responsibility for them. But there was also a pragmatic reason to build affective relationships. The bonds between children and staff encouraged children to live up to the values they had been taught.

The RPS was overt in its aims. Staff believed that the key to success lay in building an 'esprit de corps' among the children which would create 'stronger ties of affection and dependence between them and their teachers'. This would, Sydney Turner argued, 'counteract all the ordinary disturbing influences'.[258] This 'esprit de corps' — a common element of the English public-school experience — was used by staff to 'bind pupils' to the institutional community.[259] Boys were taught a sense of responsibility to their former teachers, their institution, and their peers. There is evidence that boys understood the burden of this 'School Tradition'.[260] Walter Dent who emigrated to Australia aged fifteen in 1855 wrote that 'the only way I can shew thanks to you' 'is to be a good boy and not shut the door upon others, but opening it wider'.[261] Children's correspondence revealed the extent to which the lessons on 'character' had been absorbed and how it was linked to a sense of belonging. William Bishop's 1872 letter reveals that his former housemaster Mr Hearne had written to

[257] Soares, 'Neither Waif nor Stray', p. 8.
[258] 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 25.
[259] For a discussion of the deliberate fostering of public-school communities, see: Christopher Prior's discussion of J.A. Mangan's work on camaraderie and community in the English public school system. C. Prior, 'A Brotherhood of Britons? Public Schooling, *esprit de corps* and Colonial Officials in Africa, c. 1900-1939', *History*, 98/2 (2013), pp. 174-190.
[260] 2271/1/3, Annual Report (1851), p. 6.
[261] 2271/1/9, Annual Report (1858), p. 18; 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 4.

him thanking him for 'being honorable (sic)' although William self-deprecatingly noted that 'I think I would not be worthy the honor of being a Gurney's boy if I had neglected to do as I promised and it would not have shown much for Mr Hearne's teaching either'.[262]

Sometimes, living up to the school values meant rejecting family. The historiography has tended to portray children's separation from families as an essential part of their transformation into 'clean, literate, well-mannered, industrious Protestant children'.[263] Lydia Murdoch argues that institutional children's memories were 'reoriented' and they were encouraged to forget about their past and their families. [264] Yet, many of the children in the PMVH and the RPS had entered the institution at an age where their memories of their families could not be erased. When they rejected their families, they were doing so deliberately and, sometimes, in direct contradiction to the lessons they had been taught. In 1893 SB wrote to 'Miss S' from her marital home in Hampshire.[265] SB had married a year previously, after five years in domestic service, before which she had spent three years in the Home. SB's letter reported that after eight years of being absent from SB's life, her mother had recently written to her asking her to return to the maternal home. SB had decided not to go and wanted to explain her decision to Miss S. She reported that she had decided not to return because her uncle had 'wrote and told me it would not be a fit place for me to go home as mother is living with a man and she is not married to him, and she has got two children'. She added 'my uncle told me I should ruin myself if I went to live with my mother, so I did not think it right for me to go near her and I am sure you will think so'. SB

[262] 2271/1/17, Annual Report (1872), p. 47.
[263] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 35; Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 73; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, p. 30; Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 81.
[264] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 35.
[265] Probably Miss Sneyd, a twenty-four-year-old deaconess in the PMVH.

was seeking reassurance from Miss S that, despite staff injunctions to 'honour thy father and thy mother' she had done the right thing, in refusing to return to her mother's home.[266]

Thomas Mills also chose his new life over his old one. Thomas had been admitted to the RPS for his third criminal offence in 1878. He had emigrated to Canada in 1881, aged nineteen, and shortly afterwards moved to the United States. After ten years there, he married and had a family. In 1893 the RPS received a letter from Thomas's brother George. George was not a former pupil of the RPS but had a long criminal record and presumably knew the institution was still in touch with Thomas. George was thirty-two and was serving a seven-year sentence in prison for stealing a carpet and a chest of tea.[267] He expected to be released in November 1893 and wrote that he would like to go to Thomas in the United States. The RPS sent on George's letter to Thomas and asked whether, once George was released from prison, he would allow George to come and join him in Ohio. Thomas refused. He argued that he worked 'steady all the year around and earn good wages' and did not want George to 'disgrace my life or family'. He had not told his wife about his past and 'would not like' his wife to know that he 'had a brother in prison'. That was not all. Like SB he criticised his parents noting that if his father 'had trained us right when we were young George might not be where he is'.[268] In making these choices, both children were placing the values they had learned within the institution ahead of the birth families that threatened their hard-won respectability.

Yet not all former pupils were able to live up to the standards set for them. The 1892 report from the PMVH noted that 'ninety percent of our girls do well' implying that ten percent did

[266] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Second Annual Report, p. 9.
[267] Ancestry.com, Surrey, England, Calendar of Prisoners 1848-1902, QS3/4/14; UK, Calendar of Prisoners, 1868-1929, HO140/130/2.
[268] SHC, 2271/10/17, fol. 546.

not.[269] This was broadly similar to the nine percent of girls in the research group who were recorded as failing to live up to institutional standards at least initially. In 1866 the RPS estimated that seventeen percent of boys committed further crimes after leaving.[270] The rate declined over time and by 1900 only seven percent of those discharged in the preceding four years had reoffended. A further three percent were out of work.[271] The letters seem to indicate that a far greater number behaved badly, at least initially. Of the 150 boys, twenty-three percent acted in a way that breached institutional expectations at least in the first few years after leaving. This was not a surprise for the philanthropists at the RPS. They believed that boys took a while to settle down and were pragmatic about the potential for 'decided religious change' among the boys in the school, reflecting that boys left at an 'early and still impressible age' which made them prone to give in to 'the first temptations of their early manhood'.[272]

This recognition seems to have been drawn from experience. Many letters contained admissions that revealed that children's behaviour had not adhered to institutional ideals. George Beasley wrote to Turner in 1857, aged twenty, lamenting that he had 'lost' his 'character'.[273] His shame at his behaviour was obvious. George thanked Turner for the 'kind letter' which he did not 'deserve'. He explained he had been reluctant to initiate the correspondence because of 'the disgrace I brought upon myself, for which I can never expect you will forgive me, after what good was done for me at the School'. George blamed

[269] 2591/1/14, Twenty-First Annual Report, p. 8.
[270] 2271/1/15, Annual Report (1867), p. 22. Nine percent of emigrants and eighteen percent of home disposals.
[271] 2271/1/29, Annual Report (1901), p. 52.
[272] 2271/1/9, Annual Report (1858), p. 15.
[273] Ibid., p. 21; 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 213.

his actions on the influence of fellow pupil Mason, although, as he acknowledged, he was 'big enough and old enough to know better than to listen to him'.[274]

Girls too wrote of how were failing to behave as they ought. Diana Fuller stated that she tried to 'keep in the Right Path' but that she found it much more difficult now she was no longer living in the 'Dear Old Home' where she had spent 'many a Christian Sabbath'.[275] CAH was also struggling with her faith. She wrote in 1882 from London, where she was working as a servant, that since she had entered service, she had 'not thought nearly as much about my spiritual life as I did before'. She still attended church but did not 'take these things to heart as I used to'. She confessed, 'I go on wishing I could improve, and not having strength enough to break myself of my misdoings'. It is evident that she had received a letter from one of the ladies at the PMVH, which although 'kind' had suggested that she was spending too much money on clothing. Her reply was defensive. She claimed that, although she dressed 'more than is necessary in my station of life, it is not because I think much about it or care for it either'. Once she had purchased something she lost interest in it 'immediately' adding 'she might as well be without it'. In response to the rebuke she had received, she was resolved to reform her ways, had opened a savings account at the Post Office and was determined to 'think of the rainy days that are to come'. Yet, having resolved to do better, she was unable to let the matter drop. Evidently bothered by the criticism, she blamed her spending firstly on her mother, who always liked her to 'look nice', and then on other servants who liked to 'outdo their mistresses', adding that 'one servant copies another'. CAH was keen to overcome her faults but made it clear that she was not sure that she could. Despite her many justifications, it is evident that the letter from the PMVH, while critical,

[274] 2271/1/9, Annual Report (1858), p. 21.
[275] 2591/3/1, fol. 155.

had also been sympathetic and had acknowledged the 'great many things to tempt young people in this world'. [276]

CAH's letter, like all the other surviving letters from girls, was published. It is important to recognise that these published letters would have been carefully selected.[277] Indeed, the institution admitted as much. In 1893, the PMVH published an anonymised letter from Annie McManus which it stated was chosen to show Annie's transformation from one who was 'one of our least promising girls' and who 'gave much trouble in every way' to the ideal example of an institutional girl. In noting that Annie had 'filled us with great surprise one day, when she visited the Homes in nurse's uniform and told us she had a good appointment in a Hospital' the PMVH was promoting the idea that reformation could take a while to materialise and was not always immediately evident, but that the trouble taken was worth it.[278] Yet recognising the instrumental use of Annie's letter does not negate the facts that lay behind it. Despite her difficult childhood and acknowledged troublesome behaviour within the Home, Annie had taken up a respectable occupation.[279] We traced Annie's life course in Chapter Three and noted that she pursued a successful career in nursing, retiring by 1939 to a comfortable home in suburban Croydon.[280]

The careful selection of letters does not mean that the letters themselves were heavily edited or altered. The evidence from the RPS shows that the letters published were authentic versions of those received. There is no particular reason to assume that the

[276] Nine Elms Association, *Record of Christian Labour*, pp. 99-100.
[277] We have access to less than a sixth of the letters received by the PMVH based on the Home's assertion that it was in active correspondence with over 170 girls. 2591/1/14, Twenty-third Annual Report, p. 6.
[278] 2591/1/14, Twenty-first Annual Report, p. 9.
[279] Ancestry.com, England Census 1891, RG12/203/106/4.
[280] Findmypast.co.uk, RG101/1291F/021/37; 'George Street, Park Lane, Town Hall', https://docslib.org/doc/5481050/george-street-park-lane-town-hall-friends-road-fairfield-fell-road (29 July 2022).

correspondence from the PMVH would be any different. Certainly, the letters received did not always show children's behaviour in the most favourable light – as the letter from CAH demonstrated. There are also common themes between the published correspondence of the PMVH and the unpublished correspondence of the RPS that provide support for their authenticity, as does children's frank acknowledgements of their wrongdoing. There was a risk in altering letters that the author would complain. There is no way for knowing for sure whether Annie would have read the published version of her letter, but copies of the Annual Report would have been sent to all supporters as was the *Open Doors* magazine which also contained girls' letters. Certainly, we know that boys read published letters because they referred to them in their correspondence.[281]

The true impact of the institution was realised, as Turner acknowledged, in how children lived their life beyond the institution. The open disclosure by former pupils of their weaknesses and failings tells us much about the kind of relationship that existed between children and the staff. It would have been easier for young people out in the world to say nothing than to confess bad behaviour. Like Thomas Merritt they could have chosen not to write back. That they did so shows a depth and importance to the institutional relationship that is under-recognised. Girls appear to have been more willing to puzzle out their feelings and concerns in dialogue with the institution. Their lack of concern over disclosing their failings shows that they did not expect condemnation and reveals the strength of the affectionate bond that existed. There was a familiarity and sense of friendship in their communications. In boys' letters we see the success of the objective of building an 'esprit de corps'. Boys who had breached standards of 'manly' behaviour tended to only get in touch

[281] 2271/1/16, Annual Report (1871), p. 39; 2271/1/20, Annual Report (1885), p. 47.

when they were back on the right path. Their failure to live up to the values they had been taught meant that they had let down not only themselves but their fellow pupils and the institution. Only once they were on their way to recovering their character did they feel that they could resume the connection. But that many were willing and keen to do so demonstrates the depth and importance of that relationship.

The importance of sibling relationships

It was not just institutional relationships that were important but also the relationships children developed with their siblings and peers. The evidence already discussed in this chapter has provided glimpses of the role fellow pupils could play in children's lives. Whether it was Mason leading George Beasley off the straight and narrow, or Henry Batchelor and William Harbour encouraging each other to run away, the influence of friendship on children within and beyond the institution is clear. Yet, these peer relationships remain under-explored in the literature, which foregrounds the loneliness of life for institutional children. The existing scholarship discusses peer relationships principally in the context of their rupture. When peers and siblings are mentioned, it is almost invariably in a broader context that foregrounds familial separation. Ellen Boucher writes that there was a 'disregard for the bonds of family' among twentieth-century emigrants to Australia that resulted in siblings being separated.[282] This contributed to the isolation, abandonment and trauma felt by many.[283]

This is only a partial portrayal. Of course there were those who lost all contact with their families and who felt this loss keenly in adulthood, but in dwelling on those, we gain a false

[282] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, p. 110.
[283] Wagner, *Children of the Empire*, pp. 65, 73-74, 86, 121, 219; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 161-162.

impression of the whole.[284] As we saw in Chapter One, thirty-one percent of boys and twenty percent of girls returned to their families on leaving the institution. Even some children who did not return spoke affectionately of their families. Children who had responded adversely to familial situations when young, could react differently once they too had become adults. William Lockyer, who we discussed in Chapter Two, had a washerwoman mother, who was described in the register as 'drunken, dissipated, bad'. She had according to William's admission account turned him out of the house at the age of only eleven resulting in his becoming involved with a gang of thieves and ending up in the RPS. Yet William missed her. In his letter to the institution, aged sixteen, he wrote:

> 'Sometimes I think a great deal about her. I should like to know where she is and if I had better write to her… I would like you to write to her and let her know where I am, for I think she would like to know, and she would write to me and I would write to her and let her know how I am getting on.'

William's perspective on his relationship with his mother had changed. He added that his mother had tried to make him a 'good boy' when he was 'going about the streets with my old companions' but noted that he 'did not care then'. We do not know if William ever got in touch with his mother but there is no evidence of her travelling out to see him or him returning to see her. Yet there is plenty of evidence that children did stay in touch with their families. Joy Parr reports that ninety percent of those 'urged to be dutiful correspondents were so' and 'a quarter of those counselled to sever their links with unworthy kin disobeyed'.[285]

[284] Wagner, *Children of the Empire*, pp. 48-50, 73-76, 141-143; Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, pp. 162-165; Parker, *Uprooted*, 213.
[285] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 76.

She has also shown, in her analysis of Canadian emigrants, that one third of Barnardo children had siblings in Canada and 'almost always these youngsters maintained some contact'.[286] This included writing letters, visiting each other and often, in adulthood, living near each other. For children who remained in Britain, scholarship by Lynn Hollen Lees and Lydia Murdoch has demonstrated the persistence of family bonds between institutional children and their parents. The instrumental and frequently short-term use of welfare by parents within Britain led to continued interaction for 'most children' not only with parents but also, it would be reasonable to assume, siblings and peers. [287]

Yet, an evaluation of these peer connections is largely absent from the literature or, where present, limited in its focus. This gap is reflected in the wider historiography of modern Britain. Siblings remain under-researched. With the exception of Leonore Davidoff, historians have, as Eleanor Gordon has acknowledged, 'almost entirely neglected this topic'. Yet, Davidoff's work on middle-class siblings demonstrated that 'sibling relationships are enduring and of immense emotional significance'. [288] Her work was mirrored in the United States by that of C. Dallet Hemphill who similarly argued that relationships with siblings were often the longest-lasting interpersonal relationship of an individual's life.[289] Friendship as a concept has received more intense focus in recent years. Scholarship has considered such varied questions as its role in the political realm, the way it met affective and emotional needs, its gendered nature, and the insights it can provide into social change. [290]

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[286] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 74.
[287] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 99; L. Hollen Lees, 'The Survival of the Unfit: Welfare Policies and Family Maintenance in Nineteenth Century *London,'* in P. Mandler (ed), *The Uses of Charity: The Poor on Relief in the Nineteenth-Century Metropolis* (Philadelphia, 2016), pp. 68-91.
[288] L. Davidoff, *Thicker Than Water: Siblings and their Relations, 1780-1920* (Oxford, 2012); E. Gordon, 'Review of 'Thicker than Water: Siblings and their Relations, 1780-1920', https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/1362 (3 June 2022).
[289] C. D. Hemphill, Siblings: Brothers and Sisters in American History (Oxford, 2011)
[290] B. Caine, 'Introduction: The Politics of Friendship', *Literature and History,* 17/1 (2008), pp. 1-3.

Yet, the focus has been on adult alliances and affiliations or on unequal relationships between children and 'friends', where friends often refer to older kinship relations or connections.[291] Discussions of children's peer relationships are lacking. But in this study of the RPS and PMVH peer relationships are overwhelmingly present.

Tracing children's interactions and networks throughout their lives demonstrates the enduring bonds many children formed with their brothers and sisters. Seventy-nine percent of boys within the RPS and seventy-four percent of girls in the PMVH had siblings.[292] Unlike the RPS which recorded all kin, including grandparents, aunts and uncles where known, the PMVH did not record siblings unless those siblings were also admitted to the institution. This happened in forty-one percent of girls' cases.[293] It was less common for male siblings to be admitted to the RPS. A review of the boys' cases reveals this happened in only nine percent of cases. Boys were often admitted on different dates. William Slater for instance was admitted to the RPS on his conviction for stealing fifteen ounces of thread in 1861 — two years after older brother Saxby had been admitted for stealing a pair of trousers. Both boys had multiple previous convictions, as did others within their family. Girls were more commonly admitted together, but occasionally admitted later. Ellen Hart, who was brought into the Homes in 1871 aged eleven under a magistrate's order after being found selling matches in the street, asked two years later in 1873 for the PMVH to admit her younger sister Charlotte so that she might 'sheare the privileges that she enjoyed (sic)'.[294]

[291] B. Caine, Friendship: A History (London, 2009); A. Herbert, Female Alliances: Gender Identity and Friendship in Early Modern Britain (New Haven, 2014); I. Schweitzer, Perfecting Friendship: Politics and Affiliation in Early American Literature (Chapel Hill, 2006), pp. 6-9.
[292] When girls' siblings were not recorded by the PMVH, tracing often revealed them.
[293] Based on the eighty girls traced in detail for this thesis.
[294] 2591/3/1, fol. 196.

Yet, even when children were separated from siblings by institutional life, tracing their life course reveals that they remained in contact. Both boys' and girls' records repeatedly revealed the role played by siblings, uncles, aunts and parents in finding employment or providing accommodation.[295] This was evident both within Britain and overseas. In Chapter Three, we saw that four of the six Lindsay sisters were admitted to the PMVH after their father's criminal conviction and the remaining two remained with relatives.[296] The girls were separated for many years and some even were married and had children by the time their youngest siblings left the institution.[297] Despite their long separation, census data reveals ongoing connections between the six sisters into adult life.[298] Two of the unmarried sisters, Florence, and Marion, shared a house in London together in their thirties. Thirty years later, Florence shared a different house in Kent with her widowed sister Bessie while Gertrude kept house for Bessie's son, a navy officer living in Warwick.[299] This echoes findings by Davidoff about the interdependence between nieces, nephews, aunts and uncles and the ways in which reciprocal relationships of caring could be developed.[300]

Other genealogical tracing reveals similar reciprocity of care. Illegitimate Dora Berner entered the PMVH in 1884, aged twelve, following her dismissal from service for dishonesty. Her mother's life was chaotic, involving several partners and Dora's family was scattered across multiple places. Dora left the PMVH in 1886 for a position in service — the same year that her half-sister Maggie was born. In 1891, when Dora was working in Hampshire as a

[295] Examples include: 2591/3/1, fols. 482, 108, 148; 2271/10/19, fol. 288, 2271/10/15, fol. 99; 2271/10/13, fol. 39.
[296] Chapter Three, p. 188.
[297] They were in order of age: Bessie Alice Lindsay, May Ellen Lindsay, Marion Taylor Lindsay, Gertrude Margaret Lindsay and Hope Constance Lindsay.
[298] England Census 1911; RG14/9120/47.
[299] England Census 1901, RG13/67/79/29; 1939 E&W Register, RG101/5723A; RG101/1847H.
[300] Davidoff, *Thicker than Water*, pp. 182-185.

cook, her sister Maud was living with their uncle, her brother Philip had just joined the navy and her half-siblings Maggie and Archie were living with their mother in London.[301] In the subsequent decades the siblings moved around the country and never appear to have been geographically proximate to each other. Dora herself married twice, firstly in 1905 and then in 1918 following which she moved to Wiltshire.[302] Despite the apparent distance between them, Dora's will and obituary reveal that she kept in touch with her family. At the time of her death in 1958 she had been living with a niece for over four years and her obituary noted the deep affection of a further eighteen nieces and nephews. Dora's will left her effects to her one surviving sibling, Maud, an eighty-nine-year-old widow living in Southampton.[303]

Annie McManus, who we encountered earlier, was another institutional girl who, like Ellen, asked for her siblings to be admitted. This was presumably because of the benefits she thought it would bring. Annie had been admitted to the PMVH aged seven in 1878. Her younger sisters Catherine and Helen had been born after she had entered the institution. They were ten and fifteen years younger than her and she must have barely known them. Yet, she seems nonetheless to have felt responsible for them and asked for their admission after she, herself, had left.[304]

Martin Kelly also sought to have his brother admitted to the RPS, despite it being a reformatory school. His letter to the superintendent stated, 'I should like to have him go to

[301] England Census 1891, RG12/936/46/43; RG12/1836/133/28.
[302] London, CoE Marriages and Banns, 1754-1938, p85/pau/010; p87/maa/007.
[303] Ancestry.com, Dora Berner, https://www.ancestry.co.uk/mediaui-viewer/tree/77458101/person/32370327075/media/50a59b49-85c2-499b-8b81-c384313a331a?_phsrc=COn6798&_phstart=successSource (4 June 2022)
[304] 2591/1/14, Twenty-first Annual Report, p. 9; England Census 1891, RG12/553/143/9. There is no admissions register for the three girls to tell us why they were admitted.

your School for a year or two, for I think it would be of unvalued good to him'. He added 'I will pay for him being kept there willingly'. Martin, who was in the United States, asked the RPS to write to his father about it and his instructions did not end there. He added 'I hope you will put him in the Garston's House under the care of Mr. Butcher and use him just as you would any other boy'.[305] Martin's plans came to nothing. His father refused to let John go but tempered his refusal with the reassurance that Martin's brother was 'doing very well' and was 'learning to read and write'. His concerns allayed, Martin concluded he 'will be very well as he is' and abandoned his efforts. [306]

This prolonged responsibility for younger siblings who children must barely have known, or from whom they had been long separated, was common. Hemphill has argued that, in the early nineteenth century, older siblings increasingly assumed responsibility for younger siblings.[307] Multiple letters mentioned brothers or sisters and emigrants asked the institution to help arrange siblings' emigration. Overall twenty percent of emigrants within the sample brought their family out to join them or tried to. This was often driven by a desire not just for familial companionship but also, as we saw in Chapter Two, by a desire to share the rewards of overseas life.[308] Ellen Rushman encouraged her sister's emigration and provided her with a home for over ten years while she established herself in America.[309] Ellen's sisterly letter full of advice demonstrated what Hemphill described as a recognition of the 'age difference' between siblings that could result in elder siblings acting as proxy parents to those younger than them.[310] Nineteen-year-old William Terry emigrated to Canada in 1867

[305] 2271/1/16, Annual Report (1868), pp. 48-49.
[306] 2271/1/16, Annual Report (1869), pp. 36-37.
[307] Hemphill, *Siblings*, p. 119.
[308] Chapter Two, pp. 114-127.
[309] 1900 United States Federal Census, Needham, Norfolk, Massachusetts, p. 13, enum. 105.
[310] Chapter Three, p. 210, Hemphill, *Siblings*, pp. 120-122.

after four years in the RPS. When he entered the institution, his younger brother, Thomas, was just eight years old. In 1870, now living in the United States, William, with the help of the RPS, arranged for Thomas, now fifteen, to join him and found him employment on a nearby farm. It cost fifty-five American dollars for Thomas's passage – a significant sum equivalent to over two months' wages.[311] William bought a farm in Newbury, Vermont in 1872 and Thomas managed it for him, while William became a travelling salesman for a local merchant so he could earn more money for the family, which by this point included his mother and two other younger siblings, whose emigration he had also arranged.[312] Unfortunately, Thomas died of typhoid aged eighteen. We do not know how William felt about the loss of the brother, whose future he had invested so much in. Sibling loss was, as Davidoff has highlighted, common but a focus on parental grief has marginalised considerations of the effect of the loss on siblings.[313] 'Working-class people' she wrote, seem to have been particularly reluctant to discuss it, perhaps 'through lack of vocabulary'.[314] The inscription on Thomas's headstone, which referred only to Thomas's status as a brother — not as a son — gives us some clues to the emotional closeness of the two brothers. It read 'Sleep on dear brother, take thy rest. God called thee Home when he thought best'.[315]

Many of the children in this study, like William, lost siblings to death. We cannot know how they felt but the act of naming children after lost siblings could indicate a depth of bond. The youngest Lindsay sister, Hope Constance, died, aged nineteen, in 1893. Hope had entered the PMVH in 1878 with Bessie and two other siblings, at the age of only four. After her death, older sister May who had not been in the institution with Bessie, Hope, and the

[311] 2271/10/13, fol. 178; 2271/33, Emigration Book, pp. 320-321.
[312] 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 329.
[313] Davidoff, *Thicker Than Water,* p. 316.
[314] Ibid., p. 308.
[315] ' Thomas Terry', https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/50687653 (29 July 2022).

others had two daughters but named one after herself and one after her sister Gertrude. It was Bessie who after a succession of boys finally had a daughter in 1905, twelve years later, who named her daughter Hope Constance. Perhaps as the eldest sibling to enter the institution twelve-year-old Bessie had filled the role of mother to the youngest child Hope and felt the closest bond.[316]

Tracing individuals' lives reveals that older siblings took responsibility for their brothers and sisters. They helped them with employment, accommodation, and money. Institutional separations were reconciled in adulthood despite marriage and distance. Uncles and aunts took in the children of siblings or vice versa in what Leonore Davidoff called relationships of 'reciprocity'.[317] Yet, siblings also led each other astray or repudiated each other, demonstrating the enduring influence they could have on each other's lives and the value that children felt they held.

The influence of peer relationships

When children did not have siblings, peers could fill the gap. Shurlee Swain reports that within the institution a 'camaraderie' 'developed among the children' and that this reproduced 'some elements of a sibling relationship'. She quoted children who described their peers as 'like brothers and sisters' or an 'extended family with lots of love'.[318] Children maintained these relationships through physical contact and correspondence. Letters provide considerable information about the peer networks children maintained overseas. In her analysis of child emigrants, Parr foregrounded the 'solitary' nature of life in Canada

[316] E&W, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915, 1D/509; England Census 1901, RG13/631/45/3, RG13/499/93/34; Wales Census 1911, RG14/33784/13.
[317] Davidoff, *Thicker than Water*, p. 184.
[318] Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, p. 164.

compared to the 'crowded busy' institution.[319] Yet, in Canada although distances could be large, settlements were relatively few, and the RPS's use of agents to place boys meant that boys were often situated near each other at least initially.[320] Francis Field's 1877 letter reported that he had seen thirty boys from the RPS in his neighbourhood.[321] James Anderson who had emigrated to Fredericton, New Brunswick, wrote that he often saw 'some of our lads' in town. He obviously felt a close bond to them describing them as 'my brothers, for I think as much of them'. [322] Boys were invited to regular lunches at the agent's house and all children were encouraged in their letters to pass on information about each other as part of the institutional effort to monitor and encourage appropriate behaviour. Although there are fewer letters from girls, genealogical tracing reveals that many seem to have ended up, at least initially, in the community of Le Mars in Iowa that was discussed in Chapter Three. This would imply they saw each other and stayed in contact, at least for the first few years. Sometimes, marriage meant moving and this could result in girls' losing touch, as demonstrated by Harriet Wardell's letter requesting some of her old friends' addresses.[323]

The evidence shows that, despite their greater geographic mobility, boys maintained their peer communities and used these networks to their own advantage. William Terry worked initially as a farm labourer in the village of Melbourne, Quebec, on the other side of the Saint-Francois river from the town of Richmond, where many boys also lived. After a year he left for the lumber and milling town of Wells River in Vermont, which had a population of around five hundred people. His former school mate Martin Kelly had been there for three years at that point, as had another old boy, Edwin Hearson. The small group were soon

[319] Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 101.
[320] See Chapter Three p. 115.
[321] 2271/1/18, Annual Report (1878), p. 41.
[322] 2271/1/9, Annual Report (1858), p. 57.
[323] Ibid., p. 101.

joined by James Hill who had been in Quebec with William. William's 1869 letter reported that James had spent Christmas with him. Later that year, fellow schoolmates, Edward Staples and Henry Brown, came up from New York to join them. The following year, as we have seen, William's brother Thomas travelled from England to Wells River and records show that James's brother was also there by 1873.[324] The boys had built a new community, supporting each other in their new lives.

As individuals aged and settled down, their correspondence with the school and each other seemed to become more infrequent. Thomas Farmer and William Bailey emigrated in 1858 at the age of sixteen and eighteen respectively. They were close friends and wrote to each other often, even after William decided to enlist in the 'Army of the Union' to fight in the civil war. Their letters to each other do not survive but are visible through Thomas and William's separate correspondence with the school. Thomas did not approve of William's decision to enlist writing: 'I think he has acted very unwisely in inlisting in the Fedrial Army, and with you I wish him will out of it. I have read in several papers that his regiment as been engaged (sic)'.[325] The boys wrote to each other frequently and shared news of their lives. William wrote of the 'young lady he was engaged to and the Battles he had been engaged in and the hopes he had in view'. Thomas sent William the newspapers sent to him by the RPS.[326] Yet, a letter in 1865 from Thomas, now twenty-three, noted that he had not heard from William for months and was 'afraid he sleeps in a soldier's grave'.[327]Thomas's fears were unfounded. An 1867 letter to the RPS from William, now aged twenty-seven, reported that he had not even been wounded. Once he had left the army he had married and had

[324] 2271/1/12, Annual Report (1864), p. 171; 2271/10/13, fol. 178; 2271/33, Emigration Book, pp. 249, 294-5.
[325] 2271/1/12, Annual Report (1864), pp. 32-33, 50; 2271/1/14, Annual Report (1866), p. 41; 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 168.
[326] 2271/1/13, Annual Report (1865), p. 49.
[327] 2271/1/14, Annual Report (1866), p. 41; 2271/1/33, Emigration Book, p. 187.

stopped corresponding with Thomas. His wife was ill and he had been busy running a bakery in Pennsylvania and saving his money.[328] In making these excuses, William revealed that he was aware that he had failed to keep up his end of the relationship with Thomas.[329] His explanations demonstrated how his life had changed. He had moved beyond the family of the school into a new life centred on the family he had created with his wife.[330]

Exploring children's relationships reveals their significance in determining the impact of the institution on children. Yet, children also acted as moral monitors for each other, holding up the standards of behaviour and judging those who did not live up to the ideals they had been taught. Gossip about peers was present in almost all letters. In part, this was because of institutional encouragement to pass on information, but children also sought to deepen and further the relationship within the institution through the act of sharing information. Ishiguro has argued that gossip is a 'diverse form of communication that builds relationships, produces knowledge, disciplines people and asserts social values'. Correspondence between settlers in British Columbia and the metropole were full of what she calls 'epistolary gossip' which was 'built upon foundations of judgement'.[331] Luise White states that gossip 'creates ties of intimacy' between those gossiping and relies on 'evaluating reputations'.[332] It 'binds gossipers together in an imagined community of shared values'.[333] Gossip between colonial officials was according to Christopher Prior, a way of informally policing social norms core to the 'esprit de corps'.[334] Letters such as George

[328] 2271/1/33, Emigration Book, p. 209.
[329] Ibid., p. 70.
[330] Ibid., pp. 45, 69.
[331] Ishiguro, Nothing to Write Home About, p. 184.
[332] L. White, 'Between gluckman and Foucault: Historicizing rumour and gossip', *Social Dynamics,* 20/1 (1994), pp. 76-77.
[333] White, 'Between gluckman and Foucault', p. 79.
[334] Prior, 'A Brotherhood of Britons?', p. 187.

Wiltshire's were typical. George had entered the RPS in 1862, aged sixteen, and emigrated in 1866, aged twenty. He wrote back from Canada in 1868, where he was working on a farm. His letter gave a summary of what he knew about his fellow pupils. After recounting where he was working, and how much he was earning, he noted: 'George Coombes is a silly fellow. he ought to get $20 a month but only earns board and clothes. Randall is a smart fellow. Horlor can work when he likes, but he's a shifty fellow, has had 4 or 5 places.' 'Parr gets 6 dollars a month. He will get on well if he takes care'.[335]

According to Emma Robinson, this process of 'collective self disciplining' was common in communities. In her study of shopgirls in the Rowntree factory in York, Robertson found that fellow workers both helped each other out and enforced group values for the good of the whole.[336] Girls letters show gossip was common. Rose Foley's 1883 letter from Iowa passed on second-hand news of Beatrice Ward from other correspondent. She reported that Beatrice's mistress 'wouldn't part with her for anything'. She noted that she had recently seen KC who was 'getting on very nicely' and had a 'nice farm' and added that 'married life has improved her', 'she is much more polite than she was; her husband has taught her to speak properly; he is a gentleman himself'. [337]

Connections with former schoolmates were important to both boys and girls but, with the boys from the RPS there was an additional layer of obligation, which derived from the idea of community that underpinned the 'old boy' network. This rested on a sense of mutual

[335] 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 289.
[336] E. Robertson, '"It was just a Real Camaraderie Thing": Socialising, Socialisation and Shopfloor Culture at the Rowntree Factory, York' in K. Cowman and L.A. Jackson (eds), *Women and Work Culture: Britain C.1850-1950* (Abingdon, 2016), pp. 112-113.
[337] KC is probably Katherine Coleman who married the son of a clergyman called Percy Clarke. Ancestry.com, Iowa, U.S., Compiled Marriages, 1851-1900; P could refer to Alice Partridge who arrived in Iowa in 1880. Source: Nine Elms Ladies' Association, *Record of Christian Labour*, p. 102.

responsibility that used ideas of shame, disappointment, affection, loyalty, and pride to enforce institutional standards of behaviour. These bonds of loyalty and duty stretched beyond the house to anyone from the school. Boys tried to help former schoolmates when they could. Robert Ball reported that, when walking with a friend in Montreal, he had seen a crowd of people in the street gathered around 'a boy laying in the road that had been run over'. Recognising him as a former RPS boy, Robert had him removed to a hotel, paid a doctor to tend to him and remained with him two days until he was getting better.[338]

Often, as we saw in Chapter Two, former pupils used peers' successes or failures as guiding points for their own life. They also felt qualified, as they gained some experience of the world, to offer their insights to the children still in the institution. Boys' letters are full of advice. We do not have comparable letters of advice from girls, and it is unclear whether they sent any. The boys' letters reveal the extent to which they had absorbed institutional ideals. A common theme was the need for boys to pay attention to their lessons. Many of the boys who entered the RPS before 1870 were largely illiterate. According to the 1867 Annual Report there were 112 boys in the school who did not even know their alphabet at their time of admission.[339] The school taught them how to read and write as demonstrated by their correspondence and their many requests for newspapers and books.[340] Despite this, in the first twenty years of the emigration programme, boy after boy wrote of the need for boys to 'learn all they can – the more they learn the better'.[341] William Philpott, who was a successful house builder in the United States, wrote in 1871 that he was 'hindered a great

[338] 2271/1/19, Annual Report (1880), p. 54.
[339] 2271/1/15, Annual Report (1867), p. 16.
[340] These included *The British Workman*, *The Illustrated London News*, *The Surrey Mirror*, *The Graphic*. They also asked for books such as Dick Turpin and Robinson Crusoe. It is evident that boys also read these while in the school. 2271/1/17, Annual Report (1872), pp. 40-42; 2271/1/18, Annual Report (1878), pp. 62-63; 2271/1/18 Annual Report (1877), p. 53.
[341] 2271/1/15, Annual Report (1867), p. 37.

deal by not being able to make calculations' adding 'I wish you would tell Mr Best, if he is still with you, that he must teach the Boys how to calculate to be able to estimate for contracts'.[342] William Low, a forty-three-year old father of five, encouraged boys to learn while they were young rather than learning while older, saying 'I believe we lose a great many advantages by being ignorant'.[343]

Injunctions on appropriate behaviour were common. Boys' letters commonly asked their correspondent to 'tell the boys...' followed by a piece of advice. These could reach boys in a variety of ways. Letters were read out in weekly services and circulated in a written form in newsletters.[344] Richard Dyer wrote in 1864 from New South Wales where he was working as a colt breaker. He asked Charles Walters to tell the boys 'from me to walk in the parth of virtur and to learn all thay can, so when they get out in the world they become respectable members of society (sic)'. Conscious that his letter might be dismissed as just another sermon on behaviour he added 'Tell them that my advice is that of a young man that has seen the ways of the worlds and can form some judgement of it'.[345] Fifteen percent of letters encouraged hard work. TA wrote that boys should work hard in order to gain rewards and 'always have friends'.[346] John Platt wrote to advise the boys that they must not 'get discouraged', 'they must work hard' and 'they must remember that honesty at all times is the best of policy'.[347] JCG wrote there is only one way of getting on in this country and that way is to be honest, upright, civil, kind, and obliging to every one, those are the best

[342] 2271/1/16, Annual Report (1871), p. 46.
[343] 2271/1/19, Annual Report (1881), p. 53.
[344] 2271/1/18, Annual Report (1878), pp. 46, 49, 54, 70 are just a few examples that discuss receiving these accounts.
[345] 2271/1/14, Annual Report (1866), p. 42.
[346] 2271/1/18, Annual Report (1879), p. 49.
[347] 2271/1/17, Annual Report (1873), p. 51.

principles in a man'.[348] William Paine wrote a whole letter of advice at the age of twenty-seven. His advice included saving hard and then buying a 'suit of clothes' and putting 'the rest out at interest' until they had enough to buy land.[349] Robert Ball advised boys to learn manners because 'People in this Country don't judge you by the style of your clothes, but by your good behaviour'.[350] Around ten percent of letters mentioned the need to keep from alcohol. James Fuller wrote that a boy that 'keeps from drink - in two or three years, he can get a farm of his own'.[351] William Paine wrote a cautionary tale from the US of three quarrelling men who when drunk shot each other, this being but one of the issues caused by 'drinking and bad companions'.

Boys were critical of peers' lack of judgement. William Terry wrote disapprovingly about his friend Jimmy Hill. He reported that Jimmy was getting on well but wanted to borrow money from William to help get his brother to Vermont from Ontario. William, however, had refused because he believed that Jimmy 'ought to have interest out at money himself'. Jimmy was a 'great, stout, robust fellow' who could be earning '25 to 30 dollars a month' but instead worked about 'half the time' and spent the rest running about 'fishing and hunting on the banks of the river'.[352] In censuring Jimmy, William revealed, as Luise White notes, the 'motivations and interests of the gossiper'.[353] Reading between the lines, it would appear that William, who was only a 'little fellow' '5 foot 2 and 130lbs' was envious of Jimmy. William had suffered a bad accident the year before and had been unable to work for several months and now tired more easily. Yet despite his inferior health he was working

[348] 2271/1/18, Annual Report (1878), p. 67.
[349] Ibid., p. 66.
[350] 2271/1/19, Annual Report (1880), p. 53.
[351] 2271/1/16, Annual Report (1871), pp. 40-41.
[352] Ibid., pp. 41-42.
[353] White, 'Between gluckman and Foucault', p. 81.

hard and saving, while Jimmy was not living up to the lessons of industriousness the RPS had drilled into the boys. Despite his disapproval, William, like many gossips, was eager to appear as if he was not being critical out of malice. He quickly added that despite his laziness, Jimmy was honest. 'Jimmy always gets all the clothes he wants and pays all his honest debts and so gets along in this world very easy as long as he has health but if that fails him he will have nothing to fall back on'.[354] It is difficult to know whether William's commentary on Jimmy's behaviour was intended for publication, but it nonetheless appeared, anonymised, in the 1871 Annual Report as well as transcribed into the Emigration Book of letters. The anonymisation is unlikely to have fooled anyone familiar with the boys' destinations and relationships. It may have been a pro forma approach. There was a value to the institution in this public accounting of behaviour. It was a further tool in the process of creating 'social cohesion'.[355] It was in essence a continuation of the good conduct list and mark system prevalent within the institution that counted towards the 'Shield of Honour'. What is interesting is the extent to which boys continued to involve themselves in the process even when they had left the institution.

The lack of surviving letters limits our exploration of peer relationships within Britain, but we know that children reconnected with friends at annual reunions and looked forward to seeing 'old faces again'.[356] Notations in admissions records and discharge records of letters make it clear that gossip was also passed on about boys and girls who remained in Britain. Girls' sources are limited but it is evident that they relayed news of fellow pupils if they had any. Clara Bone wrote that her sister Kate who had also been in the PMVH had left her

[354] 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 322.
[355] Prior, 'A Brotherhood of Britons?', p. 175.
[356] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Third Annual Report, p. 11.

position two weeks after Clara had arrived and had 'gone to London' with their mother where she was working in a hotel. Clara was pleased to note that although Kate had gone, she had another sister nearby (who had not been in the PMVH) with whom she went walking.[357] Mary Wyndham, who was working as a servant in England in 1894, wrote fondly of several old girls, asking for their address. She noted that one old 'companion', JG, was living 'not far' away, 'just half-an-hour's walk' and Mary reported that it was 'so nice to get together and talk about old times at the school'. She reported that the one old girl she had seen, JG, 'also belongs to the Lord'.[358]

Boys' records indicate that they too were, not only still in touch with the institution, but also retained some kind of connection with each other. We can see that the information relayed within Britain was similar to that communicated by boys overseas. Type of employment, marital status and indications of stability of character were passed on. Fred Stagg was spotted by a fellow former pupil 'at the Elephant' 'with a girl' and was reported to be working on the railways.[359] Alfred Benning was seen on the streets of Kilburn with an organ by two separate correspondents.[360] William Baker wrote that he often saw Richard Phillips and he was 'doing well'. A few years later another pupil wrote that Richard was a 'successful costermonger with three horses, married'.[361] Charles Bull wrote that John Hamm was 'doing no work and sleeping at a common lodging house'.[362]

Despite concerns about their peers' behaviour, boys in general heeded the idea of esprit de corps in helping each other where they could. This seems to have been particularly evident

[357] 2591/1/14, Twenty-Fourth Annual Report, pp. 7-8.
[358] Ibid., pp. 7-8.
[359] Elephant & Castle in London. 2271/11, Discharges, fol. 21.
[360] 2271/11, Discharges, fol. 218.
[361] Ibid., fol. 461.
[362] Ibid., fol. 395.

overseas where boys lacked familial connections. Yet, this solidarity with former school mates sometimes worked to boys' disadvantage. Boys wrote back to the institution about how they had been deceived or ill-treated by peers. George Wiltshire complained that he had found a 'good place' for fellow 'old boy' Alfred Wells, but Alfred had behaved badly. Alfred's behaviour made the man George worked for 'think I was a bad fellow', although George was confident that he 'can keep my character good for all that'.[363] A similar tale was recounted by Reuben Shepherd from Gladstone's House. Reuben had left England in 1869 and was working alongside William Bishop from Gurney's House, as a book agent in Montreal in 1870. There were several other boys working nearby. The pair had together helped former RPS boy William Carter come to Montreal where they 'recommended him to a Gentleman that we know and got him one of the best places'. Unfortunately, William Carter had not stuck in his place, nor in others found for him, and had, Reuben wrote, 'disgraced us'. Lacking employment, he 'did not have a shirt to his back' and had been 'selling papers at the corners of the streets'. William appeared to fear the judgement of his peers as Reuben claimed, 'he is ashamed to meet us and if we go by, he always hides himself'. Reuben was concerned about the impact of William's behaviour on his life. He threatened: 'He has not told where he comes from [meaning the RPS] but if he does he will not see daylight any more'.[364]

These examples illustrate the importance of reputation to former institutional children as well as the role friends played in supporting or harming individuals' character. Through these relationships we can see that not all young people reformed in the way that the institution would have liked. We also see what values and behaviours were considered

[363] 2271/1/17, Annual Report (1872), p. 43; 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 327.
[364] 2271/1/16, Annual Report (1871), p. 40; 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 278.

important. This was particularly evident when stories were damaging. William Bishop and Reuben's friendship did not last long. In an 1871 letter, William Bishop complained about tales being spread about him that were untrue. Piecing together various previous letters from several correspondents it appears that Reuben Shepherd and William had had some kind of falling out. Reuben accused William of some unspecified offences in letters back to the RPS.[365] We do not know what the institution said but William's letter emphasised his gratitude toward his former housemaster Mr Hearne for having 'nobly' 'stood up in my defence'.[366] William, who later became a respected newspaper editor in Vermont, robustly defended himself from Reuben's accusations. His letter back to Mr Trevarthen at the RPS asserted that Reuben ought to have spoken directly to him 'instead of circulating falsehoods about me for I have lent him money which he owes me still'. William added, 'he is infatuated about a girl who is a Methodist and has left the Episcopal church that is why he dislikes me'. The stories appear not to have affected William's career as his old employers re-employed him – a fact which he argued demonstrated how false the information was.[367]

As this section has shown, examining children's relationships with their peers provides considerable insights into the impact of institutional care on children's character. The analysis shows that, while a sizeable proportion of children rejected the values they had been taught in the institution, many enthusiastically embraced them. They even promoted them to others, through the way they sought to monitor and enforce correct behaviour, engaged as active agents in the project of reformation.

[365] 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 280.
[366] 2271/1/17, Annual Report (1872), p. 41.
[367] 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 379.

Conclusion

This chapter has made several important interventions. While the historiography on child welfare has recently begun to consider children's experiences of welfare, it has, as Laura Mair notes, presented 'a starkly negative picture' 'lacking testimony from children themselves'.[368] Drawing on children's own words and actions this chapter has presented an alternative view. It has shown that many children had a positive experience of the institution regarding it as 'home', expressing nostalgia and affection both for the place and for the staff who worked there. It has argued that the historiographical preoccupation with parsing accounts of hardship, loneliness or homesickness, ignores the more evident positive sentiments present in emigrant letters and fails to recognise that the emotions they expressed were congruent with those expressed by adult settlers.

The research also questions existing characterisations of the institution as uncaring or as abandoning children once they had left the institution. The analysis of letters, visits, and after-care practices has shown that the affective relationship between children and the institution was reciprocal and long-lasting. Importantly, it was determined by the individual's desire to engage. Not all children stayed in touch but many of those who did drew on the institution for advice, emotional support, and practical help long after they left. Staff took their responsibilities seriously and continued to assist former pupils for decades after they had left the institution.

The chapter has also emphasised the importance of age as a category of analysis in our understanding of the impact of child welfare. It argues that the historiographical reliance on isolated incidents fails to consider that they represent but a moment in time. Through its

[368] Mair, 'Give my love', p. 157.

demonstration that many children who ran away maintained ongoing relationships with institutional staff, it has shown the futility of using single episodes of resistance as indicative of a settled view of institutional life. Through tracing children's lives and linking their correspondence and their actions, the chapter has demonstrated that children's view of the institution changed as they aged. While children may have been unhappy within the institution, as they matured, many former institutional children experienced regret for their previous actions, as well as a greater understanding of the benefits institutional life had brought.

Finally, the chapter argues that any evaluation of welfare ought to consider the relationships developed within and beyond the institution. In so doing, it contributes to an emerging body of work that seeks to re-evaluate individual experiences of welfare through the prism of experience and agency. The analysis shows the importance of institutional, sibling and peer relationships in developing, encouraging, and maintaining children's character after leaving the institution. The affectionate familial bonds between individual staff members and institutional children served to create a sense of mutual responsibility that drew on ideas of shame, disappointment, affection, and pride to enforce standards of behaviour that lived up to institutional expectations. The reveals the active role played by children in accepting or rejecting these values and demonstrates that children were active participants in shaping their own and others' character.

Conclusion

In 1925, seventy-six-year-old Sidney Pearce died in the small city of Westminster on Canada's west coast. Only five years earlier, a Vancouver newspaper had carried an article celebrating the achievements of this 'Royal city man'. Sidney was, the newspaper reported, the city's longest serving employee. Since his arrival in Westminster, thirty-eight years earlier, he had served as 'police inspector, health and food inspector, license inspector, road and revenue tax collector, acting city clerk and treasurer'. He was now city sanitary inspector, earning $1560 a year, and occupying an office in city hall, next door to that of the mayor.[1]

In the 'Introduction' we asked what impact philanthropic intervention had on the lives of children in the second half of the nineteenth century. Sidney's career, together with the other case studies in this thesis, provides an answer. The children who entered the RPS and the PMVH were among England's most unprepossessing. They came from destitute, abusive, neglectful, and impoverished families. Many were delinquents. Sidney, from an extremely poor home, had entered the RPS aged thirteen, after being caught stealing a purse in his hometown of Weston-Super-Mare in rural Somerset.[2] Yet, despite these children's difficult beginnings, the research concludes that most of them ended up living lives that were, by the measures of their time, a success. As a result of their interactions with nineteenth-century philanthropic welfare, these children experienced social mobility far greater than that of their peers who did not enter institutions.

[1] 'Royal city man has long service', *Vancouver Sun* (5 March 1922), p. 36 col c.
[2] SHC, 2271/1/13, fol. 39; Ancestry.com, Southwest Heritage Trust; Taunton, Somerset; Ref: Q/AGS/14/1.

The story of Sidney's life did not come from the pages of 'boy's adventure stories' or from 'vignettes' designed to promote the transformational possibilities of emigration.[3] It emerged as a result of the innovative methodology employed in this thesis. Tracing the life courses of children admitted to institutional care in the late nineteenth century has shown the realities that underpinned many of the narratives critiqued by historians as discursive strategies. It has questioned historiographical dismissals of institutional care as a tool of social control and answered Ellen Boucher's question of 'whether these stories of "hyper-environmental" change were based in fact'.[4]

It has also provided the first comparative study of boys' and girls' experiences. This has shown the commonalities in children's backgrounds and the gendered differences in their outcomes. Studying the circumstances of children's admissions to institutional care has demonstrated the importance of thinking more critically about the realities of family life in nineteenth-century Britain. In assessing child welfare, many historians, including Harry Hendrick, have been influenced by a preference for family life, that has precluded deeper consideration of the relative benefits that the institution could offer in a period when families had few resources.[5] As Michele Langfield reminds us 'we need to be cautious about imposing twenty-first century values' on the past.[6]

Langfield was writing in 2013, in the context of what she described as the emergence of a 'particular kind of historical narrative' in the wake of a series of child abuse inquiries across

[3] E. Boucher, *Empire's Children. Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869-1967*, (Cambridge, 2016), p. 37; S. Swain and M. Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire. Child rescue discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850-1915* (Manchester, 2010), pp. 115, 118.
[4] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, p. 41.
[5] Hendrick, *Child Welfare. England 1872-1989* (London, 1994). p. 77.
[6] Langfield, M., 'Righting the record?' in K. Federowich and A.S. Thompson (eds), *Empire, migration and identity in the British world*, p. 151.

several former British dominions. She rightly emphasised the need to take seriously the pain and hardship of survivors of twentieth-century schemes, but also urged historians to separate these from historical analysis of nineteenth-century programmes. We need, she argued, to think historically about what philanthropists were trying to achieve and 'most importantly' how children viewed their efforts — both at the time and later in their lives.[7]

This thesis has sought to answer these questions. Tracing children's backgrounds has revealed that many nineteenth-century children lived in family situations that restricted their ability to thrive. In centring children's experiences, we can see that, although not all children rejected their families, some did. For many, life in an institution was preferable to life at home. This recognition provides some weight to Victorian discourses of harmful parents and disrupts recent historiography in child welfare that has sought to rehabilitate poor families. It forces us to reconsider the basis on which we judge the impact of welfare intervention and reject binary assessments of the value of institutional care.

It also encourages us to reassess existing ideas of what nineteenth-century institutions were trying to achieve. Most studies of child welfare have sought explanations for twentieth-century policies through an examination of the rhetoric and practices of prominent nineteenth-century child savers, many of whom only accelerated their programmes in the last decade of the nineteenth century. By broadening our approach to include reformatory and industrial schools and adopting an earlier chronology, we gain an alternative perspective. The thesis argues that the reformatory and industrial school movement was the product of a mid-Victorian intellectual culture that sought innovative solutions to societal problems. Through a combination of experimentation and experience, the

[7] Langfield, M., 'Righting the record', p. 151.

philanthropists of the PMVH and the RPS developed pioneering practices that shaped later ideas about what worked in looking after children. Their institutional influence only began to wane as founders died, new charitable organisations emerged, and state intervention in the welfare of children grew.

This alternative perspective helps to explain the apparent disconnect between nineteenth-century discourses of opportunity and the realities of the early to mid-twentieth-century experiences foregrounded in the scholarship. Reformatory and industrial schools sought, firstly, to protect children from harm and, secondly, to provide children with a better future. Philanthropists fostered ideals of 'character' and stability that drew on their own earlier experiences of education. They created deep and reciprocal relationships with, and between, children that helped to enforce these values, through mutual bonds of responsibility. While there were, naturally, children who rejected philanthropic aims and ideals, many, like Sidney, embodied these ambitions through the lives they lived. Philanthropists promoted ideas of children's futures that were about individual success, not about national degeneration, or imperial ambition.

These new understandings have implications for scholars of empire. Juvenile emigrants have traditionally been excluded from analyses of emigration because of their positioning as passive victims of emigrationist policies. Yet, as we have seen, young people were active participants in the migration process. The peer and sibling networks they developed facilitated their social and geographical mobility across the life course. Sidney had an older brother Charles. In 1882, Charles, too, emigrated to Canada, where he also became a railroad worker. He eventually joined his brother Sidney in Westminster, where his brother

found him a job in the city health department.[8] As this thesis has shown, institutional boys not only chose to go overseas but, through the detailed information they provided, actively encouraged those still in Britain — both family members and those in the institution — to follow them overseas. There is scope for further work with other types of working-class emigrants to explore how familial, charitable, state, and peer networks shaped social mobility across borders. The case studies in this thesis reveal that the boys from the RPS and their parents thought about opportunity in terms that were transnational.

A detailed analysis of Sidney's life trajectory demonstrates the potential significance of such work for our understandings of the role of working-class Britons in the creation of what James Belich has described as the Anglo-world.[9] It provides us with important new insights into meanings and experiences of social mobility in the nineteenth century. Like many emigrants, Sidney began his working life in Canada in farming. Initially, he moved around, although in an 1867 letter, he claimed that he 'never was a rambler like some of them I was working with'.[10] Sidney hired on at jobs for a year at a time, turning down offers to stay with existing employers, because he wanted more wages.[11] At the age of twenty-two, he eloped with his master's daughter and took up work as a bricklayer in an adjacent village.[12] Widowed a couple of years later, he headed to Maine in the United States, before returning to Quebec to become a fireman on the Grand Trunk railway. In 1877, he remarried, and began work as an engineer on the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, following the railway's expansion west from Perth, Ontario to Westminster in British Columbia where

[8] Ancestry.com, 1891 Census of Canada, East Ward, Sherbrooke, Quebec, Roll:T-6421; Fam.149; 1921 Census of Canada, RG31/17/17/9.
[9] J. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-world, 1783-1939* (Oxford, 2009).
[10] SHC, 2271/1/16, Annual Report 1868, p. 44.
[11] Ibid., p. 44; 2271/33, Emigration Book, p. 205.
[12] SHC, 2271/10/14, 2271/33, Emigration Book, pp. 202, 292.

his arrival coincided with the completion of the railway's construction.[13] He settled down and pursued a life of stability.

In both his geographic mobility and pursuit of financial gain, Sidney was typical of the boys studied for this thesis. Both philanthropists and children saw mobility in terms that prioritised financial prosperity over occupational progression. Following boys' life trajectories, reveals that many spent their teens and twenties moving through a series of jobs, rejecting skilled trades in pursuit of more exciting or better paid alternatives. This demonstrates an alternative perception of social mobility — one that questions the wisdom of imposing twentieth-century occupational hierarchies on nineteenth-century analysis.

These twentieth century norms have also influenced criticisms of institutional ambitions for girls. Mobility was gendered. Philanthropists did not seek to encourage girls to move beyond their social class, but instead to find happiness through the stability to be found in marriage or in a career in domestic service. Historians have criticised these limited ambitions, yet this thesis argues that, while girls' outcomes were gendered, philanthropic ambitions were more complex and considered than has been recognised. Recent historiography has demonstrated the importance attached in the nineteenth century to preventing downward social mobility between classes. This analysis argues that we need to extend this recognition to encompass preventing downward mobility *within* classes. A brief exploration of how girls experienced mobility within domestic service demonstrates that there were fine gradations of social status within the broad categorisation of working class that mattered. To individuals, these were more important than twentieth-century ideas of

[13] Ancestry.com, Quebec, Vital and Church Records, 1621-1968 (1877); 'Royal City Man'.

class progression. Further examinations of progress within domestic service in future research could generate fruitful new insights into female social mobility.

We need to rethink our model of social mobility in the nineteenth century. Philanthropists thought about mobility for both genders in terms that were situationally specific and that sought to prevent downward mobility. They sought to ensure that the boys and girls in their care did not descend to a state of permanent criminality or destitution after leaving the institution. Both emigration for farm work and domestic service fulfilled an important function in that it enabled the transition of children from care to independent adulthood. This rested on an extended vision of childhood that recognised the need for support and stability if welfare intervention was to prove effective. It demonstrates the usefulness of considering age in our analysis.

Throughout this research, age has been significant in challenging existing assessments of the impact of the institution on children's lives. Following children through the life course has countered the over-reliance on snapshots of data that has constrained historiographical evaluations. It has revealed the agency that even young children could demonstrate in their interactions with family and welfare. It has shown the transience of children's emotional and intellectual responses to institutional care and how their view of the institution and their employment choices changed as they aged. Sidney's letter to the RPS encapsulated this altered perspective when he wrote of how, having initially thought often of returning to England, he now thought boys 'should never think of going home' but come out to Canada, 'work for a living' and 'do well'.[14] By focusing on children's behaviours and outcomes, we have developed new perspectives on welfare and on nineteenth-century families.

[14] SHC, 2271/1/15, Annual Report (1867), p. 44.

Extending this analysis to other residential institutions could provide further insights. This thesis has made an argument for the significance of the RPS and the PMVH within reformatory and industrial school provision in England. It has also shown that the children who were admitted shared common backgrounds with those who entered other nineteenth-century institutions. Yet, further research into whether state-run industrial schools, such as Feltham or Manchester, delivered similar mobility gains would be invaluable, as would an exploration of the mobility of children from voluntary institutions such as the Waifs and Strays. This could help identify the significance of factors, such as type of institution, length of sentence or spatial configuration, in children's outcomes.[15] An exploration of the first thirty years of occupational data would be possible for children leaving institutions in the first decade of the twentieth century and would contribute to understandings of how the impact of these kind of institutions changed as state investment in the extra-institutional working-class family grew.

Throughout this study, we have seen that that the decisions children made, and the actions they took, made a profound difference to the lives they lived. Sidney could have chosen, like thirty-seven percent of RPS boys, to return to England. He did not. While this study has demonstrated the significance of institutional intervention in children's lives, it has also revealed that it was children's responses to philanthropic efforts that determined the ultimate life-long impact of welfare. Sidney's journey to prosperity was demonstrated in tangible form. In 1889 he built a one-storey cottage on one of Westminster's premier streets. In 1905 he added a second storey as his 'finances and family grew'. Now listed as

[15] Feltham has surviving records for the period 1859 to 1870. London Metropolitan Archives, 01/3391/SG, Feltham Industrial School.

one of Canada's historic structures, the S.J. Pearce house is one of Vancouver's landmarks.[16] Like millionaire Robert Herod's Portland bridges, Sidney's house stands as a tangible reminder of the impact of nineteenth-century philanthropic intervention on some children's lives.

[16] 'Sidney & Ida Pearce residence', https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=16579 (22 July 2022).

List of Figures

Tables

Table One: Occupations, RPS men across the life course. Emigration between 1850 and 1895 …… Page 133

Table Two: Occupations: RPS men leaving the school (1850 to 1895) compared to fathers …… Page 141

Table Three: RPS men leaving the school between 1850 and 1895 compared to brothers …… Page 147

Table Four: Initial destination of the eighty girls from the PMVH ……. Page 167

Table Five: Girls' destination on discharge by socio-economic status of father …… Page 182

Table Six: Girl's social class …….. Page 201

Table Seven: Girl's class trajectory by number of years after leaving the institution …….. Page 201

Table Eight: Unmarried girl's class trajectory by number of years after leaving the institution …… Page 206

Table Nine: Emigrant girls' class trajectory by number of years after leaving the institution …… Page 211

Table Ten: Non-emigrant girls' class trajectory by number of years after leaving the institution …… Page 212

Figures

Figure One: Number of boys emigrated each year and percentage of discharges represented …… Page 116

Figure One: Initial destination of discharged girls by year ……. Page 168

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