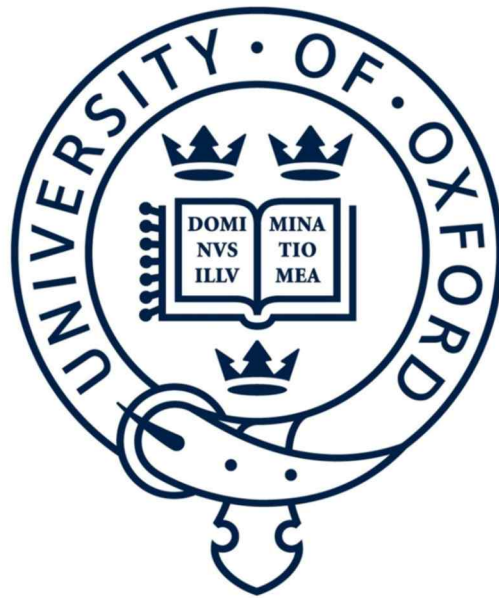


Workhouse Ecologies: Hampshire Case Studies, c. 1776–1845

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Short Abstract

While the historiography of the workhouse in England has largely followed a vertical line, namely taking a top-down or bottom-up approach, this thesis aims to extend the boundary of workhouse research horizontally by integrating multifaceted socio-economic factors, which have been overlooked or considered just in passing in previous discussions, in order to analyse often highly localised patterns of workhouse provision and regime. The term ‘ecologies’ recurring throughout this research is chosen to crystallise my holistic approach.

For this purpose, neither a national nor a parish-based study is appropriate because the former tends to generalise findings and the latter to seek peculiarity. This project focuses on a county, Hampshire, and does not just establish that there were intra-county variations in workhouse ecologies but goes further to compare and classify them using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Drawing on statistical analyses, it demonstrates that various factors, such as demographic characteristics, transport infrastructure, and socioeconomic structure possibly affected regional variations in workhouse provision under the Old Poor Law. Using parochial administrative records, we then examine how workhouse ecologies in the different divisions formed by differing combinations of socio-economic factors produced difference in practical terms.

Moreover, unlike most existing research that usually ends or begins in 1834, the year of the passage of the New Poor Law, this thesis covers both the Old and New Poor Laws to explore changes and continuities through the transitional period. A structural transformation in poor relief administration was brought about by the new act, but to varying degrees within the county, in ways affected by past regional patterns. Regional patterns surviving from the Old Poor Law made it unfeasible to impose the intended uniformity on poor law administration and workhouse practices.

Long Abstract

The historiography of the workhouse in England has largely followed a vertical line. One of the earliest studies by Beatrice and Sidney Webb underlined top-down processes, focusing on developments in the legislature, workhouse policy-making and actual implementation. Subsequent local studies of workhouses have looked into administrative developments in these institutions and explored notable cases of local initiative. Contrastingly, a bottom-up approach has emerged, often referred to as ‘history from below’, marking the increasing interest of historians in charting the lived experience of paupers. Following Tim Hitchcock’s studies of workhouse inmates, many have examined their experiences and shown them working as active agents to shape their own workhouse lives. However, historians have done less to set workhouses in socio-economic context, despite the possibility that the workhouse system was shaped not just by interaction between the centre and the localities or the parties directly concerned, the poor and parish officials, but was also by multifarious social and economic circumstances and parish-level responses to them.

This thesis aims to extend the boundary of workhouse research horizontally by integrating multifaceted socio-economic factors which have been overlooked or considered just in passing in previous discussions in order to analyse often highly localised patterns of workhouse provision and regime. The term ‘ecologies’ which recurs throughout this research is chosen to crystallise my holistic approach. For this purpose, neither a national nor a parish-based study is appropriate because the former tends to generalise findings and the latter to seek peculiarity. This project focuses on a county, Hampshire, and does not confine itself to establishing that there were intra-county variations in workhouse provision but goes further to compare and classify them using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Moreover, unlike most existing research that ends or begins in 1834, the year of the passage of the New Poor Law, this thesis covers both the Old and New Poor Laws to explore changes and continuities through the transitional period. A structural transformation in poor relief administration was, I argue here, brought about by the new act, but to varying degrees within the county, and in ways affected by past regional patterns. Furthermore, regional patterns surviving from the Old Poor Law made it unfeasible to impose the intended uniformity on poor law administration and workhouse practices.

Chapter one introduces Hampshire, the county this study covers, and the research period, c. 1776-1845. The landscape of Hampshire is investigated through the eyes of the

contemporary commentator, William Cobbett. However, it is not enough for this ecological research to portray geographical features on the basis of contemporary remarks, so we then turn our gaze on more empirical data from the 1801 crop returns to better understand regional differences in economic conditions. On this basis, Hampshire is broken down into three divisions (arable, coastal and pastoral) which become a foundation for our succeeding discussion. Using this division, the chapter then examines transport networks and social structure to argue that they played a critical role in determining the nature of poverty problems and responses. This research starts from 1776, the year covered by the parliamentary poor law returns published in 1777, the first national enquiry dealing with workhouses. After the first enquiry, there were other national surveys, though using some different categories, published subsequently, whose data make it possible to carry out a comprehensive county-level study and explore patterns within a county. It ends just before the Andover workhouse scandal of 1845, a transition point into another phase of poor relief administration and the workhouse system. Administrative developments apart, three watershed events had a decisive impact on the poor law system, including institutional provision and management: the two harvest failures of 1795 and 1800, the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, and the Swing riots of 1830-31 which helped to prompt the enactment of the New Poor Law in 1834.

Chapter two demonstrates in quantitative terms regional variations in workhouse ecologies under the Old Poor Law and analyses by statistical means various factors which possibly affected them. Statistical methods employed here include ANOVA (analysis of variance) and multiple regression analysis. Materials used as a basis for the statistical work are various, including poor law returns, population censuses, some parochial records such as overseers' account books and poor rate books and land tax assessments. There are two sections, The first section which uses ANOVA tests shows that the amount of poor relief expenditure and the prevalence of workhouses varied across the three divisions and suggests that the presence of a workhouse was statistically associated with levels of expenditure, but more interestingly, the nature of this association differed between the divisions. The second section using multiple regressions is devoted to identifying socio-economic variables which may have had an impact on the distribution of workhouses in 1803. The regression models link the workhouse (dependent variable) with individual parishes' demographic characteristics, transport infrastructure, and socioeconomic structure (independent variables). They make it possible to examine the correlation between workhouse geography and the degree of urbanisation, the availability of road and water transport facilities, and the distribution of power

and wealth. This statistical work helps us to see that the presence of a workhouse was the product of a combination of socioeconomic factors.

Drawing on parochial administrative records, Chapter three looks into how workhouse ecologies in the different divisions and formed by differing combinations of socio-economic factors were different in practical terms. It distinguishes between urban and rural workhouses. It also aggregates workhouses on the basis of the divisions and explores regional differences as manifest in patterns of their provision and management. Under the Old Poor Law, parishes exercised their discretionary powers not only as to establish workhouses and but also to run them in the light of situations which they faced. The chapter is divided into two sections, the first looking at the establishment of workhouses in Hampshire and the second investigating different types of workhouse management. In the first section, I illustrate the timing of workhouse establishments, the distribution of workhouses by size, and the ways in which the initial establishment was funded and identify external circumstances affecting these. The second section categorises three types of workhouse management: direct management by parish officers, the appointment of workhouse masters, and use of a more inclusive contract, farming out both the indoor and outdoor poor. The chapter also tries to shed light on shifts as time passed. It establishes that there were regional differences including in the chronology of changes in the management types, associated with differing practices and degrees of success in setting poor inmates to work.

Chapter four looks inside workhouses and addresses the questions of who lived in the workhouse and who was given a workhouse offer. The total number and composition of workhouse inmates were shaped by negotiations between the poor and parish officials. The overall number of those residing in a workhouse went up and down constantly, not only as a result of nationwide trends, but also as an effect of local policies. Workhouse admission proceeded from the conjunction of paupers' agency and parish authorities' choices. Workhouse inmates' profiles varied by region because the poor's needs varied by place; parish officers in different places developed different ideas as to what workhouses should do (probably in the light of their perceptions of demand, but also their convictions as to what was possible and right), and then the poor made choices from among the options open to them, in the light of their own beliefs and options. Therefore, it is, logically, impossible to expect there to be any one ideal-type of workhouse population.

In Chapter five, we examine living conditions within the walls of workhouses by reconstructing inmates' lives in relation to workhouse functioning. Workhouse functions are here categorised into three: care, discipline and work. Even though every workhouse had its own distinctive system, most performed all these functions. What differed was the balance between the functions and the different approaches to the same functions. Food and medical support were key tasks in relation to caring for inmates in workhouses. In general, workhouse diets met caloric requirements for subsistence, but more calories were supplied in workhouses with a labour scheme, while less in those that were later hailed as anticipating the New Poor Law regime. There was a difference between urban and rural workhouses in the extent to which they were medicalised. Moreover, details of doctoring contracts reveal that medical officers working for urban parishes, particularly port towns, were expected to give much attention to institutional medical care. When it came to discipline, workhouses in the arable division were stricter than those in the coastal and pastoral divisions. However, paupers in workhouses were not passively obedient to workhouse rules and orders but, at times, defied them and negotiated with those in charge of their lives in order to promote their own interests. Workhouse labour has been left underexamined, especially in terms of the income it generated. A desire to make a profit from workhouse labour underlay the workhouse boom of the 1790s across Hampshire. The labour scheme lasted only for a short while and achieved little in arable workhouses but more in their coastal and pastoral counterparts. What made this difference was their contrasting relationship with local industries. Workhouse labour hopes for profit gradually waned even in the coastal and pastoral divisions after 1815. However, workhouse inmates continued to be set to work for the purposes of training and moral reform. Therefore, varying approaches to workhouse functions were, it is argued here, influenced by different sets of local circumstances.

Chapter six briefly reviews patterns and features of Hampshire workhouses at the very end of the Old Poor Law and examines to what extent they laid a foundation for the new poor-law system. The prevalence and physical character of workhouses in Hampshire were enough to provide a basis for the New Poor Law system, and indeed some of older workhouses were adapted in the new workhouse arrangement. By contrast, the internal arrangements of workhouses in the county seem to have been ill-prepared to respond to the disciplinary principles of the new workhouse system, not surprisingly given that they had little need up to that point to cater for able-bodied inmates; also classification between inmates was underdeveloped, and a harsh labour scheme was nearly absent.

Chapter seven looks at how the process of structural transformation engendered by the New Poor Law of 1834 was set in train and how its impact differed in different parts of Hampshire. Parishes were consolidated into unions, entailing a change in the basic unit of poor-relief administration from the former to the latter. Smaller parish workhouses were superseded by larger union workhouses. The great transition, however, did not come out of nothing. The demarcation of poor law unions was based on petty sessional divisions, and deviations were the result of assistant commissioners' efforts either to consult a few local magnates in the arable division or to persuade a host of middle-class smallholders and tradesmen in the coastal and pastoral divisions, in order to form a union. Past regional patterns that had shaped workhouse density and capacity under the Old Poor Law clearly affected continuity to a large extent. Out of twenty-four union workhouses, only eleven were new, and they were concentrated in the arable division; by contrast, thirteen, more than half, were old workhouses kept in operation, though with some alterations and enlargements.

Chapter eight documents the failure to operate Hampshire workhouses on uniform standards and principles based on the doctrine of 'less eligibility', during the first decade of the New Poor Law. As many historians have long pointed to a lack of uniformity, this finding is not in itself striking. What this chapter attempts to demonstrate that is more original is that the variety of workhouse policies reflected long-established regional patterns already evident under the Old Poor Law, rather than just idiosyncratic conflicts and tensions between central and local interests. Poor law unions in the arable division, where workhouse relief had been relatively insignificant in the broader context of poor law administration under the Old Poor Law, tended to readily embrace new workhouse schemes and principles, conforming to the intent of poor law reform. By contrast, workhouses in port towns and the pastoral division, where indoor relief had comprised a significant part of overall welfare provision before the New Poor Law, were more likely to seek to preserve significant elements of their old systems. However, coastal and pastoral workhouses were not comparable among themselves in many aspects of their management and organisation. The Portsea Island union was presumably aiming to create a 'workhouse complex', not a simple reformatory institution but a multi-functional establishment. Pastoral workhouses, by contrast, seem to have remained 'underdeveloped' in many ways, in that many posts in the workhouses were left vacant, the strict inmate separation policy appears to have been ignored as unfeasible, and workhouse labour schemes were poorly organised.

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List of Abbreviations

DHC	Dorset History Centre
DRO	Devon Record Office
HRO	Hampshire Record Office
IOWRO	Isle of Wight Record Office
PHC	Portsmouth History Centre
PHFCAS	Proceedings of Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society
PP	Parliamentary Papers
SAO	Southampton Archives Office
TNA	The National Archives

Introduction

[T]he workhouses of the eighteenth century differed, in their conception and in their administration, indefinitely one from another. This extreme diversity arose largely from the fact that their promoters and administrators aimed at no fewer than six distinct objects and uses—these uses being, indeed, often mutually inconsistent devices, adopted, in varying sequence between 1660 and 1830, for dealing with the settled poor.

...

The student must, however, bear always in mind that the contemporary Poor Law Authorities ... rarely distinguished in their own minds between these several uses of the workhouse, and invariably attempted to combine some or all of them ... Hence it is not possible to present to the reader typical instances in which the workhouse was used only as a place of employment, a penal establishment, a mere instrument of deterrence or an asylum for the impotent.¹

Workhouses, as Beatrice and Sidney Webb already recognised, varied remarkably parish by parish and changed over time so that not one single workhouse system, but a wide variety of workhouse systems mushroomed across the country.² As the Old Poor Law allowed local authorities discretionary powers to dispense poor relief in their own ways in consideration of their distinctive circumstances, there was strong localism in indoor relief. The distribution, management and functions of workhouses accordingly varied to a considerable extent. However, as we will see, the difference was not created at random; rather there were regional patterns, which, it is argued here, wielded significant influence on the establishment of a new regime under the New Poor Law.

The main concern of this thesis is to identify variations in workhouse provision among regions in Hampshire and at the same time to analyse how and why they were created by means

¹ Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *English Poor Law History. Part I: The Old Poor Law* (London, 1927), pp. 219-220.

² The number of workhouses established in England between 1723 and 1750 is estimated to have been 600. By 1776, the number of workhouses in operation all over the country was 1,916. Following a radical rearrangement of workhouse landscape under the New Poor Law of 1834, a huge number of existing workhouses were closed, but more than 300 new workhouses, larger in size than old ones, were newly built in the first five years of the new act. Tim Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouses: A Study in Institutional Poor Relief in Selected Counties 1696-1750' (DPhil thesis, Oxford, 1985), p. 218; Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers: The SPCK and the Parochial Workhouse Movement', in Lee Davison, Tim Hitchcock, Tim Keirn, and Bob Shoemaker (eds), *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems in England, 1689-1750* (London, 1992), p. 145; Felix Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 79.

of an ecological approach. In other words, this study aims not merely to describe individual cases of workhouse establishment and administration and the lives of workhouse inmates, which have been well explored by historians, but also to examine the correlation and causality between the varied patterns of institutional relief on the one hand and geographical features and localised socio-economic circumstances in the county on the other.

1. Historiography

The historiography of the English workhouse c. 1776-1845 has largely followed a vertical line. The earliest studies, such as those by Dorothy Marshall and Beatrice and Sidney Webb, underlined top-down processes, focusing on developments in the legislature, workhouse policy-making and implementation in England as a whole.³ In their work, as noted above, the Webbs argued that the workhouses of the eighteenth century began with particular aims – including creating profit by the employment of the poor, providing comfort for marginal groups or exploiting a deterrent effect – but always ended up as ‘general mixed’ institutions.⁴ Following this classic research, numerous local case studies dealing with workhouses were undertaken to provide accounts of implementation.⁵ They looked into relevant acts of

³ Dorothy Marshall, *The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Social and Administrative History* (London, 1926); Webb and Webb, *English*.

⁴ Webb and Webb, *English*, p. 218.

⁵ E. H. Rideout, ‘Poor Law Administration in North Meols in the Eighteenth Century’, *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 81 (1930), pp. 105-107; F. G. Emmison, ‘The Relief of the Poor at Eaton Socon, 1706-1834’, *The Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society*, 15 (1933), pp. 1-98; E. M. Hampson, *The Treatment of Poverty in Cambridgeshire, 1597-1834* (Cambridge, 1934), pp. 66-123; M. F. Bond, ‘Windsor’s Experiment in Poor-relief, 1621-1829’, *Berkshire Archaeological Journal*, 48 (1945), pp. 33-35; P. H. Goodman, ‘Eighteenth Century Poor Law Administration in the Parish of Oswestry’, *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society*, 56 (1960), pp. 334-336; F. D. Price, ‘A North Oxfordshire Parish and its Poor: Wigginton, 1730-1830’, *Cake and Cockhorse*, 2 (1962), pp. 4-6; R. V. H. Burne, ‘The Treatment of the Poor in the Eighteenth Century in Chester’, *Journal of the Chester and North Wales Architectural, Archaeological and Historic Society*, 52 (1965), pp. 44-48; W. A. Cassell, ‘The Parish and the Poor in New Brentford, 1720-1834’, *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, 23 (1972), pp. 174-93; Philip Anderson, ‘The Leeds Workhouse under the Old Poor Law, 1726-1834’, *The Publications of the Thoresby Society Miscellany*, 17 (1980), pp. 75-113.

parliament and administrative developments regarding the institution by exploring some notable cases of local implementation.

Contrastingly, more recently, a bottom-up approach has emerged, often referred to as ‘history from below’, from the increasing willingness of historians to chart lived experience of paupers in workhouses. In his doctoral thesis, Tim Hitchcock attempted to cast light on the life and experience of the inmates within workhouses in the first half of the eighteenth century, as well as analysing their overall management.⁶ Following his more recent work on unmarried mothers and their illegitimate children, subsequent researchers have studied other groups of paupers in workhouses, such as children and the elderly.⁷ The empirical sources used by these works permitted the observation of specific situations within workhouses, and sometimes demonstrated the extent to which workhouse inmates and their families, as active agents, could have an effect on decision making in workhouse management, shaping their own workhouse lives.⁸

⁶ Hitchcock, ‘Workhouse’.

⁷ Tim Hitchcock, “‘Unlawfully Begotten on Her Body’: Illegitimacy and the Parish Poor in St Luke's Chelsea’ in Tim Hitchcock, Peter King, and Pamela Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840* (Basingstoke, 1997), pp. 70-86. For children in workhouses, see Frank Crompton, *Workhouse Children: Infant and Child Paupers under the Worcestershire Poor Law, 1780-1871* (Stroud, 1997); Alys Levene, ‘Children, Childhood and the Workhouse: St Marylebone, 1769-1781’, *The London Journal* 33 (2008); Jane Humphries, ‘Care and Cruelty in the Workhouse: Children’s Experiences of Residential Poor Relief in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century England’, in Nigel Goose and Katrina Honeyman (eds), *Childhood and Child Labour in Industrial England: Diversity and Agency 1750-1914* (Aldershot, 2013), pp. 115-134. For the elderly in workhouses, Susannah Ottaway, *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2008); Jeremy Boulton and Leonard Schwarz, “‘The Comforts of a Private Fireside’? The Workhouse, the Elderly and the Poor Law in Georgian Westminster: St Martin-in-the-Fields, 1725-1824’ in Joanne McEwan and Pamela Sharpe (eds), *Accommodating Poverty: The Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, c. 1600-1850* (London, 2011), pp. 221-245.

⁸ For overall living conditions in workhouses, see Alannah Tomkins, *The Experience of Urban Poverty, 1723-82: Parish, Charity and Credit* (Manchester, 2006), chapter two. For the agency of workhouse inmates, see Lynn MacKay, ‘A Culture of Poverty? The St. Martin in the Fields Workhouse, 1817’, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 26 (1995), pp. 209-231; Jeremy Boulton, “‘It is Extreme Necessity That Makes Me Do This’: Some “Survival Strategies” of Pauper Households in London’s West End During the Early Eighteenth Century’, *International Review of Social History*, 45 (2000), pp. 47-69; David Green, ‘Pauper Protests: Power and Resistance in Early Nineteenth-Century London Workhouses’, *Social History*, 31 (2006), pp. 137-159; Joseph Harley, ‘Material Lives of the Poor and their Strategic Use of the Workhouse during the Final Decades of the English Old Poor Law’, *Continuity and Change*, 30 (2015), pp. 71-103.

Notwithstanding the achievements of previous studies, they have remained nearly silent on the effect of socio-economic context, despite the possibility that the workhouse system was not merely the result of dynamics between the centre and the localities or the parties directly concerned, the poor and parish officials, but also the product of complex interactions with multifarious social and economic circumstances.

This thesis attempts to extend the boundary of workhouse research horizontally by integrating multifaceted socio-economic factors which have been overlooked or considered just in passing in previous discussions to analyse often highly localised patterns of indoor provision. The term ‘workhouse ecologies’ recurring throughout this study is chosen to crystallise my holistic approach.⁹ Several works have already acknowledged the utility of an ecological approach encompassing various determinants such as socio-economic, topographical and cultural features and their interaction.¹⁰ However, the most inspirational work undertaken recently in this vein has been by John Langton on the basis of numerical data from the poor relief returns of Parliament collected at the end of eighteenth and beginning of nineteenth centuries. The analysis of these returns allows him to establish that poor relief arrangements varied within rural Oxfordshire depending on the type of farming and degree of its commercialisation.¹¹

For the purpose of my thesis, neither a national nor a parish-focussed study is appropriate because the former tends to generalise findings and the latter to seek peculiarity. A county, in this case Hampshire, provides a more fitting scope for my ecological research. This

⁹ John Broad’s study is among the first ones professing a holistic approach to understanding poor relief practices. John Broad, ‘Parish Economies of Welfare, 1650-1834’, *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), pp. 985-1006.

¹⁰ Steve Hindle, *On the Parish?: The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c. 1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 282-295; Steve King, ‘‘It is impossible for our vestry to judge his case into perfection from here’’: Managing the Distance Dimensions of Poor Relief, 1800-40’, *Rural History* 16 (2005), p. 162; King, *Sickness, Medical Welfare and the English Poor, 1750-1834* (Manchester, 2018), p. 20.

¹¹ John Langton, ‘The Geography of Poor Relief in Rural Oxfordshire, 1775-1834’ in Steven King and Peter Jones (eds), *Obligation, Entitlement and Dispute under the English Poor Laws* (Newcastle, 2017), pp. 193-234.

project is based on the county, but at the same time delves into individual parishes to identify intra-county differences in workhouse provision and relate them to different local circumstances.¹² Furthermore, it spans the formative years of the New Poor Law system, and seeks to establish whether or not local control and regional variations survived and undermined central supervision and national uniformity in terms of workhouse geography and regime even after 1834.¹³

2. Key sources

This thesis uses a wide range of sources from central and local authorities. First of all, a basis for quantitative analysis of Hampshire workhouses including their physical distribution and sizes (in chapters two and three) is supplied by poor law returns to parliament. There are three sets of returns containing statistics on workhouses, covering the years 1776 (from Easter 1775 to Easter 1776), 1803 (from 20 April 1802 to 12 April 1803) and 1813-1815 (Easter 1812 to 25 March 1815) respectively.¹⁴ The information about workhouses contained in the different returns are, however, variable. The 1776 returns indicate which parishes possessed workhouses

¹² There have been few county-level studies of poor law covering our period, but one remarkable exception is Digby's of East Anglia where there the movement of consolidating parishes to form poor-law incorporations and to establish massive joint workhouses. Anne Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London, 1978).

¹³ Since Anthony Brundage challenged the notion about a revolutionary transformation under the New Poor Law and Peter Dunkley joined the battle in the 1970s, a number of other historians have made contributions to this debate. Anthony Brundage, 'The Landed Interest and the New Poor Law: A Reappraisal of the Revolution in Government', *English Historical Review*, 87 (1972), pp. 27-48; Peter Dunkley, 'The Landed Interest and the New Poor Law: A Critical Note', *English Historical Review*, 88 (1973), pp. 836-841; Anne Digby, 'The Rural Poor Law', in Derek Fraser (ed), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1976), pp. 149-170; Peter Mandler, 'The Making of the New Poor Law Redivivus', *Past and Present*, 117 (1987), pp. 129-157; Mandler, 'Tories and Paupers: Christian Political Economy and the Making of the New Poor Law', *Historical Journal*, 33 (1990), pp. 81-103; Anthony Brundage and David Eastwood, 'The Making of the New Poor Law Redivivus', *Past and Present*, 127 (1990), pp. 183-194; Philip Harling, 'The Power of Persuasion: Central Authority, Local Bureaucracy and the New Poor Law', *English Historical Review*, 107 (1992), pp. 30-53; B. K. Song, 'Continuity and Change in English Rural Society: The Formation of Poor Law Unions in Oxfordshire', *English Historical Review*, 114 (1999), pp. 314-338.

¹⁴ *PP* (1777), ix, *Abstracts of the Returns Made by the Overseers of the Poor, in Pursuance of An Act Passed in the Sixteenth Year of His Present Majesty's Reign* (hereafter the 1776 returns); *PP* (1803-04), xiii, *Abstract of the Answers and Returns Made Pursuant to Act 43 Geo 3, Relative to the Expense and Maintenance of the Poor in England* (hereafter the 1803 returns); *PP* (1818), xix, *Abridgement of Abstract of Answers and Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of the Poor in England and Wales* (hereafter the 1813-15 returns).

and how many people workhouses were capable of housing, while the 1803 and 1813-1815 returns show how many people parishes sent to workhouses (without specifying whether the workhouse was located within the parish). As there were occasionally contracts between parishes with and without workhouses, allowing one parish to send its poor to another's workhouse, the later returns do not permit us to chart workhouse distribution or capacity, but do tell us which parishes used workhouses and the actual numbers receiving indoor relief.¹⁵ Moreover, when it comes to financial information, the 1776 returns supply the sum paid for the rent of workhouses and habitations for the poor, whereas, more embracingly, the 1803 returns not only specify the gross amount expended on workhouses in the given years, but also includes columns about spending on materials for the workhouse employment and earnings from workhouse inmates' labour.¹⁶

The discrepancy in the headings of the three returns probably reflects the varying situations in which they were created and published. The MP Thomas Gilbert played a leading role in the creation of the 1776 returns. At the centre of Gilbert's concerns was how to enhance the quality of poor-law administration. In the 1770s, he advocated that the basic unit of relief administration should be enlarged and larger workhouses be erected.¹⁷ In his 1775 pamphlet, Gilbert states that district workhouses should be encouraged as the most easy and effective method for relieving the 'impotent' and employing the able poor.¹⁸ However, he thought that most existing parish workhouses, except in very large and populous parishes, rather increased

¹⁵ J. S. Taylor, 'The Unreformed Workhouse, 1776-1834' in E. W. Martin (ed), *Comparative Development in Social Welfare* (London, 1972), pp. 58-64.

¹⁶ Langton, 'Geography', pp. 200-202.

¹⁷ Paul Slack, *The English poor law 1531-1782* (London, 1990), pp. 43-44, 47-48; Joanna Innes, 'The "Mixed Economy of Welfare" in Early Modern England: Assessments of the Options from Hale to Malthus (c.1683-1803)', in Martin Daunton (ed), *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past* (London, 1996), pp. 121-122.

¹⁸ Thomas Gilbert, *Observations upon the Orders and Resolutions of the House of Commons, with respect to the poor, vagrants, and houses of correction* (London, 1775), p. 11.

than reduced the burden on the public, due to the want of proper regulations.¹⁹ The implication was that large workhouses tended to be better run. The questions annexed in an act of 1776 which ordered the 1776 returns need to be interpreted in the light of his hope for a transition to a district workhouse system. The purpose of the returns asking about the possession, capacity and rent of workhouses was probably to provide essential data on the state of parish property across England and Wales for those who might be involved in implementing the district workhouse plan, with an eye to realising capital on unneeded buildings.²⁰ Therefore, the returns were not a survey aimed at understanding the utilisation of parish workhouses within the current system, but one designed to support the proposed reform of poor relief.

The 1803 and 1813-15 returns also reflect the commitment of an MP, George Rose, to poor law reform, in the face of burgeoning abolitionists. The MP was keen to collect more precise information on poor relief provision, against the background of criticism of the poor laws, especially from T. R. Malthus in his *Essay on the Principle of Population*, based on little exact information about the relief system.²¹ Through a national survey, Rose tried to demonstrate that the principles of poor laws were still applicable and the present system could be modified and improved as to provide relief effectually, although he admitted that the number of paupers and the expense of maintaining them had increased and the burden on the community was considerably heavier than it once had been.²² In contrast to Gilbert, Rose took a substantially negative view on workhouses. Rose claimed that a key to improve the current system was to abolish workhouses, except in metropolitan cities faced with a problem of

¹⁹ Gilbert, *Observations*, p. 26.

²⁰ Gilbert, *Observations*, p. 30.

²¹ R. G. Cowherd, 'The Humanitarian Reform of the English Poor Laws from 1782 to 1815', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 104 (1960), pp. 340-341; Martin Gorsky, 'The Growth and Distribution of English Friendly Societies in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Economic History Review*, New Series, 51 (1998), pp. 490-493; J. R. Poynter, *Society and Pauperism: English Ideas on Poor Relief, 1795-1834* (London, 1969), pp. 186-190.

²² George Rose, *Observations on the Poor Laws, and on the Management of the Poor, in Great Britain, Arising from a Consideration of the Returns* (London, 1805), pp. 2-6.

inadequate housing, and to promote friendly societies, whose establishment he had already sought to facilitate through legislation in 1793.²³ Comprehensive information about the current state of workhouse management in the returns, ranging from the number of people confined in workhouses to the expense of their maintenance, was collected to test his contention. The inclusion of figures regarding friendly societies and schools of industry in the returns can be interpreted as representing his aim of showing the spread and the potential of the societies and the schools as an alternative to residential workhouses.

In addition to inconsistencies in questions asked in the different returns, there are problems with accuracy in reporting. First of all, there are some basic accounting mistakes. For instance, the 1803 returns for the parish of Lymington state that the total expenditure was £1,018 2s. 3d. but according to the overseer's account book, the actual annual expenditure was £1,168 13s. 1d.²⁴ It is probable that the discrepancy of about £150 was due to the overseers omitting the last month's account of the fiscal year (Easter 1802 to Easter 1803). One discovers a similar case in Cambridge in which the figure returned by the parish of Thriplow in 1776 as the total expenditure was £52 14s., but the actual figure from the overseer's book was £112 10s. 5d., more than double. This was probably because of the ambiguity of questions in the returns. Overseers of Thriplow are thought to have returned weekly permanent payments only, excluding occasional payments or relief in kind.²⁵ In fact, it is not rare to see parishes in Hampshire understating their total expenditure in the returns, although it is impossible to know whether this reflected parish officers' intention to underreport the scale of their pauperism.²⁶

²³ Gorsky, 'Growth', pp. 490-493; Rose, *Observations*, pp. 33-38.

²⁴ Lymington Overseers' Accounts, 12 April 1803, HRO, 42M75/PO20.

²⁵ Shirley Wittering, 'How Reliable are the Government Poor Law Returns?', *The Local Historian*, 30 (2000), pp. 162-164.

²⁶ For example, the 1776 returns for Whitchurch report the figure of £371 15s. 10d. as the total expenditure as opposed to £377, 8s. 2d. from the overseer's account. The 1803 returns for Boldre report £1,181 0s. 5d. against £1,187 6s. 9d. from the overseer's account. Whitchurch Overseers' Accounts, 15 April 1776, HRO, 83M76/PO1; Boldre Overseers' Accounts, April 1803, HRO, 1A09/A1.

By contrast, the amount recorded in the 1813-15 returns for Odiham is rather larger than that given in the overseer's account.²⁷ Lyndhurst returned the same figure as that in its account book in 1776.²⁸ Overall, errors between the parliamentary returns and parish accounts are undeniable, but the margins appear not so great as to destroy the credibility of the returns completely.

In focusing on workhouses, more fundamental questions arise. What was meant by the term 'workhouse' as it appeared in the three returns or in individual localities? How did parish officers in charge of collecting data on the ground interpret this term? The bills and instructions relating to those returns do not provide a definition of 'workhouse'. Under the Old Poor Laws, the term tended to be used so loosely that it could in effect imply any institution for housing the poor, some of which were sometimes referred to by different names such as 'poorhouse' or 'house of industry'. In fact, regardless of the original meaning of 'workhouse', whether work was performed inside or not was not decisive.²⁹ The ambiguity of the term may have induced overseers to count what were nothing more than humble dwellings where paupers lived independently. From the 1776 return within Hampshire, there were two tiny workhouses capable of holding less than ten in the parishes of Faringdon and Hinton Ampner. As well as the small scale, the fact that the successive 1803 and 1813-15 returns disclose that none of paupers belonging to those parishes were sent to workhouses makes it possible to assume that the two treated as a workhouse in the 1776 returns were in fact mean cottages whose rents were paid by the parishes.

Workhouse data in the 1803 and 1813-15 returns are different, but likewise imperfect. It was rare for parish officers to keep separate workhouse accounts, so collecting the data depended on workhouse masters or governors.³⁰ A footnote in the 1803 returns, for instance,

²⁷ Odiham Vestry Minutes, 24 April 1815, HRO, 47M81/PV3.

²⁸ Lyndhurst Overseers' Accounts, 9 April 1776, HRO, 25M84/PO2.

²⁹ Taylor, 'Unreformed', pp. 58-61.

³⁰ Taylor, 'Unreformed', p. 58.

reports that the Hampshire parishes of Kingsley and Headley failed to fill up columns in relation to workhouse cost because ‘the manager of the workhouse has absconded with the accompts’.³¹ Moreover, data on workhouse inmates are too tangled to support a fruitful analysis. In the first place, since the numbers of people relieved in workhouses throughout the year provided in the 1803 returns includes children, while those in the 1813-15 returns exclude children, it is not possible to make an accurate comparison. Additionally, the figures for workhouse population for some parishes seem to represent the number of times that indoor relief was provided rather than the number of persons to whom it was granted.³² In the case of the parish of Boldre, whose workhouse is reported to be capable of twenty-six people in the 1776 returns, sixty-seven permanent paupers, far exceeding the capacity, were relieved in the workhouse according to the 1803 returns. Unless extension work on the workhouse was undertaken between 1776 and 1803, Boldre overseers perhaps returned the number of cases for whom workhouse relief was provided.³³

Table 1 Hampshire parishes with a workhouse leaving administrative records from 1776 to 1834 (%)

Division	No. of parishes with a workhouse in 1834	No. of workhouse parishes with overseers’ accounts	No. of workhouse parishes with vestry minutes	No. of workhouse parishes with workhouse committee books	No. of workhouse parishes examined in this thesis
Arable	32	21(66)	27(84)	2(6)	21(66)
Coastal	20	8(40)	10(50)	4(20)	10(50)
Pastoral	12	8(67)	6(50)	1(8)	7(58)
Total	64	37(58)	43(67)	7(11)	38(59)

Source: See bibliography for the archival evidence of Hampshire parishes.

³¹ The 1803 returns, p. 447, fn. (d), (e).

³² Langton, ‘Geography’, p. 205.

³³ In 1793, Boldre opened a new workhouse, but provided no information about a difference in size between the new and old ones, instead noting that there were around thirty inmates on the opening day. John Walter, Thomas Robbins and William Gilpin, *An Account of a New Poor-house Erected in the Parish of Boldre, in New Forest near Lymington* (London, 1803), p. 7.

Another set of source material used in chapters three, four and five for qualitative analysis of workhouse administration and conditions consists of local administrative documents produced by parish officers, chiefly comprising accounts of overseers of the poor, vestry minute books and workhouse committee books. Out of sixty-four Hampshire parishes identified as having possessed a workhouse in 1834 (whose detail will be discussed in following chapters), the numbers of those with overseers' accounts and vestry minutes are thirty-seven, 58 per cent and forty-three, 67 per cent each, while those with workhouse committee books was relatively scarce, aggregating only seven, 11 per cent. The proportion of parishes examined in this thesis is no more than 60 per cent (38 of 64). However, considering the survival rates of the records, this thesis is highly comprehensive, covering most of the parishes for which any of those sources survive.

Basically, overseers' accounts were devoted to quantitative data, and were customarily divided into two parts, the first showing the details of poor rates collected and the second illustrating how the collected money was disbursed for poor relief. They therefore contain lists of the names of recipients with varying relief items and their quantity but recording practices could be so different from place to place and from officer to officer even within communities that specific details might vary a great deal. Some entries regarding workhouses can be discovered from time to time, although usually not enough to support a general account of the workhouses. Notwithstanding their evident limits, the account books provide some insight into the workhouses. In the overseers' account of Whitchurch, for instance, there are some entries indicating on what financial basis the new Whitchurch workhouse was set up. The officers made a payment of £50 for building a new workhouse in 1774 and spent money repaying interest on loans established for the same purpose in regular basis.³⁴ In addition, the overseers'

³⁴ Whitchurch Overseers' Accounts, 1774-1780, HRO, 83M76/PO1.

accounts include some hints as to how the workhouse was managed and by whom. The account of Romsey Extra notes disbursements of large sums of money, hundreds of pounds, towards contractors every year, whereas there is no mention of paying money for necessities of the workhouse.³⁵ It is possible to assume that the contractors were in charge of almost all of the workhouse under minimal control by the local officers. However, we could fall into serious trouble due to vague descriptions such as ‘bills’ which the recording officers frequently used to describe payments to local traders in the accounts without concrete information on items purchased. To overcome the problem, it is essential to set these records within a broader context of other minutes created by relief officers as well as to exercise a degree of ingenuity.

In general, vestry minutes display the decisions and resolutions made by predominant ratepayers who constituted the *de facto* ruling committee in parishes. In vestry meetings, they handled almost every aspect of their parish business, so the minutes present a quite wide range of information. It is, however, undeniable that poor relief was a matter of particular significance in vestry meetings, such that a considerable portion of the minutes tends to be dedicated to problems of the poor. It is also easy to find reports about workhouses, especially in larger parishes, much better documented than smaller ones. In most cases, parish officers were likely to bring up the workhouse in vestry meetings when they thought something important was going to happen to it. Therefore, reports relating to the workhouse are mainly dominated by its establishment, the collection of funds for it, the employment of people for its management, and the contract with people taking the charge. Although giving insight into when it was erected, how people coped with it financially and who had a major responsibility for it, the workhouse records in these minutes do not generally delve into their internal circumstances. Furthermore, the minutes chiefly focus on the resolutions of the meetings without remarking on the process

³⁵ Romsey Overseers’ Accounts, 1774-1784, HRO, 10M58/PO1.

of reaching the agreements. They are also relief supplier-oriented inasmuch as they rarely offer detailed notes on the conditions of relief recipients living in the workhouse let alone their personal experience. In short, despite the details of resolutions on the workhouse available in the vestry minutes, it would not be easy to create a comprehensive picture of a workhouse by referring only to the minutes, without help from other more specialised documents such as workhouse books.

Unlike the overseers' accounts and vestry minutes describing general relief practices, workhouse committee books were a product of the decision made by some communities to govern the workhouse more systematically by forming a special organisation, the workhouse committee. The special committee would be formed once parish authorities determined to erect a new workhouse. The existence of the committee did not always lead to the production of an elaborate workhouse committee book since it might be too short-lived to create such a book. For instance, committees were set up in several of the parishes dealt with here, but among those investigated, only the workhouse committee in Alverstoke survived for long enough to leave a detailed workhouse book.³⁶ In 1806 the committee members intended to resign their offices, but the local authorities turned down their resignation and retained the committee to assist them.³⁷ The Alverstoke workhouse book contains much detail about workhouse administration, including the committee minutes, annual reports to ratepayers, contracts with people involved in the workhouse and annual accounts and can be subjected to detailed qualitative analysis.

In the final three chapters examining Hampshire workhouses on the eve of and after the New Poor Law, I consult other types of records. The first is bound volumes of correspondence between the Poor Law Commission at Somerset House and an assistant commissioner, Colonel

³⁶ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 1799-1831, HRO, PL2/1/1.

³⁷ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 1806, HRO, PL2/1/1.

Charles Ashe A'Court, appointed for the counties of Hampshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire in 1834. Soon after his appointment, he visited Hampshire and made detailed parish-level notes for the Commission on poor relief administration including workhouses and their management. Such activity can be seen as a sort of preliminary survey for the New Poor Law.³⁸ Further, he kept on reporting in detail on local situations associated with the formation of poor law unions and their boards of guardians and the establishment and management of new union workhouses.³⁹ There are also bundles of correspondence between poor law unions in Hampshire and the central authorities.⁴⁰ The contents of this voluminous set of records are enormously diverse, ranging from statutes, circulars, and orders from Somerset House to minutes, reports, and complaints of boards of guardians and even pauper letters, which have received much attention.⁴¹ This thesis is, of course, concerned with information from the

³⁸ Colonel A. C. A'Court, Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 1834, 1835, TNA, MH32/1-2.

³⁹ Colonel A. C. A'Court, Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 1836, 1837-42, TNA, MH32/3-4.

⁴⁰ Alresford Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1834-1837, 1838-1842, 1843-1846, MH12/10613-5; Alton Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1834-1837, 1838-1840, 1841-1842, 1843-1846, MH12/10626-8; Andover Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1837-1841, MH12/10661; Basingstoke Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1834-May 1836, June-December 1836, 1837-1838, 1839-1842, 1843-1844, MH12/10669-73; Catherington Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1834-1845, MH12/10701; Christchurch Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1835-1842, 1843-1846, MH12/10710-1; Droxford Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1834-1837, 1838-1842, 1843-1846, MH12/10751-3; Fareham Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1834-1836, 1840-1842, 1843-1846, MH12/10767-9; Fordingbridge Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1839-1842, 1843-1847; MH12/10792-3; Hartley Wintney Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1835-1837, 1838-1842, 1843-1848, MH12/10804-6; Havant Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1834-1837, 1838-1842, MH12/10825-6; Hursley Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1835-1845, MH12/10845; Kingsclere Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1838-1842, 1843-1847, MH12/10853-4; Lymington Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1834-1837, 1838-1842, 1843-1847, MH12/10865-7; Petersfield Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1834-1838, 1839-1842, 1843-1847, MH12/10896-8; Portsea Island Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1834-1838, 1839-1842, 1843-1844, 1845-1846, MH12/10916-9; Ringwood Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1834-1837, 1838-1842, 1843-1846, MH12/10971-3; Romsey Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1834-1841, 1842-1849, MH12/10983-4; South Stoneham Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1834-1838, 1838-1842 1843-1847; MH12/11035-7; Stockbridge Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1834-1842, 1843-1849, MH12/11063-4; Whitchurch Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1834-1837, 1838-1842, 1843-1847, MH12/11074-6; New Winchester Union to the Poor Law Commission, TNA, 1838-1839, 1840-1842, 1843-1847, MH12/11168-70.

⁴¹ The latest work on pauper letters in MH12 series is Peter Jones and Steven King, *Pauper Voices, Public Opinion and Workhouse Reform in Mid-Victorian England: Bearing Witness* (Basingstoke, 2020).

documents about the establishment and context of union workhouses and their population and operational policies.

Chapter One: Hampshire, c. 1776–1845

This chapter first examines the geography of Hampshire and its intra-country variations to demonstrate that it offers an appropriate case-study for the ecological approach. It identifies regions within the county which shared common features, categorising economic and social settings associated with different landscapes by using empirical sources. Secondly, it looks at changes in the economic and social context over time during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, centring on two crises, bad harvests in 1795 and 1800 and un- and underemployment after 1815, which demonstrably created or changed workhouse ecologies. The last section explores the Swing riots of 1830-31 and their aftermath to track the path towards the New Poor Law, a critical juncture in the history of the workhouse system.

1.1 Three different landscapes

Every history reader is aware that he must learn some geography if he would understand what he reads. Comparatively, few, however, seem to realise how much light geography throws on history if one may judge from experience. Geographical influences account for much that happens and has happened. Geographical knowledge affords valuable data for solving historical problems.¹

Hampshire had a landscape marked by great diversity, as is clear from contemporary accounts drawn up by the Board of Agriculture, which cut it up into eight districts according to soil types.² I draw on these surveys below. However, to make our discussions simple and straightforward, the county is, in this thesis, divided into three parts: northern and central arable areas characterised by chalk down-lands, south-western and north-eastern pastoral areas of forest and heathland, and southern coastal towns, including Portsmouth and

¹ H. B. George, *The Relations of Geography and History* (Oxford, 1901), p. v.

² Charles Vancouver, *General View of the Agriculture of Hampshire, including the Isle of Wight* (London, 1810).

Southampton. As we will see below, the Isle of Wight is included in the arable part, as grain farming took up a large section of the isle.

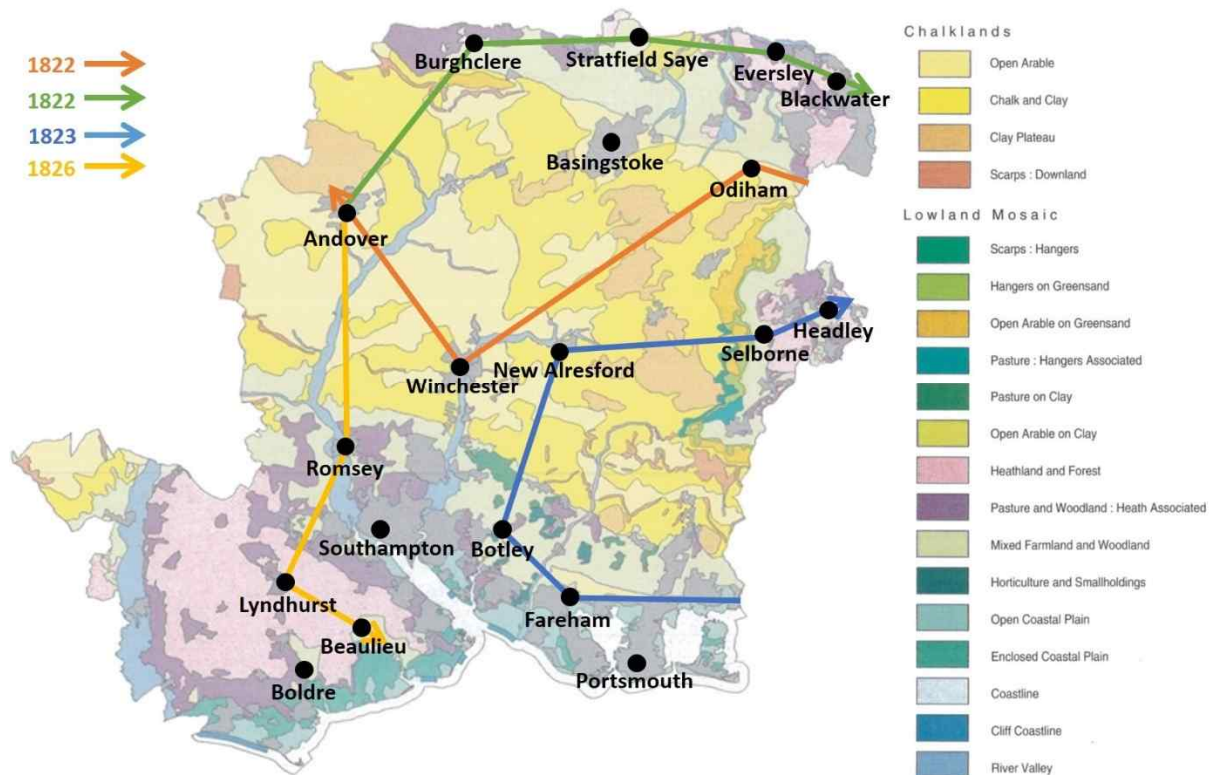


Figure 1.1 Hampshire landscape with Cobbett’s journeys
 Source: Hampshire County Council, *The Hampshire Landscape*, p. 17 (I insert Cobbett’s journeys on the map)

1.1.1 Chalk downs

From 1822 to 1826, William Cobbett, a political writer and farmer, embarked on a series of travels through the countryside of southern England.³ As his object was ‘not to see inns and turn-pikes, but to see the country; to see the farmers at home, and to see the labourers in the fields’, he went on horseback through by-lanes and bridle paths and across fields.⁴ He

³ As being more interested in rural England and its economic hardship, in 1805, Cobbett purchased a farm at Botley in Hampshire, which became primary residence for him and his family until 1817 when he fled to America due to the repression of the home secretary, Lord Sidmouth. After returning from America in 1819, he was bankrupt and lost the Botley farm. Ian Dyck, ‘Cobbett, William (1763-1835)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/5734> (04 Nov. 2022).

⁴ William Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (London, 1830; repr, Cambridge, 2009), pp. 1-2.

believed that travelling on turnpikes showed nothing about England; real knowledge could only be given by travelling across fields or commons or along country lanes.⁵ The famous outcome of his travels, *Rural Rides*, first published in 1830, provides descriptions of rural landscapes and observations of farming conditions in the countryside.⁶

In September 1822, Cobbett travelled through the north-central part of Hampshire while going from London, more specifically Kensington, to Uphusband, now called Hurstbourne Tarrant, near Andover, Hampshire. He entered Hampshire from the north-eastern corner and arrived at Odiham on 27 September. Soon after crossing the border, he recognised that soils came to be composed of stiff loam and flint at the top with a bed of chalk beneath. Over the next two days, on his way to Uphusband through Winchester and Andover, a similar landscape of flint and chalk unfolded before his eyes. He pointed out that land composed of stiff loam upon chalk was suitable for growing corn.⁷ Ten years earlier, Charles Vancouver, an agricultural writer, hired by the Board of Agriculture to survey the county, had likewise stated that the land in this part showed uniformity in its internal composition, chiefly consisting of chalk rubble upon which different types of soil and mould rested.⁸

The following year, Cobbett set off on another ride from Singleton, West Sussex, went through Portsdown Hill in the south of Hampshire just above Portsmouth and turned north in Botley. As he got closer to the south coast, the ground came to be of chalk. He found that the land in the south was excellent for all kinds of corn and said in its praise that ‘it is impossible

⁵ James Grande, *William Cobbett, the Press and Rural England Radicalism and the Fourth Estate, 1792-1835* (Basingstoke, 2014), p. 151.

⁶ James Mulvihill suggests that in *Rural Rides*, as a traveller, Cobbett did not merely illustrate the physical appearance of the earth but, as a champion of the rural economy, introduce and apply it to establish a medium of public discourse for his campaigns. James Mulvihill, ‘The Medium of Landscape in Cobbett’s *Rural Rides*’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 33 (1993), pp. 825-840.

⁷ Cobbett, *Rural*, pp. 21-44.

⁸ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, p. 15.

that there can be, anywhere, a better corn country than this'.⁹ Similarly, it was stated in Vancouver's reports that Portsdown Hill's soil was of a variety similar to the north-central chalk region, constituting 'a grey and brown loam of a good staple, on substrata of rubbly chalk and gravel', which yielded plenty of crops.¹⁰ After Portsdown Hill, between Fareham, Titchfield and Botley, a loam and clay soil became predominant in the cultivated fields, good for farming grain as well.¹¹ Along the way to Botley, Cobbett observed no bad field of corn, and said that 'the wheat grows well, as it does upon all the clays that I have seen'.¹²

Then, Cobbett's journey reached the valley of the River Itchen, which rises in Ropley Dean near New Alresford and runs down through Winchester to Southampton.¹³ A vale of meadows ran along the river, stretching to South Stoneham, just above Southampton, about twenty-five miles in length. The sides of the vale were mainly high grounds of chalk covered thickly with loam. Apart from some hills rising steeply from the valley, most parts of this area were affluent corn-lands. From Cobbett's observation, there were few spots in England more fertile than this vale and the surrounding fields. Its fertility was, he argued, proved by the fact that, besides the towns of New Alresford, Winchester and Southampton, there were seventeen rich villages with their own parish church in the river valley.¹⁴ In 1826, on route from Andover to Romsey, he observed another river valley: the valley of the River Test, which rises in the north of Hampshire, runs southwards through Stockbridge and Romsey and enters an inlet at Redbridge near Southampton.¹⁵ The grounds bordering on the river possessed a calcareous substance called malm, namely marl or chalky clay, upon which loose moor or peaty soil lay.¹⁶

⁹ Cobbett, *Rural*, pp. 81-82.

¹⁰ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, p. 31.

¹¹ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, p. 23.

¹² Cobbett, *Rural*, p. 89.

¹³ Cobbett, *Rural*, p. 101; Vancouver, *Agriculture*, p. 7.

¹⁴ Cobbett, *Rural*, pp. 112-113.

¹⁵ Cobbett, *Rural*, p. 329; Vancouver, *Agriculture*, p. 7.

¹⁶ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, pp. 25, 343.

Between Andover and Romsey, other observers reported that a significant portion was open fields for sheep-corn husbandry and that the wheat, rye, vetch, and sainfoin seemed excellent.¹⁷

Cobbett said little about it, but the Isle of Wight had soils of clay in the north half and chalk and lower greensands in its central and southern parts. Two hundred years before, William Camden had reported that the island's ground, in general, consisted of fruitful soils but could be divided into north and south. From his observations, the north part was covered by meadows, pastures, and woods, while the south was wholly bedecked with cornfields.¹⁸ The 1795 report of the Board of Agriculture presents a similar picture, one in which the east, west and south were occupied by grain farming, though in slightly varying degrees. In contrast, in the north on the clay, beans were predominant.¹⁹

1.1.2 Forest and heath

Cobbett's rides were, as his title emphasised, rural ones, but he did not travel only across cereal-farming regions. In 1822, on the route from the north of Hampshire to London, he traversed parishes such as Stratfield Saye, Heckfield Heath, Eversley, and Blackwater in the north-east. The soil upon which he made his way here became stony sand upon a gravel bed beyond the end of the chalk hills. He judged that few spots in England could be poorer and uglier than this land, where miscellaneous weeds, particularly rushes, grew.²⁰ Vancouver's reports also remark that this area was principally dominated by woodland and heathland with clay, sand, gravel, and peat, unfit even for cultivating turnips in some places.

¹⁷ Arthur Young also had seen that this region was under a course of fallow, wheat, oats, peas or beans, and turnips were farmed and folded by sheep. G. E. Fussell, 'Four Centuries of Farming Systems in Hampshire, 1500-1900', *PHFCAS*, 17 (1952), p. 274; Cobbett, *Rural*, pp. 594-595.

¹⁸ William Camden, *Britain, or, a Chorographical Description of the most flourishing Kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland* (London, 1610), pp. 273-276.

¹⁹ Abraham Driver and William Driver, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Hants* (London, 1794), pp. 49-55.

²⁰ William Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, ed. Ian Dyck (London, 2005), p. 34.

It produced inferior vegetables and herbage and afforded humble pasturage.²¹ The following year, after visiting some central farmland areas, Cobbett journeyed out of the county through a couple of eastern parishes, Selborne and Headley, on the border with Surrey. The naturalist Gilbert White, who lived at Selborne, and whose descriptions were acknowledged by Cobbett to capture what Selborne looked like, mentioned that the parish's soils were diversified. The south-west consisted of a vast hill of chalk. However, on the verge of the hill and to the north-east towards Woolmer Forest, the land became wild and rough in character, mainly consisting of a wet, sandy loam and hungry, lean sand, neither fitting for pasture nor for the plough, but only for cultivating hops.²² The hop plantations were, Cobbett pointed out, of considerable importance to the parish, in spite of a recent poor harvest.²³ His next stop, Headley, was surrounded by woods and heath, where he found some plantations of coppice wood for cropping, namely fir.²⁴

However, the best-known wooded region encompassing open heathland was the New Forest in south-west Hampshire. Before Cobbett, another person presented a vivid picture of the forest and praised its 'picturesque' beauties. As the vicar of Boldre in the New Forest and also a painter, William Gilpin (who will be discussed later as one of those leading the Boldre workhouse project) undertook some excursions through different parts of this woody regions and reported his observations. Although the word forest immediately generates the image of an uninterrupted tract of woody land, the New Forest consisted in large part of heathy fields and carpet lawns, interspersed with woods.²⁵ According to Vancouver's findings, light sand

²¹ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, pp. 8, 11-14.

²² As a pioneering naturalist, Gilbert White inherited his family house, The Wakes, Selborne, in 1763 and explored the natural history and ecology of this parish. Gilbert White, *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (London, 1789), pp. 1-4; William Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (London, 1830; repr, Cambridge, 2009), p. 122.

²³ Cobbett, *Rural*, p. 119.

²⁴ Cobbett, *Rural*, p. 123.

²⁵ William Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery, and Other Woodland Views*, ed. T. D. Lauder (Edinburgh, 1834), pp. 124-131.

and gravelly loam marked the New Forest.²⁶ Cobbett visited Lyndhurst, the New Forest's administrative capital, and roamed around surrounding places. He observed that the New Forest's heath and wood were even worse than Bagshot's heath in the north-east, stating that 'a poorer spot than this New Forest, there is not in all England; nor, I believe, in the whole world'.²⁷ However, one wood, through which he passed, consisted chiefly of beech, and was destined to grow food for pigs, and there were at least a hundred hogs to one deer, so from this perspective, the land had more virtues than he allowed. He did acknowledge that some wooded land if properly managed, had the potential to produce a prodigious quantity of timber.²⁸

1.1.3 Seacoast

Cobbett was less interested in seaside regions of Hampshire because they were urbanised in comparison to their inland counterparts, so not fitting stops for his rural rides.²⁹ He just briefly threw out some comments about them as being located in the estuaries of Hampshire major rivers, including the Avon, the Test, the Itchen, and the Meon. Vancouver's report indicated that the hinterlands of coastal towns facing Southampton Water, such as Southampton, Titchfield, and Fareham, were, for the most part, composed of clay, sand, and gravel, lying at a point where the great body of chalk forming the character of the middle and north terminated.³⁰ The coastal fringe of the New Forest, from Lymington to Christchurch, a mile or two in width, was described as having a high proportion of clay-loam soils, in part suited for grains. This made it different from the interior forest and heath.³¹

²⁶ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, p. 9.

²⁷ Cobbett, *Rural*, p. 619.

²⁸ Cobbett, *Rural*, pp. 610, 620.

²⁹ On the basis of the 1801 census, out of fourteen parishes with more than 2,000 people and more than 50 per cent of residents engaged in non-agricultural fields, half (Alverstoke, Christchurch, Fareham, Lymington, Portsmouth, Portsea, Southampton) were on the coast.

³⁰ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, pp. 23-24.

³¹ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, pp. 26-28.

However, the south seacoast country was less affected by soil type than by its physical position and marine situation. Vancouver shed light on the advantages enjoyed by seaside places with a harbour or roadstead, that is, a sheltered body of water.³² The development of Portsmouth and Southampton, two major port towns in Hampshire, was to a considerable extent due to geopolitical factors. Daniel Defoe had pointed out that the situation of Portsmouth, the largest fortification in England, was well-adapted for the security of the Navy. The entrance into the harbour was so narrow as to be possible to guard on both sides by cannon. Its dockyards had grown big enough to form a town by themselves, where large fleets of naval and merchant vessels lay at anchor and where long rows of dwellings for commissioned officers and tradesmen were established, enriching the town. Southampton, Defoe indicated, ‘stands upon a point running out into the sea, between two very fine rivers, both navigable, up some length into the country, and particularly useful for the bringing down timber out of one of the best wooded counties in Britain’. A significant quantity of timber of an uncommon size was by this means conveyed to the shipbuilding industry.³³ Although not the site of any heavy manufacturing, the two smaller port towns of Lymington and Christchurch, to the south of the New Forest, were much involved in marine industries. Situated on Boldre foreshore, Lymington was not fit for a harbour because the ebb and flow were considerable. This handicap, however, supported flourishing sea-salt production. Christchurch at the Avon’s mouth was famous for fishing, mainly of salmon aiming to swim up the river.³⁴

1.2 Economic geography

Many local historians have begun their works by portraying the local landscapes of their study areas and dividing them into parts according to their geographical features and

³² Vancouver, *Agriculture*, p. 6.

³³ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour thro’ the Whole Island of Great Britain, divided into circuits or journies* (London, 1724), pp. 72-81.

³⁴ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, pp. 418-424.

economic structure, on the basis of contemporary surveyors' or travellers' remarks. That is what I have just done in order to introduce the county that my study covers. However, we should not be satisfied with travellers' observations only but should also undertake a more concrete investigation of economic structure, delving as deep into the parish level as we can in order to provide a firm basis for our understanding of regional differences.

1.2.1 Agriculture

Hampshire, considered as a whole, was one of the most agriculturally advanced counties of England in the eighteenth century. The middle and northern chalk downs dominated by the 'sheep and corn' system set the stage for one element in the agricultural revolution and for the development of agrarian capitalism. Agricultural improvement resulted in a boom in the construction of water meadows from 1640, which yielded an early bite of grass for the sheep in April, a hungry period as winter hay stocks were depleted. The precocious introduction of new crops, such as clover, sainfoin and turnips, was also crucial, because they could be a useful fodder crop.³⁵ The south-west and north-east of Hampshire were, by contrast, as we have seen, marked by heaths, woodland and pasture and were unsuitable for grain cultivation. A forest-pasture system combining livestock rearing and timber and firewood production was the norm here. In places, limited arable farming was possible, though only for fodder crops or simple subsistence.³⁶

Nevertheless, this cursory description does not help us to establish the precise divisions on which to found my research. We therefore now turn our gaze on more quantitative, though somewhat underused, data from returns of the acreage under crops. In 1800-1801, years of

³⁵ Fussell, 'Four', pp. 264-287; E. L. Jones 'Eighteenth, Century Changes in Hampshire Chalkland Farming', *Agricultural History Review*, 8 (1960), pp. 5-19; Joan Thirsk, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales vol. v: 1640-1750, Part I: Regional Farming systems* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 327-331.

³⁶ Thirsk, *Agrarian*, pp. 340-344.

great economic and social distress due to the French wars and a catastrophic harvest failure, Parliament appointed select committees to investigate the price trend of provisions, particularly grain, and agricultural output and potential across the country. As a result of their enquiries, the 1801 crop returns were created to provide information on acreage in each parish devoted to different crops.³⁷ Since W. G. Hoskins first indicated the significance of these returns in his study of Leicestershire, many local studies have employed them. However, some serious doubts have been cast on them.³⁸ The Board of Agriculture, to which the returns were sent for comment, warned that some board members with personal knowledge of particular parishes found them too inaccurate to support any conclusions. They had been compiled by the distribution of printed forms through the bishops to incumbents, but with no statutory backing; the care and accuracy with which the clergymen filled in the forms could vary greatly. The acreage recorded may have been underestimated if landowners or occupiers suspected that the information gathered would be used for tax or tithe assessments. More importantly, the year 1801 was abnormal, in that much land on which other crops had in the past been planted had been sown with wheat on account of the incredibly high price it commanded. The wheat acreage of this year was, accordingly, greater than before. Despite these possible errors and imperfections, they have some utility for my study, as its aim is not to compute agricultural output precisely but instead to identify general patterns in terms of the cultivated acreage of each parish and to distinguish agricultural regions.

³⁷ W. E. Minchinton, 'Agricultural Returns and the Government during the Napoleonic Wars', *Agricultural History Review*, 1 (1953), pp. 37-40; Michael Turner, 'Agricultural Productivity in England in the Eighteenth Century: Evidence from Crop Yields', *Economic History Review*, 35 (1982), pp. 492-497.

³⁸ W. G. Hoskins, 'The Leicestershire Crop Returns of 1801', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society*, 24 (1949), pp. 127-153.

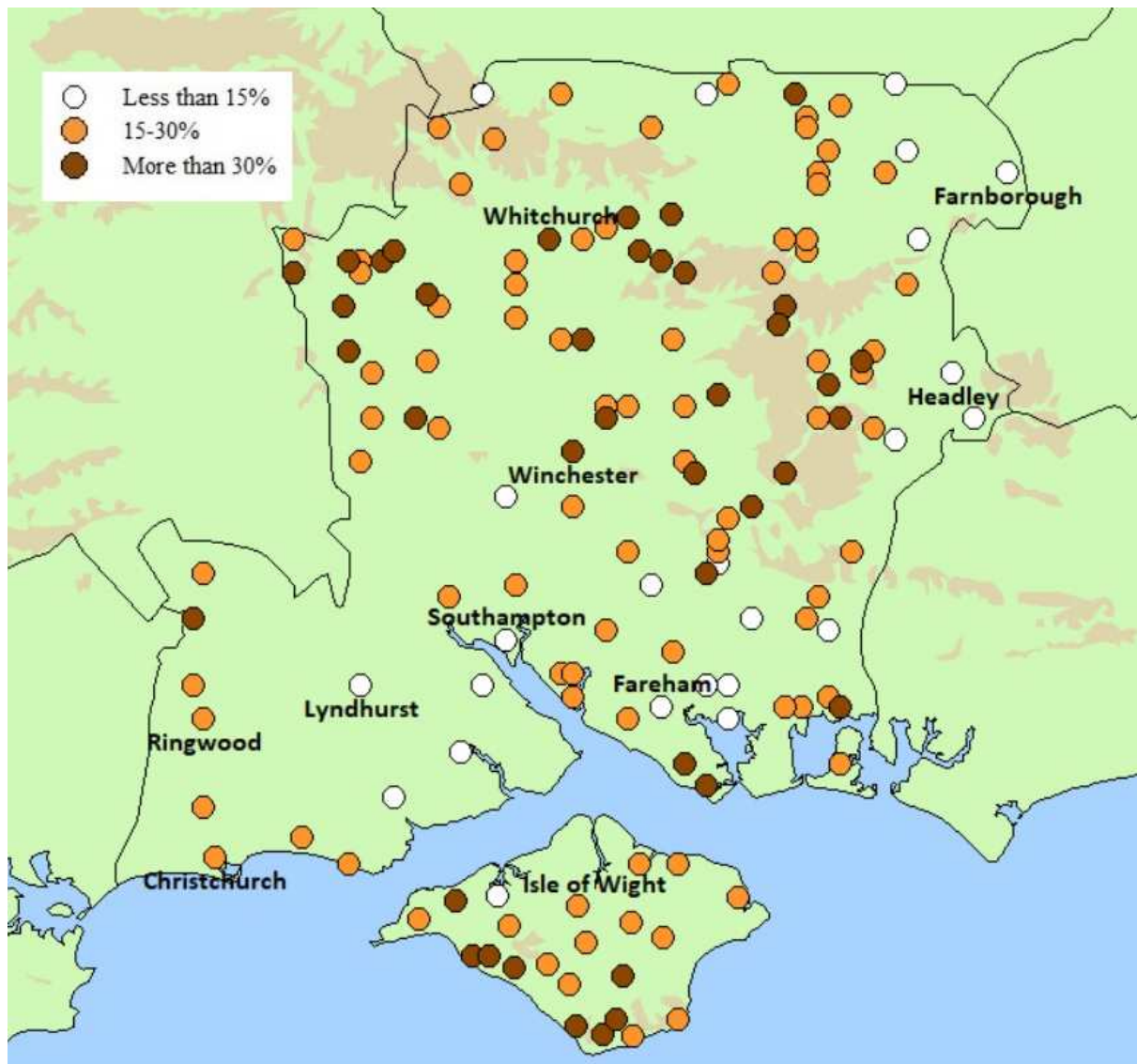


Figure 1.2 The proportion of acreage under cereal crops (wheat, barley, oats) in Hampshire parishes 1801

Source: The acreage returns of 1801 appended in R. A. Pelham, 'The Agricultural Revolution in Hampshire, with Special Reference to the Acreage Returns of 1801', *PHFCAS*, 18 (1953), pp. 150-153.

The returns for Hampshire present crop censuses for over 150 of 356 parishes including in the Isle of Wight (by Vancouver's count, Hampshire had 356 parishes, precincts, hamlets and tithings in 1810) and the variety of reported crops range from grain (wheat, barley, oats) and animal fodder (pea, bean, turnips, rape) to a hardy crop (potatoes). To distinguish agricultural variations within the county, particularly between arable and pastoral regions, it is

worth estimating the proportion of acreage harvested for grain (Figure 2).³⁹ At a glance, it is clear that most parishes in the central and northern chalkland devoted more than 15 per cent of the total land to grain-farming (light and dark brown circles). It is, furthermore, noteworthy that out of thirty-two parishes with over 30 per cent (dark brown circles), excluding those in the Isle of Wight, only four were located outside these regions. This distribution confirms what Cobbett and Vancouver observed, that in the chalk downs, a grain belt existed. There were, however, two more areas where cereal cultivation was important. Along the Avon Valley, which passed through Ringwood, agricultural features were not the same as those of the New Forest nearby. All the parishes in the valley, which ended with Christchurch at the inlet, used at least 20 per cent of the land for growing grain. The Isle of Wight, on to which the geological features of the downs continue, was also heavily engaged in corn husbandry. Out of the twenty-three parishes in the island, only one had less than fifteen per cent under grain, while nineteen had over twenty per cent, of which eight had even more than thirty per cent.

By contrast, a number of parishes that planted less than fifteen per cent of the total land with grain (white circles) were, unsurprisingly, located in forest and heathland areas of the south-west, centred on Lyndhurst, and the north-east, surrounding Farnborough and Headley. This echoes Cobbett and Vancouver's findings, in that their hungry soils of light sands and gravels were much less suitable for arable farming than they were for rearing livestock and cropping wood. According to the 1854 agricultural returns for Norfolk and Hampshire, where Hampshire is broken down into twenty-nine unions (mostly those set up under the New Poor Law of 1834), these regions again emerged statistically as having been dominated by non-agricultural land. More than fifty per cent of the land in the New Forest, almost entirely within Farnborough and Headley unions, was, the 1854 returns indicate, pasture, woods or commons.

³⁹ For the estimates, I use total acres for each parish from census data corrected by E. A. Wrigley, *The early English censuses* (Oxford, 2011).

In contrast, the average across Hampshire was about 35 per cent. It also emerges from the returns that stock-farming was more popular in these unions. For instance, the numbers of cattle per person were 0.21, 0.20, and 0.23 and those of swine 0.27, 0.26, and 0.37, respectively, compared with the Hampshire average of 0.09 and 0.18.⁴⁰

The south is another part where white circles are concentrated. As contemporary comments suggest that this region's soil was favourable for grain-farming, this cluster is less likely to have resulted from poor soils than from its location near the two large port towns, Portsmouth and Southampton. The remarkable development of the towns drove the urbanisation of the neighbourhood.⁴¹ Based on the 1831 census, parish population density in hundreds adjoining the towns (that is, the hundreds of Mansbridge, Titchfield, Fareham, Portsdowns, Havant, Bosmere, Alverstoke and a part of Buddlesgate) was 0.92 per acre, compared with the Hampshire average of 0.37. Moreover, the proportion of families in these parishes engaged in agriculture stood at only 14.4 per cent, whereas 35.2 per cent was the county average, while those in trade, manufacture and handicraft stood at 43.4 per cent, higher than the county figure of 32.5 per cent.

1.2.2 Industry and trade

Although there was no one industry of overriding importance, there was industry in Hampshire, in both inland arable and seaside regions. The significance of the textile industry had gradually declined since the sixteenth century, more even than in neighbouring counties, but there were a few exceptions in the interior in such towns as Alton, Andover, Basingstoke,

⁴⁰ *Reports of Sir John Walsham and Mr Hawley on the Agricultural Statistics of Norfolk and Hampshire*, vol. 65 (London, 1854); J. P. Dodd, 'Hampshire Agriculture in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *PHFCAS*, 35 (1979), pp. 239-260.

⁴¹ As specialised in naval services, Portsmouth expanded dramatically. By the seventeenth century, the population increased from 5,007 to 33,226 in 1801. Southampton also, as one of the oversea and coastal trade hubs, grew. The population rose from 2,939 in 1696 to 27,744 in 1801. Peter Clark (ed), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol. II: 1540-1840* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 50, 61-62, 65, 353, 385, 474.

Romsey, Winchester and Overton.⁴² It is notable that the industry was so labour-intensive that those involved found it challenging to obtain a sufficient supply of labour, occasionally, therefore, drawing on workhouse inmates. In Alton, a variety of worsted and silk articles of high quality were (Vancouver's reports of 1810 tell us), manufactured for London and, at times, American markets. Worsted yarn was spun not only in the town centre and the suburbs but also in its workhouse, where there were twenty looms to set the inmates to weave clothes.⁴³ Although sacking and canvas manufacture was carried out in Winchester, the prevailing industry by the last decade of the eighteenth century was the making of light silk fabrics. In 1792, a new silk manufactory was established in the city, and fourteen mills were set up, employing more than a thousand hands. The poor of this city and neighbourhood were given the opportunity to work for them, and children in the workhouse were instructed in winding silk so as to be ready for the work.⁴⁴ In Overton a large silk mill was established in 1769, capable of employing over one hundred, whose owners opposed a proposal to establish a workhouse with a manufactory due to their anxiety about possible competition for labour from the workhouse manufactory, as will be explored in depth later.⁴⁵

However, the inland towns, in general, were more famous for the industries of malting and brewing. By 1810, there were at least seven centres of this trade, namely Andover, Basingstoke, Bishop's Waltham, Kingsclere, Odiham, Petersfield, and Ringwood. Although the others mainly catered for local markets, the breweries of Ringwood were nationally celebrated for the excellence of their beer. Their popularity was assisted by water transport. The beer was conveyed to Christchurch in quantity and then shipped coastwise to other port

⁴² Thirsk, *Agrarian*, pp. 352-353.

⁴³ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, pp. 399-401.

⁴⁴ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, pp. 410-412; Peter Barfoot and John Wilkes, *Universal British Directory of Trade, Commerce & Manufacture, Hampshire extracts* (London, 1792-1798), p. 917.

⁴⁵ Moira Grant, 'The Small Towns of North Hampshire 1660-c.1800. Part 1: Economy' *PHFCAS*, 62 (2007), p. 194; Ashok Vaidya (ed), *The Mills and Millers of Hampshire*, Vol. 2: West (King's Lynn, 2012), pp. 85-86.

towns to be distributed all over the country.⁴⁶ Relative to the textile industry, labour demand was low in malting and brewing. The workforce divided into two categories, a few highly skilled permanent workers and a body of robust labourers, so the need for semi-skilled women and children whom textile manufactories required in large numbers was almost absent.⁴⁷ In other words, the drink trades had little potential to create employment opportunities for marginal groups.

Papermaking was another industry of significance, which had developed in Hampshire from the mid-seventeenth century. The assistance of Huguenot refugees from France was crucial to its development.⁴⁸ In 1686, Up Mill in South Stoneham, one of the earliest paper mills making white paper, belonged to the Company of White Paper Makers, which a group of fifteen men set up, out of whom nine were French refugees or of refugee origin.⁴⁹ Later, the Portal family, of Huguenot descent, who were in the vanguard in the papermaking industry, acquired the lease of Laverstoke paper mill in 1718 and the privilege of producing the paper for Bank of England notes in 1724.⁵⁰ Their business grew steadily so as to need the constant attendance of about sixty people throughout the year by 1810. The family became one of those deeply associated with county affairs as major landowners as well as with parochial administration, including indoor and outdoor relief.⁵¹

In contrast to those towns in the middle of farmland areas which had their own industrial elements, south-western and north-eastern Hampshire, characterised by forest and heath, was devoid of prominent industries and trades. Yet this did not mean that the pastoral areas had nothing to do with any industry. People living in the poor-soil zones were more likely to be

⁴⁶ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, p. 417.

⁴⁷ Peter Mathias, *The Brewing Industry in England, 1700-1830* (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 35-36.

⁴⁸ Thirsk, *Agrarian*, p. 353.

⁴⁹ J. H. Thomas, 'Hampshire and the Company of White Paper Makers', *PHFCAS*, 26 (1969), pp. 137-138.

⁵⁰ A. H. Shorter, 'Paper Mills in Hampshire', *PHFCAS*, 18 (1953), pp. 1-11

⁵¹ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, p. 403.

distressed by the insufficiency of work in agriculture, particularly after the sharp growth of population from the second half of the eighteenth century. They were probably strongly motivated to turn to cottage industries, and therefore a variety of by-employments, mostly handicrafts, mushroomed.⁵² In Selborne in the north-east, there was a putting-out system where women spun wool ‘in the dead months’ as material for barragons, genteel corded ‘stuff’ (worsted), which was manufactured by Quaker merchants in the neighbouring town of Alton.⁵³ It was no coincidence that woman inmates were set to work for woollen manufacture in Selborne’s workhouse and allowed some pay.⁵⁴ In a similar vein, Boldre in the New Forest made a contract with a local businessman in Christchurch to let out the labour of their workhouse children to make watchchains.⁵⁵

In coastal areas, their geopolitical location played a critical part in determining the nature of the local industry. Being situated across the Channel from the Seine, France’s mouth, Portsmouth had acted as a naval headquarter for some centuries, because the harbour, with its deep and narrow entrance, provided a natural shelter for ships. As Frederick Eden remarked, ‘war is the harvest of Portsmouth; and peace, which is so ardently wished for in most other parts of England, is dreaded here’. The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars accordingly saw the port town grow rapidly. The population of Portsmouth and adjacent Portsea, a ‘new town’, together increased from 33,226 in 1801 to 53,032 in 1841, and the number of houses from 5,553 in 1801 to 10,700 in 1841.⁵⁶ Not surprisingly, naval shipbuilding was a key industry. Well before 1800, Portsmouth dockyards contained many elements of the factory system, including the division of labour. The Great Ropehouse of 1776, 1,095 feet in length, was one

⁵² Thirsk, *Agrarian*, pp. 354-357.

⁵³ Gilbert White, *The Natural History of Selborne*, ed. Anne Secord (Oxford, 2013), p. 15.

⁵⁴ Selborne Vestry Minutes, 16 March 1801, HRO, 32M66/PV1.

⁵⁵ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 7 October 1808, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

⁵⁶ F. M. Eden, *State of the Poor*, vol. 1 (London, 1797), p. 228; David Wilson, ‘Government Dockyard Workers in Portsmouth, 1793-1815’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 1975), pp. 13-44.

of the longest buildings in the world at the time. In 1802 the size of the labour force was 2,396. In 1813, the number of shipwrights alone employed in Portsmouth was 1,330.⁵⁷ The proportion of all the town's male workers employed in the dockyards nonetheless did not exceed 40 per cent, which left more than 60 per cent hired by civilian concerns such as brewing, brickmaking and agriculture. Nevertheless, much employment with no direct link to the Navy or dockyards was certainly influenced by their activities, for example, inasmuch as they generated local consumer demand.⁵⁸

Southampton also had natural advantages as a port town. The deep approach to the port along Southampton Water was bounded on three sides by land and sheltered. Though the town had been reputed a 'healthy, populous' spa resort from 1750, the French wars and the stationing of troops threatened this reputation and rebalanced its position towards being above all a shipbuilding centre. Southampton's shipbuilding industry was led by local private shipbuilders, who successfully linked themselves with adjacent dockyards at Northam, Bursledon, and Buckler's Hard. Between 1803 and 1814, within this group of yards, at least thirty-four naval ships were built. Shipbuilding had a great impact on local economic growth, especially in terms of jobs and wages, given that about one-sixth of the cost of a ship was the cost of labour.⁵⁹ Furthermore, Southampton lay at the confluence of two principal rivers in Hampshire – the Itchen and the Test. The town was an important hub of trade because the rivers were navigable by vessels of considerable burden. There was accordingly a significant flow of cargo between Southampton, on the one hand, and Winchester and Andover on the river navigations on the other. Unlike Portsmouth, which as a military base was relatively self-contained, Southampton

⁵⁷ R. C. Riley, 'The Industries of Portsmouth in the Nineteenth Century', *The Portsmouth Papers*, 25 (1976), p. 4.

⁵⁸ Wilson, 'Government', pp. 57-59.

⁵⁹ John Oldfield, 'From Spa to Garrison Town: Southampton during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793-1815' in Miles Taylor (ed), *Southampton: Gateway to the British Empire* (London, 2007) pp. 1-10.

formed a commercial network with its dependencies, the ports of Titchfield, Hamble, Bursledon, Lymington, and Christchurch.⁶⁰

It is notable that the two port towns of Lymington and Christchurch to the south of the New Forest placed themselves under Southampton's influence. Lymington had long been renowned for saltworks, which indeed dated from the Iron Age.⁶¹ By 1740, the time of their greatest prosperity, there were 163 salt evaporation ponds in use in Lymington. The saltmakers took advantage of Southampton's extensive trade networks, not only coastwise but abroad. Between 1724 and 1766, the total number of bushels of salt sent from Lymington to Southampton was 184,480 (i.e. 4,612 tons). They were then shipped to Newfoundland and America, Ireland, Norway, and the Channel Islands.⁶² Christchurch was thought to be 'the first place in England for knit [*sic*] silk stockings' and also carried on the knitting of worsted hose to a considerable extent. A watchchain manufactory was established by Robert Cox in 1790 and remained prosperous until the mid-nineteenth century, enabling the poor here as well as in many of the neighbouring villages to earn a comfortable subsistence.⁶³ In terms of its shipping interest, Christchurch was also dependent on Southampton.⁶⁴ Another important industry of the town was the salmon fishery, which provided a large number of labourers with employment. The salmon caught on the Avon were conveyed to Southampton, gathered together with marine products from other satellite towns and supplied to markets across the country.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, pp. 427-428.

⁶¹ A. B. Powell, 'Two Thousand Years of Salt Making at Lymington, Hampshire', *PHFCAS*, 64 (2009), pp. 9-40.

⁶² A. T. Lloyd, 'The Salterns of the Lymington Area', *PHFCAS*, 24 (1967), pp. 90-91.

⁶³ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, p. 418.

⁶⁴ James Robbins, *The Annual Hampshire Repository*, vol. 1 (Winchester, 1799-1801), p. 126.

⁶⁵ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, p. 418.



Figure 1.3 Three divisions in Hampshire and towns with more than 2,000 people in 1801
 Note: 1. Arable division, 2. Coastal division, 3. Pastoral division

Figure 3 summarises what has been discussed above, delineating the three regions according to their geo-economic features. The arable division covers almost all of central and northern Hampshire and further extends to the Avon and the Isle of Wight. The coastal division encompasses the big port towns of Portsmouth and Southampton and adjoining hundreds (Mansbridge, Titchfield, Fareham, Portsdown, Havant, Bosmere, Alverstoke and a part of Buddlesgate), also the two ports of Christchurch and Lymington at the south-west edge and

their neighbourhood. The pastoral division includes the New Forest, the most wooded area of Hampshire, and north-eastern heathland regions, comprising parts of Thames Basin Heath and Western Weald Heath.

1.2.3 Towns and transport networks

In the preceding sections, three different divisions within Hampshire have been created by grouping parishes sharing similar geo-economic characteristics, but of course there was also variation within these. In this section, we explore urban areas which were different from rural parts of the same division. However, it is also noteworthy that the distribution, size and typology of towns varied significantly between the divisions, giving rise to different patterns of poverty. In addition, we examine transport systems in the county focussing on how they affected economic and social structures in and beyond towns, with consequences for patterns of poverty.

Table 1.1 Hampshire towns with populations over 2,000 by division

Divisions	No. of towns with over 2,000 in 1801	Prop. of population living in towns in 1801	Prop. of families in towns engaged in non-agricultural Occupations in 1811
Arable	7	22.4%	80.0%
Coastal	8	80.3%	93.1%
Pastoral	1	16.5%	47.7%
Total	16	45.5%	89.4%

Sources: The 1801 and 1811 censuses.

Many historians have used population size to draw a dividing line between urban and rural parishes, although they have admitted it to be an imperfect, though convenient, measure and only one among other variables – such as function, social structure and economic base – defining a town.⁶⁶ However, population size, as determined by national censuses from 1801, provides a simple criterion. The cut-off point chosen here is 2,000 residents, the number fixed

⁶⁶ Rosemary Sweet, *The English Town, 1680-1840: Government, Society and Culture* (Harlow, 1999), pp. 7-10.

by the Registrar General and Census Commissioners from the 1851 census to distinguish between town and county, on the supposition that only a tiny fraction of inhabitants of parishes with over 2,000 would have worked in neighbouring agricultural areas.⁶⁷

There were sixteen places with a population of more than 2,000 in Hampshire on the basis of the 1801 census.⁶⁸ In other words, only about 5 per cent of more than 300 parishes crossed the threshold. The population of the sixteen towns accounted for over 45 per cent of the Hampshire population, implying far higher nucleation in the urban areas (0.77 per acre) than in the rest of the county (0.14 per acre). Moreover, nearly 90 per cent of families living in towns were principally engaged in something other than agriculture, according to the 1811 census. The proportion of the rural population (by this definition) working in non-agricultural sectors was by contrast only 32 per cent.

Divisional differences in town profiles were nonetheless impressive. The town population in the coastal division overwhelmed the rural one. It stemmed from the presence of fast-developing port towns, particularly Portsmouth and Portsea, which (taken together) became the largest town in southeast England (excluding London) in 1841, with 53,032 inhabitants.⁶⁹ The numbers of towns in the coastal and arable divisions were eight and seven, but the urban share of the total population of the two strikingly differed, 80.3 per cent for the

⁶⁷ Minimum population figures which historians have determined to define a town can vary remarkably. In his inter-country work, E. A. Wrigley chooses 5,000 as his minimum, while C. M. Law and Penelope Corfield exclude places with under 2,500 from their nationwide urban studies. However, in some county-level works, the threshold drops more, in some cases, to less than 2,000. E. A. Wrigley, 'Urban Growth and Agricultural Change: England and the Continent in the Early Modern Period', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 15 (1985), p. 684; C. M. Law, 'Some Notes on the Urban Population of England and Wales in the Eighteenth Century', *Local Historian*, 10 (1972), p. 18; Penelope Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800* (Oxford, 1982), p. 6; R. W. Unwin, 'Tradition and Transition: Market Towns of the Vale of York 1660-1830', *Northern History*, 17 (1981), p. 75; J. D. Marshall, 'The Rise and Transformation of the Cumbrian Market Town, 1660-1900', *Northern History*, 19 (1983), pp. 162-163.

⁶⁸ In the arable division, Andover, Alton, Basingstoke, Fordingbridge, Ringwood, Romsey, Winchester; in the coastal division, Alverstoke, Christchurch, Fareham, Lymington, Portsmouth, Portsea, Titchfield, Southampton; in the pastoral division, Eling. Although Hampshire's major cities of Portsmouth, Portsea, Southampton and Winchester consisted of multiple parishes, they are counted as one place in this thesis for clear discussions.

⁶⁹ C. W. Chalklin, 'South-East', in Clark (ed), *Cambridge*, p. 61.

coastal and 22.4 per cent for the arable. In the arable division all urban parishes, save for Winchester, were small market towns with no more than 3,500 inhabitants in 1801. In the pastoral division, there was only one parish with over 2,000 inhabitants. This was the parish of Eling in the New Forest, but within the orbit of Southampton, having docks for building and repairing ships and granaries and warehouses for storing and merchandising corn.⁷⁰

Towns in the different divisions also varied by type. The coastal division was characterised by burgeoning port cities and their satellite towns. At a national level, the commercial economy based on overseas as well as the coastal carrying trade remained more important than the manufacturing economy until the end of the eighteenth century. Commercial exchange and associated finishing and processing industries created much wealth in ports, though they were vulnerable to warfare and resulting restrictions on trade. During wars against revolutionary France, ports on the south coast, including Southampton and its satellites, struggled to keep their wealth and even declined.⁷¹ However, the demands of wars stimulated the enlargement of the royal navy dockyards. Over the century, the dockyards in the two major Atlantic naval stations, Portsmouth and Plymouth, continued to expand. After the Seven Years War, nearly £680,000 was invested in their improvement and, by the 1770s, a workforce of over 8,000 was employed in naval dockyards overall, of whom more than half worked in these two naval cities.⁷² In both sorts of coastal town, employment could be a source of poverty: many men were employed as sailors whether for merchants or the royal navy, so were frequently away from their families, while both sailors and dockers were liable to physical

⁷⁰ Barfoot and Wilkes, *Directory*, p. 473; *Pigot and Co. 's Royal National and Commercial Directory and Topography* (London, 1844), p. 83.

⁷¹ Sweet, *English*, pp. 19-22.

⁷² John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State 1688-1783* (London, 1989), p. 28.

injury, so that women often became effective heads of household, and might end up dependent on formal relief.⁷³

The much smaller urban parishes in the arable division were by contrast long-established market centres with no dominant manufacturing specialism and no leisure industries. They served the needs of their rural hinterland and benefitted from the development of inland domestic trade and transport networks by providing diverse services for travellers.⁷⁴ Close links with the countryside and high accessibility through the improvement of transport became crucial but at the same time problematic for these towns. From the end of the eighteenth century, increasing labour productivity in agriculture and the decay of cottage crafts accompanied by a rise of rural populations exacerbated unemployment and poverty in the countryside and caused an influx of the country poor into the towns.⁷⁵

The administrative role of towns also varied by division. The coastal towns emphasised autonomy in their own bounds, rather than extending their administrative influence over surrounding areas: among them, only Fareham, Lymington and Southampton were appointed as pivots of petty sessional divisions under the 1828 Act for the Better Regulation of Divisions which formalised petty sessional divisions in Hampshire (though these had been informally set up long before).⁷⁶ Lymington and Southampton along with Portsmouth were corporate towns, significant enough to be subject to the changes imposed by the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act.⁷⁷ They all were also parliamentary constituencies, which may have made a difference to

⁷³ Gordon Jackson, 'Ports 1700-1840' in Clark (ed), *Cambridge*, p. 726.

⁷⁴ Sweet, *English*, p. 15.

⁷⁵ Peter Clark, 'Small Towns 1700-1840' in Clark (ed), *Cambridge*, pp. 726-727.

⁷⁶ 9 Geo. IV c.43; *PP* (1832), xi, *Reports from Commissioners on Proposed Division of Counties and Boundaries of Boroughs*, part I, pp. 205-208.

⁷⁷ 5&6 Wm. IV c.76.

the political vitality of local life, particularly when elections were contested on a regular basis.⁷⁸ Portsmouth claimed exclusive jurisdiction, preventing intervention from county magistrates.⁷⁹ In Southampton, an incorporation of the poor was additionally established under a local act of 1772, as a special-purpose statutory body in charge not only of maintaining the poor but also of town ‘improvement’.⁸⁰ Alverstoke did not have these administrative trappings, but in 1799 adopted Gilbert’s Act to become a single Gilbert’s parish and reform relief by building a large workhouse with a capacity of 300.⁸¹ Even after the passage of the New Poor Law, which imposed uniformity in poor law administration, the autonomous systems of Southampton and Alverstoke survived.

The small market towns in the arable division played a significant role not just as an economic hub but also as a governmental focal point that attracted people in the neighbourhood who carried on administrative business and attended social occasions.⁸² Under the 1828 act, all the towns except Fordingbridge were designated as centres of the divisions, and there petty sessions were mainly held. Later they all, even Fordingbridge, were to be the heart of poor law unions formed under the New Poor Law of 1834 and were the sites of union workhouses. Andover, Basingstoke, Romsey and Winchester were corporate towns covered by the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act, and Andover and Winchester were parliamentary constituencies as well.⁸³

⁷⁸ In the case of Southampton, the electorate persistently went to the polls even in the early decades of the nineteenth century. R. G. Thorne, *History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1790-1820* (London, 1986), Appendix 1.

⁷⁹ John Field, ‘Bourgeois Portsmouth: Social Relations in a Victorian Dockyard Town, 1815-75’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 1979), pp. 246-247; Joanna Innes and Nicholas Rogers, ‘Politics and Government 1700-1840’ in Clark (ed), *Cambridge*, pp. 530-532.

⁸⁰ 13 Geo. III c.50; Innes and Rogers, ‘Politics’, pp. 540-543.

⁸¹ Samantha Shave, *Pauper Policies: Poor Law Practice in England, 1780-1850* (Manchester, 2017), pp. 64, 73.

⁸² Sweet, *English*, pp. 16-17.

⁸³ 5&6 Wm. IV c.76; R. G. Thorne, *History*, Appendix one.

In the pastoral division, Eling, the only town above the 2,000 threshold, did not hold an administrative position. Instead, it was Lyndhurst with a population of only 882 in 1801 that had long served as the capital of the New Forest, where all the business with relation to the government of the forest was transacted and an official residence of the Lord Warden of the Forest was located. It was also the post town and was noted for its genteel inhabitants.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the pastoral district had within it no petty sessional division centre. The New Forest region was divided into Romsey and Lymington divisions whose centres were the boroughs of Romsey and Lymington, and the northeast pastoral areas were attached to Alton and Odiham divisions, with the parishes of Alton and Odiham as their pivots.⁸⁵ The effect of the lack of an urban centre was that a union workhouse under the New Poor Law was unusually built in a small village, Ashurst, about halfway between Eling and Lyndhurst, whereas the other Hampshire union workhouses were in large towns. The north-eastern areas were mostly covered by two Gilbert unions, surviving even after the new act, whose centres hosting shared workhouses were Headley and Farnborough. These parishes were undoubtedly not urban, but Headley was one of the most populous among those in the northeast and Farnborough was located on a main route to London.

Being well situated on transport networks, notably turnpike roads and inland water navigations for our period, was a key for the development of towns but put pressure on poor relief administration in areas they ran through. The construction and maintenance of transport infrastructure needed an extensive supply of labour and occasionally brought in workers for construction or maintenance from elsewhere, a potential burden on localities. The improvement of transport networks contributed to a growth in traffic and relevant services, which attracted

⁸⁴ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, pp. 424-425; William Tunnicliff, *A Topographical Survey of the Counties of Hants, Wilts, Dorset, Somerset, Devon & Cornwall* (Salisbury, 1791), pp. 10-11.

⁸⁵ *PP* (1832), xi, part I, pp. 207-208.

not only those involved in commercial, industrial or leisure activities but also poor travellers mostly in search of jobs.

Turnpike development in Hampshire closely followed the national pattern. Before 1750, only two turnpikes were established in Hampshire, and they were both on the route between London and Portsmouth.⁸⁶ Between the 1750s and 1770s, referred to as a period of 'Turnpike Mania' on the national scale, a further seventeen turnpikes were established in the county. At this time, major routes leading to London and local hubs in other counties, as well as provincial cross-roads, were incorporated into the turnpike system. During the rest of the eighteenth century, development became sluggish in Hampshire. Over the first four decades of the nineteenth century, there were piecemeal but indispensable works that chiefly filled in blanks in the road networks developed in the preceding century by creating shorter or easier alternative routes. By 1841, turnpike roads in Hampshire spanned just under 500 miles and had created a high degree of linkage between local centres within the county.⁸⁷

Road work was a popular public work for employing the labour of the poor. According to a parliamentary report of 1833, there were a total of 2,626 people employed in repairing all kinds of roads throughout Hampshire in 1832, and the total amount of money from poor rates paid for their labour was £12,729.⁸⁸ More information is available for slightly earlier dates: returns of turnpike trusts across the country were published in 1824, providing information about money paid for labour on turnpike roads, on the basis of which the rough size of the workforce can be estimated. The annual sum all turnpike trusts in Hampshire spent on day

⁸⁶ For a general list of Hampshire turnpike acts, see M. J. Freeman, 'A Study of Road Transport Development during the Industrial Revolution: Southern Hampshire 1750-1850' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Southampton, 1977), pp. 243-246.

⁸⁷ M. J. Freeman, 'Turnpikes and Their Traffic: The Example of Southern Hampshire', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, 4 (1979), pp. 413-415.

⁸⁸ *PP* (1833), xxxii, *Abstract Return of Money Levied and Expended for Relief of Poor in England and Wales, in the Year ending 25th March 1832*, p. 2.

labour in 1822 or 1823 was £4,540 and, if £4,259 expended on work executed by contractors paid per mile is added, the labour cost increases to £8,799.⁸⁹ Considering that in 1810 the weekly wage rates of agricultural workers in Hampshire were 9s. in winter and 12s. in summer, this total amount could have paid for the weekly labour of around 19,553 persons on the basis of the winter wage rate and 14,665 persons based on the summer wage rate.⁹⁰ These figures make it possible to assume that parishes that roads passed through could not meet the demand and therefore, an inflow of workers from elsewhere was inevitable.

Much like turnpike trusts, schemes to develop and maintain inland water navigations were valued as among other things a means of setting the poor to work.⁹¹ For the most part, they were beyond the capacity of individual parishes in terms of cost and labour force, so chiefly undertaken by joint-stock navigation companies and entailing a considerable importation of labourers from outside, sometimes from Scotland and Ireland.⁹² By the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, there were four navigable waterways running through Hampshire: the Andover canal from Andover to Southampton, the Basingstoke canal linking Basingstoke with the River Thames, the Itchen Navigation from Winchester to Southampton, and the lower reaches of the River Hamble between Botley and Hamble-le-Rice on the Southampton estuary. In 1708, it was reported that £6,110 had already been invested to render the Itchen Navigation, navigable and, one hundred years later, a surveyor appointed by the proprietors of mills and meadows dependent on the Navigation

⁸⁹ *PP* (1824), xx, Turnpike Trusts. Copies of the Several Accounts Transmitted to the Clerks of the Peace of the Different Counties of England and Wales; from the Clerks of the Trustees of the Several Turnpike Trusts in Each County, pp. 590-622.

⁹⁰ For wages of agricultural labourers from 1768 to 1846, see statistical appendix in G. E. Mingay (ed), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume 6: 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 1069-1107.

⁹¹ M. W. Flinn, 'The Poor Employment Act of 1817', *Economic History Review*, 14 (1961), pp. 82-92.

⁹² J. T. Ward, *The Finance of Canal Building in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1974) pp. 18, 171; Max Satchell, 'Navigable Waterways and the Economy of England and Wales: 1600-1835', in Leigh Shaw-Taylor, et al. (eds), *The Online Historical Atlas of Transport, Urbanization and Economic Development in England and Wales c.1680-1911* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 23.

pointed out that serving all the users of the waterway properly would cost upwards of £11,000.⁹³ The Andover canal opened in 1794 at the cost of £48,000: £35,000 was the authorised share capital and £13,000 borrowed on security of the tolls.⁹⁴ The plan to establish the Basingstoke canal was laid down in 1778 but postponed in consequence of the American War until early 1788, when the share capital of £86,000 was subscribed.⁹⁵ The canal was completed in 1794.

⁹³ Edwin Course, 'The Itchen Navigation', *PHFCAS*, 24 (1967), pp.115-120.

⁹⁴ Ward, *Finance*, p. 66.

⁹⁵ Ward, *Finance*, pp. 80-81.

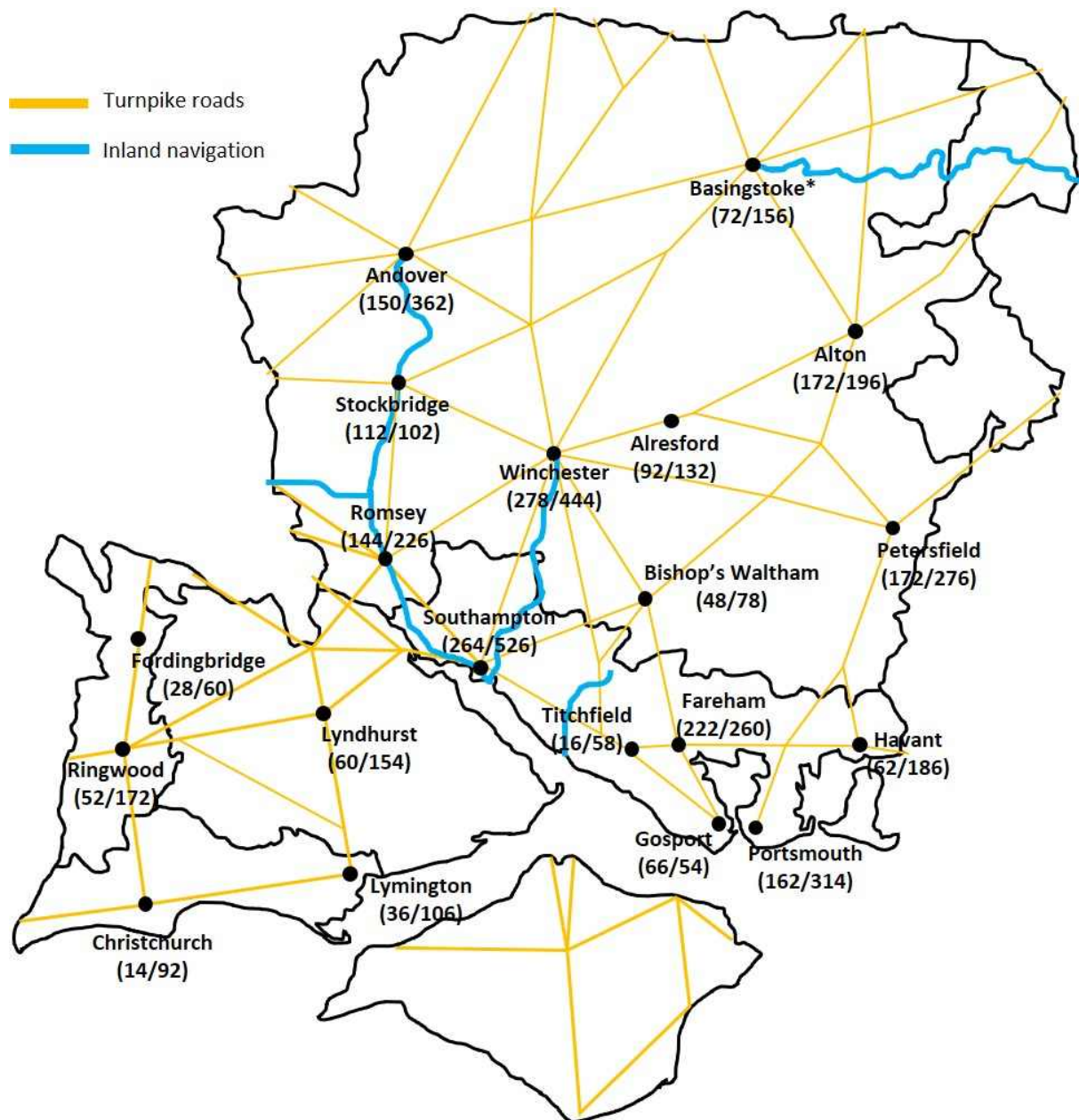


Figure 1.4 Transport networks in Hampshire (numbers of inward and outward coach and carrier movements per week for 1798/1830)

Note: *Figures for Basingstoke from the 1823 *Pigot and Co.'s Commercial Directory*

Source: For the lines of turnpike roads and canals, Christopher and John Greenwood, *Map of the County of Southampton* (London, 1826). For the numbers of coach and carrier movements, Freeman, 'A Study of Road Transport Development', pp. 190, 210; Barfoot and Wilkes, *Universal British Directory of Trade; Pigot and Co.'s London and Provincial New Commercial Directory for 1823-4*.

Improved transport networks essentially caused an increasing flow of goods and people.

'Vertex connectivity', namely the numbers of inward and outward coach and carrier

movements per week at any one place, can be a useful indicator in this context (Figure 4).⁹⁶ Between 1798 and 1830, the coach and carrier system in Hampshire considerably expanded, in that total numbers of coach and carrier services increased from 1,412 to 2,064 and from 964 to 2,146 respectively.⁹⁷ There were three major routes on which a host of coaches and carriers travelled: between Romsey and Southampton, Winchester and Southampton, and Petersfield and Portsmouth. This suggests that the south coastal region gained greater benefits from the transport improvement than other areas and evidently saw a remarkable increase in the floating population. By contrast, neither roads nor river navigations played important roles in pastoral districts. Except for Lyndhurst, there was no significant spot at which coach and carrier services called even though there were some employment generated by road maintenance.⁹⁸

It is notable for our concerns that the development of transport infrastructure attracted not merely people travelling for business or leisure, but also demobilised soldiers returning home, and those wandering because of want. Across the country, it was common to find the poor roaming around major transport routes, making demands on urban parishes nearby.⁹⁹ According to the 1803 returns, over 80 per cent of the total of non-parishioners relieved by Hampshire parishes were relieved by the market and port towns of Hampshire. The challenging burden on the towns was largely caused by the huge demobilisation of the army after the Treaty of Amiens.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ M. J. Freeman, 'The Stage-Coach System of South Hampshire, 1775-1851', *Journal of Historical Geography* 1 (1975), pp. 259-281; Freeman, 'The Carrier System of South Hampshire, 1775-1851', *The Journal of Transport History*, New Series, 4 (1977), pp. 61-85.

⁹⁷ Freeman's work focuses on south Hampshire so that Basingstoke data is omitted. Freeman, 'Stage-Coach', p. 270; Freeman, 'A Study', p. 210.

⁹⁸ In the parish of Boldre mainly consisting of heathland, 'about 150 Men are principally supported by culling Turf and Furze, and upwards of 60 are employed by the Parish on the Roads', in the 1831 Census, p. 573, fn. (q).

⁹⁹ Report from royal commission on the administration and practical operation of the poor laws offer several cases of parishes close to turnpike roads or navigable rivers having troubles of the casual poor from other places. *PP* (1834), xxviii, *Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws*, pp. 89, 134A, 211A, 78E.

¹⁰⁰ See the 1803 returns, pp. 459, 463, fn. (y), (q).

1.3 Social structure

It is important to understand the structure of society, not least because it played a key role in determining not only the nature of poverty, but also who held sway over decision-making in relation to poor relief. Regional variations in social structure within Hampshire reflected geo-economic disparities, resulting in intra-county differences in poor relief patterns, including in workhouse systems.

1.3.1 Landed elites

Through the first half of the nineteenth century in Hampshire, hegemony in country affairs lay almost entirely with landowning elites. The definition of this group is fuzzy, but in 1850, at the top in terms of status were twenty-nine noblemen whose main residence was in the county. Large landowners, of course, included not only titled men but also a number of untitled gentlemen. While the former tended to look beyond the county boundary, paying much attention to national issues, the latter were more likely to be active in county affairs, constituting a large proportion of active magistrates.¹⁰¹ A significant quantity of land was requisite to gain acceptance into the landed gentry. Even if one was willing to be involved in the county's administration as a magistrate, the law specified that one must first possess an estate worth £100 per year or £300 in reversion. However, F. M. L. Thompson points out that £100 landed income was not in this context a large sum, falling far short of what was needed to maintain a landed gentleman's lifestyle and that an estate of 1,000 acres earning an annual income of at least £1,000 would be a more reasonable lower limit in practice to distinguish the gentry.¹⁰² From the parliamentary return of 1875, commonly known as the 'new Domesday', which presents the names and addresses of landowners and their acreages and rentals in great

¹⁰¹ Ruscombe Foster, *The Politics of County Power: Wellington and the Hampshire Gentlemen 1820-52* (London, 1990), pp.7-8.

¹⁰² F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1968), pp. 109-112.

detail, Ruscombe Foster calculates that there were 168 families who could be judged to be members of the gentry according to Thompson's standard. Their estates accounted for no less than 59 per cent of the county's land, excluding waste.¹⁰³

It is not surprising that most great landed elites concentrated in the arable division. In the return of 1875, there were 119 landowners with an estate of over 1,000 acres yielding an income of no less than £1,000 who had an address that has been identified as being in Hampshire. Out of them, 91 (76.4%) lived in the arable division. The coastal and pastoral division had 14 (11.8%) each.¹⁰⁴ As early as 1640, in the centre and north of chalk downs, the great estates had begun to expand to absorb smaller ones, as small owner-occupying farmers found it hard to survive. As the size of farms increased, 'family farmers' were increasingly superseded by 'capitalist farmers' who employed landless labourers.¹⁰⁵ On the basis of Leigh Shaw-Taylor's work using the 1851 census to track the progress of agrarian capitalism – the growth of large farms and the decline of the smallholding peasantry, Hampshire was one of the most advanced counties. In 1851, the average farm size in Hampshire was 200 acres, and the proportions of farmland in family farms and capitalist farms were 3 and 95 per cent respectively.¹⁰⁶ Capitalist development particularly characterised the arable division, where there prevailed a tripartite social structure consisting of large landowners, capitalist tenant farmers and agricultural proletarians.

1.3.2 Urban bourgeoisie

¹⁰³ Foster, *Politics*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ PP (1873), lxxii, *Return of owners of land in England and Wales*, vol. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Thirsk, *Agrarian*, p. 332.

¹⁰⁶ Leigh Shaw-Taylor states of his conceptual categories, 'a family farm refers to a holding large enough to support its holder, and perhaps other family members, but small enough for family labour to have supplied most of the necessary labour' and 'a capitalist farm refers to a farm sufficiently large that the majority of labour would have had to be supplied by wage labour'. He classifies farms not employing anyone as family farms and those employing two or more as capitalist farms in statistical terms. Leigh Shaw-Taylor, 'The Rise of Agrarian Capitalism and the Decline of Family Farming in England', *Economic History Review*, 65 (2012), pp. 26-39.

Despite the scarcity of large-scale industrial enterprises across Hampshire, among major port towns in the coastal division, there predominated other forms of urban or industrial elite. In Portsmouth, a considerable portion of its wealth was characteristically acquired from association with the armed forces. A study of probate records between 1821 and 1871 shows that the wealthiest occupational group was that of professional men, including the army and naval officers in this town. Sir George Grey, who had long served as a naval captain and acted as the Dockyard Commissioner in Portsmouth, for example, left a large fortune valued at £25,000 on his death in 1828. Another distinctive stratum was the ‘managerial’ element, including dockyard managers, some of whom accumulated a sizeable fortune. A master ropemaker, Peter Martin, left £30,000 when he died in 1832.¹⁰⁷ By contrast, the mercantile element in Southampton was wealthier than in Portsmouth because private trade prospered by using intimate connections with other ports both domestic and international, whereas Portsmouth was relatively isolated from wider commercial networks, except in relation to timber supplies for shipbuilding. Interestingly, one of the richest groups in the town consisted of single women, who seem to have been rentiers living on dividends rather than engaged directly in economic activity – presumably linked to its genteel, spa town reputation. Between 1821 and 1870, there were eighty-seven widows or spinsters who left more than £5,000 in Southampton, of whom fifteen left even over £20,000, as compared to a total of forty-one in Portsmouth. They probably wanted to enjoy the comforts of the genteel seaside town noted for spa and sea-bath.¹⁰⁸

On the south coast of the New Forest in and around Lymington and Christchurch, it was also not long-established landed gentry but newcomers who had amassed their wealth through professions, offices or trade who wielded strong influence. According to reports

¹⁰⁷ Field, ‘Bourgeois’, pp. 127-129.

¹⁰⁸ Field, ‘Bourgeois’, pp. 131-132.

produced by the assistant commissioner, Colonel Charles Ashe A'Court, for the Poor Law Commission in 1834, Lymington petty sessions, which served the coast, had nine members, of whom at least five had immigrated into this region.¹⁰⁹ Among the members was Sir George Henry Rose, whose father, George Rose, purchased Cuffnells Park in the New Forest in 1784. The money which enabled George senior to do that was derived from his public offices. He was William Pitt's right-hand man, working as a secretary of the Treasury to 1801 and holding other offices thereafter, and serving as Member of Parliament for Christchurch from 1790 to 1818. His older son, George, inherited the estate in 1818 and acted initially as a diplomat and as Member of Parliament for Southampton from 1794 to 1813 and for Christchurch from 1818 to 1832.¹¹⁰ Another member of the petty sessions was John Morant. His father, Edward Morant, a third-generation creole, was born in Jamaica and owned a sugar plantation that earned an average income of £20,000 per year. He bought Brockenhurst House in the New Forest in 1770 and acted as a Member of Parliament for Lymington from 1774 to 1780. On his accidental death in 1791, his son, John, succeeded to the estate.¹¹¹

1.3.3 Family farmers and proletarians

To assess the extent to which proletarianisation was progressing is difficult, but it is generally accepted that there were regional disparities.¹¹² Even before 1700, the decline of family farming was well underway in the arable division, where farms tended to increase in

¹⁰⁹ A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the several Parishes in the division of Alton', February 1835, TNA, MH32/2.

¹¹⁰ R. G. Thorne, 'Rose, George (1744-1818)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24088> (05 Nov. 2022); C. A. Harris, revised by H. C. G. Matthew, 'Rose, George Henry (1770-1855)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24091> (05 Nov. 2022); Emma Page, 'Place and Power: the Landed Gentry of the West Solent Region in the Eighteenth Century' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2016), p. 83.

¹¹¹ Lewis Namier and John Brooke (eds), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754-1790* (London, 1964), <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/morant-edward-1730-91> (05 Nov. 2022), pp. 161-162; Page, 'Place', pp. 82-83.

¹¹² J. V. Beckett 'The Decline of the Small Landowner in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England: Some Regional Considerations', *Agricultural History Review*, 30 (1982), pp. 97-111; Shaw-Taylor, 'Rise', pp. 57-58.

size at the expense of smallholdings, reducing small husbandmen to landless labourers and thus shaping a social pyramid with a wide base of wage labourers.¹¹³ Contrastingly, in the pastoral division, smallholders and cottage stock keepers who relied heavily on their common rights over the forest and heathland to get by continued to be numerous for much longer, through the first half of the nineteenth century. They had the benefit of various by-employments such as gravel-digging and wood-working on commons as well as handicrafts, whose availability could attract the landless poor to become squatters.¹¹⁴ In the coastal division, the development of the shipbuilding industry and related businesses proletarianised a great part of the civilian population; apart from the Royal Dockyard in Portsmouth, there were thirteen places in this division in which naval vessels were built between 1690 and 1820.¹¹⁵

Table 1.2 Employment structure of males over twenty years of age in the three divisions in 1831

Divisions	Ratio of farmers employing labourers to those not	Prop. of labourers employed in agriculture	Prop. of labourers employed in non-agriculture
Arable	3.2:1	47.7%	8.2%
Coastal	1.9:1	13.9%	19.4%
Pastoral	1.2:1	40.6%	15.4%

Source: The 1831 census.

The regionally varied patterns described above are illustrated by data from the 1831 census, the first national census to include statistics not only on agricultural employment but also on different types of employment outside agriculture.¹¹⁶ In the arable division of the county, the ratio of farmers employing labourers to farmers employing no labourers other than

¹¹³ Thirsk, *Agrarian*, p. 332; Thirsk, *Agricultural Regions and Agrarian History in England, 1500-1750* (Basingstoke, 1987), p. 38.

¹¹⁴ C. R. Tubbs, 'The Development of the Smallholding and Cottage Stock-Keeping Economy of the New Forest', *Agricultural History Review*, 13 (1965), pp. 23-32; Thirsk, *Agricultural*, pp. 48-51; Carl Griffin 'Enclosures from below? The Politics of Squatting and Encroachment in the post-Restoration New Forest', *Historical Research*, 91 (2018), pp. 274-295.

¹¹⁵ A. J. Holland, *Ships of British Oak: The Rise and Decline of Wooden Shipbuilding in Hampshire* (Newton Abbot, 1971), p. 24.

¹¹⁶ E. A. Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress, and Population* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 88-89.

their family members was 3.2 to 1 in 1831, that in the pastoral division it was 1.2 to 1. Farmers reporting no employment are likely to have been family farmers, even though they might have hired some workers in a busy season or when the labour of their children was not available either because they were too young to work or because they had grown and left home. This suggests that family farmers tended to be more important in the pastoral division, which helped the community maintain an egalitarian social structure. By contrast, in the arable division, the adult male workforce was highly proletarianised, as labour-employing farmers were more significant than anywhere else. Labourers in agriculture accounted for almost 50 per cent of the total adult male population in the arable division, though the pastoral division's figure was still quite high at 40 per cent. The agricultural proletariat accounted for a small part of the adult male population in the coastal division, occupying no more than 14 per cent. However, the proportion of labourers employed outside agriculture was also small, about 20 per cent, though higher than the other divisions. The census provides us with a conservative estimate of the size of the non-agricultural proletariat because the labourer outside agriculture category included only unskilled workers. Given that the total population engaged in manufacture or trade ranging from masters and shopmen to journeymen and apprentices accounted for 62 per cent of all adult males in the coastal division, the table above almost certainly underestimates the degree of proletarianisation concealed within this large sector.

1.4 Period, 1776-1845

This study starts from 1776, a year covered by the parliamentary poor law returns published in 1777, the first national enquiry about workhouses, and ends just before the Andover workhouse scandal of 1845, a turning point to another phase of poor relief administration and the workhouse system. Over the period, there were three watershed events that had a decisive impact on the poor law system including workhouses: the two harvest

failures of 1795 and 1800, the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, and the Swing riots of 1830-31, which helped to set the scene for the enactment of the New Poor Law in 1834.

1.4.1 Two economic crises: price inflation and unemployment

It is clear that the cost of poor relief was generally increasing from the point at which reasonably reliable national figures begin, the second half of the eighteenth century. Poor law expenditure per head rose considerably from the 1770s and reached peaks during the high-price years of 1795-1812 and the high rural unemployment years of 1813-1820.¹¹⁷ George Boyer demonstrates that, though we need to make allowances for rising prices and population, nonetheless real per capita relief expenditure was generally moving upwards from 1748 to 1820, though at varying rates between periods.¹¹⁸ A substantial increase in population made an indirect contribution to the rise of relief expenditure, insofar as it affected the real incomes of workers negatively. According to E. A. Wrigley's calculation, the English population increased by 37.4 per cent between 1761 and 1801 (it is estimated that the Hampshire population also rose by more than 30 per cent over these years).¹¹⁹ Despite the growth of nominal wages for agricultural labourers, there was a long-run declining trend of real wages due to a rise in the cost of living, in turn caused by an increase in household size and price inflation.¹²⁰

However, it was price fluctuations that exerted an immediate influence on relief expenditure and provoked concern from contemporaries. In particular, the great crises of 1795 and 1800 resulted in a sharp upswing in corn prices. Due to adverse weather conditions, prolonged drought and fierce heat over the summer and the third most intense cold over the

¹¹⁷ There is a well-organised graph in K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 212-213.

¹¹⁸ George Boyer, *An Economic History of the English Poor Law, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 29.

¹¹⁹ E. A. Wrigley, 'English County Populations in the Later Eighteenth Century', *Economic History Review*, 60 (2007), pp. 54-56.

¹²⁰ Boyer, *Economic*, pp. 43-45.

winter in the entire eighteenth century, the harvests of 1794 and 1795 were disastrous.¹²¹ Corn prices mounted sharply, and in particular, the price of wheat per Imperial quarter surged from 52s. 3d. to 75s. 2d. between 1794 and 1795, reaching as high as 78s. 7d. in 1796.¹²² The crisis stirred up great interest in the topic of poor relief issues at both local and national levels. It is well-known that, in May 1795, Berkshire magistrates and some principal inhabitants met at Speenhamland to consider the unprecedented distress of the poor and decided to introduce a sliding scale of poor relief benefits based on the price of bread and family size, and their actions were imitated in some other places. This system was castigated later as a prime example of the poor policy of the Old Poor Laws by those who sought to reform them.¹²³ In Westminster, Prime Minister William Pitt made an audacious attempt (for an eighteenth-century prime minister) to propose an omnibus reform bill in December 1796. Even though this met with strong opposition and did not reach the statute book, the bill did something to encourage interest in a wide variety of initiatives, such as family allowances, aid to purchase a cow and other capital equipment, the establishment of schools of industry, the reclamation and reservation of wastelands for the poor, further relaxation of the law of settlement, compulsory friendly societies, and an annual poor law budget approved by Parliament.¹²⁴ In addition to spurring efforts to reform the poor-relief administration, the national disaster helped to foster an appetite for investigating the precise conditions of the poor. Among a mass of writers involved in the poor laws, Frederic Morton Eden and his work, *The State of the Poor*, have been most often referred to by welfare historians. In this work, he compiled empirical data to disclose the working poor's actual situation in 186 parishes, mostly rural, throughout the

¹²¹ Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England, 1793-1801* (Stroud, 1988), pp. 36-37.

¹²² B. R. Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 756.

¹²³ Anthony Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp 28-29.

¹²⁴ Poynter, *Society*, pp. 62-65; Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (New York, 1985), pp. 74-75.

country, not only by visiting several himself but by using a salaried research assistant and a host of correspondents.¹²⁵

Another crop failure in 1800 was even more serious than that in 1795. As the second half of 1799 was extremely wet, and the first half of 1800 brought relentless drought, the shortage of grain became acute and, as a result, the price rose enormously.¹²⁶ The wheat price per Imperial quarter jumped from 51s. 10d. to 119s. 6d. between 1798 and 1801.¹²⁷ The crisis induced the Board of Agriculture to send out a circular letter asking for definite information on agricultural conditions across the country, the replies to which revealed that cereals were scantily supplied to markets almost everywhere, and the price remained notably high. The Home Secretary, the Duke of Portland, also distributed a questionnaire concerning the harvest of crops and the trend of their prices through the bishops. In turn, the questionnaire was passed on to clergymen, and returns were drawn up by them, though with different degrees of diligence, and sent back to the Home Secretary.¹²⁸ The result of the circulation was a large body of returns of the acreage under crops, organised by diocese (these records were used in the section above about agriculture).¹²⁹

While, at the turn of the century, crisis resulted from catastrophic crop failures and high prices, fifteen years later, after the cessation of hostilities against France, it was the return of demobilised soldiers, leading to an overstocked labour market, and the drop in agricultural prices (not least because of imports from the continent) that created issues, entailing a dramatic

¹²⁵ Joanna Innes, 'Power and Happiness: Empirical Social Enquiry in Britain, from 'Political Arithmetic' to 'Moral Statistics'', in Joanna Innes (ed), *Inferior Politics: Social Problems and Social Policies in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 170-171.

¹²⁶ Wells, *Wretched*, pp. 37-39.

¹²⁷ Mitchell, *Statistics*, p. 755.

¹²⁸ Minchinton, 'Agricultural', pp. 37-38.

¹²⁹ Hoskins, 'Leicestershire', p. 127.

rise in poor rates.¹³⁰ One sign of the times was that, against a background of an enlarged labour pool and economic contraction, the Poor Employment Act of 1817 was enacted, under which a number of commissioners were appointed and empowered to make government loans to those willing to create public works.¹³¹ At a local level, there were more diverse attempts to address the intractable problem presented by the underemployment of healthy adult males in particular. One widely adopted approach to alleviating unemployment was the roundsman scheme, under which parish officers (or workhouse officials) offered those out of employment to farmers in turn, with wages either fully or partly paid out of poor rates. (This can be seen as an adult variant on long-standing practices with regard to parish apprentices). As a variant on roundsman schemes, labour rates were also introduced in the 1820s. They involved fixing a wage rate so as to guarantee labourers a subsistence level of income and levying it on all ratepayers according to their poor rate assessment. A ratepayer had two options: either hiring labourers at the fixed-wage rate or paying that much to a parish officer.¹³² In addition, the unemployed poor were sometimes directly engaged by a parish on road works or parish farms that the parish rented and managed.¹³³ They were also leased out to road contractors in some cases. After the Swing riots of 1830-31, a dramatic rising by poor rural workers seeking an end of their misery (which had a serious effect in parts of Hampshire), allotments, a form of land provision, involving letting plots of land to poor families for cultivation (which parishes had been authorised to do by a clause in Sturges Bourne's 1818 Vestry Act), became more common.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ D. A. Baugh, 'The Cost of Poor Relief in South-East England, 1790-1834', *Economic History Review*, 28 (1975), pp. 62-67; K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor-Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 37-38.

¹³¹ Flinn, 'Poor', pp. 82-92.

¹³² Boyer, *Economic*, pp. 16-18.

¹³³ Carl Griffin, 'Parish Farms and the Poor Law: A Response to Unemployment in Rural Southern England, c. 1815-35', *Agricultural History Review*, 59 (2011), pp. 176-198.

¹³⁴ Jeremy Burchardt, *The Allotment Movement in England: 1793-1873* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 51-135.

Hampshire parishes were not free from the national hazard and experimented with a variety of poor relief practices, particularly to tackle the unemployment problem from the second half of the 1810s. Vestry minutes across the county evince that measures implemented by parish authorities varied depending on different local environments. Extensive reports made in 1832 and 1833 by Captain Pringle, a correspondent of a royal commission on the poor laws, hint at the regional variations. Throughout the county, one of the most popular methods of hiring the unemployed population was road works. Those out of employment applying for work were sent to roads to scrape or repair them, in most cases under the superintendence of an assistant overseer.¹³⁵ In the arable north, where farmers were relatively wealthy, he found that the scheme of labour rates was adopted, that is, farmers were obliged to employ a certain number of labourers in proportion to the value of their assessed property. For instance, Alton resolved to fix the quota of one man to every £30 assessed to provide paupers with employment, although small farmers objected to the resolution because of their inability to pay wages.¹³⁶ By contrast, in the New Forest where farming was on a smaller scale and less labour-intensive, farmers more generally probably could not afford to support the unemployed poor nor needed extra labour, so instead some parishes decided to manage a parish farm. Boldre and Eling, for instance, hired forty-five and thirty acres of land each to set the poor to work there.¹³⁷ According to a map drawn by Carl Griffin, parish farms were mainly distributed in the south and in the New Forest, while no parishes on the Hampshire downs in the north used a parish farm.¹³⁸

1.4.2 The Swing riots and the New Poor Law

¹³⁵ *PP* (1834), xxviii, pp. 294-295.

¹³⁶ *PP* (1834), xxviii, p. 304.

¹³⁷ *PP* (1834), xxviii, pp. 294, 301-302.

¹³⁸ Griffin, 'Parish', p. 187.

In the post-war period, a growing sense of unease became prevalent among ratepayers, as poor rates remained at a high level. Over the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century, landowners' profits from their land were probably large enough to compensate for relief expenses, as corn prices maintained a high level until the Napoleonic Wars ended. For the next two decades, by contrast, wheat prices per Imperial quarter returned to the levels seen in the last decade of the eighteenth century, roughly between 50s. and 60s.¹³⁹ Per capita expenditure on poor relief also fell markedly and fluctuated between 5s. and 7s. in the 1820s and 1830s.¹⁴⁰ However, as Boyer demonstrates, whereas nominal relief expenditure decreased by 14 per cent, real relief expenditure, adjusted for falling agricultural profit and rental rates, increased 23 per cent from 1817 to 1832.¹⁴¹ By this standard, the crisis of the Old Poor Law was getting more serious.

The outbreak of the Swing riots in 1830-1831 could be seen to symptomise the desperate need for social reform. In November 1830, disturbances erupted within the Hampshire boundary. The participants' main objectives appear to have been more regular employment and higher wages, in view of the fact that they destroyed threshing machines as the alleged culprit and that some negotiations over wages and employment were carried out during the revolt.¹⁴² Poor law issues were also sufficiently prominent among rioters' grievances that some farmers were targeted by the angry mob in their capacity as overseers of the poor.¹⁴³ Assaults on Selborne and Headley workhouses and a threat to one in Alton manifested widespread resentment over poor relief policies, in that the master of the Selborne workhouse, an assistant overseer, was so disliked as to flee and was never reinstated, though the contractor

¹³⁹ Alan Kidd, *State, Society, and the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 10-11, Appendix, Table 1; Mitchell, *Statistics*, p. 756.

¹⁴⁰ Snell, *Parish*, p. 212.

¹⁴¹ Boyer, *Economic*, pp. 196-197.

¹⁴² Carl Griffin, *The Rural War: Captain Swing and the Politics of Protest* (Manchester, 2012), pp. 102-117.

¹⁴³ Roger Wells, 'Andover Antecedents: Hampshire New Poor-Law Scandals, 1834-1842', *Southern History*, 91 (2002), pp. 96-102.

in charge of the Headley workhouse was allowed by protestors to save his possessions whilst the house was being destroyed. The great part of the group attacking the workhouses and calling for higher wages and lower tithes was recognised as consisting of people belonging to adjoining parishes in the pastoral division or on the border with the arable division.¹⁴⁴ The Swing riots suggested that the Old Poor Law regime was close to a breaking point, at least in south rural England, from the perspective of claimants of poor relief as well as relief suppliers. The government was, therefore, convinced that the reform of the poor law could not be postponed any longer because it was necessary to establish a firmer foundation for social stability.¹⁴⁵

In 1832, the year after the Swing riots, the Royal Commission into the Operation of the Poor Laws was formed by the recently appointed, activist Whig ministry to investigate the maladministration of the Old Poor Law. The report of the Commission argued that because of the indiscriminate provision of out-relief represented by the Speenhamland policy, labourers had no incentive to be industrious and frugal, while employers kept wages artificially low, realising that any shortfalls in the income of their labourers could be met by the parish – although historians have subsequently questioned whether the Commission diagnosed the situation correctly.¹⁴⁶ According to the commissioners, not only did the Old Poor Law raise the burden of relief expenditure on individual ratepayers but also demoralised society as a whole by distorting the natural relationship between the labouring classes and employers.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, according to the report, the mismanagement and excessive generosity of local poor law authorities and magistrates itself bore significant responsibility for making pauperism widespread.¹⁴⁸ Accordingly, later annual reports would emphasise the need to diminish able-

¹⁴⁴ *PP* (1834), xxviii, pp. 302-303; Griffin, *Rural*, pp. 108-111.

¹⁴⁵ Peter Dunkley, *The Crisis of the Old Poor Law in England, 1795-1834: An interpretative essay* (New York, 1982), pp. 128-129.

¹⁴⁶ Mark Blaug, 'The Poor Law Report Re-examined', *Journal of Economic History*, 24 (1964), pp. 229-245; Baugh, 'Cost', pp. 50-68.

¹⁴⁷ *PP* (1834), xxviii, pp. 11-24.

¹⁴⁸ *PP* (1834), xxviii, pp. 55-84.

bodied pauperism through the moral improvement of the labouring classes and a reduction in their habits of dependency, this being expected automatically to lead to a drop in poor relief expenditure.¹⁴⁹

Though socio-economic circumstances set the scene, the political situation also contributed to determining that the Poor Law Amendment Act, known as the New Poor Law, was passed in 1834. ‘Reform’ had come into fashion.¹⁵⁰ After the relative social and political peace of the early and mid-1820s, a successor to Liverpool’s Tory administration, the Wellington ministry, fell apart in November 1830. Even before that, popular reform cries had already revived. One was promoted by extra-parliamentary agitation by Daniel O’Connell and his associates for enhanced civil rights for Catholics. Although Wellington’s Tory government conceded Catholic Emancipation in 1829, some ‘ultras’, alienated by this, shifted support to the Whigs. Finally, some liberal Tories eventually broke away from Wellington in the autumn of 1830 and joined the Whigs in setting up a coalition to deal with reform issues.¹⁵¹ The new Whig-dominated government developed an extended reform agenda, including not only parliamentary reform but also the abolition of slavery, the dissolution of commercial monopolies, especially the East India Company monopoly, and poor-law reform.¹⁵²

Even if ministers in the new coalition government favoured reform, their attitude to specific reforms differed: as Peter Mandler presents it, Whigs aimed to build reformed institutions through which society could be reshaped, whereas liberals sought to minimise government meddling. Nassau Senior, the main author with Edwin Chadwick (secretary) of the 1832 Royal Commission’s report, intended to provide the basis for a reformed poor law, was

¹⁴⁹ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (London, 1836), p. 281

¹⁵⁰ Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes (eds), *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 1.

¹⁵¹ Peter Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals 1830-1852* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 31-33.

¹⁵² Burns and Innes, *Rethinking*, pp. 44-45.

an Oxford political economist and a founder of the Political Economy Club. In addition to Senior, the other seven members of the royal commission deeply involved in making the New Poor Law were mainly what Mandler terms ‘Christian Political Economists’ based at Oxford and having acted as economic advisers to liberal Tories.¹⁵³ Basically, they believed that human government could destroy virtue through faulty institutions, among which were the poor laws, which had played a role in promoting habits of idleness, imprudence and dependency. In their view, poor-law reform should be designed to propagate virtue, not by reinforcing but by withdrawing rights that paupers enjoyed by creating incentives for them to strive to live on their own resources. Ultimately, they hoped to abolish the poor laws altogether.¹⁵⁴

By contrast, Edwin Chadwick, as a Benthamite from finger to toe and at the same time a bureaucrat, had a different background and objectives. He had been a private secretary to Jeremy Bentham and had assisted him in completing the *Constitutional Code*. He was convinced that governments led by experts and professionals could make a contribution to improvement by positively punishing, deterring or preventing bad actions in the light of the principle of utility, pursuit of ‘the greatest happiness for the greatest number’, applied to social policy.¹⁵⁵ In his view, the poor laws had the potential to become effective motors of improvement in practice. He thought that well-conceived reforms could wipe out vicious patterns of paternalistic poor-law practice by establishing a professionalised central authority and well-organised institutions such as union workhouses.¹⁵⁶ Although there were overlaps between his view and the liberal Tory view, Chadwick was not an abolitionist.

¹⁵³ Charles James Blomfield (Bishop of London, Chairman), John Bird Sumner (Bishop of Chester), William Sturges Bourne (M.P.), the Rev. Henry Bishop (a fellow of Oriel College, Oxford), Henry Gawler, Walter Coulson, and James Traill.

¹⁵⁴ Mandler, ‘Tories’, pp. 81-103; Mandler ‘Making’, pp. 148-153.

¹⁵⁵ David Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in Nineteenth-Century Britain, 1834-1914: From Chadwick to Booth* (London, 1998), pp. 9-10.

¹⁵⁶ Mandler, ‘Tories’, p. 101.

These differences of view played a role in determining the ambivalent nature of the New Poor Law, ultimately agreed by the two groups. Unlike eighteenth-century legislation, which merely offered new options for the maintenance of the poor, such as Knatchbull's act of 1722 and Gilbert's Act of 1782, the new act was largely compulsory in effect, inasmuch as it ordered the establishment of Poor Law Commissioners, who gave directions to local authorities. Assistant commissioners were employed by the Poor Law Commission and sent out to establish a new regime across the country; they were remarkably zealous and interventionist. In the second half of the 1830s, they oversaw the establishment of the new system across almost the whole country, save for a few areas which remained under previous acts, such as local acts of incorporation and Gilbert's Act. Therefore, local discretion, a feature of the 1601 act, was sharply curtailed by the 1834 act.¹⁵⁷

Nonetheless, localism still remained to some extent. The final chapters will show that despite new administrative bodies and new workhouse landscape being formed through the implementation of the New Poor Law in Hampshire, they were basically rooted in old localised structures. The reformed poor law regime based on the new act was not easily settled across the county during the first decade of the new act. The degree of compliance markedly differed according to different divisions.

¹⁵⁷ Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 27-28.

Chapter Two: The geography of workhouses: statistical approaches

This chapter aims to demonstrate regional variations in workhouse provision and to explore by statistical means various factors which possibly affected them. The disparities in topographical context and socioeconomic circumstances presented in the previous chapter plausibly played a part in determining regional differences in the distribution and usage of workhouses as well as in larger patterns in poor relief provision in Hampshire. This chapter tries to demonstrate these linkages. Statistical methods employed include ANOVA (analysis of variance) and multiple regression analysis. Materials used as a basis for the statistical work are various, including poor law returns, population censuses, some parochial records such as overseers' account books and poor rate books and land tax assessments.

The first section will identify intra-county differences in the scale of poor relief and the prevalence of workhouses. It aims to address the following questions. How much variation was there in the scale of money spent on poor relief and in the popularity of workhouses between sub-county regions? And, was there a statistically meaningful correlation between poor relief expenditure and maintenance of a workhouse? What we will see is that the amount of poor relief expenditure and the number of workhouses varied across the three divisions (arable, coastal, and pastoral) demarcated in the preceding chapter. ANOVA tests suggest that the presence of a workhouse was statistically associated with levels of expenditure, but more interestingly, the nature of the association differed between the divisions.

The next section will explore workhouse distribution. It begins by looking at changes in their distribution over time. It then turns to diverse factors correlated with workhouse distribution by 1803 on the basis of multiple regressions. The regression models link the workhouse (dependent variable) with individual parishes' demographic characteristics,

transport infrastructure, and socioeconomic structure (independent variables). They make it possible to examine the correlation between workhouse geography and the degree of urbanisation, the availability of road and water transport facilities, and the distribution of power and wealth. This statistical work helps us to see that the presence of a workhouse was the product of a combination of socioeconomic factors and, at the same time, suggests several hypotheses about different workhouse ecologies and functions between the divisions, which will be further explored in the following chapters, using textual sources.

2.1 Intra-county variations in poor relief provision

Some historians have indicated that, by comparison with the welfare regimes of continental Europe and even other parts of the British Isles and Ireland, the English system was marked by a high level of coherence and integration.¹ It seems true that in terms of poor rates being levied across almost the whole country and the nationwide application of settlement laws to determine who was entitled to be relieved by which parish, the English system was uniquely consistent. Nonetheless, considering that even in England, formal poor relief represented only one part, though a central part, of a welfare patchwork which also included semi-formal and private forms of relief, the difference between England and the others was, as Joanna Innes points out, essentially one of balance between the parts.² Furthermore, research at a local level suggests that variations extended to inferior units of poor law administration. In this context, ecological studies become significant in that they encompass various determinants, including

¹ The most positive appraisal is Peter Solar's; he states that English poor relief was distinctive in its 'uniformity and comprehensiveness' and its 'certainty and generosity'. Peter Solar, 'Poor Relief and English Economic Development before the Industrial Revolution', *Economic History Review*, 48 (1997), pp. 1-7.

² Joanna Innes, 'The State and the Poor: Eighteenth-Century England in European Perspective' in John Brewer and Eckhart Hellmuth (eds), *Rethinking Leviathan: The Eighteenth-Century State in Britain and Germany* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 233-234.

socioeconomic, topographical and cultural features and their interaction, and suggests that they helped to shape highly localised poor relief patterns.

Table 2.1 Poor relief expenditure per capita and percentage of relief recipients in 1802/3

Divisions	Poor relief expenditure per capita (£)	Proportion of relief recipients to total population
Arable	0.8	20.3%
Coastal	0.4	9.3%
Pastoral	0.6	15.0%

Sources: Poor relief data from the 1803 returns and population data from the 1801 census.³

This simple analysis on the basis of the three divisions (identified in Figure 1.3 in the previous chapter) brings out intra-county variations in poor relief provision within Hampshire. Variations within the county were as great as differences between counties.⁴ In the arable division, the average poor relief expenditure per head was £0.8 in 1803, plainly higher than the others. In the same year, the division also had the largest proportion of those on relief to the total population, over 20 per cent. The expenditure for the coastal division were £0.4 and the proportion less than 10 per cent, around half those for the arable division. Figures for the pastoral division were located midway between those of the other two divisions.

Nevertheless, this does not imply that welfare systems between or within counties were entirely disparate. Differences in the average figures do not reflect different ranges of poor relief expenditure per capita across whole divisions, but rather different balances between ‘generous’ and ‘parsimonious’ parishes. For example, the amount of poor relief spending per

³ Population data used hereafter are based on the census returns, but with corrections of arithmetic and printing errors and standardisation of census units by Wrigley, *Censuses*.

⁴ In his ‘macro-regional’ study, Steven King carves his southeast and northwest regions into eight areas according to the scale of welfare provisions and the extent of entitlement to relief. Between the most generous ‘south’ tying together Dorset, Sussex, Wiltshire, Hampshire, Bedfordshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire and the most parsimonious ‘northwest’ incorporating Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire, and parts of Yorkshire, Durham, Northumberland and Cheshire, disparities in poor relief spending per head and proportion of the population on relief were doubtlessly great. King, *Poverty*, pp. 261-265.

capita in arable, coastal, and pastoral parishes ranged from £0.18 to £3.27, from £0.14 to £1.66, and from £0.24 to £1.57 respectively. Excepting seven exceptionally lavish parishes, the remaining more than 220 arable parishes expended less than £2 per person. However, in the arable division, the proportion of parishes spending more than £1 per capita was high, nearly 40 per cent, compared with proportions in the coastal and pastoral divisions, 25 per cent and 13 per cent. Similarly, the proportion of arable parishes spending less than £0.5 was 7 per cent, far lower than in the other two, both over 20 per cent.

It is important to observe that the effective financial load imposed by poor relief on even low-spending parishes in the non-arable divisions was almost certainly larger than that for high-spending ones in the arable division, taking into account ratepayers' economic capacity. In that sense arable parishes were probably, in practice, less burdened than pastoral and coastal parishes, whose economic life was dominated by smallholders or small businessmen, as discussed in the previous chapter. In the case of Lyndhurst, a posting centre in the middle of the New Forest, which has left poor rate books documenting the assessment of ratepayers' property, there were 133 people who paid poor rates in 1792, only 3 (2.3%) of whom held property with an annual value of over £50, while 63 (47%) had property worth less than £5.⁵ In the same year, the arable parish of Basing with 94 ratepayers had a quite different distribution of rateable property. The proportion of those with property valued at more than £50 was 11 per cent, while only 23 per cent occupied property worth under £5.⁶ The average value of ratepayers' property in Basing was £25, much larger than that in Lyndhurst, £10, by 2.5 times. Therefore, even though nominal per capita poor relief expenditure for the arable

⁵ Lyndhurst Overseers' Accounts, 1792, HRO, 103M94/PO1; Boyer estimates that the maximum rateable value of a family farm ranged from £21 to £50. Boyer, *Economic*, p. 96.

⁶ Basing Overseers' Accounts, 1792, HRO, 3M70/45.

division was higher than that for the pastoral division by £0.2 (Table 2.1), the real burden of poor relief imposed on pastoral ratepayers was probably heavier.

Table 2.2 Workhouses in Hampshire, 1776, 1803, and 1834

Divisions	No. of parishes	Workhouses in 1776 (%)	Workhouses in 1803 ^a (%)	Workhouses in 1834 ^b (%)
Arable	232	24(10.3)*	26(11.2)	32(13.8) ^c
Coastal	34	14(41.2)	16(47.1)	20(58.8)
Pastoral	23	8(34.8)	11(47.8)	12(52.2)
Total	289	46(15.9)	53(18.3)	64(22.1)

Note: (a) figures for 1803 are estimated through cross-checking the 1803 returns with Hampshire record office's catalogue since the returns display parishes sending their poor people into workhouses, not parishes having a workhouse.

(b) figures for 1834 come from parish Colonel Charles Ashe A'Court's notes of 1834.

(c) In A'Court's notes, the parish of Andover and its neighbouring areas are omitted, so the data for the Andover division in 1834 are based on answers to the Rural and Town Queries of 1834. Given the limited coverage of the queries, these figures might be underestimated.

* Winchester had three workhouses in 1776

Sources: The 1776 returns; the 1803 returns; The 1834 report of the Royal Commission; A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District; Basingstoke Union Correspondence, Hartley Wintney Union Correspondence.

In relation to indoor provision, variations within Hampshire were also clear. The returns for 1776 are, as noted in the Introduction, the only ones offering information about the national landscape of workhouses (those for 1803 and 1813/15 showed the numbers of people a parish sent to workhouses, not necessarily only to the parish's own workhouse). On the evidence of those early returns, in the arable division, the proportion of parishes with a workhouse was lower than in other divisions, about 10 per cent. By contrast, at the other end of the spectrum was the coastal division, where more than 40 per cent of parishes reported having a workhouse in 1776. Workhouses were also common in the pastoral division, 34.8 per cent of whose parishes returned having a workhouse in the same year. The relative popularity of workhouses was unchanged in the last year of the Old Poor Law, on the evidence of notes made by Colonel Charles Ashe A'Court, the assistant commissioner dispatched by the Poor Law Commission to Hampshire in 1834, though overall numbers of workhouses had grown. In 1834, no less than

half of their parishes of coastal and pastoral parishes had a workhouse. This was in stark contrast to the arable division where no more than 14 per cent of the parishes possessed a workhouse in that year.

The patterns of difference discussed above suggest that workhouse provision tended to be inversely related to poor relief expenditure per capita. In other words, the divisions in which workhouses were more prevalent spent less per head on formal welfare provision. Few historians have noted, let alone tried to explain the correlation, partly because workhouses have tended to be studied in themselves rather than being explored in relation to their role within a more extensive poor relief regime. Boyer is a notable exception. He attempts to explain the long-term increase in per capita poor relief expenditure during the last decades of the Old Poor Law empirically. One of the explanatory variables he used in his regression work was the existence of workhouses, to test the contention that indoor relief was more expensive than outdoor relief, such that the expenditure would be higher in places with workhouses.⁷ However, he failed to gain a statistically meaningful result and concluded that the presence of a workhouse did not affect the level of poor relief expenditure.⁸

⁷ Boyer, *Economic*, p. 137.

⁸ Boyer, *Economic*, pp. 138-142.

Table 2.3 Results of ANOVA tests

A. One-way ANOVA		
	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Division	7.209	0.001
	Mean difference	Sig.
Arable vs Coastal	3.38	0.072
Arable vs Pastoral	5.68	0.006
Coastal vs Pastoral	2.30	0.567
N	286	
B. Two-way ANOVA		
	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Division	5.765	0.004
Workhouse in 1803	0.547	0.460
Division × Workhouse	3.707	0.026
N	286	

Note: The dependent variable is per capital relief expenditure for parishes. The independent variables are divisions and the presence of workhouses.

Source: Poor relief data are from the 1803 returns. The workhouse distribution is based on the same data as Table 2.2.

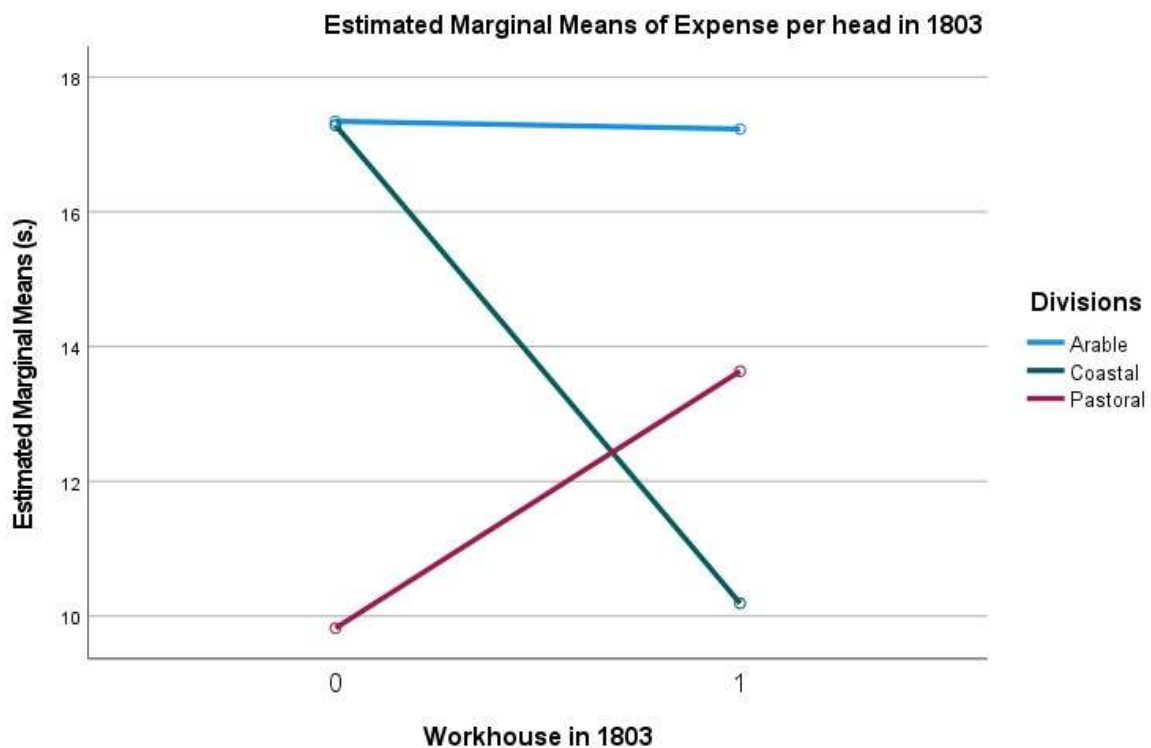


Figure 2.1 Plot of the two-way ANOVA results

Yet, if we analyse the correlation between the workhouse and poor relief expenditure employing our intra-county divisions (unlike Boyer, who worked cross-county, using the

returns to the Rural Queries of 1834), a thought-provoking result is produced. A one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) test in panel A affirms that there were statistically significant differences in poor-relief expenditure per capita between the divisions (F stat=7.209; sig.=0.001). Additionally, a further contrast analysis determines that arable parishes paid more per head than coastal and pastoral ones did (mean differences=3.38 and 5.68; sig.=0.072 and 0.006), while there was no statistically meaningful difference between the coastal and pastoral divisions.⁹ In panel B, a two-way ANOVA is carried out to see if there was any effect of interaction between divisions and the presence of a workhouse on poor relief expenditure per capita. Results show that the interaction effect is statistically significant (F stat=3.707, sig.=0.026), meaning that the expenditure for individual parishes was associated with the combination of the two factors: which division they belonged to and whether or not they possessed a workhouse. More importantly, coastal and pastoral divisions now look different from each other: the profile plot shows that the expenditure for the three divisions was differently correlated with the presence of a workhouse. Comparing not having and having a workhouse, the green line (coastal) descends steeply; the red line (pastoral) rises, while the blue line (arable) remains relatively horizontal. This implies that coastal parishes with workhouses paid less per head for relieving paupers than those without workhouses, whereas pastoral parishes with workhouses paid more per head than those without workhouses. By contrast, for the arable division, the existence of a workhouse was of little importance, making a quite small difference.

⁹ Normally, a 5 per cent level of significance has been adopted as an appropriate norm, but such a conventional selection can be criticised as rather arbitrary because there is no statistical justification to distinguish 5.1 per cent from 4.9 per cent. In this chapter, the 10 per cent level is selected as an appropriate level to give my readers the fullest information for their better understanding and interpretation. C. H. Feinstein and Mark Thomas, *Making History Count: A Primer in Quantitative Methods for Historians* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 160-162.

The results allow us to hypothesise that workhouses performed different functions in the different divisions. In the coastal division, the presence of a workhouse was correlated with lower per capita expenditure. It is usually assumed, plausibly, that those in receipt of indoor relief cost more to maintain because they mostly consisted of orphans, single mothers with dependent children, widows, the aged, sick and infirm who required long-term care in a relatively expensive facility.¹⁰ It seems that coastal workhouses were successful in offsetting the potential extra cost. There are two ways in which they may have achieved this. Their workhouses may have been run with the object of deterring the poor, especially the able-bodied poor, from applying for formal relief; or they may have employed their labour so as to redeem a part of the money spent. A contemporary investigator, Frederick Eden, hinted at the first possibility (though all his examples in this context were big coastal towns, not representative of other non-urban coastal parishes with small populations). He mentioned that a workhouse in coastal Portsmouth reduced poor law expenditure ‘not because the poor are maintained at a cheaper rate in the house than they could be at their own homes, but because of the apprehension of being obliged to intermix with the various descriptions of indigent people,’ preventing many from making a relief application.¹¹

It is also clear that some coastal workhouses emphasised the employment of inmates’ labour so as to reduce the financial burden of ratepayers. Thomas Gilbert’s report of 1776 indicates that Portsea workhouse earned £342 from workhouse labour between 1772 and 1774.¹² A decade later, according to Eden’s figures from 1782-84, earnings from workhouse labour had increased to £548, though the total expenditure had risen a little more steeply, to

¹⁰ J. S. Taylor, ‘Unreformed’, p. 78; G. W. Oxley, *Poor Relief in England and Wales, 1601-1834* (Newton Abbot, 1974), p. 90.

¹¹ Eden, *State*, pp. 227-228.

¹² *PP* (1776), ‘Second Report. Reported by Thomas Gilbert, Esq. 21 May 1776’, pp. 268-269.

£6,196.¹³ In the case of another coastal workhouse in Southampton, housing 120 people, workhouse employment generated the sum of £226 in 1793 in partnership with local industries. The inmates were employed at a silk mill or a blanket manufactory. These were significant earnings by contemporary standards.¹⁴ The 1803 returns enable us to draw a broader picture, because it gives information about money parishes paid for goods for employing workhouse inmates and earned by their labour. According to the returns, 44 per cent of coastal parishes made money out of workhouse labour. For this division, the total net income (workhouse labour income left over after subtracting costs of materials for the labour) and net income per inmate (total net income divided by the numbers of people parishes sent to workhouses) were higher than for the other two (Table 2.4). This supports the hypothesis that work schemes in coastal workhouses were profitable and contributed to lowering poor relief expenditure.

Table 2.4 Earnings from workhouse labour by 1803

Division	No. of Parishes earning from workhouse labour	Total net income (£)	Net income per inmate (s.)
Arable	26 (11%)	611.4	6.8
Coastal	15 (44%)	628.7	8.9
Pastoral	9 (39%)	109.5	6.3

Note: Net earnings is (earnings from workhouse labour) – (expense of purchasing materials for workhouse labour).

Source: The 1803 returns.

By contrast, workhouses were positively associated with per capita poor-relief expenditure in the pastoral division: parishes with workhouses spent more per capita on the poor. It seems that pastoral parishes either failed to exploit the potential offsetting effects of workhouses on relief cost or did not attempt to accentuate (or perhaps did not succeed in accentuating) the deterrent aspect of workhouses. Although employment was often provided

¹³ Eden, *State*, p. 225.

¹⁴ Eden, *State*, pp. 229-232.

in pastoral as in coastal workhouses, there are indications that this proved less rewarding. Table 2.4 shows that although the parishes earnings from workhouse labour accounted for 39 per cent of all pastoral parishes, nearly comparable to the coastal division, the profitability for the pastoral division was lower than the coastal division, in that the net income per inmate for the former was about 6s. while for the latter it was nearly 9s. The pastoral figure drops dramatically to a mere 1.3s. if an exceptional case, Boldre (which earned over £100 by inmates' labour according to the 1803 returns), is excluded.¹⁵ As will be shown in the discussion of the more qualitative evidence, some pastoral workhouses were run less as deterrent institutions with harsh conditions than as places for maintaining the vulnerable. Most workhouses in the north-eastern pastoral areas were, for example, established under Gilbert's Act of 1782, which authorised houses to provide accommodation solely for the vulnerable, while the able-bodied were offered outdoor relief.¹⁶

Turning finally to the arable division, whose workhouses we have suggested were not associated with significantly increased poor relief expenditure: Eden included in his study Petersfield workhouse, which lay in the arable division; the workhouse's regime, according to his account, was not very ambitious. One of the parish officers supervised the house but did not reside there. Given that another of his tasks was to collect poor rates, he assumed almost full charge of poor relief business. (We will see in the next chapter that it was not uncommon for arable workhouses to be either managed by one of the overseers or let out to contractors – as opposed to being confided to the care of a workhouse master operating alongside the overseers). In the case of this Petersfield overseer, even though local gentlemen acclaimed his

¹⁵ A report about a workhouse project at Boldre states that for the five years preceding the establishment of the new workhouse in 1793, a saving of £338 8s. 8d. was created, though not merely attributed to the profits of labour, but also to the improvement of workhouse management. Walter, Robbins and Gilpin, *Account*, p. 14. The case of Boldre will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

¹⁶ Shave, *Pauper*, pp. 64-65.

‘good’ management to which the reduction of the poor rates was said to be principally ascribable, ‘he is disliked by the poor, and several attempts have been made to burn his house’. The income from workhouse inmates was trifling, not exceeding £5 or £6 per year. The main work assigned to the inmates was to clean the streets.¹⁷ Across the arable division, approximately one in ten parishes acquired income from workhouse labour, which was far lower than in the coastal and pastoral divisions (Table 2.4). On the basis of net income per inmate, the profitability of workhouse labour for the arable division was lower than for the coastal division, though higher than for the pastoral division.

It is also possible that the workhouse not merely affected the scale of poor relief expenditure but was affected by it. One of the common causes put forward when the decision to establish a workhouse was made was an increase in expenditure. A report of 1795 commissioned at a Quarter Sessions held in Winchester, in response to rising poor rates, strongly recommended the building of workhouses in the hope that they might mitigate the increasing trend.¹⁸ The preambles of acts forming incorporations of the poor in Southampton and the Isle of Wight also indicate that it was because great expense was involved in maintaining their paupers, that they aimed to establish a workhouse, to create an efficient system of poor relief.¹⁹ The next chapter will discuss more fully using parochial administrative records the role played by poor relief expenditure in the establishment of workhouses.

All in all, although we establish various forms of correlation between expenditure levels and workhouses, we can do no more than hypothesise what these correlations mean. Yet the

¹⁷ Eden, *State*, pp. 222-223.

¹⁸ Edmund Poulter, *Address and Report on the Enquiry into the General State of the Poor, instituted by Order of the Last Epiphany General Quarter Session for the County of Hampshire* (Winchester, 1795), p. 49.

¹⁹ 11 Geo. III. c. 43 and 13 Geo. III c. 50.

other evidence adduced makes it seem plausible that these circumstances played a part in shaping the patterns we see.

2.2 Workhouse distribution

2.2.1 Changes over time

The distribution of workhouses shifted at different times, as did patterns in opening new workhouses. As was shown in Table 2.2 (which checks not-wholly-reliable parliamentary returns against local evidence), between 1776 and 1803, the number of workhouses probably increased only by seven from forty-six to fifty-three across Hampshire, but over the next three decades, there was a slightly steeper increase in the number from fifty-three to sixty-four.²⁰ One might suppose that there was for some reason a shift in favour of the establishment of workhouses. However, the truth was more complicated. From 1776 to 1803, nineteen workhouses began their operations across the county, but twelve workhouses disappeared (Figure 2.3). The large apparent loss was in part caused by the definition of ‘workhouse’ employed in the 1776 returns having been so loose that some were eliminated in 1803 when there was more specific guidance about what to count as a workhouse.²¹ Between 1803 and 1834, a smaller total of ten workhouses were newly set up, and two reopened, while only one in the parish of Basing was abandoned (Figure 2.3). Of nineteen workhouses appearing in the first period, there are eight for which opening years have been identified, and all of them were set up after 1790, except for one in Heckfield established in 1778.²² Nine parishes out of twelve

²⁰ The number for 1803 is my estimate based on the combination of data from the 1803 returns and Hampshire record office’s catalogue, while those for 1776 and 1834 come from the 1776 returns and A’Court’s reports of 1834.

²¹ The 1803 returns remark that ‘if there be a House of Industry or Workhouse, in which any Poor of your Parish or Place are maintained, inform the Governor, or proper Office thereof, that he is required, under Pain of the Penalties of this Act, to enable you to fill up and complete the proper Column ... relating to the Workhouse’. The 1803 returns, p. iii.

²² Heckfield Churchwardens’ Accounts, 30 August 1778, HRO, 27M79/PW1.

(re)establishing a workhouse in the second period started to offer indoor provision to their paupers before 1815, according to the 1813-15 returns. In other words, there were probably only three parishes whose workhouses were launched after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Therefore, most of the (re)establishment of workhouses took place between 1790 and 1815 in Hampshire (as will be discussed in the next chapter in more detail).

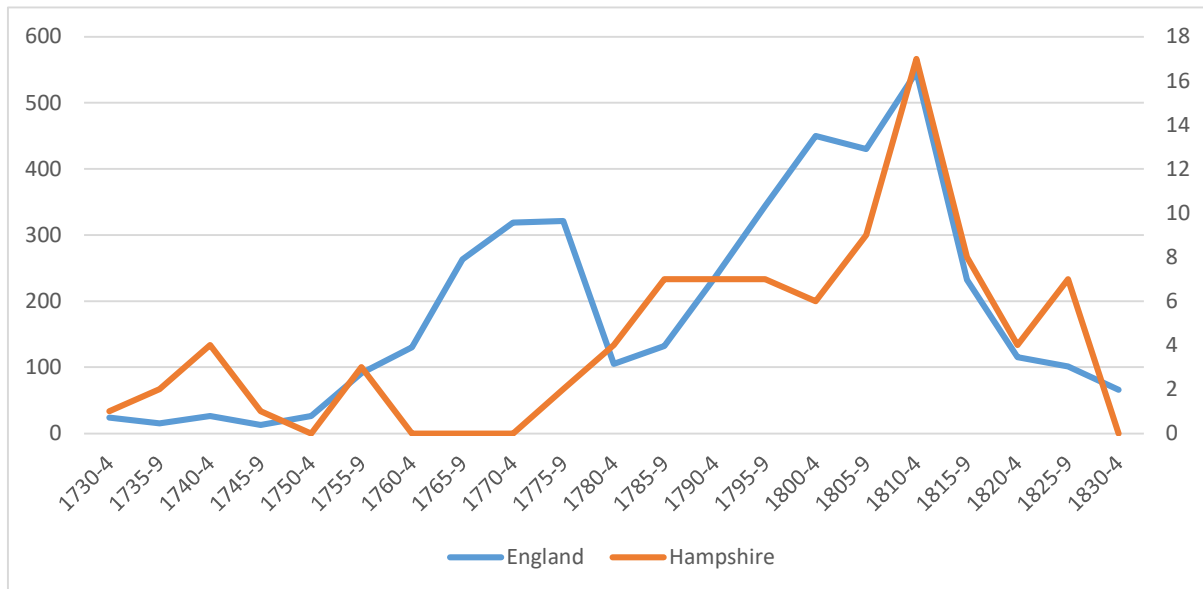


Figure 2.2 Chronology of parliamentary enclosure acts in England and Hampshire, 1730-1834
 Source: For England, Turner, *English Parliamentary Enclosure: Its Historical Geography and Economic History*, p. 68. For Hampshire, Chapman and Seeliger, *A Guide to Enclosure in Hampshire 1700-1900*, pp. 89-135.

As the establishment of workhouses – whether by constructing a new building or by purchasing or leasing an existing building – was capital-intensive, we need to take account of fluctuations in the collective financial capacity of ratepayers as part of the context for understanding chronological patterns in workhouse foundations. The trend of enclosure movements could be a meaningful, though indirect, indicator. As a form of capital investment in agriculture, enclosure was sensitive both to farming incomes and to the cost of borrowing, and these same factors are likely to have affected willingness to invest in workhouses, although the former would apply more to the arable than the other divisions. Enclosure projects involved costs not merely of fencing lands but also legal fees arising from negotiations between intricate

landed interests and from presenting a bill to parliament or making an agreement.²³ From 1730 to 1830, there were two distinctive peaks in parliamentary enclosures at a national level: the 1760s and 1770s and the French Wars, 1793-1815.²⁴ In fact, around 80 per cent of all parliamentary enclosure acts were enacted in these forty years.²⁵ The first phase of intensive enclosing activity was associated with a growth in population and grain market and a rise in food prices and rents for land. However, in the later 1770s and 1780s, the trend turned downwards, falling back to the level of the first half of the 1760s, probably because cereal prices were stationary, while – as a result of the government’s wartime borrowing – interest rates headed up, which led to a mortgage for financing an enclosure becoming more expensive. From the 1790s, there was another rapid increase in the number of enclosure acts against a background of harvest failures and a sharp rise in grain prices which was aggravated by the prolonged wars. Interest rates remained high, and thus the financial burden of carrying out an enclosure was still heavy but offset by the great increase in agricultural profits.²⁶

Hampshire did not perfectly mirror the national picture. During the first national enclosure craze, the 1760s and 1770s, Hampshire saw no upsurge in interest: most enclosing activity was concentrated in the clay-lands of the midland counties.²⁷ Hampshire’s enclosure acts began to increase from the second half of the 1780s and peaked in wartime.²⁸ In all, there

²³ Michael Turner, *English Parliamentary Enclosure: Its Historical Geography and Economic History* (London, 1984), pp. 53-60.

²⁴ Parliamentary enclosures executed under the authorities of private acts were only one form of enclosure. There were two other types of non-parliamentary enclosure implemented outside of the intervention of a private act: enclosures by agreement and piecemeal enclosures. In theory, parliamentary enclosures are more likely to have left far more complete records than enclosures by agreement and piecemeal enclosures. The completeness of records has given them disproportionate attention. G. E. Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England: An introduction to its causes, incidence and impact, 1750-1850* (London, 1997), pp. 11-14; John Chapman and Sylvia Seeliger, *A Guide to Enclosure in Hampshire 1700-1900* (Winchester, 1997), pp. xx-xxi.

²⁵ Turner, *Enclosure*, p. 66.

²⁶ Mingay, *Enclosure*, p. 22.

²⁷ Turner, *Enclosures*, pp. 72-76.

²⁸ While 51 per cent of all open fields of Hampshire existing in 1700 are supposed to have been later enclosed by informal forms: piecemeal or by lords of manors, parliamentary enclosures accounted for only 33 per cent. It is, however, inevitable to focus on parliamentary enclosures when creating the chronology, as, unless there was

were eighty-nine enclosure acts for Hampshire during a hundred years from 1730, fifty-three (60%) of which were enacted in the three decades from 1785 to 1815.²⁹

If the establishment of a workhouse is counted as a considerable investment, it would be little surprise that the timing of workhouse opening, to some extent, coincided with the enclosure movements. Particularly, in the 1790s, rising interest rates contributed to an increase in the cost of workhouse establishment, but on the other hand, encouraged farmers who gained economic benefit from the rise in grain prices to invest more in a public project and expect higher yields.³⁰ It may not be a coincidence that two major canals, the Andover canal and the Basingstoke canal, also opened in the 1790s.³¹ From the later 1780s, it became common to borrow money in the form of loans of £50 or £100 at the rate of 5 per cent or below to erect public buildings such as gaols and houses of correction, as the Gaol Building Act of 1784 enabled Quarter Sessions to raise funds on the security of the county rates.³² There was little difficulty in lending money for the establishment because of what was seen as complete security for the lender and absence of danger of capital loss, as will be further discussed in the next chapter.

a dispute, the informal enclosures tended not to be well-documented, which makes it difficult to date them. Chapman and Seeliger, *Guide*, pp. xvi-xviii.

²⁹ Chapman and Seeliger, *Guide*, pp. 89-135.

³⁰ It is identified that there was a great boom of workhouse establishment in Hampshire in the 1790s. For details, see Figure 3.1 in chapter three.

³¹ P. A. L. Vine, *Hampshire Waterways* (Midhurst, 1990). P. ii.

³² C. W. Chalklin, *English Counties and Public Building, 1650-1830* (London, 1998), pp. 62-66.

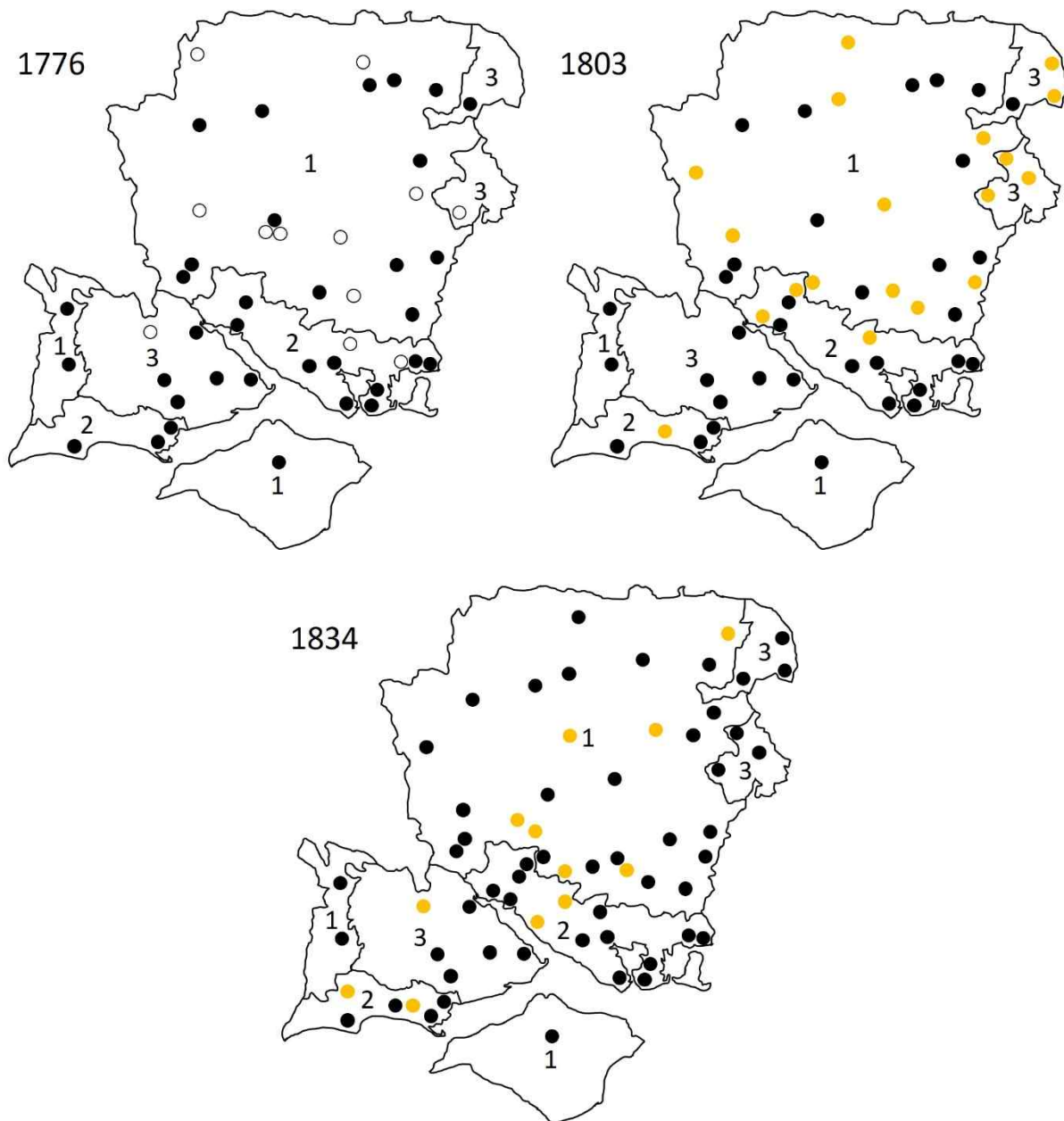


Figure 2.3 Workhouse distributions in 1776, 1803 and 1834

Note: 1. Arable division, 2. Coastal division, 3. Pastoral division. Open circles indicate workhouses disappearing in 1803, and yellow circles indicate new workhouses

Sources: Based on the same data as Table 2.2.

Out of nineteen workhouses established from 1776 to 1803, ten belonged to the arable division and four to the coastal division, but they were scattered. By contrast, five new workhouses clustered around the north-eastern corner of heathland. Among workhouses (re)opening during the last thirty years of the Old Poor Law, more than two-thirds were located

in the arable division, mostly in the south near the boundary with the coastal division, and one third in the coastal division, whereas only one was added in the pastoral division.

In the case of a cluster of new workhouses created between 1776 and 1803 around the northeast pastoral corner, we can trace how it was formed. It was linked with Gilbert's Act of 1782, forming part of a set of adoptions of the act on the Hampshire and Surrey borders in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Four of five new workhouses here were associated with Gilbert parishes or unions.³³ Farnborough and Headley unions, established in 1794 and 1795, consisted of seven parishes covering much of the north-eastern edge. Despite the scarcity of records explicitly indicating the background of decisions to adopt Gilbert's Act, Louise Ryland-Epton suggests the motives of adopters can be classified under four headings: 'a method to cut cost', 'a scheme to provide better poor relief and to improve moral behaviours', 'a device for providing indoor relief' and 'a mechanism for magistrates to exercise control'.³⁴ Samantha Shave particularly stresses economic rationales behind the adoptions, suggesting in support of this that rocketing prices in the 1790s, which made parish authorities anxious about an increase in relief costs, correlated with a boom in adoptions in the south of England.³⁵ However, given that all parishes on the northeastern edge of Hampshire which adopted the act erected new workhouses costing large sums, it is doubtful that poor-rate savings were at the forefront of their concern.³⁶ In fact, an agreement between parishes to form the Farnborough union states that they were united 'for the better maintaining and employing of their poor and

³³ Aldershot parish, Farnborough union, Headley union, and Selbourne parish. Shave, *Pauper*, pp. 64-65.

³⁴ I am grateful to Louise Ryland-Epton for providing me with her thesis. Louise Ryland-Epton, 'Social Policy, Welfare Innovation & Governance in England: The Creation and Implementation of Gilbert's Act 1782' (Ph.D. thesis, Open University, 2020), p. 158.

³⁵ Shave, *Pauper*, pp. 69-70.

³⁶ After 1815, there was another great interest in Gilbert's Act across Hampshire, and many parishes adopted the act, though they had already held a workhouse. At that time, economic reasons might become stronger, outweighing the comfort of the vulnerable. Under Gilbert's Act, the parishes are likely to have wanted to economise indoor relief provision by introducing a contracting system to farm out workhouse management. Shave, *Pauper*, p. 69.

for the building of a workhouse’, mentioning nothing about cost savings.³⁷ It seems that we need to look beyond the nationwide crisis to consider local circumstances since, in general, establishing a workhouse seems unlikely often to have been a response to economic dislocation that could reasonably be expected to be temporary.

2.2.2 Factors affecting workhouse distribution

Even though there do survive some parochial administrative documents describing the context in which a workhouse was established, they are scarce, and verbal descriptions provide only a limited snapshot, so they have little power to give a broader explanation of workhouse distribution. It therefore seems worth seeing whether we can illuminate these patterns by a statistical approach, particularly by regression analysis. Data of various kinds exist to support statistical enquiry. At a national level, empirical and well-organised enquiries, either parliamentary or private, dealing with social and economic developments, took place from the 1760s, some of which focused on poor relief.³⁸ In addition, we can abstract datasets from local records such as parish registers and land tax returns. Together, these provide a basis for exploring at least some of the constellations of factors that shaped the workhouse landscape.

There have been some studies explaining patterns of workhouse distribution under the Old Poor Law, but mostly in passing or descriptively with little empirical foundation. Geoffrey Oxley, for example, provides a chronological overview of workhouse geography across the country, but his emphasis is excessively on urban workhouses, not least because of limited evidence.³⁹ Tim Hitchcock charts the distribution of parish workhouses in the early decades of the eighteenth century at a national level using records produced by parishes and a charity

³⁷ Farnborough Incorporation: Agreement to Unite between the Parishes and Tithings, 10 May 1793, HRO, 50M63/C68.

³⁸ Innes, ‘Power’, pp. 154-161.

³⁹ Oxley, *Poor*, pp. 79-87.

organisation, the SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge). As there is no systematic central source and the accounts which he employs are very patchy, what he achieves is to depict locations of workhouses whose information survives, not to establish how workhouses were actually distributed.⁴⁰ Anne Digby's county-level research clearly describes where workhouses were erected in Norfolk and discovers a regional pattern of the distribution of workhouses concentrating on the east of the county. She contends that parishioners in the east had a stronger economic incentive to innovate in local poor law administration by forming incorporations of the poor or unions and by establishing workhouses on account of their moderate wealth and high population pressure.⁴¹ However, this claim is based on impressionistic observations, not empirical analysis.

More recent studies, though with their own limitations, have attempted to account for workhouse distribution on a more systematic empirical basis. David Green draws an empirically grounded picture of the workhouse landscape in London by using parliamentary returns; he links the expansion of workhouses to rapid development of the city, which is gauged based on population data.⁴² Large flows of migrants into London, he claims, though with little statistical evidence, provided another notable stimulus driving parishes to adopt workhouse provision.⁴³ This approach seems sensible in view of the uniqueness of London but not applicable to other regions, including Hampshire, whose workhouse distribution cannot be understood as a response to urban growth. Byung Khun Song performs a cluster analysis to classify Oxford parishes in terms of 'openness and closeness' and argues, on the basis of

⁴⁰ Hitchcock, 'Workhouses', pp. 97-104.

⁴¹ Digby, *Palaces*, p. 32.

⁴² David Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790-1870* (London, 2010), pp. 57-64.

⁴³ Green, *Capital*, pp. 37-38. Nicholas Rogers indicates that in the metropolis, the number of vagrants incarcerated to prison increased by 43 per cent between 1826 and 1829 and 142 per cent between 1829 and 1832. By 1832, the proportion of vagrants committed to prison accounted for over 50 per cent, while the others were usually treated by parish workhouses. Nicholas Rogers, 'Policing the Poor in Eighteenth-Century London: The Vagrancy Laws and Their Administration', *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 24 (1991), p. 146.

spending on indoor relief, that workhouses were popular in ‘open’ parishes where power was diffused widely among less wealthy smallholders. However, he is not interested in how precisely different social structures affected workhouse popularity, but rather suggests that they were among the causes making a difference in the scale of poor law expenditure between ‘open’ and ‘close’ parishes.⁴⁴

This section will employ more comprehensive datasets to establish factors shaping the distribution of Hampshire workhouses statistically. It will also raise broader questions about the tendency and omissions of existing workhouse studies. The selected datasets can be categorised into three. The first one is related to demographic characteristics, population density and the proportion of those engaged in non-primary sectors, as a basis for estimating the extent to which the level of urbanisation was correlated with workhouse distribution empirically. This data will also be used to test the validity of the view that in rural areas generally workhouses were of little significance and in the light of the results, to question the bias of previous research towards urban workhouses. Boyer, for instance, claims that most rural parishes were small enough to know the nature of relief applicants, so there was no need for a workhouse to test their legitimacy.⁴⁵ Given the general paucity of information about rural workhouses, it is not surprising that previous studies of Old Poor Law workhouses have concentrated on urban areas. According to the Bibliography of British and Irish History (BBIH), fifty-four works with workhouses as the main subject have been published in the ten years since 2010, but, among them, few have focused on rural workhouses, setting apart a small number of local studies.⁴⁶ A representative example is *Medicine and the Workhouse*, whose first five

⁴⁴ B. K. Song, ‘Parish Typology and the Operation of the Poor Laws in Early Nineteenth-Century Oxfordshire’, *Agricultural History Review*, 50 (2002), pp. 212-216.

⁴⁵ Boyer, *Economic*, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁶ Jane Pearson, ‘The Essex Workhouse Master 1760-1837’, *Essex Archaeology & History*, 1 (2010), pp. 322-329; D. J. Leeming, *Turton Workhouse* (Turton, 2011); Carla Herrmann, *Lives of the Poor in Eighteenth Century Barnet* (London, 2012).

chapters offer studies of medical aspects of workhouses under the Old Poor Law regime.⁴⁷ They discuss over forty workhouses, out of which no more than four belonged to parishes with a population of less than 2,000 in 1801, the threshold beyond which this thesis counts parishes as ‘urban’.⁴⁸ By contrast, seventeen London workhouses are dealt with. Steven King admits in the Afterword that workhouses in large urban areas are disproportionately well covered in this book, in contrast to rural and provincial ones, and suggests that an avenue for future research is regionality, including rural-urban differences as well as between south and north or east and west.⁴⁹

The second set of factors relates to transport infrastructure: the possession of road (turnpike gates) and water transport facilities (canals and seaports). The reasoning beyond the choice of the factors is that parishes with improved transport networks might be expected to experience a rise in the movement of people and to attract those travelling to seek jobs not just in industries benefiting from transport improvements but also in the construction and maintenance of the facilities.⁵⁰ However, wandering job-seekers could potentially become chargeable as casual poor even though not settled, unless they gained employment. Transport factors are therefore employed to test the possibility that workhouses also took in the casual poor, not targeting only the permanent poor (the young, the old and the infirm). It has long been maintained that the main groups of workhouse inmates were the vulnerable, and a key role of workhouses was to look after them.⁵¹ More recently, individual groups of inmates, such

⁴⁷ Jonathan Reinarz and Leonard Schwarz (eds), *Medicine and the Workhouse* (Rochester, 2013), pp. 19-122.

⁴⁸ Market Harborough, Barking Town, Malden, and Shipmeadow. The first two were, though, not typical rural parishes.

⁴⁹ Steven King, ‘Poverty, Medicine, and the Workhouse in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: An Afterword’, in Reinarz and Schwarz (eds), *Medicine*, pp. 228-252.

⁵⁰ Freeman, ‘Turnpikes’, pp. 411-434; Peter Maw, Terry Wyke and Alan Kidd, ‘Water Transport in the Industrial Age: Commodities and Carriers on the Rochdale Canal, 1804-1855’, *The Journal of Transport History*, 30 (2009), pp. 200-228. For estimates of the size of the workforce for building and repairing transport infrastructure in Hampshire, see Chapter one.

⁵¹ Webb and Webb, *English*, pp. 246-254; Oxley, *Poor*, pp. 89-91; Hitchcock, ‘Workhouses’, pp. 194-210.

as unmarried mothers, children, and the elderly, have been separately explored in depth.⁵² However, there have been few works using empirical analysis to explore the possible linkage between Old Poor Law workhouses and the casual poor, including those undergoing settlement investigations and vagrants whose stays might have been too short to be itemised in workhouse accounts. Exceptionally, Jeremy Boulton suggests that the number of the casual poor given workhouse offers was growing in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, citing changes in the ratio between expenditure on the settled poor and casual poor, but he focuses only on the workhouse in St Martin-in-the-Fields, London.⁵³

The third set relates to socioeconomic features derived from land tax returns (patterns of land tax, average land tax payments and acres per taxpayer), which give us hints as to wealth distribution and local power configurations. Traditionally, the distribution of land tax has been treated as a key to capturing how concentrated control over parochial affairs was, particularly by distinguishing between ‘open’ and ‘close’ parishes.⁵⁴ What we will consider is whether there was a correlation between the distribution of workhouses and different local authority structures. It seems likely that in ‘open’ parishes with a majority of smallholders, the officers’ grasp on local affairs was weak, and their financial foundation was not so strong as to allow them to devote themselves to official work. In this context, my hypothesis is that workhouses

⁵² See Introduction, fn. 7.

⁵³ Jeremy Boulton, ‘Indoors or Outdoors? Welfare Priorities and Pauper Choices in the Metropolis under the Old Poor Law, 1718-1824’, in Chris Briggs, P. M. Kitson and S. J. Thompson (eds), *Population, Welfare and Economic Change in Britain 1290-1834* (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 177-178.

⁵⁴ D. R. Mills, ‘The Poor Laws and the Distribution of Population, c. 1600-1860, with Special Reference to Lincolnshire’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 26 (1959), pp. 185-195; B. A. Holderness, ‘‘Open’ and ‘Close’ Parishes in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, *Agricultural History Review*, 20 (1972), pp. 126-139; Mills, *Lord and Peasant in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London 1980), pp. 64-94; Sarah Banks, ‘Nineteenth-century Scandal or Twentieth-century Model? A New Look at ‘Open’ and ‘Close’ Parishes’, *Economic History Review*, 41 (1988), pp. 51-73; David Spencer, ‘Reformulating the ‘Closed’ Parish Thesis: Associations, Interests, and Interaction’ *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26 (2000), pp. 83-98; Song, ‘Typology’, pp. 203-224; Andrew Jackson, ‘The ‘Open-Closed’ Settlement Model and the Interdisciplinary Formulations of Dennis Mills: Conceptualising Local Rural Change’, *Rural History*, 23 (2012), pp. 121-136.

would have served as an administrative device to reinforce officers' loose social control and facilitate poor relief administration.⁵⁵

2.2.3 Data sources

The data about demographic variables for my regression models come from the 1801 census, the first national census, whose basic objective was to provide a simple count of the totals of males, females and the two combined. As it contains a host of deficiencies, my calculations make use of the corrected version published by E. A. Wrigley.⁵⁶ It was not until the 1841 census that a specialist organ of government was set up to take charge of compiling the census by using specially-appointed enumerators; by contrast, the collection of data for the first census was undertaken by overseers of the poor from individual parishes. These parish officers were liable to interpret questions and answer them accordingly, producing inconsistent results. Aside from incidental mistakes and errors, there was a general tendency to undercount infants. More significantly, the census rarely included men in the army, the navy, on board a merchant vessel and absent on census night training in militia camps. Though this might mean that it provided an accurate count of those present in a parish on a given night, insofar as these omissions were not corrected by other procedures, it may have distorted results in some parishes, as well as meaning that the census did not count the whole population (though the latter is less of a concern for present purposes). Moreover, some people whose settlement status was uncertain probably attempted to conceal their presence in a parish.⁵⁷ Wrigley's corrections produced two sets of census tables. The first incorporated revisions to address errors on the part of the census-takers; the second restored omissions of certain groups of people, based on

⁵⁵ Timothy Besley, Stephen Coate, and T. W. Guinnane, 'Incentives, Information and Welfare: England's New Poor Law and the Workhouse Test', in William Sundstrom, T. W. Guinnane and Warren Whatley (eds), *History Matters: Essays on Economic Growth, Technology and Demographic Change* (Stanford, 2003), pp. 245-270.

⁵⁶ Wrigley, *Censuses*.

⁵⁷ Wrigley, *Censuses*, pp. 1-15.

his previous population studies.⁵⁸ The first set will be used for the analyses below since my aim is to ascertain regional variations rather than to explore changes over time.

The first census was intended not merely to estimate the total size of the population but also to provide a basis for estimating national income and wealth by establishing whether the primary source of income of respondents was agriculture, industry or something else.⁵⁹ However, there has been serious doubt about the reliability of the occupational data. Wrigley comments that ‘what was collected in 1801 is worthless’.⁶⁰ Even John Rickman, under whose direction information was collected, admitted that ‘the question regarding occupations may be said to have produced no result in 1801’. The problem is that the data in the 1801 census was collected in respect of individuals, whereas in 1811 and 1821, it related to households. Rickman showed that in some cases, although householders were put into the agricultural or commercial class, other members of their family were referred to the third class as not being in either of the classes, so the character of many places known to be agricultural or commercial was distorted.⁶¹ The data in subsequent censuses improved in quality but are still dubious, particularly as a result of the rough definition of occupational groups.

So as to improve occupational estimates, my regression models use a set of data produced by the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure (hereafter the Cambridge Group), based on parish registers from 1813 to 1820.⁶² In 1813 an act reformed and standardised the way of registering marriages, baptisms, and burials in parish registers. One of the so-called ‘Rose’s Act’ requirements was to record the occupation of the father of

⁵⁸ Wrigley, *Censuses*, pp. 31-98.

⁵⁹ J. E. Cookson, ‘Political Arithmetic and War in Britain, 1793-1815’, *War & Society*, 1 (1983), p. 45; Innes, ‘Power’, p. 157.

⁶⁰ Wrigley, *Poverty*, p. 121.

⁶¹ The 1811 Census, Preliminary Observations, p. x.

⁶² I would like to appreciate the permission of Leigh Shaw-Taylor and the Cambridge Group to work with 1813-20 Parish Register Occupational Data for the county of Hampshire.

the baptised infant. Therefore, in theory, from 1813, parish registers should contain information on male occupation, based on which the Cambridge Group has created what they call an occupational ‘quasi-census’ for the years of 1813-1820.⁶³ The occupational data are coded according to Wrigley’s PST (primary, secondary, tertiary) scheme. Primary activities involve the production of raw materials on the land and water, such as by agriculture, livestock farming, forestry, fishery, and mining. Secondary production refers to the process in which industries convert raw materials into finished products. The tertiary sector consists of all other industries but is mainly associated with the circulation of primary and secondary products and also domestic service at household level.⁶⁴ Given that the data relates to fathers, the focus has to be on male occupations

Before assessing the occupational structure, it is necessary to apportion those denominated simply as ‘labourer’ in the registers to a particular sector. They accounted for almost 30 per cent of the total of recorded fathers, though there were substantial regional differences in the proportion.⁶⁵ S. A. J. Keibek has made the most recent attempt to develop methods to allocate unspecified labourers using multivariate regression techniques.⁶⁶ This approach seems to work inasmuch as its results for 1851 compare very well with the distribution of labourers both on a national and on a county scale reported in the 1851 census (which introduced a new refined occupational classification and served as a datum for the Cambridge Group’s studies on occupation). He claims that this approach can be applied to data

⁶³ P. M. Kitson *et al.*, ‘The Creation of a Census of Adult Male Employment for England and Wales for 1817’ (unpublished paper, 2012), p. 2; S. A. J. Keibek ‘The Male Occupational Structure of England and Wales, 1600-1850’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 2017), pp. 12-25.

⁶⁴ The basic rationale of the PST system is to track a change in the nature of the economy in the course of the industrial revolution and its aftermath by looking at fluctuations in the proportion of the workforce engaged in the primary, secondary or tertiary sector. E. A. Wrigley, ‘The PST system of classifying occupations’ (unpublished paper, 2010).

⁶⁵ Kitson *et al.*, ‘Creation’, p. 10.

⁶⁶ For details of his methodology for allocating labourers to sectors, see section 3.1 of his doctoral thesis. Keibek, ‘Male’, pp. 57-64.

for smaller geographical units, but he consolidates some parishes into larger units.⁶⁷ Instead of borrowing his rather complicated method, this section, therefore, makes use of the 1831 census to allocate the non-specific group of labourers in the registers. The census is quite close in time to the study period, 1813-1820, and more importantly, includes the numbers of labourers employed in agriculture and non-agriculture on a parish-by-parish basis. The occupational data from the census no doubt have characteristic limitations. Above all, on this basis, labourers can be divided into only two groups – agricultural and non-agricultural – not into the three sectors. The dichotomy is, however, good enough for the statistical models presented below, as what is needed to ascertain the degree of urbanisation is just the proportion involved in non-agricultural occupations. (The fact that enumerators for the 1831 census were, as the Enumeration Abstract indicates, instructed to put miners into the non-agricultural group, rather than in the primary sector as in the PST system, is not a concern because there were no mines in Hampshire).⁶⁸

The source materials relating to transport infrastructure variables in my regression analysis are national and provincial trade directories, contemporary plans of waterways and D. J. Viner's survey of turnpike gates. The first two are used for water transport networks. As the *Universal British Directory* of 1792-1798, the *Hampshire Directory* of 1794 and the annual *Hampshire Repository* of 1799 indicate, some coastal parishes were associated with coasting vessel services and their stations.⁶⁹ Dwight Robinson estimates that the tonnage of coastal shipping increased from 212,000 to 505,000 tons between 1686 and 1776, about 1.5 per cent per annum.⁷⁰ Although this estimate of growth is less high than that for the carriage of goods

⁶⁷ Keibek, 'Male', pp. 64-71.

⁶⁸ The 1831 Census, Enumeration Abstract, p. vi. For information about the industrial background of Hampshire, see G. A. Cooke, *Topographical and Statistical Description of the County of Hants* (London, 1819), pp. 27-43.

⁶⁹ John Sadler, *Hampshire Directory* (Winchester, 1784), pp. 70, 74, 96, 114, 156-157; Barfoot and Wilkes, *Directory*, pp. 182-183; Robbins, *Repository*, p. 126.

⁷⁰ Dwight Robinson, 'Half the Story of The Rise of the English Shipping Industry', *Business History Review*, 41 (1967), pp. 303-308; 'Secret of British Power in the Age of Sail: Admiralty Records of the Coasting Fleet', *American Neptune*, 48 (1988), pp. 5-21.

by road (roughly 11 per cent according to John Chartres and Gerard Turnbull's estimate), the total weight of goods conveyed coastally far exceeded that carried by road.⁷¹ Characteristically, freight transported by sea was bulky and low-valued, though essential for urbanisation and industrialisation, including coal, iron, salt and timber.⁷² Thus, most timber and salt (from salterns at Lymington) produced in the New Forest was carried from shipyards in the inlets on the south coast of the forest to Portsmouth and from there shipped across the country.⁷³ In addition, inland navigable waterways such as the Andover canal, the Basingstoke canal and the Itchen Navigation played a key role in promoting inter-regional trade.⁷⁴ In the directories, information about inland navigation is so insufficient as to make it impossible to build up a full picture of water networks. In this context, contemporary plans for the waterways are a great alternative, as they show parishes that they passed through.⁷⁵

The publishers of the directories paid more attention to road transport networks, including stagecoach and carrier services, on most occasions providing names of the services, places which they commuted and their frequency in a week, but their information is so imbalanced between places that outcomes of statistical analysis using it as a variable could be distorted. Based on this information, M. J. Freeman establishes vertex connectivity (the total number of inward and outward movements of stagecoaches and carriers per week) for the principal parishes in Hampshire, probably a good numerical indicator for the scale of migrating people and freight.⁷⁶ However, the accuracy of transport information and its level of detail vary markedly from place to place. In *The Universal British Directory* of 1792-1798, for instance,

⁷¹ John Chartres and Gerard Turnbull, 'Road Transport', in Derek Aldcroft and M. J. Freeman (eds), *Transport in the Industrial Revolution* (Manchester, 1983), p. 85.

⁷² John Armstrong, *Vital Spark: The British Coastal Trade, 1700-1930* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 20-21.

⁷³ Philip Le Brocq, *Outline of a Plan for Making the Tract of Land Called the New Forest A Real Forest* (London, 1793), pp. 10-11, 41-42; Vancouver, *Agriculture*, pp. 419-425.

⁷⁴ For more detail of inland waterways in Hampshire, see section 1.2.3.

⁷⁵ Vine, *Waterways*.

⁷⁶ For more detail of the transport system in Hampshire, see section 1.2.3. Freeman, 'Transport', pp. 190, 210.

the information for the northern town of Basingstoke relates only to inbound journeys from London and does not give the names of the services.⁷⁷ By contrast, the information provided for the large towns of Southampton and Winchester is much more comprehensive, containing details not only of inward and outward London-bound journeys and calling points but also of networks linking these towns to other major hubs within Hampshire and neighbouring counties.⁷⁸ A more critical flaw, however, is that the *Directory* provides almost no information about transport systems in rural areas, which means that the possibility of a rural parish with high traffic is eliminated from the analysis. It might be falsely concluded that transport networks were correlated only with urban workhouses.

What I select instead as a road transport variable is the existence of turnpike gates. Turnpike trusts set up gates at various points on a stretch of their turnpike roads, at which a fixed toll was charged, but also people and goods gathered and re-dispersed. The locations of gates were associated with social and economic activities nearby, so their toll returns have been surveyed to identify fluctuations of traffic.⁷⁹ Wickham gate on the Gosport trust, for example, saw the returns reaching a peak every other Monday, since it was the market day at adjacent Fareham.⁸⁰ The list of turnpike gates employed in my regressions is based on D. J. Viner's survey.⁸¹ According to him, there were at least sixty-nine gates in Hampshire by the early nineteenth century. They did not concentrate in towns but rather spread across urban and rural parishes, which makes them very useful for my analysis focusing on regional variations.

⁷⁷ Grant, 'Towns', p. 197; Barfoot and Wilkes, *Directory*, p. 316.

⁷⁸ Barfoot and Wilkes, *Directory*, pp. 465-466, 918-919.

⁷⁹ John Copeland, 'An Essex Turnpike Gate', *The Journal of Transport History*, 6 (1963), pp. 87-94.

⁸⁰ Freeman, 'Turnpikes', pp. 426-430.

⁸¹ D. J. Viner, 'The Industrial Archaeology of Hampshire Roads: A Survey' *PHFCAS*, 26 (1969), pp. 155-172. The information is arranged here, <http://www.turnpikes.org.uk/Tollhouses%20of%20Hampshire.htm> (05 Nov. 2022).

The limitations of the information about traffic networks make it possible to categorise transport data only into ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ (existence or nonexistence), rather by supplying continuous numerical values representing the quantity. Given that there were regional differences in the volume of people and goods transported, an ideal model would explore how the existence of a workhouse was affected by traffic volume. Nonetheless, the presence of public transport infrastructure alone had meaningful effects, not merely causing an increase in traffic, but also perhaps attracting travelling people to linger, the overt concern of local authorities in charge of poor relief.

The source of data for socioeconomic variables included in my regression models is land tax returns. As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, historians began to use land tax records to map landholding patterns – since tax records show owners (and the resident householder, not necessarily the same), and the proportion of land tax borne by them.⁸² The land tax was first imposed in 1693 in the form of a poundage rate on personal and real property to support William III’s military campaigns against France, becoming a major part of the tax burden imposed upon landed interests during the eighteenth and to a much lesser extent the early nineteenth centuries. Despite being named a ‘land’ tax, it was initially designed as a general income tax, levied on three categories of income, namely profits and salaries, the value of goods and merchandise, and the annual value of the land. However, it proved too demanding to collect taxes on personal income, with the result that, by 1733, the tax was in practice raised almost entirely on land and real property.⁸³ Even earlier, by 1698, the direct poundage rate had been replaced by a system of county quotas, fossilising the proportion of the total contributed by each county, and this practice was subsequently extended into hundreds and parishes. Even

⁸² A. H. Johnson, *The Disappearance of the Small Landowner* (Oxford, 1909).

⁸³ D. B. Grigg, ‘The Land Tax Returns’, *Agricultural History Review*, 11 (1963), pp. 82-83; G. E. Mingay, ‘The Land Tax Assessments and the Small Landowner’, *Economic History Review*, New Series, 17 (1964), p. 382.

though the county quotas were fixed by statute in 1798, they were in practice unchanged from the 1690s and strikingly remained unaltered until 1963, when the tax was entirely abolished.⁸⁴

Land tax records are scattered across local record offices and in the National Archives, mainly in the form either of assessments or returns of tax paid. It is on the land tax assessments for 1798 housed in the National Archives (the series IR 23) that the following statistical work is based.⁸⁵ The 1798 returns were compiled under the Tax Perpetuation Act of 1798, covering the whole country.⁸⁶ This set of records is more valuable than later ones, not merely because of its scope and uniformity but also because, in 1798, the Land Tax Redemption Office was established to offer taxpayers the chance to redeem their tax so as to bring in more funds in wartime. In theory, even if the land tax had been redeemed, values should have been registered on the returns as a separate column. However, in some cases, redeemed properties thereafter randomly disappear, confusing the picture of the landholding structure.⁸⁷ The 1798 returns for Hampshire consist of three columns, the first giving names of proprietors, the second names of occupiers and the third sums assessed. My calculations are not based on the ownership column but on the column of occupiers who actually paid the tax in most cases.

Nonetheless, there are a number of dangers entailed in relying on land tax assessments, though these are not insurmountable, especially given that my objective is not to reconstruct landownership as such but rather to calculate the proportion of tax taken on by the biggest taxpayer as an indicator of how substantial their voice may have been in making decisions in their parishes. There are some structural problems that historians exploring landownership patterns face. For example, what was assessed was the value of a landholding, not its size,

⁸⁴ D. E. Ginter, *A Measure of Wealth: The English Land Tax in Historical Analysis* (London, 1992), p. 4.

⁸⁵ For Hampshire, IR 23/77 and IR 23/78.

⁸⁶ 38 Geo. III c. 60.

⁸⁷ Mingay, 'Land', pp. 382-383; Ginter, *Measure*, pp. 123-132; Richard Hoyle, 'Who Owned Earls Colne in 1798....or How to Squeeze More from the Land Tax', *The Local Historian*, 41 (2011), p. 268.

meaning that a certain amount of tax would not represent a certain acreage of land accurately.⁸⁸ In addition, as quite often even small owners had properties in more than one parish and farm boundaries might extend over more than one parish, historians may erroneously count someone as a smallholder owning a compact parcel of land, when he or she was, in reality, a large proprietor.⁸⁹ However, when we map the structure of taxpaying, these problems do not matter.

Among technical issues which remain, land tax assessments do not include all properties; some holdings were omitted for reasons that are very hard to pin down, though it is clear that smallholdings tend to be affected more.⁹⁰ As we focus on major holdings with high tax values, the omissions seem not so critical. The more intractable problem is that the same names often appear more than once in the returns for a parish. Ginter suggests that it is reasonable to assume that people with the same name were the same people. Nonetheless, I decided not to merge data about holdings under the same names.⁹¹ Technically, it is very hard to aggregate all holdings under the same names perfectly, and it is difficult to eliminate the possibility of making errors in this process. The result, however, is that I may sometimes have failed to identify all the largest taxpayers, because someone whose properties were scattered in pieces within a parish and which I have therefore counted separately may have been missed. Furthermore, even if the largest taxpayers are successfully identified, the proportion of the total that they paid may be underestimated in cases where they occupied other smallholdings as well, which are not counted in my analysis. The average amount of land tax and acres per taxpayer will be additionally computed based on the land tax returns of 1798. These two variables are suggestive of the overall economic capacity of taxpayers, from whom parish officers were

⁸⁸ Mingay, 'Land', pp. 384-386.

⁸⁹ Mingay, 'Land', pp. 387-388; Ginter, *Measure*, p 31.

⁹⁰ Ginter, *Measure*, pp. 33-44.

⁹¹ Ginter, *Measure*, pp. 14-18.

drawn, while the proportion of land tax paid by the largest taxpayer is an indicator of the extent to which the structure of power was monopolised.

2.2.4 Regression results

My multiple regression analysis (the Ordinary Least Squares model) will treat the number of workhouses possessed by individual parishes by 1803, as a dependent variable – the thing to be explained – and population density (persons per acre derived from the 1801 census) and the proportion of the non-primary population (from 1813-20 Parish Register Occupational Data made by the Cambridge Group), the existence of turnpike gates and the accessibility of water transport facilities (canals and seaports), and the percentage of land tax paid by the largest taxpayer, the average amount of land tax per taxpayer, and acres of land per taxpayer as independent variables (possible explanatory factors).⁹² As already outlined, the first two independent variables are chosen on the basis of the hypothesis that demographic features related to the degree of urbanisation may have shaped patterns; the next two test the hypothesis that significance might attach to the proximity of transportation infrastructure, associated with movements of people and goods; the last three relate to the hypothesis that the varying social and economic conditions of those dominating parish politics may have contributed to the varying incidence of workhouses.

The regression analysis takes the form of three equations allotted to each division. Arguably, interaction terms obtained by multiplying those explanatory variables by categorical dummy variables of the divisions should be added to the regressions to support intra-county

⁹² There was no Hampshire parish with more than one workhouse by 1803, so the dependent variable is binary (0 or 1). One might suggest using logistic regression because the dichotomous values can be taken as categorical (the presence/absence of workhouse). However, my dependent variable is continuous, as some large towns possibly had several workhouses simultaneously. For example, Winchester had three workhouses in 1776, as can be seen in Figure 2.3. To employ a logistic regression means that the possibility of multiple workhouses located in one place is ruled out. For categorical dependent variables and logistic analysis, see Feinstein and Thomas, *Making*, pp. 385-389.

comparisons of the relative importance of particular factors.⁹³ Without interaction terms, it is impossible to state that the effect (coefficient) of a certain variable was greater for one division than for other ones. What we can identify from my analysis allocating the divisions to separate models is just the mix and relative significance of explanatory variables *within* a division. However, there are reasons not to take the possible further step. The addition of interaction terms can cause multicollinearity problems arising from high correlations between explanatory variables and interaction terms. This is the case for my analysis in that, if interaction terms are included, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for some variables would soar to over 70 (VIF exceeding 10 is usually regarded as indicating multicollinearity issues).⁹⁴ In fact, considering the main goal of my statistical work is to assess different dynamics of the explanatory variables for each division, rather than to estimate exact coefficients of every variable and figure out differences between divisions, the three-equation regression seems acceptable.

⁹³ For interaction terms, see Feinstein and Thomas, *Making*, pp. 286-291.

⁹⁴ For multicollinearity, see Feinstein and Thomas, *Making*, pp. 321-323.

Table 2.5 Regression results of the correlation of demographic, transport, and socioeconomic variables with workhouse distributions of the three divisions by 1803

	Arable		Coastal		Pastoral	
	β	<i>t</i> -statistic	β	<i>t</i> -statistic	β	<i>t</i> -statistic
Constant	0.029	0.570	0.208	1.046	3.624	3.894
Population density	0.118*** (0.189)	2.862***	-0.003 (-0.052)	-0.458	-4.322 (-0.364)	-1.467
Non-primary proportion	0.004*** (0.239)	3.459***	0.002 (0.106)	0.599	-0.019* (-0.725)	-1.978*
Road Transport	0.132*** (0.174)	2.638***	0.398*** (0.373)	3.033***	0.515** (0.523)	2.266**
Water Transport	0.083 (0.088)	1.464	0.387*** (0.376)	2.889***	1.799** (0.801)	2.941**
Land tax concentration	-0.004*** (-0.215)	-2.630***	-0.014*** (-0.548)	-3.011***	-0.054** (-0.721)	-2.864**
Acres per taxpayer	0.000 (0.101)	0.897	0.003*** (0.622)	2.873***	-0.007** (-0.550)	-2.313**
Average land tax	-0.000 (-0.017)	-0.040	-0.000 (-0.196)	-0.804	-0.001** (-0.848)	-2.593**
Adjusted R ²	0.292		0.655		0.351	
N	210		34		20	

Note: Statistical significance: ***p < 0.01; **p < 0.05; *p < 0.1. The independent variables of Road Transport and Water Transport are dummy. Road Transport = 1 if a parish had turnpike gates, 0 otherwise. Water Transport = 1 if a parish had water transport infrastructure, 0 otherwise. Standardised coefficients are given in parentheses.

Source: See text.

In the case of the arable division, the four variables of population density, proportion of non-primary population, road transport and land tax concentration had a statistically meaningful relationship with the possession of a workhouse. Population density and the proportion of those involved in non-primary sectors are indicators of the degree of urbanisation, so the positive results reflect the fact that the majority of arable workhouses were located in urbanised areas such as market towns. In particular, among the important variables, the proportion of the non-primary population was the most significant on the basis of standardised coefficients.⁹⁵ In the same vein, the positive association of road transport infrastructure (the

⁹⁵ Standardised coefficients, sometimes called beta coefficients, are created to compare the relative significance of independent variables in different measurement units by standardising their coefficients to be unitless.

existence of turnpike gates) suggests that parishes with a workhouse also functioned as focal points for road traffic in the arable division. Standardised coefficients reveal that the second strongest, though negatively correlated, variable was land tax concentration, namely the proportion of land tax borne by the largest payer. The negative association indicates that ‘close’ parishes under monopolistic or oligarchic control were less likely to possess a workhouse. Together with the other significant variables, this also offers support for the hypothesis that in the arable division, workhouses were prevalent in urban parishes, characteristically dominated by smallholders rather than by one or a few wealthy taxpayers.

In the case of the coastal division, transport factors were statistically significant, whereas population density and the proportion of the population in non-primary economic activity were not. This suggests that, unlike the arable division, workhouses in the coastal division were not skewed towards urban parishes but rather were to be found in ones with well-organised road or water transport infrastructure. The parishes of North Stoneham and South Stoneham with workhouses were, for example, quite rural, but on the Itchen Navigation.⁹⁶ North Stoneham had a turnpike gate as well. The social structure was statistically more powerful than the transport ones according to standardised coefficients. As in the case of the arable division, land tax concentration was inversely correlated with workhouse distribution, meaning that coastal workhouses were more likely to belong to ‘open’ parishes with a diversified structure of power.

As applied to the pastoral division, the model shows that the proportion of the non-primary population was correlated with workhouse distribution, but negatively, in contrast to the arable division, where, as we have seen, there is a positive relationship between the two

⁹⁶ The population density of North Stoneham and South Stoneham was around 14 and 16 per 100 acres each, while the Hampshire average was about 22 and their proportion of those not engaged in primary sectors was 26 and 45 per cent, while the Hampshire average was 62 per cent.

variables. In other words, pastoral workhouses were more likely to exist in parishes with more of their population engaged in primary sectors. This result reflects the fact that the pastoral division was largely devoid of urban towns as we have defined them. Road and water transport variables had a positive association with workhouse distribution – even though the pastoral division was relatively poorly served with improved transport infrastructure, as we saw in Chapter one. There was, for instance, no important locus at which regular coach and carrier services called, except for Lyndhurst, and no inland navigable waterway running through pastoral districts. However, nine parishes, mainly in northeastern pastoral areas through which three principal thoroughfares from London passed, had turnpike gates and, out of the parishes, six possessed workhouses.⁹⁷ Beaulieu, which had a workhouse, was the only parish with a harbour in Buckler's Hard.⁹⁸ However, for the pastoral division, the most significant variables were socioeconomic ones, based on standardised coefficients. The variables of land tax concentration, acres per taxpayer and the average amount of land tax were all negatively associated with workhouse distribution. As in the other divisions, pastoral workhouses were more likely to be established in 'open' parishes having many small taxpayers. Furthermore, the negative results for acres per taxpayer and the average amount of land tax stand as testimony to the fact that the smaller the general wealth of taxpayers was, the higher the probability of having a workhouse for pastoral parishes. This contrasts with the coastal division where the more acres per taxpayer, the greater the probability of possessing a workhouse.

The overall outcome provides us with a variety of insights into workhouses. First of all, workhouses were not merely urban affairs, except in the arable division, which highlights the

⁹⁷ The three main roads from London: one from Kingston, Sheet Bridge to Portsmouth (now A3 road), one from Knightsbridge, Basingstoke, Andover to Salisbury (now A30 road), and one from Kingston, Guildford, Alton to Winchester (now A31 road). Viner, 'Industrial', pp. 158-160.

⁹⁸ In Buckler's Hard, the industry of shipbuilding commenced its operations in 1743. G. N. Godwin, 'Bucklers Hard and its Ships', *PHFCAS*, 2 (1890), pp. 59-76.

overrepresentation of urban workhouses in previous research (as discussed above) and bolsters the case for attending to rural workhouses (in this thesis, we will look at a number of rural workhouses as well as some urban ones). Previous workhouse studies have maintained that towns initiated workhouse movements from the earliest example at Colchester, Essex established in 1613, while Corporations of the Poor were founded in large cities in order to set up workhouses from the end of the seventeenth century.⁹⁹ The Workhouse Test Act of 1723 provided stimulus to a workhouse movement, and by the mid-eighteenth century, most market towns had a workhouse.¹⁰⁰ In Hampshire, many urban workhouses were, likewise, built in the 1720s and 1730s. However, the county witnessed a couple of other periods notable for new foundations, in the 1770s and 1790s. During the latter decade, in particular, there was, as the next chapter will show, a distinct spread of workhouses into rural areas, such that urban workhouses became less typical.

Second, as the transport facilities accelerated freight flows and lured people from elsewhere, the distribution of workhouses for all the divisions was affected by the volume of the movements rather than just by static demographic elements. A report of 1834 from the Royal Commission on the administration and practical operation of the poor laws offers several cases of parishes close to turnpike roads or navigable rivers having trouble with the casual poor from other places. The parish of Farningham, Kent, was returned as being ‘much burdened by the expense of the casual poor, as five miles of turnpike road are within the parish’; ‘from 1,000 to 1,500 have passed in a day; 200 or 300 of them take possession of the outbuilding of farms situate [sic] by the road side for the night; many of them beg their way’.¹⁰¹ The town of South

⁹⁹ Webb and Webb, *English*, pp. 215-216; Oxley, *Poor*, pp. 80-81; Alannah Tomkins, ‘Poverty and the workhouse’ in David Hitchcock and Julia McClure (eds), *The Routledge History of Poverty, c. 1450-1800* (London, 2020), p. 241.

¹⁰⁰ Oxley, *Poor*, pp. 82-85; Slack, *English*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁰¹ *PP* (1834), xxviii, p. 211A.

Shields, bounded on one side by the river Tyne, navigable at that point, and on the other side by the village of Westoe with docks and manufactories, suffered from a great number of relief applications made by those whose settlement could not be ascertained. Overseers of this parish commented that ‘all parishes and townships bordering on navigable rivers are more or less affected by the same circumstances’.¹⁰² According to the 1803 returns (a year of demobilisation, as we have noted), the total number of non-parishioners relieved by Hampshire parishes was 13,846, of whom parishes with turnpike gates or water transport facilities or both dealt with more than 75 per cent (10,423).

In this context, workhouses in parishes with developed transport infrastructure served among others a multitude of those who were migrating to seek employment or for other reasons and might join the casual poor (in the sense of people occasionally relieved), often without acquiring a settlement. The connection has been largely omitted in existing research focusing on the permanent poor in workhouses. As Green notes, the existence of a workhouse, as an unpleasant residential institution, might have been a threat to travellers who might anticipate having to rely on parish relief, namely vagrants, deterring them from applying for the relief or even entering a parish having a workhouse.¹⁰³ However, in practice, workhouses did offer short-term incarceration for vagrants, in most cases with a bare minimum of comfort – even before the establishment of dedicated ‘casual wards’ under the New Poor Law.¹⁰⁴ It was also possible to send them, especially habitual vagrants, into a house of correction to be passed back to their parishes of settlement with a short or little term of imprisonment.¹⁰⁵ It is likely that

¹⁰² *PP* (1834), xxviii, p. 89.

¹⁰³ Green, *Capital*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁴ *PP* (1834), xxviii, pp. 208 a, 459 a, 460 a, 465a, 512a, 519a, 671a, 175c. For cases of workhouses in London and Middlesex, see Rogers, ‘Policing’, pp. 127-147; Tim Hitchcock, *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London* (London, 2004); Tim Hitchcock, Adam Crymble and Louise Falcini, ‘Loose, Idle and Disorderly: Vagrant Removal in Late Eighteenth-Century Middlesex’, *Social History*, 39 (2014), pp. 509-527.

¹⁰⁵ Kiran Mehta, ‘Courts and Prisons: Criminal Imprisonment in London metropolis, 1750-1845’ (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 2021), pp. 58, 202. I am grateful to Kiran Mehta for providing me with her thesis.

workhouses served as in effect a ‘quarantine’ centre, accommodating those under investigation to establish their parish of settlement, those about to be removed to their own parishes of settlement or who had just been removed from other parishes.¹⁰⁶

Third, all over Hampshire, workhouses were rare in so-called ‘close’ parishes characterised by the existence of a single or a very few overwhelmingly wealthy taxpayers who were capable of exercising tight control over parochial administration in all aspects.¹⁰⁷ Particularly in the pastoral division, workhouses were more common in parishes with a majority of poorer smallholders, as the regression results of acre per taxpayer and average land tax show. Taken collectively, places dominated by those with meagre socioeconomic foundations seem to have had more of a taste for workhouses. This is notable given that a workhouse scheme was capital intensive, including construction costs and overheads, even though these varied considerably depending on the size of the house.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the utility of workhouses has been underestimated because it has been supposed that the deterrent effect of workhouses and the workhouse test – denying any relief to anyone who refused to reside in the house – never succeeded. Paul Slack, for example, says that ‘It is questionable ... whether deterrence worked in anything more than the shortest of short terms’ and ‘outdoor relief for both impotent and able-bodied slowly returned’.¹⁰⁹ Other historians have similarly pointed out

¹⁰⁶ Alys Levene and Susannah Ottaway, ‘Dependency, the Workhouse and Family Ties in Later Eighteenth-Century England’ (unpublished paper), p. 9.

¹⁰⁷ One contemporary commentator defined close parishes in terms not of whether landownership was consolidated or not but of who actually paid land tax and what proportion of the tax was covered by a few major taxpayers. ‘The term ‘close’ parish in this sense may also be applied to parishes in which the owners of land may be numerous and not acting in concert: but where the whole parish is rented by one or a few persons, who pay the whole rates and have a like interest in keeping them down’. Quoted in Banks, ‘Scandal’, p. 53.

¹⁰⁸ The five major rural incorporations in Norfolk (Loddon and Clavering Incorporation formed in 1764, East and West Flegg Incorporation in 1775, Mitford and Launditch Incorporation in 1775, Forehoe Incorporation in 1776, Tunstead and Happing Incorporation in 1785) spent over £40,000 on purchasing land and erecting and equipping their workhouses. Digby, *Palaces*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁹ Slack, *English*, p. 42.

that outdoor relief, notably pensions, did not disappear or reappeared shortly after a workhouse was built, making it doubtful that workhouses held back the growth of relief expenditure.¹¹⁰

We might, however, question whether smallholders expected workhouses to reduce poor law expenditure only by eliminating outdoor relief or by bringing about a major shift in the balance of the relief system. Some parishes in big cities proceeded on that basis, in that workhouses were built on a large scale so as to be able to deter and implement a workhouse test, stopping all or some parts of outdoor relief and compelling relief applicants to enter the house.¹¹¹ As their workhouses opened in the decade after the Workhouse Test Act of 1723, several market towns in rural areas in Kent also discontinued, if not completely, at least a large part of outdoor assistance.¹¹² However, the enthusiasm for using workhouses as a means of reforming poor relief patterns did not last for long.¹¹³ Nevertheless, it is significant that even after this loss of enthusiasm, workhouses continued in operation. This suggests that smallholders may have had different motivations: to compensate for the weakness of their parish officers. The insecurity of economic conditions often prevented parish officers in such places from dedicating themselves to official duties. Workhouses were, therefore, useful as administrative devices to test whether or not a relief applicant was desperate without time-consuming face-to-face enquiries.¹¹⁴ Moreover, where the hold of parish officers over their communities was feeble, workhouses could serve as a weapon for them, notably in negotiating with those claiming parochial assistance. As we will discuss in Chapter four, it was common

¹¹⁰ Hindle, *Parish*, p. 188; Tomkins, *Experience*, pp. 43-45.

¹¹¹ In the parish of St Martin-in-the-Fields, London, the provision of parish pensions was completely extinct for at least fifteen years after a workhouse was erected in 1725. Boulton, 'Indoors', p. 161.

¹¹² Mary Barker-Read, 'The Treatment of the Aged Poor in Five Selected West Kent Parishes from Settlement to Speenhamland, 1662-1797' (Ph.D. thesis, Open University, 1988), p. 220.

¹¹³ St Martin-in-the-Fields resumed outdoor pensions by the late 1740s. Boulton, 'Indoors', p. 163. In the town parishes of Kent, there was the restoration of outdoor relief provision, in part because of the frequent outbreak of contagious disease and a large number of fatalities within their workhouses. Barker-Read, 'Treatment', pp. 225-227.

¹¹⁴ Besley, Coate and Guinnane, 'Incentives', pp. 245-70.

to see workhouse offers given to applicants whom the officers identified as habitual applicants or who requested extra aid or asked to increase their allowances. In addition, when paupers whose applications were turned down by their parishes appealed to magistrates to overturn the refusal, the effect of a workhouse offer was – as one parish officer of North Mymms, Hertfordshire, Joseph Sabine noted – among other things, to remove one ground on which paupers might complain to magistrates.¹¹⁵

2.3 Conclusion

In summary, there were regional differences relating to diverse aspects of the poor-relief system within Hampshire. Per capita poor-relief expenditure was highest, and the popularity of workhouses was lowest in the arable division, whereas the expenditure was lowest and the popularity of workhouses highest in the coastal division. Indicators for the pastoral division lay in between. The ANOVA tests suggest that the interactions between the two sets of categorical variables of three divisions and the presence of workhouses had a statistically significant relationship with per capita poor relief expenditure. However, the direction of the relationship varied by division, which suggests that workhouse functioning may also have differed from division to division. Hampshire workhouses tended to proliferate in the period of French wars, mirroring, though not perfectly, the trend of public investment such as enclosure movements and canal construction. Statistical analysis using multiple regressions demonstrates that a variety of factors were meaningfully correlated with workhouse distribution. More importantly, the combination of statistically significant variables also varied by division. The regional variations shed light on different workhouse ecologies. The following chapters will develop these statistical findings and hypotheses using manuscript records.

¹¹⁵ *PP* (1817), lxxxiv, *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Poor Laws*, p. 72.

Chapter Three: Workhouses and parishes

The previous chapter charted the uneven distribution of Hampshire workhouses between divisions and demonstrated by statistical means that several factors affected their locations. This chapter delves more deeply into various aspects of welfare supply through workhouses by using the manuscript records that parishes themselves produced. The chapter distinguishes between urban and rural workhouses and also aggregates workhouses on the basis of the divisions and explores regional differences in patterns of their provision and management.¹

The first section looks at the establishment of workhouses in Hampshire. It determines the timing of decisions to erect, purchase or rent buildings for use as a workhouse and external circumstances affecting these. Hampshire cases were not far from national trends (insofar as we know what these were). It then illustrates the distribution of workhouses by size across Hampshire and suggests that most large workhouses were, unsurprisingly, located in populous towns, while small workhouses were usually in less populated rural parishes. However, we need to explain why a few towns possessed only a small workhouse and, by contrast, some small parishes a large one. Finally, the ways in which the initial establishment was funded are dealt with. Two common means were issuing bonds and support from local elites.

The second section investigates different types of workhouse management. They are distinguished into three types: direct management by parish officers, the appointment of workhouse masters, and a more inclusive contract farming out both the indoor and outdoor poor. The chapter explores the characteristics of these different systems and tries to shed light

¹ For the scale of surviving records produced by Hampshire parishes and the extent of this thesis on them, see Table 1. in the Introduction.

on shifts as time passed. It establishes that there were regional differences in the chronology of changes in the management types, associated with differing practices and success in setting poor inmates to work.

Overall, the chapter argues that variations in the establishment and management of workhouses under the Old Poor Law regime reflected varying combinations of parochial circumstances. The Old Poor Law allowed parishes, as the basic unit of poor relief administration, to exercise their discretionary powers not only as to whether and how to set up workhouses and but also as to how to manage them in the light of local circumstances. The chapter suggests that the choices they made reflected parish populations and regional locations – but also that there were more individual variations.

3.1 The (re)establishment of workhouses

As individual parishes had considerable discretion in establishing workhouses before the passage of the New Poor Law of 1834, the timing, size and ways of funding differed parish by parish. Inasmuch as it represented an expensive project likely to provoke public attention, a workhouse was not established on a whim but after due consideration of the circumstances.

3.1.1 The timing of (re)establishments

The 1776 returns suggest that there were forty-six workhouses in Hampshire, whereas the estimated number of workhouses in operation by 1834, based on notes for 1834-1835 made by Colonel Charles Ashe A'Court, an assistant commissioner, was sixty-four workhouses, as we already noted in the previous chapter. Considering that some workhouses disappeared, especially between 1776 and 1803, it can be assumed that around thirty workhouses were (re)established in the county between 1776 and 1834. Unfortunately, most of the parish records are too intermittent or cover too limited a time for it to be possible to tell the full story of any

given workhouse establishment, so scattered accounts need to be gathered so as to build up an overview. In offering such an overview, I will divide the period into three, namely before 1790, between 1790 and 1815, and after 1815. Circumstances in these different periods differed, such that workhouses are likely to have been decided upon for different reasons and expected to perform different functions within each. This section also suggests that there were more differences between rural and urban areas than by region in relation to when a decision to establish or re-establish a workhouse was made.²

² As the exact time of the completion of workhouse buildings is rarely specified, I will instead select the time of making an agreement to establish or re-establish a workhouse. As a result, the years presented in Table 3.1 were probably a few years earlier than the actual start of the workhouse operation.

Table 3.1 Identified years of the (re)establishment of workhouses

Divisions	Character	Parishes	Initial establishment	Re-establishment
Arable	Rural	Whitchurch	1771 (purchase)	1796 (alter)
		Petersfield		1771 (purchase)
		Heckfield	1778 (build)	
		Bishopstoke	1792 (build)	
		Droxford	1794 (purchase)	
		Kingsclere	1796 (purchase)	
		Overton	1796 (build)	
		Bishop's Waltham		1808 (build)
		Hursley	1829 (alter)	
		Micheldever	1827 (rent)	
		Hartley Wintney	1833 (rent)	
	Urban	Ringwood	1725 (build)	
		Basingstoke	1726	
		Andover	1726	
		Alton	1727 (build)	1792 (build)
		Isle of Wight (Newport)	1729	1771 (build)
Winchester			1795	
Coastal	Rural	South Stoneham	1720 (build)	1792 (rent)
		Milton	1790 (purchase)	1813 (purchase)
		North Stoneham	1800	
	Urban	Portsmouth	1725 (build)	
		Portsea	1730 (build)	
		Titchfield	1732 (rent)	
		Lymington	1738 (build)	
		Christchurch	1745 (purchase)	
		Southampton		1776 (build)
		Alverstoke		1799 (build)
Pastoral	Rural	Boldre		1792 (build)
		Farnborough	1793 (build)	
		Headley	1794 (build)	
		Fawley		1796 (build)
		Minstead		1805 (alter)

Source: See bibliography for the archival evidence of Hampshire parishes.

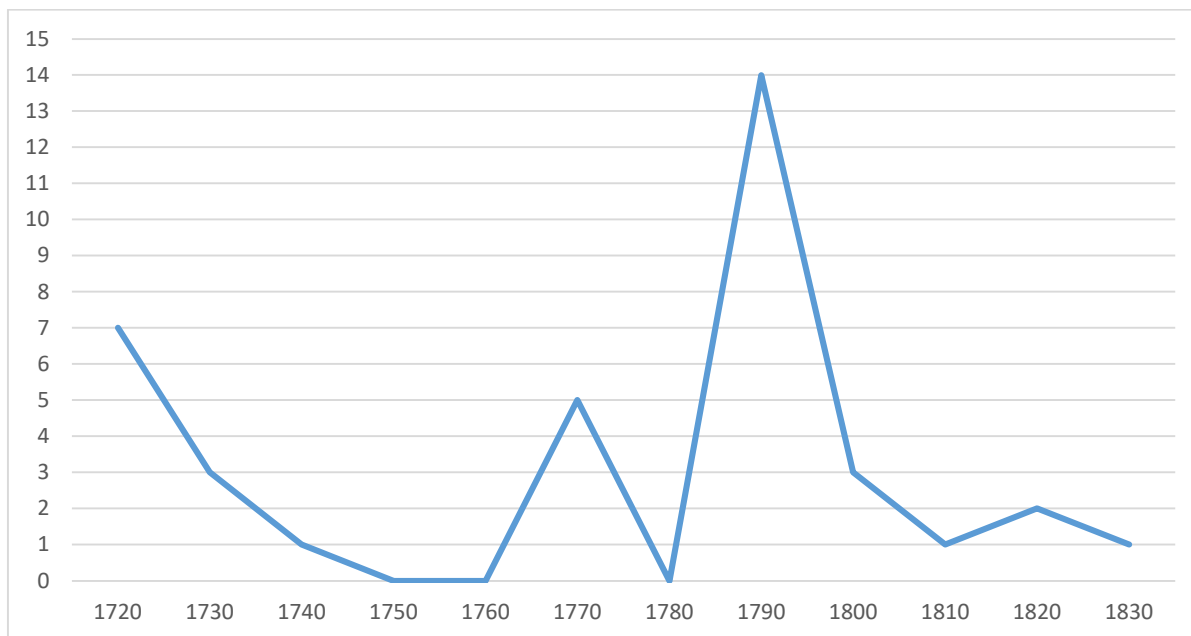


Figure 3.1 Distribution of (re)establishment years

Source: Based on data used for Table 3.1.

3.1.1.1 Before 1790

The first national boom in founding parish workhouses was prompted by the passage of the Workhouse Test Act of 1723, although before that, there had been at least forty parish workhouses across the country, essentially independent parochial initiatives. The number of workhouses founded in England in the next three decades has been estimated as 600.³ Hampshire was affected by the great movement, in that ten workhouses can be identified as having been established in the 1720s and 1730s (Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1). The new workhouses were chiefly in urban parishes which would have more than 2,000 inhabitants in 1801 (the threshold beyond which this thesis counts parishes as ‘urban’), much as Hitchcock finds in Surrey, where all thirteen new foundations identified by him as having been opened in these two decades were in urban parishes.⁴

³ The number of workhouses is clearly a conservative estimate of the actual number because it represents workhouses for which records are left to remark a date of their foundation. Hitchcock, ‘Workhouses’, p. 218.

⁴ See Chapter one for my distinction between urban and rural parishes. In the case of Essex, only three out of eighteen workhouses founded in the 1720s and 1730s were, however, located in urban parishes. Hitchcock,

One can claim that high poor rates prompted workhouse establishments, based on Hitchcock's finding that southeast counties with the highest incidence of workhouse foundations paid more for poor relief than did other counties.⁵ However, the concentration of Hampshire workhouses in populous towns before 1790 suggests that the foundations were not merely the result of concerns about heavy relief burdens but also of the different nature of urban and rural poverty. Urban parishes in Hampshire, as seen in the previous chapter, spent less per capita on poor relief than their rural counterparts did, even though their total poor relief expenditure was higher. Most rural parishes in the early eighteenth century had relatively simple tasks in relation to poor relief. They just supported permanently disabled and temporarily sick or injured people and assisted victims of occasional hardships caused by seasonal, but largely predictable, employment trends. Some if not all of their communities were small and 'close', face to face, so that the parish officers could easily discern who deserved to be paid in money or kind, and there was no need for a special institution for the destitute.⁶ Moreover, even in rural but 'open' parishes, there were a variety of options for the housing of the poor incoming from elsewhere, not involving establishing a residential institution, such as taking over abandoned farmhouses and squatting on waste. Such housing was occasionally permitted by local landlords who hoped to profit from fines and rents, even though their gain potentially led to an increase in poor relief expenditure.⁷ By contrast, urban parishes were naturally susceptible to non-seasonal and less predictable economic fluctuations and had to accommodate the migrating population. In the course of the eighteenth century, urban growth

'Workhouses', Appendix: Workhouse Foundations Listed by County, pp. 258-281. However, we should keep in mind that urban workhouses might be overrepresented because urban parishes tended to be well-documented and their records' survival rate is also relatively high.

⁵ Hitchcock, 'Workhouses', Appendix: Workhouse Foundations Listed by County, p. 223.

⁶ Poynter, *Society*, pp. 14-15; Boyer, *Economic*, p. 23.

⁷ John Broad, 'Housing the Rural Poor in Southern England, 1650-1850', *Agricultural History Review*, 48 (2000), pp. 153-156. As we will discuss below, in the 1790s when expenditure was on the rise, some rural parishes in Hampshire decided to build a workhouse, probably in the hope that it could offer cheaper accommodation to cut rent support.

depended more on a persistent influx of migrants from the countryside than on natural increase, whereas the pattern reversed in the nineteenth century.⁸ As a result, the scale of demand could capriciously fluctuate, and parish officers could be overloaded with work to determine the legitimacy of relief applications. These circumstances encouraged the adoption of the deterrent workhouse and workhouse test, a key device for distinguishing the deserving from the non-deserving poor, sanctioned by the 1723 Act, and also the use of workhouses as ‘quarantine centres’ for immigrants, as discussed above.

It is, however, doubtful that any such deterrence strategy contained numbers of claimants over the long term, and this may well explain why the popularity of workhouse establishments fell from the 1740s.⁹ In Hampshire, only one workhouse can be identified as having been founded from the 1740s to 1760s. East Anglia, however, entered another phase of reforming poor relief as early as the 1750s by embarking on multi-functional workhouse projects under local acts of Parliament. The local acts empowered parishes to form local incorporations, which would found joint workhouses of a large size to provide profitable employment for the able-bodied poor and specialist facilities for the infirm poor. By 1758, a house of industry was completed at Nacton in Suffolk and reported to be successful both in the reduction of poor relief expenditure and the better maintenance of the poor.¹⁰ All the wars at the mid-century were, however, associated with high taxation and high interest rates, an obstacle for ambitious local projects.¹¹ It was, therefore, not until the 1760s that either in East Anglia or nationwide was there a marked upsurge in demand for local acts for incorporation. According to S. J. Thompson’s estimate based on Julian Hoppit and Joanna Innes’s dataset,

⁸ Corfield, *Impact*, pp. 99-123; Richard Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain 1780-1914: Class, Capitalism and Construction* (London, 1989), p. 8.

⁹ Slack, *English*, pp. 42-43.

¹⁰ Webb and Webb, *English*, pp. 127-128; Digby, *Palaces*, pp. 32-36.

¹¹ Joanna Innes, ‘The Domestic Face of the Military-Fiscal State: Government and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, in Innes (ed), *Inferior*, pp. 73-74.

there were seventy-eight bills proposing such incorporations in twenty-two sessions during the 1760s and 1770s, roughly two and a half times as many as the twenty-nine bills in twenty-one sessions during the 1740s and 1750s.¹² The second spike of the 1770s in Hampshire was affected by this movement. In 1770, the Isle of Wight held a meeting of principal local inhabitants and decided to promote a bill to enable them to follow the Suffolk model of incorporations and workhouses.¹³ Under local acts of 1771 and 1776, they obtained authority for an incorporation, including all the parishes of the isle, and a spacious workhouse was built to accommodate 700 paupers in the parish of Newport.¹⁴ Southampton also set up an incorporation and opened a workhouse capable of holding 130 under a local act of 1772.¹⁵ The preambles of the acts for the isle and Southampton, which were nearly the same as those for Suffolk incorporations, indicates that they modelled themselves on the Suffolk initiative. This statutory framework remained in force in these localities even after the enactment of the New Poor Law of 1834.

3.1.1.2 1790 – 1815

In the 1790s came the third and highest peak, the last under the Old Poor Law. This runs counter to a widely accepted notion that, in this period, the workhouse system was, to a large extent, replaced by radical outdoor relief schemes represented by the Speenhamland system of 1795 and by mutual associations, such as friendly societies, which were encouraged by the Rose's Act of 1793.¹⁶ In fact, workhouses were popular, at least in Hampshire, such that

¹² S. J. Thompson, 'Population growth and corporations of the poor, 1660-1841', in Briggs, Kitson, and Thompson (eds), *Population*, pp. 197-200.

¹³ Webb and Webb, *English*, pp. 139-140.

¹⁴ 11 Geo. III. c. 43 and 16 Geo. III. c. 53.

¹⁵ 13 Geo. III c. 50.

¹⁶ Cosma Orsi, 'The Political Economy of Inclusion: The Rise and Fall of the Workhouse System', *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 39 (2017), p. 475.

during these years fourteen workhouses were (re)established, mainly in rural areas, spread out across pastoral, coastal and agricultural regions.¹⁷

In Hampshire, a total of eleven such rural parishes selected the workhouse as a means of reforming poor relief administration so as to reduce poor relief spending that was growing on trend and was at its height in 1796 and 1801, due to two consecutive harvest failures and rocketing grain prices.¹⁸ In fact, although there were these two peaks in the nominal costs of poor relief at the turn of the century, the level of real cost – that is, adjusted for wheat price trends from the early 1790s to 1814 – was in general rather steady, according to D. A. Baugh's analysis of three southern counties (Essex, Kent and Sussex).¹⁹ Price rises increased poor relief expenditure, but they also raised agricultural profits for farmers, who constituted a large proportion of the ratepayers in rural parishes. It was this that made it possible for ratepayers to launch experimental redistributive schemes (such as the Speenhamland system), especially in the rural south and east of England. In this context, we should not be surprised that the eleven parishes in Hampshire felt able to establish a workhouse, a capital-intensive undertaking.

The key thrust of workhouse projects in this third period was to create profit to offset a part of poor relief expenses by employing workhouse inmates, even though some arable parishes with little industrial employment established a workhouse for other reasons, as we will discuss below. This might seem an anachronism because contemporaries are said to have given up on the vision of the workhouse as a profitable enterprise after the early eighteenth century.²⁰

¹⁷ See chapter one for details of situations in the 1790s.

¹⁸ The rate of increase of per capita poor relief expenditure for Hampshire between 1776 and 1803 was 93.2 per cent.

¹⁹ Baugh, 'Cost', pp. 54-62.

²⁰ 'The general thought of the proposers runs upon the employing the poor by workhouses ... those proposals come vastly short of the main design ... all these workhouses tend to the encrease and not the relief of the poor' Daniel Defoe, *Giving Alms no Charity, and Employing the Poor a Grievance to the Nation* (London, 1704), p. 14; 'The failure of most attempts for employing the poor, has been generally owing to the expecting too much profit from their labour: for, alas! What great gains can be hop'd for, from old, infirm people, who are past labour, or young unexperienced children, who have every thing to learn?' *An Account of Several Work-houses for Employing and Maintaining the Poor* (London, 1725), p. iv; Poynter, *Society*, pp. 15-16.

Nonetheless, the idea of a profitable workhouse did not vanish completely. We should remember that Jeremy Bentham still articulated a vision of a great network of workhouses employing paupers to generate profits in the early nineteenth century.²¹

One local inspiration was no doubt the much-publicised model of a ‘house of industry’ in the Isle of Wight. When William Gilpin led the re-establishment of Boldre workhouse in the New Forest, for instance, he referred to the House of Industry as a good example when he advanced a plan for a well-regulated workhouse ‘with a coercive power to make them work, who are able’.²² The Boldre workhouse set up a couple of looms and a number of wheels for spinning and weaving at the outset and later added other manufactories for knitting gloves and making watchchains under contracts with local businessmen.²³ Another pastoral workhouse in Farnborough possessed a linen manufactory.²⁴ The workhouse of South Stoneham in the coastal division set the poor to make shoes and, in particular, children to knit stockings.²⁵ Whitchurch and Overton on the River Test, though they were rural parishes in the arable division with no more than 2,000 inhabitants in 1801, were exceptional in that they had strong local textile industries based on water mills, so their workhouses also incorporated woollen and sacking manufactories.²⁶

By contrast, the other three rural parishes in the arable divisions of Bishopstoke, Droxford, and Kingsclere, which opened new workhouses in the 1790s, had no significant

²¹ Poynter, *Society*, pp. 108-109; Richard Ashcraft ‘Lockean Ideas, Poverty, and the Development of Liberal Political Theory’ In, John Brewer and Susan Staves (eds), *Early Modern Conceptions of Property* (London, 1995), p. 49.

²² William Gilpin, Henry Addington - New poor house at Lymington to be taken on forest land, 20 September 1786, DRO, 152M/C/1786/OZ/7. I am grateful to Joanna Innes for providing me this record.

²³ Walter, Robbins and Gilpin, *Account*, pp. 8, 32; Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 2 December 1799, HRO, 84M70/PO1; Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 7 October 1808, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

²⁴ Farnborough Union Account Book, 2 June 1806, HRO, PL2/2/2.

²⁵ South Stoneham Workhouse Master Day Book, 22 November 1800, SAO, PR9/15/43; South Stoneham Workhouse Committee Book, 4 June 1822, SAO, PR 9/4/2.

²⁶ Barfoot and Wilkes, *Directory*, p. 936; Vancouver, *Agriculture*, pp. 402-404; Whitchurch Officers’ and Visitors’ Order Book, 5 September 1796, HRO, 83M76/PO3; Overton Vestry Minutes, 17 December 1799, HRO, 81M72/PV1.

industrial base. The aim of their establishment was likewise to cut down on poor relief expense, but simply by reorganising poor law administration, rather than by using the labour of workhouse inmates. Shortly after building a workhouse, Bishopstoke made a contract with Samuel Lovedee, who, for an annual payment of £157 10s., was to take charge of all the poor, including those in the workhouse.²⁷ As a result, the overseer's accounts became dramatically shorter, meaning that the work burden of the parish officers must have been greatly lightened. In Droxford, a vestry meeting on 18 December 1793, at which a plan to construct a workhouse was confirmed for the first time, also resolved that no further house rent in future should henceforth be paid for indigent tenants, except for the old or the disabled who could by no means support themselves.²⁸ It sounds as if the newly built workhouse was to be used for communal housing by those who could not afford to pay rent – or, even better, it must have been hoped, the threat of being sent to the workhouse might spur the able-bodied to greater efforts to provide for themselves. In this regard, the Kingsclere workhouse seems to have been successful, in that annual spending on the support of house rents decreased from £97 14s. in 1797 to £39 14s. in 1799.²⁹

At the same time, three urban workhouses were re-established in Alton, Winchester and Alverstoke in the last decade of the eighteenth century. All these foundations were under Gilbert's Act which enabled parishes to form a union and set up a shared workhouse for those unable to maintain themselves for reasons of age or infirmity. The able-bodied poor were expected to be put to work outside the workhouse or given outdoor relief.³⁰ Alton and Alverstoke did not take advantage of the opportunity to form unions with other parishes, creating single-parish unions, but Winchester set up an inter-parish union, initially of three

²⁷ Bishopstoke Overseers' Accounts, Easter 1794, HRO, 145M82/PO8.

²⁸ Droxford Vestry Minutes, 18 December 1793, HRO, 66M76/PV1.

²⁹ Kingsclere Overseers' Accounts, 17 April 1797, 25 March 1799, HRO, 90M72/PO4.

³⁰ 22 Geo. III c.83.

parishes, though this number increased to sixteen by 1800.³¹ The capacities of all three workhouses, as shown by notes for 1834 made by A'Court, were well over 100 (110, 150 and 200).³² Following the experiment by East Anglian rural incorporations, a national debate on the merits of incorporated districts with a large workhouse in urban and rural settings alike took place over several decades. Thomas Gilbert shaped the agenda for this debate by proposing that there should be general legislation on the East Anglian model, succeeding once, in 1782, in securing permissive legislation. He initially envisaged that multi-purpose institutions of large size must be erected in order to improve the quality of provision and relief administration. However, by the late 1780s, lack of progress in winning support in Parliament for any general compulsory measure compelled him to draw back from his early ambitious stance and propose instead to give local authorities discretion to establish larger or smaller workhouses.³³ His efforts created the framework within which these urban parishes acted.

The establishment of large workhouses in the three unions was said to be not only for the 'better maintenance' but also for the 'employment of the poor'. Workhouses under Gilbert's Act were supposed to accommodate the vulnerable, but this did not necessarily mean that work schemes did not operate, simply that it could not be heavy work. Gilbert explicitly contended that the inmates who were able to work were to be employed.³⁴ The Hampshire union workhouses adopted this principle, installing manufactories and gardens for employment. The Alverstoke workhouse was not merely shaped by Gilbert's Act but also provides an early

³¹ Alton Vestry Minutes, 27 June 1792, HRO, 29M/84PV1; Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 9 November 1799, HRO, PL2/1/1; St Mary Kalendar Vestry Minutes, 17 November 1795, HRO, 1M82W/PV1; Report on the Winchester House of Industry, 4 April 1800, HRO, 71M81W/PO80.

³² A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the several Parishes in the division of Winchester', November 1834, TNA, MH32/1; A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the several Parishes in the division of Fareham, 'Alverstoke', 21 December 1834, TNA, MH32/1; A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the several Parishes in the division of Alton', 23 February 1835, TNA, MH32/2.

³³ Thomas Gilbert, *A Scheme for the Better Relief and Employment of the Poor* (London, 1764), pp. 9-10; Innes, "Mixed Economy of Welfare", pp. 120-122.

³⁴ Thomas Gilbert, *Plan for the Better Relief and Employment of the Poor* (London, 1781), pp. 1-2; Shave, *Pauper*, pp. 91-97.

example embracing some of the principles presented in Bentham's work, *Pauper Management Improved*, which appeared in 1797. The architecture of the house had rooms for house officers and a committee at its centre of a cross, with wings to accommodate separated men and women, a 'cruciform' design for disciplinary surveillance, which was to be popular under the New Poor Law.³⁵ Furthermore, just as Bentham stressed the importance of setting inmates to work, on the principle of self-supply, within a collective subsistence economy outside the regular market, so in this instance, a farm was founded to raise crops for inmates' consumption, which was reported to contribute to keeping costs down.³⁶

In the fifteen years following 1800, until the end of the Napoleonic Wars, only four workhouses have been identified as having been (re)established, but the difference in the focus of workhouse schemes between the pastoral and arable divisions seems to have been maintained. A workhouse in Minstead in the New Forest, which was closed down and converted into three tenements, reopened in 1805 with an addition of a manufactory for inmates' employment.³⁷ By contrast, Bishop's Waltham, a rural parish in the arable division, decided to build a new workhouse next to a pesthouse in 1808, whose principal aim was more probably caring for the poor than setting them to work.³⁸ Later, when the parish discussed the best plan to accommodate paupers with large families, instead of paying for their rents out of poor rates, it considered whether to build some cottages annexed to the pesthouse or erect another new workhouse.³⁹ It is also notable that among the workhouse committee formed right after the

³⁵ See appendix: workhouse layouts. Jeremy Bentham, *Pauper Management Improved: Particularly by Means of an Application of the Panopticon Principle of Construction* (London, 1797), pp. 21-24; Carl Griffin, *The Politics of Hunger: Protest, poverty and policy in England, c. 1750-c. 1840* (Manchester, 2020), p. 135. From 1800, local English prisons were considerably enlarged, and the structure was well-organised, typically radial or polygonal, for 'classification, inspection and labour' of prisoners. Robin Evans, *The Fabrication of Virtue: English Prison Architecture, 1750-1840* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 236-317.

³⁶ Bentham, *Pauper*, pp. 61-62; Poynter, *Society*, pp. 133-135; Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 9 April 1803, HRO, PL2/1/1.

³⁷ Minstead Vestry Minutes, 14 November 1798, 6 December 1803, 19 July 1805, HRO, 90M71/PV1.

³⁸ Bishop's Waltham Vestry Minutes, 30 September, 14 October 1808, HRO, 30M77/PV1.

³⁹ Bishop's Waltham Vestry Minutes, 2 May 1828, HRO, 30M77/PV1.

decision to build a workhouse was a famous political writer, William Cobbett, who denounced Malthusian-inspired workhouses with strict discipline and advocated the right of the poor to alms.⁴⁰ The workhouse was consequently probably intended to play more the role of an almshouse.

3.1.1.3 After 1815

In the last two decades of the Old Poor Law regime, only three workhouses can be shown to have been established. The post-war depression and mass unemployment due to demobilisation raised poor relief expenditure, echoing the striking upward movement that had taken place in 1796 and 1801. Drawing on Baugh's analysis, it is important to note that the real value of per capita relief expenditure also began to increase from 1814 and exceeded those of 1796 and 1801 in the early 1820s.⁴¹ This increase reflected broad continuity, or even rises, in actual relief expenditure despite a drop in wheat prices after the French wars. Price movements meant that farmers, a major group among ratepayers, were forced to tighten their purse-strings, so despite the pressure of need, the establishment of a workhouse, being expensive, was rarely put on the table. Moreover, in the situation where chronic unemployment among agricultural and other workers played an important part in keeping relief expenditure at high levels after 1815, a workhouse did not obviously offer a good answer, as the hope of making workhouse labour profitable increasingly evaporated, as will be discussed in more detail below. Instead, work-making schemes such as roundsman, labour rates, and allotments were introduced.

There were two exceptions, those of Micheldever and Hursley in the arable division, both of which decided to establish a workhouse in the second half of the 1820s. It is suggestive that both projects were led by a local magnate, whereas before 1815, the establishment of

⁴⁰ Bishop's Waltham Vestry Minutes, 30 September 1803, HRO, 30M77/PV1; Charles Kegel, 'William Cobbett and Malthusianism', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19 (1958), p. 359.

⁴¹ Baugh, 'Cost', pp. 54-62.

workhouses was, in most cases, funded out of poor rates. Given the adverse economic circumstances of ratepayers, it would have been unattractive to erect a workhouse without financial support from a local wealthy man. In 1826, the Micheldever vestry held a meeting chaired by a large landowner, then MP for Chipping Wycombe, Sir Thomas Baring, and made a decision to open a workhouse. It was also resolved that a house and premises suited for the purpose would be provided by Baring.⁴² Hursley also had a member of the landed elite, Sir William Heathcote, one of the MPs for Hampshire, who was deeply involved in the workhouse project in 1829. Under his leadership, the parish converted a cluster of parish lodging houses into a workhouse.⁴³

To sum up, the three different periods saw different patterns of workhouse establishments. Prior to the 1790s, workhouses established in Hampshire echoed two national heights of interest in the institutional provision, one touched off by the Workhouse Test Act of 1723 and the other by the burgeoning of local acts for incorporation from the 1760s. Most of the workhouses established in these two periods were large ones in urban parishes. The high point for foundations, in this instance mainly in rural parishes, came in the 1790s, when poor harvests and the French revolutionary wars pushed up the price and, in consequence, profits from agriculture, such that ratepaying classes involved in farming were in comfortable enough circumstances to undertake the required capital expenditure. In Hampshire, at least, the hope of employing the poor in profitable work seems to have been especially buoyant in the 1790s especially in forest and heathland parishes, contributing to the willingness to establish workhouses at that time. After the end of the French wars in 1815, the fall in prices and economic recession made it difficult to raise money for building projects. Workhouse

⁴² Micheldever Vestry Minutes, 28 December 1826, HRO, 7M80/PV1.

⁴³ A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the several Parishes in the division of Winchester, 'Hursley', November 1834, TNA MH32/1; Shave, *Pauper*, p. 73.

establishments became scarce in Hampshire, except for some funded by local landed gentlemen, not out of poor rates.

3.1.2 The size of workhouses

The 1776 returns are, as noted in the introduction, the only ones which give information about workhouse capacities, whereas the 1803 and 1813-15 returns show how many paupers each parish sent to workhouses. In this context, A'Court's notes of 1834 and 1835, reporting maximum numbers of people individual workhouses could accommodate before the New Poor Law began to be implemented, are useful for estimating the size of the houses, even though some information seems to be missing. I will chart the size distribution of workhouses based on the two sets of data. Adding in data relating to union workhouses under the New Poor Law supports the picture of workhouses becoming bigger as time passed, in the context of an overall population rise in Hampshire: the population roughly doubled, increasing from 162,572 to 320,587, between 1771 and 1831.⁴⁴ Using these datasets allows us to compare the sizes not just of newly established or re-established workhouses but of all workhouses, so we should capture extensions in the capacity of existing houses. This section will indicate that workhouses in populous urban parishes tended, unsurprisingly, to be larger than those in rural parishes, but there were a few exceptions requiring attention to local circumstances. In conclusion, I will suggest that parochial settings were decisive in determining the size of workhouses, whereas the timing of their establishment was more a reflection of national trends.

⁴⁴ The population figures are from calculation of E. A. Wrigley. Wrigley, *Censuses*.

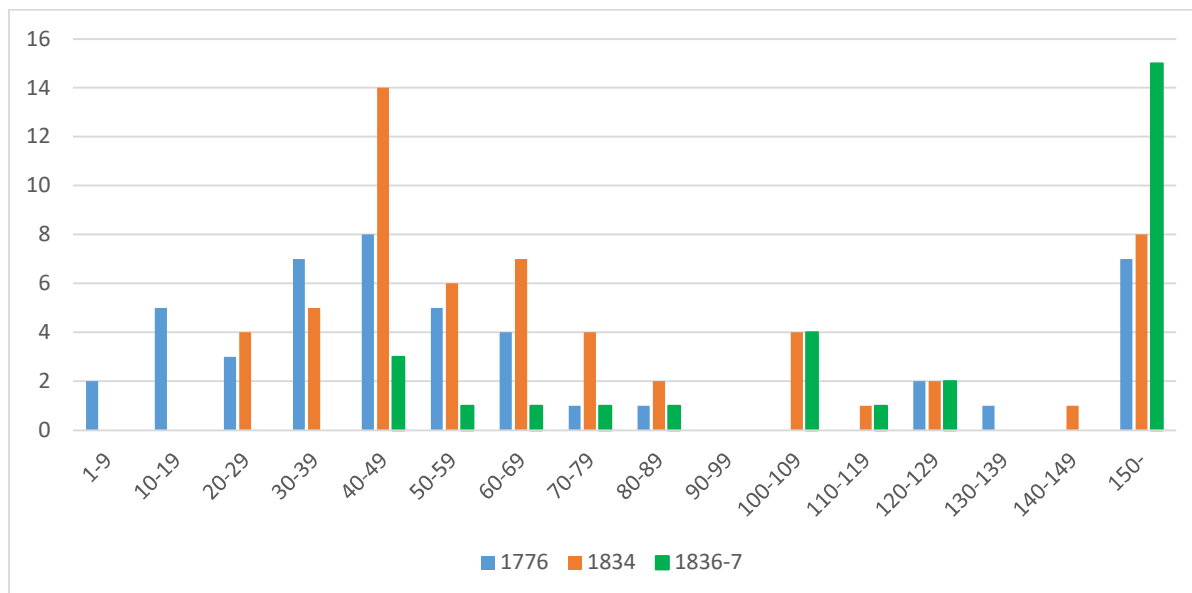


Figure 3.2 Size distribution of workhouses in Hampshire 1776, 1834, and 1836-7

Source: The 1776 returns; A’Court, Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District; *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, Appendix D.*, pp. 567-568; *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, Appendix C.*, pp.123-124.

There was a marked though not invariable tendency for Hampshire workhouses to increase in size between 1776 and 1834, as shown in Figure 3.2. Among forty-six workhouses for which the 1776 returns provide data, 45 per cent were capable of holding fifty or more, whereas this was true of more than 60 per cent out of the fifty-eight workhouses documented in 1834. After the implementation of the New Poor Law, almost two-thirds were able to lodge over a hundred (as will be discussed in depth in Chapter five).

Gilbert’s Act of 1782 facilitated workhouse expansion, not least by making it easier for parishes to pool resources and providing a statutory framework for borrowing money. It was hard work and costly to obtain local legislation, such that, even given East Anglia’s example, only two local acts of incorporation were passed in Hampshire, for the Isle of Wight and Southampton.⁴⁵ Gilbert’s Act was, furthermore, advantageous because it made it possible to form a new local authority without any appeal to Parliament.⁴⁶ Boldre’s experience illustrates

⁴⁵ Digby, *Palaces*, pp. 32-53.

⁴⁶ Joanna Innes, ‘The Local Acts of a National Parliament: Parliament’s Role in Sanctioning Local Action in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, in Innes (ed), p. 99.

the point. In 1788, the parish of Boldre in the New Forest attempted to unite neighbouring parishes (Lymington, Brockenhurst, and Beaulieu) into an incorporation to build a common workhouse but failed.⁴⁷ Instead, the parish established its own workhouse without any special act in 1792 and finally decided to adopt Gilbert's Act in 1820.⁴⁸ Shave shows that at least seventeen Gilbert unions were created in the county prior to the enactment of the New Poor Law.⁴⁹ The act was not used only to establish new workhouses but also, as in Boldre's case, to change the management of existing workhouses. Under the act, smaller workhouses could also be amalgamated to form one larger workhouse. In Winchester, for example, there had been three smaller workhouses capable of holding twelve, thirty and forty according to the 1776 returns, but after the town adopted Gilbert's Act in 1795, a larger workhouse was established accommodating a maximum of 150.

A more direct determinant of workhouse size was the population of individual parishes. One might expect the size of the population to have been in direct proportion to that of the workhouse. Overall, this was true in Hampshire, where nine out of ten workhouses able to house 100 people or more were located in urban parishes in 1776, and the correlation increased such that this was true of three-fourths in 1834. But there were exceptions. Among parishes with a population of more than 2,000 in 1801, those whose workhouses never held as many as 100 were Basingstoke and Eling, whose workhouses were capable of holding 56 and 50 in 1776, rising only to 70 and 80 in 1834. Conversely, there were five parishes with total populations under 2,000 in 1801 (Bishop's Waltham, Havant, Hartley Wintney, South

⁴⁷ Lymington Vestry Minutes, 6 December 1788, HRO, 42M75.PV1; Julian Hoppit (ed), *Failed Legislation, 1600-1800: Extracted from the Commons and Lords Journals* (London, 1997), p. 500.

⁴⁸ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 4 May 1820, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

⁴⁹ Shave, *Pauper*, pp. 64-65.

Stoneham, and Whitchurch), which ran workhouses capable of holding 100 or more in either 1776 or 1834 or both.

This strong relationship between parish population and workhouse size reduces the need to look for other ecological factors to explain what we find but does not remove it entirely because of the exceptional cases. Why did some towns have only small workhouses and some smaller parishes, larger workhouses? As a local hub on a great thoroughfare from London to Salisbury and Winchester, Basingstoke was a populous town but ran a smaller workhouse, capable of holding less than 100 people. It is notable that there was an unusual amount of alternative indoor provision in this town, which lessened the need for a large-scale institution, in that eleven almshouses were being run by 1818, by contrast with just one house in Southampton.⁵⁰ Even though almshouses tended to cater for a limited section of the population, carefully selecting the type of person to be admitted, clearly they catered for a part of the poor population, typically aged and well-behaved people.⁵¹ Among Basingstoke almshouses, there were four belonging to the parish under the direction of the churchwardens, in addition to eight cottages managed by overseers, which must have helped the parish officers to relegate the workhouse to a minor role in accommodating the poor.⁵²

The other populous urban parish with a smaller workhouse, Eling, attempted to establish a larger workhouse but failed. After the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the parish's main concern was to cope with mounting unemployment. In 1816, it was reported that there

⁵⁰ The 1813-15 returns, pp. 403, 413.

⁵¹ Alannah Tomkins, 'Almshouse versus Workhouse: Residential Welfare in 18th-Century Oxford', *Family & Community History*, 7 (2004), pp. 47-48. Almshouses founded by Joseph Page in 1802 provided housing for the poor, particularly belonging to the congregation of the independent persuasion of Calvinistic principles. 'Parishes: Basingstoke', in William Page (ed), *A History of the County of Hampshire: Volume 4* (London, 1911), pp. 127-140. *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/hants/vol4/pp127-140> (05 Nov. 2022).

⁵² A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the several Parishes in the division of Basingstoke', 'Basingstoke', 27 March 1835, TNA, MH12/10669.

were about sixty labouring men out of employment in this parish.⁵³ The next year, the parish found it ‘extremely desirable’ to incorporate with adjoining parishes under a general act ‘for the maintenance of the poor by incorporated societies’, just like Southampton and the Isle of Wight, and applied to them to ascertain their willingness to an incorporation. However, only two parishes, Millbrook and North Stoneham, showed interest, and there was no further discussion thereafter.⁵⁴ Eling then turned to a ‘xenophobic’ policy, not unique in southern England.⁵⁵ Just after the failure to set up an incorporation and a joint workhouse, a special paid officer, called ‘guardian’, was appointed and put in charge of not just relief provision but enquiries into the profile of relief claimants and their removal.⁵⁶ In 1819, a vestry meeting reported that a large sum of money was being spent on the poor out of work, amounting to over a hundred in number. In order to alleviate the great expense, it was resolved to urge local farmers and businessmen to discharge labourers belonging to other parishes, whose number was calculated at more than fifty in total, and instead to hire unemployed labourers belonging to Eling. If the employers did not dismiss those without settlement, they were directed to hire as many of those with settlement in the parish as they retained from other parishes. Furthermore, as it was realised that many paupers who were not entitled had received parochial relief, some parishioners well acquainted with local circumstances were selected to identify which applicants were proper.⁵⁷ Therefore, the exclusion of outsiders not only from the relief lists but also from their jobs, which would then be filled by the unemployed belonging to the parish, represented an alternative strategy to workhouse provision, perhaps reducing the need for a larger institution.

⁵³ Eling Vestry Meeting Minutes, 11 July 1816, HRO, 4M69/PV1.

⁵⁴ Eling Vestry Meeting Minutes, 16, 23 January 1817, HRO, 4M69/PV1.

⁵⁵ Snell, *Parish*, pp. 65-66.

⁵⁶ Eling Vestry Meeting Minutes, 27 March 1817, HRO, 4M69/PV1.

⁵⁷ Eling Vestry Meeting Minutes, 16, 23 January 1817, HRO, 4M69/PV1.

By contrast, the five parishes of Bishop's Waltham, Havant, Hartley Wintney, South Stoneham, and Whitchurch possessed large workhouses for their population size. Their records are remarkably silent about why they needed a big institution, but we must suppose that they were either in especially favourable circumstances in terms of being able to afford them or in particular need of having them. For the two rural parishes in the arable division, Whitchurch and Bishop's Waltham, the support of members of local elites was probably significant. A vestry meeting was held in Whitchurch in 1771 to consider the building of a workhouse, where it was decided to purchase two houses from Joseph Brown, a local dyer. In the following year, it was resolved to ask Thomas Townshend, one of the MPs for Whitchurch, to 'grant a lease of two tenements for a long term at a small reserved rent'.⁵⁸ There is no information about how much the parish paid Townshend, but the total cost of the establishment was relatively low. The parish borrowed £250 to meet the cost, whereas Kingsclere nearby, which also purchased a property for use as a workhouse, paid £300, even though its workhouse was smaller.⁵⁹ Bishop's Waltham also asked Brownlow North, the Bishop of Winchester, to give a grant of land and an allowance of timber for the purpose of erecting a workhouse. The rural parish had been accustomed to the assistance of the magnate, who had provided ten tons of timber and £25 to build a bridge.⁶⁰

By contrast, in the cases of the rural parishes in the coastal division in close proximity to thriving port towns, population pressure seems to have prompted the establishment of a big institution. Thus, South Stoneham experienced a dramatic increase in population, from 1,255 to 2,083, during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, a migrating population, predominantly consisting of disbanded sailors and soldiers, appears sometimes to

⁵⁸ Whitchurch Overseers' Accounts, Minutes, 18 December 1771, 1 May 1772, HRO, 83M76/PO1.

⁵⁹ Whitchurch Overseers' Accounts, Minutes, 5 May 1772, HRO, 83M76/ PO1; Kingsclere Overseers' Accounts, Minutes, 10 April 1798, HRO, 90M72/PO4.

⁶⁰ Bishop's Waltham Vestry Minutes, 24 April, 30 September 1803, HRO, 30M77/PV1.

have troubled the parish, given that in 1803 the money the parish expended for the removal of paupers and lawsuits accounted for 15 per cent of the total poor relief expenditure, which was far higher than the county average, 4 per cent.⁶¹ In fact, as we will discuss further in the next chapter, a large part of those in the South Stoneham workhouse were under investigation about their settlement, according to a workhouse master's daybook from 1800 to 1808.⁶²

3.1.3 Funding workhouse establishment

When the establishment of a workhouse was considered, an overriding concern was how to fund the project. Depending on decisions as to whether to erect, purchase or rent buildings, the total cost varied considerably. One of the most common ways to raise capital was to borrow money on the security of bonds. Bonds were usually issued at a certain interest rate to be paid out of poor rates. Gilbert's Act provided statutory powers to seek a loan on this basis.⁶³ In our period, public schemes such as building infrastructure and other large institutions, including prisons and houses of correction, were often funded by bonds or mortgages secured on the county rates.⁶⁴ We should ask what motivated investors to purchase the bonds. As we will see, many bondholders were local proprietors. They may have been concerned about poor relief but also saw it as a good investment.

Some workhouse projects were strongly backed by local elites who provided money on a different basis, though this was true only of a few arable parishes. In the nineteenth century, a few gentlemen still considered contributing to building public facilities for the poor, such as cottages, schools, and workhouses, as an element of paternal duty.⁶⁵ At first glance, those cases

⁶¹ The 1803 returns, p. 454.

⁶² South Stoneham Workhouse Master Day Book, 1800-1808, SAO, PR9/15/43.

⁶³ 22 Geo. III c.83, XX.

⁶⁴ Ward, *Finance*, pp. 97-125; Dan Bogart, 'Investing in Early Public Works: Financial Risks and Returns in English and Welsh Turnpikes', *Economic History Review*, 72 (2019), pp. 848-868; Chalklin, *English*, pp. 62-66.

⁶⁵ J. V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England 1660-1914* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 350-353.

might seem to contradict the hypothesis I developed in the previous chapter, that workhouses were unlikely to be established in parishes with a monopolised structure of power, but these few cases were definitely exceptional. As we have seen, there were only a couple of cases in Hampshire where local magnates covered nearly all the expense, by this means aiming to regulate the poor, particularly the unemployed after 1815; others merely provided charitable contributions.

3.1.3.1 Issuing bonds

There are ten parishes that financed workhouse schemes by issuing bonds, out of which eight decided to erect new buildings. As building a new workhouse cost far more than the buying or hiring of existing properties, it is not surprising that these eight parishes borrowed large sums. Parishes prepared to rent tenements could usually avoid issuing a bond. Nonetheless, as shown in Table 3.1, the majority of parishes opening their own workhouses in our period built a new house, so the selling of bonds to finance the establishment was commonplace, at least in Hampshire. It is also evident that total sums raised by bonds for urban and pastoral parishes were much bigger than those raised for arable parishes (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Identified parishes issuing bonds for workhouses

Divisions	Character	Parishes	Year	Unit of bond (£)	Annual interest	Total raised by bonds (£)	Type of establishment
Arable	Rural	Whitchurch	1772	50	5%	250	Purchase
		Kingsclere	1798	50	5%	300	Purchase
		Heckfield	1778	100	5%	400	Build
	Urban	Alton*	1792-6	50	4-5%	4050	Build
		Isle of Wight (Newport)	1770s	?	4%	17450	Build
Coastal	Urban	Alverstoke*	1800s	50	5%	11200	Build
		Southampton	1770s	?	4.5%	1700	Build
Pastoral	Rural	Fawley	1796	?	5%	300	Build
		Boldre	1792	800	4-5%	800	Build
		Farnborough union*	1794-5	50	5%	850	Build

*Under Gilbert's Act

Source: Whitchurch Overseers' Accounts, Minutes, 5 May 1772; Kingsclere Overseers' Accounts, 13 March, 10 April 1798; Heckfield Churchwardens' Accounts, 1 September 1778; Alton Vestry Minutes, 1792-1796; for Isle of Wight, Eden, *State of the Poor*, Volume 2, p. 240; Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 6 February 1800; for Southampton, Eden, *State of the Poor*, pp. 231-232; Fawley Overseers' Accounts and Vestry Minutes, 5 May 1796; Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 7 January 1799; Farnborough Incorporation: Bundle of Securities for £50 for Building a Poorhouse, 1794-1795.

Half of the parishes listed in Table 3.2 issued bonds denominated in units of £50 at 5 per cent annual interest (that is, paying £2 10s. a year for each bond). A clause of Gilbert's Act authorised the borrowing of sums by bonds whose value was not to exceed £50 each, Alton, Alverstoke and Farnborough union, which constructed workhouses under the act, all accordingly issued £50 bonds.⁶⁶ However, the act was not the only reason for the unit of £50, because Whitchurch had sold £50 bonds a decade before and bonds for funding turnpike roads

⁶⁶ There have been very few works indicating that Gilbert's Act empowered its adoptees to raise money on the security of poor rates. As an exception, Ryland-Epton points out that borrowing money might have been an essential reason for adopting the act. Ryland-Epton, 'Social', pp. 169-170.

were often set at £50.⁶⁷ The interest rate of 5 per cent on the workhouse bonds was at a similar level to that paid on turnpike bonds; neither could be over 5 per cent owing to usury laws.⁶⁸

The value of bonds and their interest rates appear to have been sufficient to attract investors, chiefly consisting of farmers and petty businessmen, given that no evidence has yet been found to suggest difficulty in selling the bonds. People who purchased the eighty-one bonds issued by Alton were mostly residents of the parish, along with others from neighbouring parishes within a radius of 10 miles. Their descriptions were diverse, such as esquire, gentlemen, yeoman, carpenter, maltster, ostler, and even widow, but, for the most part, they consisted of the rural middling sort or the petty bourgeoisie from market towns.⁶⁹

Those who invested in workhouse bonds were probably motivated not just by benevolence but also by the hope of economic benefit. A workhouse could, as Paul Langford observes, pay good returns. At the same time, risks could be kept to a minimum through the active engagement of bondholders, as principal inhabitants, in decision-making processes.⁷⁰ A contemporary report made at a Quarter Sessions held in Winchester states that the fund for the establishment of a workhouse was raised by the voluntary loan of individuals who ‘have money to vest at the greatest legal interest’ on ‘the best security of poor rates’.⁷¹ Given that the average yields on turnpike bonds before 1850 were 4 per cent, 5 per cent interest on workhouse bonds was large enough to attract attention from people looking for a promising and safe investment.⁷² In Kingsclere, six people purchased one bond at £50 on these terms. Since the periods for which they held their bonds differed, the quantity of interest received also differed. Elizabeth Jenkins retained her bond most tenaciously, for thirteen years from 1802 to 1814,

⁶⁷ Whitchurch Overseers’ Accounts, Minutes, 5 May 1772, HRO, 83M76/ PO1.

⁶⁸ Bogart, ‘Investing’, p. 852.

⁶⁹ Alton Vestry Minutes, 1792-1796, HRO, 29M84/PV1.

⁷⁰ Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman 1689-1798* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 251-252.

⁷¹ Poulter, *Address*, p. 34.

⁷² Bogart, ‘Investing’, pp. 854-855.

obtaining more than £30 as income. From 1804 no one held any bond in this parish except her.⁷³ As a daughter of Joseph Portal, a successful businessman owning paper mills at Laverstoke, and as the wife of Stiverd Jenkins, curate for the parish, she was probably sufficiently economically literate and risk-averse to judge the workhouse bond a smart investment. After 1814 when her husband returned to his hometown, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, to work as a curate there, her name disappeared from the overseers' account books as the parish paid off the principal due.⁷⁴ Overseers' accounts from the Isle of Wight and from Alverstoke, which also erected a massive workhouse not comparable to others in Hampshire, reveal investments and returns on a far greater scale. Those holding bonds issued by the Isle of Wight were given, as interest, £627, £500, £500, and £488 in 1782, 1793, 1794 and 1795, constituting 10.3, 10.2, 6.3 and 6.8 per cent respectively of the total relief expenditure.⁷⁵ Alverstoke also dedicated more than 10 per cent of spending on poor relief to interest payments in 1805-1807, paying £560, £501, and £467, although the proportion decreased as the parish chipped away at the principal. For three decades after 1801, when the workhouse was completed, well over £6,000 was paid to bondholders in the form of interest alone.⁷⁶

By comparison with investments in public works such as canals, turnpikes and railways, workhouse bonds presented low risks. Financial returns for investors in transport infrastructure inevitably oscillated, because of fluctuations in performance, so interest rates changed, and, on

⁷³ Kingsclere Overseers' Account Books, 1796-1803, 1802-1809, 1809-1817, HRO, 90M72/PO4, 90M72/PO5, 90M72/PO6. It is of little surprise that a woman invested in the public bond and created a steady profit in the early nineteenth century. Sarah Hudson, 'Attitudes to Investment Risk amongst West Midland Canal and Railway Company Investors, 1760-1850' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 2001); David Green and Alastair Owens 'Gentlewomanly Capitalism? Spinsters, Widows, and Wealth Holding in England and Wales, c. 1800-1860', *Economic History Review*, 56 (2003), pp. 510-536; Janette Rutterford and Josephine Maltby "'The Widow, The Clergyman and The Reckless": Women Investors In England, 1830-1914', *Feminist Economics*, 12 (2006), pp. 111-138.

⁷⁴ *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 24 August 1826; Kingsclere Overseers' Accounts, 11 April 1814, HRO, 90M72/PO6.

⁷⁵ Eden, *State*, pp. 242-266.

⁷⁶ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 1801-1831, HRO, PL2/1/1.

occasion, repayment of principal and interest was cancelled or discounted.⁷⁷ A chief safeguard for workhouse bondholders was poor rates that were universal and were collected smoothly on a regular basis, though with some spasmodic complaints mainly about the accuracy of assessments, not about their existence, to which people were resigned.⁷⁸ In addition, as leading local inhabitants, those purchasing workhouse bonds were not passive investors but instead routinely occupied positions such as churchwarden, overseer or member of a workhouse committee, partially in order to further the scheme in which they had invested. In Kingsclere, every bondholder apart from Elizabeth Jenkins held positions as churchwarden, overseer or workhouse committee member in 1796, the year in which the establishment of a workhouse was decided.⁷⁹ The parish of Boldre presented a more dramatic scene. The parish borrowed the sum of £800 at an annual interest of 4 per cent from only one landowner, Thomas Robins, who possessed the Pylewell estate of 1,950 acres between 1787 and 1802.⁸⁰ He attended and, as chairman, very often led meetings of the workhouse committee until 1801.⁸¹ In 1799, at a committee meeting, he mentioned that, although it had been agreed that initially, his loan should attract interest of 4 per cent and the principal be paid off by instalments as early as the parish finances would admit, yet thus far the debt had not been lessened, and inflation had become worse, so he thought it not unreasonable to request 5 per cent interest to commence from that point.⁸² His claim was no doubt accepted. It may not be a coincidence that his name suddenly disappeared from attendance at lists of meetings from June 1801, shortly after the committee resolved to begin liquidating his principal.⁸³ Even though the debt was by degrees

⁷⁷ Bogart suggests that overall, turnpike bonds generated higher returns than those for canals and railways but accepts that the returns were variable depending on situations. Bogart, 'Investing', pp. 863-865.

⁷⁸ Slack, *English*, pp. 26-27.

⁷⁹ Kingsclere Overseers' Accounts, 29 March, 17 May 1796, HRO, 90M72/PO4.

⁸⁰ Page, 'Place', pp. 71, 85.

⁸¹ Walter, Robbins and Gilpin, *Account*; Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 1797-1805, HRO, 84M70/PO1.

⁸² Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 7 January 1799, HRO, 84M70/PO1.

⁸³ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 7 April 1801, HRO, 84M70/PO1.

paid off, it seems certain that Robbins earned over one hundred pounds as interest, since overseers' accounts from 1801 to 1804 show that the parish paid £40 in 1801 and 1802, £32 10s. in 1803 and £11 9s. 8d. in 1804.⁸⁴ Bondholders were thus able to act to protect their own interests.

3.1.3.2 Support from local elites

Some workhouse schemes depended partially or entirely on the sponsorship of local magnates, in some cases in addition to the issuing of bonds. Six Hampshire parishes listed in Table 3.3 can be shown to have been assisted by members of local elites in carrying out workhouse plans. It is notable that they were all in the arable division in which members of landowning elites were concentrated.⁸⁵

Table 3.3 Parish workhouses sponsored by members of local elites

Divisions	Character	Parishes	year	Name of sponsor	Details
Arable	Rural	Whitchurch	1771	Thomas Townshend, 1st Viscount Sydney	Grant of a lease at a reduced rent
		Petersfield	1776	William Jolliffe	Grant of £100
		Bishopstoke	1792	Bishop of Winchester	Grant of a building site
		Bishop's Waltham	1808	Bishop of Winchester	Grant of land and materials for building a workhouse
		Micheldever	1826	Thomas Baring, 2nd Baronet	Grant of a house and land at one-pound rent
		Hursley	1829	William Heathcote, 5th Baronet	Converting of tenements for workhouse establishment

Source: Whitchurch Overseers' Accounts, Minutes, 18 December 1771; Petersfield Vestry Minutes, 4 February 1776; Bishopstoke Documents concerning the Establishment of the Poorhouse, 2 November 1792; Bishop's Waltham Vestry Minutes, 30 September 1808; Micheldever Vestry Minutes, 28

⁸⁴ Boldre Overseers' Accounts, 1800-1804, HRO, 1A09/A1.

⁸⁵ See Chapter one for more details about it.

December 1826; A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the several Parishes in the division of Winchester, 'Hursley', November 1834.

In the ancient boroughs of Whitchurch and Petersfield, which sent two burgesses to Parliament each, peers – who might well have been motivated by the desire to protect their political influence – were asked to promote the welfare of their neighbours and dependents.⁸⁶ A vestry meeting of Whitchurch requested Thomas Townshend, 1st Viscount Sydney, who had been elected as a member of Parliament for this parish in 1754 and held the seat till 1783, to provide two tenements at a cheap rent, stressing that this was 'for public work and for ye benefit thereof'.⁸⁷ The two houses were later adapted to be used as workshops for sacking manufacture in the workhouse.⁸⁸ Likewise, in Petersfield, William Jolliffe, one of the MPs for this parish from 1768 to 1802, granted £100 to the parish to cover the rent of the workhouse. An inscription placed on a stone in the front of the house still says that 'this house and garden were given to this parish for a poor house by our worthy friends the late John Jolliffe and William Jolliffe esquire'.⁸⁹

Spiritual leaders also bestowed favours on workhouse schemes. The vestry of Bishopstoke held a meeting in 1792 at which James Searle, then steward of the Bishop of Winchester, promised to grant a plot of the bishop's land on Stoke Common for the purpose of building a workhouse.⁹⁰ As its name implies, the influence of the bishop on this parish dated back to 1284, and its manor remained in the bishop's possession until the Bishops' Resignation Act of 1869.⁹¹ In 1808, Bishop's Waltham, another parish upon which the bishops of Winchester retained their hold from the medieval era, resolved to erect a workhouse on

⁸⁶ Beckett, *Aristocracy*, p. 354.

⁸⁷ Whitchurch Overseers' Accounts, Minutes, 1 May 1772, HRO, 83M76/PO1.

⁸⁸ A. C. Bennett, *Whitchurch Workhouse* (Andover, 1976), p. 3.

⁸⁹ Petersfield Vestry Minutes, 4 February 1776, HRO, 108M70/PV1.

⁹⁰ Documents Concerning the Establishment of the Poor House, 2 November 1792, HRO 145M82/PO72.

⁹¹ 'Parishes: Bishopstoke', in William Page (ed), *A History of the County of Hampshire: Volume 3* (London, 1908), pp. 308-310. *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/hants/vol3/pp308-310> (05 Nov. 2022).

Waltham Chase and made an application to the bishop, not only for the grant of a building site but also for an allowance of building materials such as timber.⁹² When a further resolution to build a new workhouse was made in 1832, the vestry asked the bishop for land again. The bishop signified his willingness to comply with the request.⁹³

In the 1820s, as already noted, a couple of gentlemen took the lead, going beyond just agreeing to sponsor construction. In 1826, Thomas Baring of Stratton Park presided at a vestry meeting to push the parishes of Micheldever and East Stratton under his influence to form a union for the purpose of establishing a workhouse and provided a house and premises at the rent of £1 per year, a peppercorn rent.⁹⁴ This is not the only instance of him strongly backing institutional reform. In 1816, he promoted a motion to erect a lunatic asylum at Quarter Sessions alongside William Sturges Bourne, although it was defeated due to opposition from the cash-conscious. From 1817, as *de facto* head of the Winchester prison visiting justices' committee, he directed Quarter Sessions to renovate the structure and administration of their prisons, following Benthamite and evangelical principles.⁹⁵ Another benefactor already reported who was notably active was Sir William Heathcote, the owner of Hursley Park, which exceeded 14,000 acres. He adapted tenements for use as a workhouse in 1829. He went on to shepherd the project by drawing up workhouse regulations.⁹⁶ An assistant commissioner dispatched from London to discuss the setting up of a poor law union and a union workhouse under the New Poor Law consulted him in person and acclaimed his indefatigable attention to

⁹² Bishop's Waltham Vestry Minutes, 20 September 1808, HRO, 30M77/PV1.

⁹³ Bishop's Waltham Vestry Minutes, 29 January 1832, HRO, 30M77/PV2.

⁹⁴ Micheldever Vestry Minutes, 28 December 1826, HRO, 7M80/PV1.

⁹⁵ Foster, *Politics*, pp. 45, 54.

⁹⁶ A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the several Parishes in the division of Winchester, 'Hursley'', November 1834, TNA, MH32/1.

poor law issues.⁹⁷ After the union was formed, he offered to serve as the chair of the board of guardians.⁹⁸

It seems likely that the workhouse plans led by the two gentlemen reflected their concerns about unemployment and social stability. As a major magistrate, Baring, at a petty sessions in 1822, had encouraged discussion of the issue and had tabled a resolution that all paupers relieved by their parishes should be compelled to perform appropriate work, the parish officers providing employment for them as far as possible, and that allowances should be varied depending on family composition but kept at a parsimonious level.⁹⁹ In the parochial context, he acted as the surveyor of the highways for Micheldever so as to encourage the hiring of labourers out of employment in repairing the roads.¹⁰⁰ Heathcote, also a member of the bench, participated in a Quarter Sessions meeting at which it was reported that inhabitants of the manufacturing districts in Lancashire were alarmingly distressed by ‘want of employment’, and he subscribed £30 to restore the prosperity of the manufacturing community.¹⁰¹ Moreover, as a supporter of the Labourers’ Friend Society, which eulogised allotments as a means of assisting the labouring poor who could not obtain full and constant employment adequate to their subsistence, he apportioned a field of six acres in quarter-acre allotments.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on every Parish in the Winchester Division’, 6, 15, 19 November 1834, TNA, MH32/1.

⁹⁸ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 297.

⁹⁹ It faced a backlash from contemporary critics. Thomas Jonathan Wooler defined it as the conspiracy of magistrates against the poor in his satirical journal, *The Black Dwarf*, remarking that ‘[t]he gist of this infamous conspiracy is, that a labourer ... who refused to accept wages throughout the year, amounting on the average to 4s. 6d. per week should forfeit all claim to relief from his parish! ... This is a less sum for maintenance of a labourer, his wife, and child ... than Sir Thomas Baring swallows at every gulp when he takes his wine!’ William Cobbett also criticised Baring that it was found that for the Loyal Bridge Street Association, he subscribed £10 10s., which was rather more than one year’s wage allowed by his resolution to a labouring man, being no more than £9 2s. *The Black Dwarf*, 9 October 1822, Vol. 9(15), pp. 539-540; *Cobbett’s Weekly Register*, 21 September 1822, Vol. 43(12), p. 711.

¹⁰⁰ Micheldever Vestry Minutes, 29 January, 7M80/PV1.

¹⁰¹ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 8 May 1826.

¹⁰² *Labourers’ Friend Society* (London, 1833), p. 392.

Such men's willingness to finance workhouses appears, from this evidence, to have been motivated by a larger concern and interest in promoting the welfare of their neighbourhoods, and not (as in the case of those who lent money on bond) by calculations about financial return.

3.2 The administration of workhouses

Once a workhouse was established, a parish had to arrange how to run it. Usually, there were two tiers of administrative authority. At the top, parish vestries, consisting of churchwardens and overseers, made all workhouse decisions of importance, ranging from their establishment to their abolition, and also monitored specific issues from time to time by forming special committees. On the ground, there were contractors, hired masters or paid parish officers such as assistant overseers, in charge of every aspects of the day-to-day running of workhouses. No parish workhouse was free from control by vestries, but ways in which workhouses were administered on a daily basis varied from parish to parish and shifted as time passed.¹⁰³ This section will focus on diversity by region and changes over time.

By comparison with other cognate public institutions, such as almshouses and bridewells, workhouses were administered in very diverse ways. In the first case, masters or keepers were chiefly appointed and salaried by charity trustees; in the second, by county magistrates. It seems likely that those working for almshouses focussed on promoting the comfort of the inhabitants rather than playing directive roles, as the houses were always established by voluntary charity, though there was a variation in their circumstances. While the master of a well-endowed institution could gain a good salary and accommodation and enjoy assistance from employed staff and high standing in localities, others were given a derisory income, and had to rely on some makeshifts, and take charge of inelegant tasks such as caring

¹⁰³ Hitchcock, 'Workhouses', p. 133.

for the infirm, providing necessities, and locking up at the appointed time.¹⁰⁴ Masters of bridewells, in many cases, were drawn from the ranks of small capitalists such as manufacturers or were petty farmers; they were expected to increase their incomes from their position by exploiting inmates' labour or receiving fees in return for services.¹⁰⁵ In the case of workhouses, by no means all were run by hired masters. In this section, three approaches to workhouse administration will be discussed: direct management by parish officers, employment of masters, and farming out the poor. The aim will be to shed light on overall patterns and how they varied by area and period.

The three types were not simply the result of administrative evolution but of distinctive ecologies, as there were divisional differences in the preference. Figure 3.3 indicates that parishes in the coastal and pastoral divisions tended to employ masters, while contracts for farming out were comparatively popular in the arable division. This section will analyse this pattern in relation to shifting confidence over time and changes in attitude towards workhouse labour.

¹⁰⁴ Tomkins, 'Almshouse', pp. 50-51; Nigel Goose, Helen Caffrey, and Anne Langley (eds), *The British Almshouse: New Perspectives on Philanthropy ca 1400-1914* (Milton Keynes, 2016), pp. 60-61, 233-234.

¹⁰⁵ Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *English Prisons Under Local Government* (London, 1922), pp. 12-17; Joanna Innes, 'Prisons for the Poor: English Bridewells, 1555-1800', in Francis Snyder and Douglas Hay (eds), *Labour, Law, and Crime: An Historical Perspective* (London, 1987), pp. 76-78.

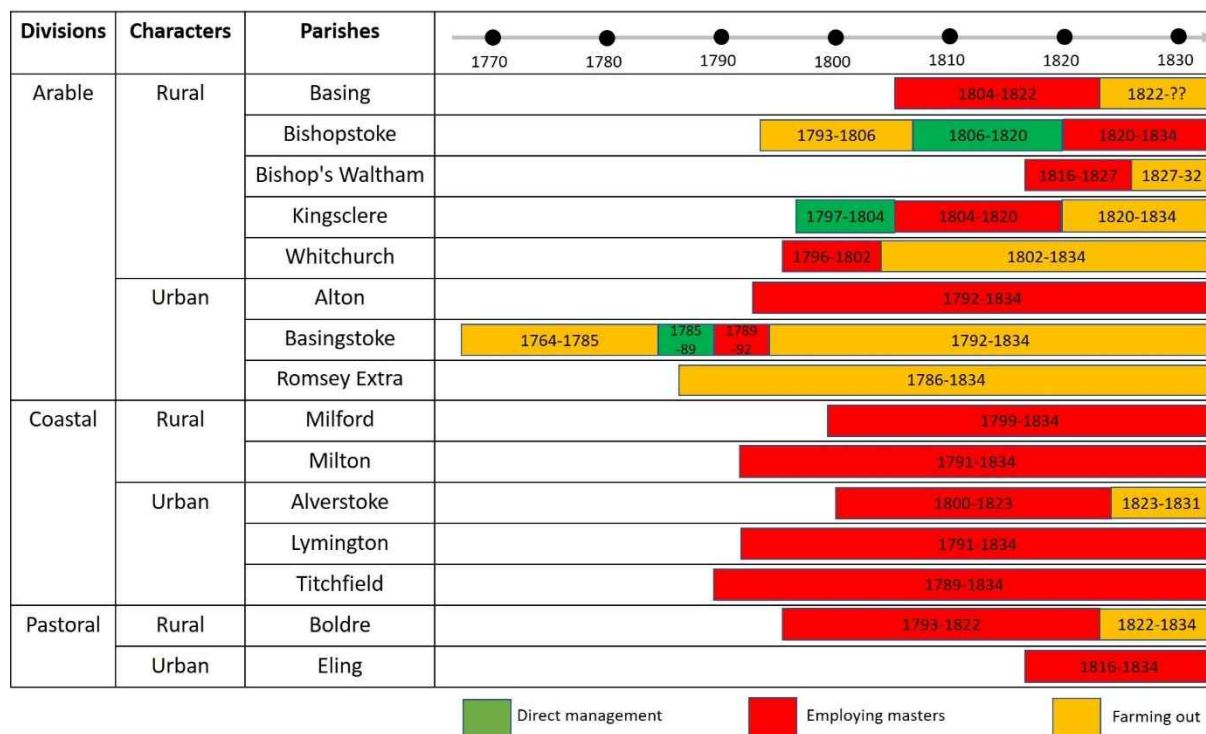


Figure 3.3 Timeline of identified forms of workhouse administration

Sources: Basing Overseers' Accounts, 1804-1809, HRO, 3M70/46; Basing Vestry Minutes, 1819-1822; Bishopstoke Overseers Accounts, 1793-1834; Bishop's Waltham Vestry Minutes, 1816-1832; Kingsclere Overseers' Accounts, 1797-1817; Kingsclere Poor Rate Books, 1817-1834; Whitchurch Officers' and Visitors' Order Book, 1797-1834; Alton Vestry Minutes, 1792-1834; Basingstoke Vestry Minutes, 1764-1797; Basingstoke Vestry Minutes, 1797-1834; Romsey Vestry Minutes, 1786-1834; Milford Overseers' Accounts, 1799-1803; Milford Book of Vestry Resolutions, 1803-1834; Milton Overseers' Accounts, 1791-1821; Milton Guardians' Accounts, 1831-1834; Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 1799-1831; Lymington Vestry Order Books, 1791-1817; Lymington Vestry Minutes, 1791-1834; Titchfield Vestry Minutes, 1789-1834; Gilpin, *An Account of a New Poor-house, Erected in the Parish of Boldre*; Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 1797-1834; Eling Vestry Minutes, 1816-1834.

3.2.1 Direct management

There were a few workhouses operated directly by parish officers, predominantly overseers of the poor, rather than either by salaried masters or by contractors. In Hampshire, only three arable workhouses can be identified as having undergone direct management for some years during our period. This is, no doubt, an underestimate. Once a workhouse became the daily work of overseers, its records are likely to have provided little evidence of their activities, being laconic or even lumping them together with outdoor relief accounts. Overseers' account books and vestry minutes for Kingsclere, fortunately, illustrate the situation between

1797 and 1804, when the workhouse was managed by the parish. In 1795, when a vestry meeting was held in Kingsclere to consider the establishment of a house for the poor, there was an initial discussion about appointing a ‘permanent overseer’ at a fixed salary to assist the overseers.¹⁰⁶ A few years later, the parish picked one of the overseers, Edward Tomlins, as a special overseer paid from the parish purse, a practice that was often witnessed in towns and formally authorised by Sturges Bourne’s Act of 1819. The officer was responsible for all duties of the overseers, from collecting poor rates to managing a workhouse.¹⁰⁷ In the case of Kingsclere, although there is no information clearly showing what type of work the special overseer performed, given that the office vanished from 1804 when a workhouse master was employed, the role was apparently absorbed by the master.¹⁰⁸

Forming a temporary committee, though with a particular aim, was another option available to parishes. Tim Hitchcock, writing about the first half of the eighteenth century, describes such a committee as a permanent body looking after nearly all parts of the workhouse business, but in Hampshire during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it tended to be transitory and assigned a specific purpose.¹⁰⁹ After parishioners reached an agreement to establish a workhouse, it was common for a committee to be organised to handle every detail of construction, consisting mainly of parish officers and some local worthies. For instance, in 1796 at Kingsclere, this type of committee was set up, with members including churchwardens, overseers and two major ratepayers, John Charter and William Goddard. They were empowered to find a suitable site and contract with local builders and carpenters.¹¹⁰ The object of a committee set up by Basingstoke in 1785 was to transform the workhouse by establishing

¹⁰⁶ Kingsclere Overseers’ Accounts, 31 March 1795, HRO, 90M72/PO3.

¹⁰⁷ Kingsclere Overseers’ Accounts, 1802, HRO, 90M72/PO4; Samantha Shave, ‘The Impact of Sturges Bourne’s Poor Law Reforms in Rural England’, *The Historical Journal* 56 (2013), pp. 399-429.

¹⁰⁸ Kingsclere Overseers’ Accounts, 1804, HRO, 90M72/PO5.

¹⁰⁹ Hitchcock, ‘Workhouses’, pp. 134-137.

¹¹⁰ Kingsclere Overseers’ Accounts, 17 May 1795, HRO, 90M72/PO3.

a manufactory in preparation for hiring a local manufacturer as a workhouse master, whom the parish expected to encourage labour within the institution.¹¹¹

3.2.2 Workhouse masters

Workhouse masters were hired as specialists in institutional provision, given an annual wage, usually resident in the workhouse and provided with board and lodging for themselves and their wives and children. When looking for a master, parishes usually inserted an advertisement into provincial papers to attract candidates, who were requested to submit their profiles and testimonials to a vestry meeting. The masters were responsible to the vestry or sometimes to a committee, to which they reported their activities and gave accounts of all indoor relief on a regular basis. Their basic job was to administer every aspect of workhouse life, ranging from food, clothing, and bedding to religious services.¹¹²

It is notable that by the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth century – when, as I have already shown, many workhouses were (re)established as interest in promoting work in workhouses boomed – workhouse masters were much more likely to be appointed across Hampshire than they were either earlier or later. In this context, masters were expected to commit themselves not just to stable management but to exercising professional skills to help generate an economic gain from inmates' labour. It is, therefore, no coincidence that once a master was appointed, work schemes began in earnest both in newly established workhouses and in ongoing workhouses. In this section, I will not only dig further into the new workhouses discussed above to understand how the employment of the masters

¹¹¹ Basingstoke Vestry Minutes, 21 March 1785, HRO, 80M99/2.

¹¹² *Rules and Orders to be Observed by the Governor and Matron of the Poor-house of Boldre* (Southampton, 1793); Milford Overseers Accounts, 27 November 1799, HRO, 87M98/5.

was linked to workhouse labour but also add some cases of old workhouses where the same processes seem to have played out.

The appointment of masters for new workhouses around the turn of the century was directly associated with the launch of workhouse labour plans. In 1796, the rural (but riverine) parishes in the arable division of Overton and Whitchurch decided to (re)establish workhouses and, at the same time, build a manufactory within the walls of the houses and hire masters to furnish employment to the poor.¹¹³ The former master of Michelmersh workhouse, John Jones, was, in 1799, appointed as the first workhouse master for Overton workhouse in the hope of emulating a successful woollen manufactory in the former workhouse which was said to engage about forty people.¹¹⁴ The plan was to employ not only workhouse residents but also those not on the relief lists but in need of employment, who would work in the daytime only and return to their own homes at night.¹¹⁵ John Gange as a new master for Whitchurch workhouse, employed from 1796, was given 2s. 6d. in the pound upon all the earnings of the inmates from a woollen manufactory built in the house on top of an annual salary of £24. In 1799, Whitchurch decided to set up another building for a sack manufactory within the premises, suggesting that the parish had managed to make money from the employment of the workhouse inmates.¹¹⁶

In terms of the extent to which, and ways in which, workhouse masters made use of inmates' labour, parishes in the coastal and pastoral divisions seem – on the admittedly quite slender evidence available – to do better than their arable counterparts. The new workhouse at Alverstoke, a coastal town, selected Thomas Steel in 1799 as a master in charge of not only

¹¹³ Overton Vestry Minutes, 3 November 1796, HRO, 81M72/PV1; Whitchurch Officers' and Visitors' Order Book, 5 September 1796, HRO, 83M76/PO3.

¹¹⁴ Overton Vestry Minutes, 21 October 1799, HRO, 81M72/PV1.

¹¹⁵ Overton Vestry Minutes, 5 December 1796, HRO, 81M72/PV1.

¹¹⁶ Whitchurch Officers' and Visitors' Order Book, 5 September 1796, 4 June 1799, HRO, 83M76/PO3.

manufacture but also cultivation for the house, which it was hoped would prove profitable.¹¹⁷ The reports made by the workhouse committee state proudly that agricultural and manufacturing production had become sufficient for the consumption and use of the inmates and helped save expense in maintaining the paupers.¹¹⁸ Even more ambitious was the pastoral parish of Boldre, where confidence was expressed that under a well-qualified master employed in 1793, workhouse labour could do more than just cut costs.¹¹⁹ The parish made a plan to appropriate earnings from inmate labour to liquidate the mortgage on the house worth £800, meanwhile paying its interest. Under the terms of this scheme, the master, Thomas Salter, was assigned an important role. He was so much trusted by the parish that he was paid £70 per year from 1798, the highest level of wage found in any workhouse, contrasting with what was paid to the master of the similar-sized Bishopstoke workhouse capable of holding 60 people, just £25.¹²⁰ Salter's job was not merely to set workhouse inmates to work but also to obtain raw materials and sell products. In 1797, he visited Mr Roach of Fordingbridge to complain about the recent late delivery of flax for spinning thread and, in 1798, communicated with Mr Stevens and Mr Blackmore, woollen drapers of Salisbury, to promote the quality of blanketing produced in the workhouse and negotiate with them over the price.¹²¹ The debt of £800 was totally cleared in 1805.¹²² When, in 1803, some ratepayers expressed their suspicion that it was paid from poor rates the parish officers carried out an examination and reaffirmed that the money came from the inmates' earnings.¹²³

¹¹⁷ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 27 November 1799, HRO, PL2/1/1.

¹¹⁸ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 1805-1813, HRO, PL2/1/1.

¹¹⁹ Walter, Robbins and Gilpin, *Account*.

¹²⁰ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 9 April 1798, HRO, 84M70/PO1.

¹²¹ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 6 November 1797, 6 August 1798, HRO, 84M70/PO1.

¹²² Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 7 April 1801, 7 March 1805, HRO, 84M70/PO1.

¹²³ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 6 January 1803, HRO, 84M70/PO1.

These were both new workhouses, but we can also cite instances of parishes that already had a workhouse hiring masters to embark upon a remunerative work project. In 1785, Basingstoke in the arable division chose to stop a contract for workhouse maintenance with a private businessman and, in 1789, recruited George Goves, a local manufacturer, as a master; he was judged to be well-suited to instruct the workhouse inmates and to run a blanket manufactory that had recently been built there.¹²⁴ In a similar vein, in overseers' accounts from the neighbouring rural parish of Basing, entries concerning the master's salary and of earnings from workhouse labour appear almost simultaneously in 1804 and 1805.¹²⁵ The coastal parish of Milton showed a similar pattern. From 1791, its accounts contain information about both the master's annual wages and profits from inmates' labour. The parish saw the average contribution from inmates' labour to total relief revenue reach over 5 per cent in the second half of the 1800s, more than twice the figure for the arable parish of Basing in the same years, that being only 2.1 per cent.¹²⁶ In the two coastal towns of Lymington and Titchfield, the employment of a new master was again associated with the enlargement of their workhouses to add a workshop. In 1791, after the enlargement was completed, James Salter (possibly a relative of Boldre's master, Thomas Salter, though there is no evidence of this) was appointed as a new master. An agreement between the parish and Salter stipulated that he was to be paid £20 annually and 2s. 6d. out of every pound from inmates' work.¹²⁷ Between 1801 and 1807, he earned approximately £10 on average from workhouse labour per year.¹²⁸ According to an advertisement in 1789, Titchfield was looking for a person capable of establishing a woollen

¹²⁴ Basingstoke Vestry Minutes, 10 November 1789, HRO, 80M99/2.

¹²⁵ Basing Overseers' Accounts, 20 November 1804, 14 April 1805, HRO, 3M70/46.

¹²⁶ Milton Overseers Accounts, 1805-1809, HRO, 56M83/PO3; Basing Overseers' Accounts, 1805-1809, HRO, 3M70/46.

¹²⁷ Lymington Vestry Minutes, 10 March 1791, HRO, 42M75/PV1.

¹²⁸ Lymington Overseers' Accounts, 1800-1807, HRO, 42M75/PO20.

manufactory and employing the poor therein. The parish selected Thomas Flower as a new master and made an addition to the workhouse in 1790.¹²⁹

However, in the 1820s, several arable parishes decided to stop hiring a master and to contract out institutional relief to a contractor instead. Out of the eight parishes in the arable division which hired masters to supervise inmates' work, only two retained them until the last year of the Old Poor Law. Remunerative labour schemes in arable workhouses were apparently judged to have failed before then. In 1811, Alton resolved that the manufacturing concern 'should be gradually discontinued, but as speedily as possible'.¹³⁰ The workshop of the Whitchurch workhouse was also closed and converted into a tenement in 1817.¹³¹ Even in Bishopstoke, an arable parish whose workhouse remained under the control of a master, the return from workhouse labour was latterly poor in monetary terms. From 1820 to 1834, the yearly average income from workhouse labour was less than £30, just enough to cover the master's annual salary, £25 in 1834.¹³² By contrast, five out of seven parishes in coastal and pastoral divisions continued to employ masters until 1834. As late as the 1820s, a workhouse work plan was still operating in the parish of Eling in the New Forest. In 1816, John Musselwhite of Salisbury was chosen as the new master by the parish and ordered to instruct the workhouse residents in the manufacture of flannels, for which Salisbury was, at that time, famous.¹³³ The obvious question raised here of why the labour scheme in coastal and pastoral workhouses were more successful than in arable ones will be addressed in the next chapter.

3.2.3 Contracts for farming out

¹²⁹ Titchfield Vestry Minutes, 19 December 1789, 17 April 1790, HRO, 37M73/PV1.

¹³⁰ Alton Vestry Minutes, 1811, HRO, 29M/84PV1.

¹³¹ Whitchurch Officers' and Visitors' Order Book, 8 April 1817, HRO, 83M76/PO3.

¹³² Bishopstoke Overseers Accounts, 1820-1834, HRO, 145M82/PO8.

¹³³ Eling Vestry Minutes, 26 December 1816, HRO, 4M69/PV1.

The practice of ‘farming’ the poor, namely putting their relief out to contract, had been popular from the first half of the eighteenth century. A clause of the Workhouse Test Act of 1723 seems to have become a basis of contracts for the maintenance of the poor at a fixed rate per annum.¹³⁴ In Hampshire, there were two types of contracts found in particular across the arable areas during our period: one for the maintenance of all paupers, indoor and outdoor, and the other just for the management of the workhouse. Commonly, parishes advertised for tenders from those willing to farm the poor; existing contractors also needed to bid against other candidates periodically.¹³⁵

Three parishes in the arable division, Basingstoke, Bishopstoke and Romsey Extra, embarked upon contracts prior to the nineteenth century, in each case farming the whole poor on payment of a lump sum. In 1764, Basingstoke vestry resolved to make a contract with John Burrige to farm the poor of the parish, including those in the workhouse, for three years at the annual sum of £470, to be paid monthly.¹³⁶ This contract was renewed several times, though at fluctuating annual sums, and continued until 1781, the year of the death of Burrige’s wife, who had taken over her husband’s position by 1775.¹³⁷ The overseer, John White, was, in the following year, selected as the new contractor at the slightly increased sum of £480 per year.¹³⁸ The other arable parishes of Romsey Extra and Bishopstoke, which signed contracts to maintain all their paupers, guaranteed contractors yearly sums of £1,050 in 1786 and £157 10s. in 1794, respectively.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Webb and Webb, *English*, p. 277.

¹³⁵ Webb and Webb, *English*, p. 279.

¹³⁶ Basingstoke Vestry Minutes, 12 March 1764, HRO, 80M99/2.

¹³⁷ Basingstoke Vestry Minutes, 17 December 1781, HRO, 80M99/2.

¹³⁸ Basingstoke Vestry Minutes, 11 February 1782, HRO, 80M99/2.

¹³⁹ Romsey Vestry Minutes, 4 August 1786, HRO, 10M58/PV1; Bishopstoke Overseers Accounts, 1794, HRO, 145M82/PO8.

The contracts for Bishopstoke and Romsey Extra were terminated halfway through the first decade of the nineteenth century, by contrast with that for Basingstoke, which was abandoned earlier, in 1785. Because of price rises at the turn of the century, the number of those in receipt of relief and the poor relief cost spiralled up, which probably contributed to the abandonment of the contract system. The sharp increase put an unbearable strain on the contractors, who were driven to give up the contract. When prices were unpredictable, the system of contracting with a fixed annual payment was unlikely to be effective. Although Basingstoke vestry agreed to allow the contractor one month's additional pay on account of the great advance of the county tax and the increase of the poor in 1775, crises like those of 1795 and 1800 probably undermined both sides' faith in the workability of the contract system.¹⁴⁰ From the contractors' point of view, contracts ceased to be worthwhile. Their response was to try to transfer costs to parishes – but that meant that from the point of view of parishes the system failed to contain costs. In 1792, there was a contract between Romsey Extra and Richard Witters at sums of £555 for the first year, £540 for the second and £535 for the third, but he abruptly cancelled the contract in the following year. In 1794 A new contract was entered into, but the agreed annual sum surged to as much as £1,239 19s. 6d.¹⁴¹

As numbers and costs of the poor in receipt of outdoor relief were recognised as being liable to fluctuate in the last decade of the eighteenth century, contracts for farming all relief business in Hampshire gave way to those which focussed on letting out the poor in the workhouse.¹⁴² Workhouse contracts had already been widespread across the country over the second quarter of the eighteenth century, though no evidence of early examples has been found in Hampshire. There had been a group of active contractors, such as the best known, Matthew

¹⁴⁰ Basingstoke Vestry Minutes, 21 March 1775, HRO, 80M99/2.

¹⁴¹ Romsey Vestry Minutes, 5 April 1792, 21 February 1793, 23 April 179, HRO, 10M58/PV1.

¹⁴² Webb and Webb, *English*, p. 289.

Marryott, under whose control at least seventeen workhouses operated.¹⁴³ Those selected as workhouse contractors by Hampshire parishes in the early nineteenth century had experience specifically in workhouse management, in contrast to contractors for farming the whole poor, who were local petty farmers or businessmen with little knowledge or experience of managing institutional relief.

Workhouse contractors in these circumstances were not given a fixed salary, but instead were assigned two distinct sources of income: profit derived from the labour of inmates and a weekly payment for their maintenance per head. In the 1790s and 1800s, the contractors relied more on the former source. This reflected these two decades having seen a wave of enthusiasm for a profitable work schemes, at least in Hampshire. Some of the master-employing parishes discussed above shifted towards offering a workhouse contract in this period. In 1792 Basingstoke made a contract with George Goves, the current workhouse master, who had charge of the blanket manufactory in the workhouse. The workhouse contract specified that the ‘farmer’ should continue to run the manufactory and receive returns from it. Furthermore, it was planned to erect another workshop at the parish’s expense under his supervision.¹⁴⁴ Similarly, in 1802, two years after a sacking manufactory was built in the workhouse, Whitchurch chose a local manufacturer, Richard Dibley, as a contract counterparty. According to the detail of the contract, he was to be entitled to all the earnings of workhouse inmates, in addition to 3s. 6d. per inmate every week.¹⁴⁵ However, the drive for profits under the contracts seem to have ended in failure. In 1816, it was found that the manufactory in the Whitchurch

¹⁴³ Hitchcock, ‘Workhouses’, pp. 151-152.

¹⁴⁴ Basingstoke Vestry Minutes, 10 November 1789, 1 May 1792, HRO, 80M99/2.

¹⁴⁵ Whitchurch Officers’ and Visitors’ Order Book, 24 May 1802, 3 April 1804, HRO, 83M76/PO3.

workhouse was out of repair. The next year, it was closed.¹⁴⁶ A workshop in the Basingstoke workhouse was also converted into sleeping rooms in 1819.¹⁴⁷

During the 1820s, a further five parishes, three in the arable division (Basing, Bishop's Waltham, Kingsclere) and two in the pastoral division (Alverstoke, Boldre), stopped hiring masters and commenced a workhouse farming contract (the other five coastal and pastoral parishes shown in Figure 3.3 kept their masters until the end of Old Poor Law). The main base of their contracts shifted to weekly payments per head; a clause to allow a contractor to receive the profits from inmates' labour disappeared from all their contracts.¹⁴⁸ This suggests that hope that workhouses might provide a forum for the money-making employment of the poor increasingly vanished, although economically worthless task work might still be offered to teach labour discipline or for deterrent effect.¹⁴⁹ A report made by Alverstoke in 1822, just before its workhouse was farmed, plainly stated that workhouse work could not be a reliable source of profit. 'A manufactory in a poor house must be subject to disadvantage not felt in a private establishment, and the reason is obvious. Although a certain portion of their earnings is given to the workers, it is not of that magnitude to induce them to remain in the house, if anything more eligible offers. Hence, it is that on a favourable opportunity, they leave the institution'.¹⁵⁰ A workhouse contract could make the situation worse in that it motivated the parish to send the workhouse contractor the most expensive paupers, including the very young

¹⁴⁶ Whitchurch Officers' and Visitors' Order Book, 12 November 1816, 8 April 1817, HRO, 83M76/PO3.

¹⁴⁷ Basingstoke Vestry Minutes, 8 July 1819, HRO, 46M74/PV1.

¹⁴⁸ Proposals for Letting the Poore of Basing that is in the Poor House, 1822, HRO, 3M70/70; Bishop's Waltham.

Vestry Minutes, 18, 25 March 1827, HRO, 30M77/PV1; Kingsclere Vestry Minutes, 23 December 1820, HRO, 90M72/PW1; Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 1 April 1823, HRO, PL2/1/1; Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 10 December 1822, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

¹⁴⁹ Mandler, 'Making', pp. 141-142.

¹⁵⁰ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 2 April 1822, HRO, PL2/1/1.

and old and the disabled, as money was paid per head regardless of the profile of the poor. The workhouse could easily end up full of people unable to work.

3.3 Conclusion

To summarise, this chapter has been divided into two, the first part focussing on the establishment of workhouses and the second on the different types of workhouse management. It has used parish-generated records to show, in the first part, how workhouses were distributed by size, when and how large workhouses were established and how the relatively high costs of their establishment were met and, in the second part, how workhouses were managed and how patterns in this regard changed over time. In answering these questions, the chapter has highlighted to what extent the patterns revealed related to workhouses being urban or rural on the hand and in one or another division on the other. The central argument is that workhouse provision and management were conditioned by ecological circumstances but were also the result of varying parochial responses to both local circumstances and larger patterns in need and parishes' ability to respond to need.

Chapter Four: Workhouse inmates

Whereas the previous chapter explored the establishment and management of workhouses, this chapter looks inside them. We address questions of who lived in the workhouse and who was given a workhouse offer. The total number and composition of workhouse inmates were shaped by negotiations which set the scene for final decisions. The process of workhouse admission broadly developed through three stages. First, it was usually initiated by the poor asking for formal aid. Their determination to apply for poor relief was influenced not only by national or local circumstances but also by incidents of their personal life histories. Second, parish authorities selected who among poor-relief claimants was appropriate to be committed, considering both the nature of their needs and what the workhouse could offer them. Lastly, as the officers had no power to compel the poor to accept the workhouse offer, the decision of whether to enter the house or go without relief was up to the latter. The refusal rate may have depended on the availability of alternative recourse for those in need.

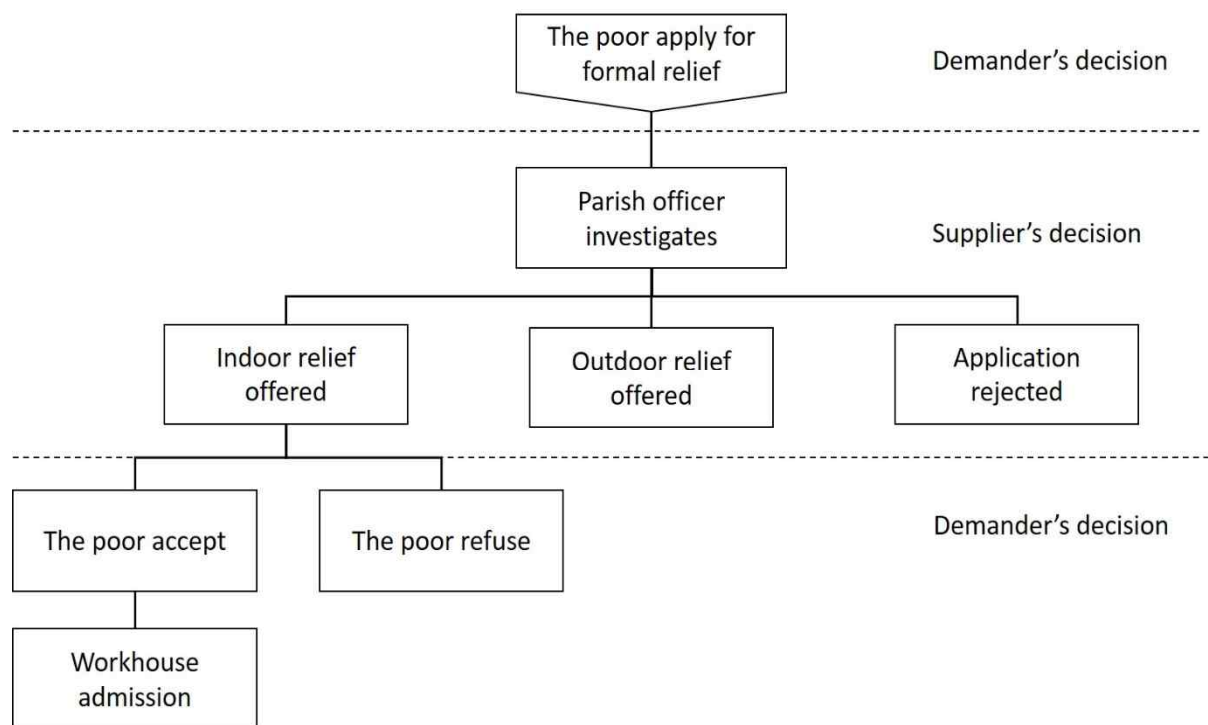


Figure 4.1 The process of workhouse admission

Various factors on the demand side and supply side combined in different ways in different places and at different times, which created regional and temporal variations in the size and character of the workhouse inmate population. The questions addressed below are, accordingly, how the overall number of people living within the walls of workhouses changed over time and how their age and gender profile varied in different localities. Unfortunately, lists of the inmates, including their personal information, rarely survive for Hampshire; even if a few have been discovered, most of these are irregularly scattered over time or even one-off. It is, therefore, essential to use supplementary records. Some parishes, for example, produced vestry or workhouse committee minutes which contain details of applications made by the destitute for formal poor relief and their results, making it possible to discern what types of claimants were chiefly offered workhouse admission and whether there was a pattern.

4.1 Fluctuations in workhouse populations

The overall number of those residing in a workhouse went up and down constantly. Here we explore how workhouse populations fluctuated and what had an impact on the fluctuations. The records of three parishes are used, Ringwood in the arable division, Christchurch in the coastal division, and Headley in the pastoral division, all of whose records, unusually, contain serial data about the workhouse population, covering at least ten years.¹

Previous studies have indicated that workhouse populations moved in response to national economic crises, which increased the demand for poor relief. For example, according to Samantha Shave's research, the population of a workhouse at Easebourne, Sussex, rose in 1800-1802, 1805-1807, 1811-1814, and 1816-21, years which saw a jump in national wheat prices (illustrated in Figure 4.2). She also points out that the high population in the last period between 1816 and 1821 was associated with the start of a recession caused by the disbandment of soldiers at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, reflected in steep growth in the number of male inmates from 1816.² Joseph Harley observes that a workhouse at Beaminster, Dorset, accommodated more inmates from 1816, reaching its height in 1822. He likewise attributes this to economic depression after the peace with France in which the job market was saturated and real wages diminished.³

Other studies focusing on London have by contrast found that the numbers of people residing in metropolitan workhouses did not synchronise simply with national vicissitudes of the economy, but were also affected by local factors, especially on the supply side. David Green claims that the exceptional pressure from the fast growth of the London population led to a mounting need for institutional relief and, therefore, either to the construction of new

¹ Christchurch Weekly Returns of the Employment of Inmates Books, 1787-1824, DHC, BG/CC/X/4/3/4-7; Ringwood Admittance and Discharge Book, 1814-1823, HRO, 22M84/PO111; Headley Account Book for the House of Industry, 1795-1805, HRO, 57M75/PO16.

² Shave, *Pauper*, pp. 77-78.

³ Harley, 'Material', pp. 78-79.

workhouses or to the enlargement of existing buildings.⁴ A metropolitan workhouse in the parish of St Martin-in-the-Fields, for example, saw the inmate population suddenly drop in the early 1770s when the rebuilding of the house was taking place. The rebuilding followed a dramatic increase in the workhouse population which exceeded 900 in 1785, making the workhouse the third largest in London according to the 1803 returns. Yet, another notable finding from this workhouse is that its population fairly consistently fell from 1785 to 1805, despite harvest failure and sharp rises in corn prices occurring sporadically across the country.⁵ The decrease may be partly explained by the fact that, from the later eighteenth century, few children were sent to the workhouse, probably owing to a new local policy. Parish authorities increasingly sent the young inmates out to a nurse, school or apprenticeship.⁶

Among the Hampshire parishes studied here, Christchurch and Ringwood workhouse population numbers grew in periods of nationwide economic hardship and high demand for formal assistance, as in the cases studied by Shave and Harley. The ups and downs for the two workhouses paralleled the movement of wheat prices: the numbers of workhouse inmates for the former peaked in 1800 and 1818 and that for the latter in 1818. Due to the two grain crises of 1795 and 1800, the cost of wheat borne by a family with two children rose almost fourfold from 4s. 5d. in 1794 to 17s. in 1801, according to Wells' estimates, while agricultural labourers' wages did not mirror the upward trend, occasionally becoming inadequate to purchase even a subsistence-level diet.⁷ This led to a great increase in the number of those relying on poor relief and sent to workhouses. In 1816-1818, the situation was complicated by a sharp price rise due

⁴ Green, *Capital*, pp. 57-69.

⁵ Jeremy Boulton and John Black, 'Paupers and their Experience of a London Workhouse: St Martin-in-the-Fields, 1725-1824', in Jane Hamlett, Lesley Hoskins and Rebecca Preston (eds), *Residential Institutions in Britain, 1725-1970: Inmates and Environments* (London, 2013), pp. 83-85.

⁶ Boulton and Schwarz 'Comforts', pp. 227-228.

⁷ Roger Wells, 'The Development of the English Rural Proletariat and Social Protest, 1700-1850', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 6 (1979), p. 121.

to food shortage, in part stemming from the global calamity caused by volcanic activities and the staggering influx of discharged men after the Napoleonic Wars.⁸

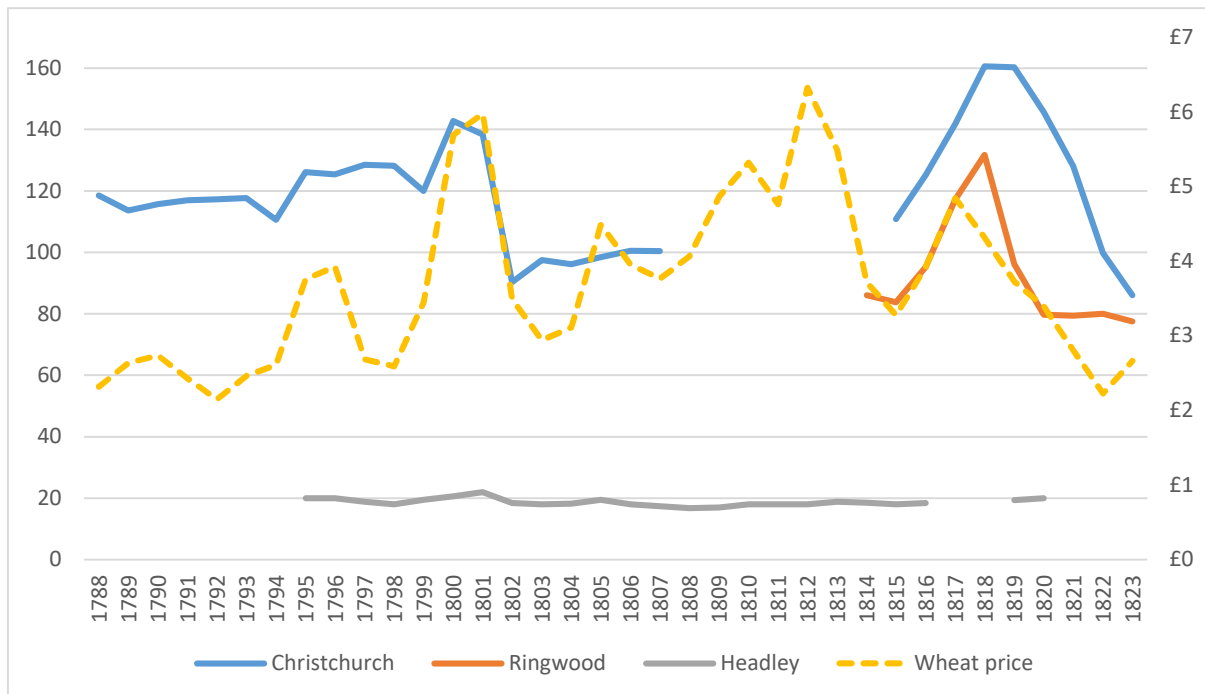


Figure 4.2 Average annual numbers of inmates in Christchurch workhouse, Ringwood workhouse and Headley union workhouse (from Headley parish only), and national wheat prices (per Imperial quarter), 1788-1823

Source: Christchurch Weekly Returns of the Employment of Inmates Books, 1787-1824; Ringwood Admittance and Discharge Book, 1814-1823; Headley Account Book for the House of Industry, 1795-1805. For wheat prices, Mitchell, *Statistics*, p. 756.

By contrast, the population trend of the Headley workhouse responded more to supply-oriented local conditions than to national distress, like the London cases discussed. The workhouse, which served the Headley union, uniting the north-eastern pastoral parishes of Headley, Kingsley and Bramshott under Gilbert’s Act, accommodated a consistent number of people from the parish of Headley from 1795 to 1820. Except for a slight increase associated

⁸ For the food crisis, see John Post, ‘The Economic Crisis of 1816-1817 and Its Social and Political Consequences’, *Journal of Economic History*, 30 (1970), pp. 248-250; *The Last Great Subsistence Crisis in the Western World* (Baltimore, 1977), pp. 27-67; Andrew Charlesworth (ed), *An Atlas of Rural Protest in Britain 1548-1900* (London, 1983), pp. 104-108; Michael Turner, ‘Corn Crises in Britain in the Age of Malthus’ in Michael Turner (ed), *Malthus and His Time* (London, 1986), pp. 115-116; J. R. Wordie, ‘Perceptions and Reality: The Effects of the Corn Laws’, in J. R. Wordie (ed), *Agriculture and Politics in England, 1815-1939* (London, 2000), pp. 38-39. For the post-war unemployment, see Roger Wells, ‘Poor-Law Reform in the Rural South-east; the Impact of the ‘Sturges Bourne Acts’ during the Agricultural Depression, 1815-1835’, *Southern History*, 23 (2001), pp. 52-55.

with the hardship of 1800 and 1801, that number was around twenty. The steadiness appears to have been a product of agreements, albeit unwritten, for allocating inmate places available in the workhouse between the parishes comprising the union. Even though the inmates were farmed out to a contractor at 2s. 10d. per head with a minimum number for each parish, the parishes may have been given places, by unwritten agreements, in proportion to their population. A'Court's note shows that by 1834, the workhouse accommodated thirty-nine in total, seventeen from Headley, sixteen from Bramshott and six from Kingsley.⁹ The population of the three parishes was 1,228, 1,210, and 345, respectively, in 1831, meaning that the ratio of workhouse inmates to the population was 0.014, 0.013, and 0.017 each.

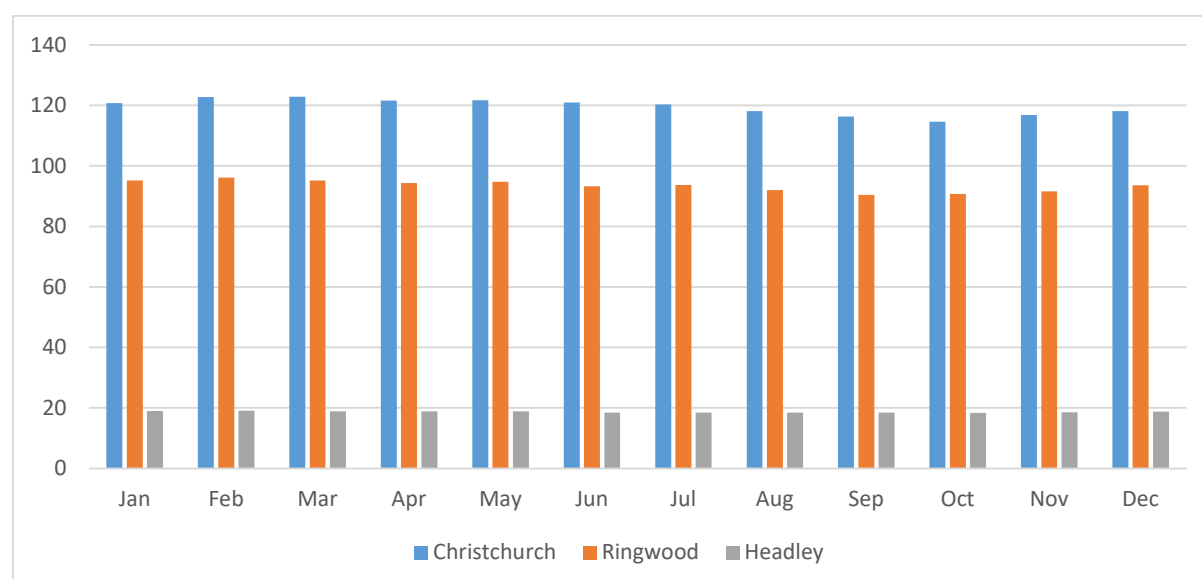


Figure 4.3 Average monthly numbers of inmates in the three workhouses from 1788 to 1823
Source: Based on data used for Figure 4.2.

There was little seasonal fluctuation in the size of the population for the three Hampshire workhouses for which we have data. This contrasts with findings that the populations of London workhouses and New Poor Law workhouses had a high degree of seasonality, probably reflecting levels of unemployment, usually rising in the winter and falling

⁹ A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the several Parishes in the division of Winchester', 'Headley', February 1835, TNA, MH32/2.

in the summer.¹⁰ Although in these Hampshire workhouses the numbers of inmates commonly reached their highest point in February or March and their lowest in September or October, the variance was inconsiderable, for the Christchurch workhouse from 123 to 115, for the Ringwood workhouse from 96 to 90 and for the Headley workhouse from 19 to 18. The stability of the three workhouses' population during the year, in spite of the seasonality of agricultural unemployment, suggests that seasonality in demand for relief was muted by being filtered through decisions by parish officers, who mainly put the young, old and infirm into the workhouses, people less capable of productive labour and less touched by employment trends.¹¹ Under Gilbert's Act, the Headley workhouse was, in fact, supposed to receive the vulnerable solely.¹² By contrast, the St Martin-in-the-Fields workhouse in London housed the able-bodied out of work, whose numbers grew in winter when employment was slack.¹³

4.2 The composition of workhouse inmates

Three urban workhouses – including two of those already discussed – have left records including personal information about their inmates for certain years during my research period. The two towns of Ringwood in the arable division and Christchurch in the coastal division maintained workhouse registers that still survive that contain names, ages, and the admission

¹⁰ The St Martin-in-the-Field workhouse in London housed about 20 per cent more inmates in winter than in summer. MacKay, 'Culture', p. 214. For New Poor Law workhouses and the seasonality of their population, see M. A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System 1834-1929: The History of an English Social Institution* (London, 1983), pp. 229-231; Andrew Hinde and Fiona Turnbull, 'The Populations of Two Hampshire Workhouses, 1851-1861', *Local Population Studies*, 61 (1998), pp. 43-47; Nigel Goose, 'Workhouse Populations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Case of Hertfordshire', *Local Population Studies*, 62 (1999), pp. 52-69; David Jackson, 'Kent Workhouse Populations in 1881: A Study Based on the Census Enumerators' Books', *Local Population Studies*, 69 (2002), pp. 55-56; 'The Medway Union Workhouse, 1876-1881: A Study Based on the Admission and Discharge Registers and the Census Enumerators' *Local Population Studies*, 75 (2005), p. 17.

¹¹ For agricultural unemployment patterns, see K. D. M. Snell, 'Agricultural Seasonal Unemployment, the Standard of Living, and Women's Work in the South and East, 1690-1860', *Economic History Review* 34 (1981), pp. 421-425.

¹² Shave, *Pauper*, pp. 94-95.

¹³ MacKay, 'Culture', pp. 219-220.

and discharge dates of inmates, although some of these details were frequently omitted.¹⁴ Portsmouth drew up muster books, in which workhouse inmates are listed by room, and their profiles, such as employment and health condition, as well as their names and ages, are set out.¹⁵

The records do not capture the structure of the workhouse population at a specific moment but suggest usage by different groups of paupers. More significantly, information at the level of the inmate enables us to dig into personal circumstances which led paupers to the workhouse. Furthermore, the personal information hints at strategic ways in which the poor took advantage of institutional relief, endorsing recent emphasis on the agency of inmates.¹⁶ In her work on poor children and their families, Alys Levene, for example, argues that they used the workhouse in a variety of ways to meet immediate economic or medical needs.¹⁷

By contrast, information about inmates inhabiting small rural workhouses is so scarce that we need to turn to another type of parish document. Some vestry minutes and workhouse committee minutes detail applications for poor relief and their results. They tell us who was offered workhouse admission. Few applications are recorded from the long-term dependent poor, the vulnerable, but clearly ‘deserving’, such as the very old, orphans, or the disabled, even though they normally bulked large among inmates, perhaps because their cases did not spark much discussion and their applications were small in number, as they stayed for a long time once they had entered a workhouse. What we gain is, therefore, insight into the most discretionary sector of admissions. Records of this kind survive from six rural parishes (South Stoneham and Botley in the coastal division, and Boldre, Fawley, Minstead, and Selborne in

¹⁴ Ringwood Admittance and Discharge Book, 1786-1823, HRO, 22M84/PO111; Christchurch Register of Inmates, 1812-1835, DHC, BG/CC/X/4/2/1.

¹⁵ Portsmouth Muster Books, 1804, 1805, 1808, 1813, PHC, PL6/12-15.

¹⁶ For historiography about the agency, see the introduction, fn. 8.

¹⁷ Levene, ‘Children’, p. 42.

the pastoral division), usually not saying whether the offer was accepted or not. The choice to offer the workhouse seems to have reflected both how parish officers apprehended the character of applicants' poverty and what their workhouses could provide for them. The parish of South Stoneham (in the coastal division) has left workhouse committee minutes including not only information about workhouse offers but also several, albeit piecemeal, lists of workhouse inmates, which makes it possible not merely to compare the offers and admission but also to determine varied patterns of response between different groups of the poor.

Even though the different types of records limit the scope for convincing comparison between urban and rural workhouses, they allow us to grasp varied ways in which workhouses were used on the part of both demanders and suppliers of poor relief and, furthermore, to uncover regional variations within Hampshire. In order to analyse what they tell us more systematically, we will divide the people concerned into four categories: adult men, adult women, children, and the old. E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield estimate that the population of the country became increasingly young from 1,676 to 1,826, during which time the proportion of children (aged 0 to 14) rose from 29 to 39.5 per cent, while the proportions of adults (aged 15 to 59) and the elderly over 60 dropped from 61 to 53.5 and from 10 to 6.5 per cent, as increasing numbers of children drove the population growth of the period.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the sex ratio (Male/Female) remained nearly constant, moving from 103.9 to 104.3 between 1780 and 1830, on the basis of baptism data.¹⁹ Overall, in the workhouses given in the tables below, the young were certainly predominant, and adult men were outnumbered by adult women. However, this did not reflect the age and sex structure at the national level but resulted from local or personal circumstances, as we will see now.

¹⁸ E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (London, 1981), p. 217.

¹⁹ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population*, p. 225.

Table 4.1 Workhouse inmates of the towns of Ringwood, Christchurch and Portsmouth (%)

Division	Parishes	Years	Adult men	Adult women	Children	The old	Not known	Total
Arable	Ringwood	1786-7, 1801-23	39 (6.8)	75 (13.1)	137 (23.9)	39 (6.8)	284 (49.4)	573 (100)
Coastal	Christchurch	1814-35	102 (13.6)	170 (22.6)	313 (41.7)	123 (16.4)	43 (5.7)	751 (100)
	Portsmouth	1804, 1805, 1808, 1813	65 (4.5)	475 (32.8)	245 (16.9)	260 (18.0)	401 (27.7)	1446 (100)

Note: Children – 14 years old or under, the old – 60 years old or more (the age classification found in the 1803 returns)

Source: Ringwood Admittance and Discharge Book, 1786-1823; Christchurch Register of Inmates, 1812-1835; Portsmouth Muster Books, 1804, 1805, 1808, 1813.

Table 4.2 Workhouse offers made by the rural parishes of South Stoneham, Boldre, and Selborne (%)

Division	Parishes	Years	Adult men	Adult women	Children	The old	Total
Coastal	South Stoneham	1800-08 1821-32	22 (20.6)	26 (24.3)	55 (51.4)	4 (3.7)	107 (100)
Pastoral	Boldre	1797-1820	30 (18.2)	37 (22.4)	96 (58.2)	2 (1.2)	165 (100)
	Selborne	1795-1814	0 (0.0)	13 (24.1)	41 (75.9)	0 (0.0)	54 (100)

Source: South Stoneham Workhouse Master Day Book, 1800-1808; South Stoneham Workhouse Committee Book, 1821-1832; Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 1797-1805, 1805-1822; Selborne Vestry Minutes, 1795-1814.

Table 4.3 Number of inmates in South Stoneham workhouse (%)

	Adult men	Adult women	Children	The old	Unknown	Total
May 1822	4 (9.3)	7 (16.3)	19 (44.2)	13 (30.2)	0 (0.0)	43 (100.0)
May 1826	4 (12.1)	2 (6.1)	15 (45.5)	11 (33.3)	1 (3.0)	33 (100.0)
Jan 1827	2 (6.9)	4 (13.8)	14 (48.3)	9 (31.0)	0 (0.0)	29 (100.0)
Dec 1831	3 (12.5)	8 (33.3)	5 (20.8)	8 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	24 (100.0)
Aug 1832	3 (11.1)	8 (29.6)	9 (33.3)	7 (25.9)	0 (0.0)	27 (100.0)
Feb 1834	9 (21.4)	11 (26.2)	16 (38.1)	6 (14.3)	0 (0.0)	42 (100.0)
Total	25 (12.6)	40 (20.2)	78 (39.4)	54 (27.3)	1 (0.5)	198 (100.0)

Source: South Stoneham Workhouse Committee Book, 1821-1848.

4.2.1 Adult men

Adult men aged 15 to 59 commonly accounted for an insignificant part of the workhouse population; this finding receives support from previous studies.²⁰ As seen in Table 4.1, the proportions of adult men admitted to workhouses at Ringwood, Christchurch and Portsmouth were 6.8, 13.6, and 4.5 per cent each (if 'unknown' numbers are subtracted from total numbers, they rise to 13.5, 14.4, and 6.2 per cent).

Adult male inmates in the three urban workhouses displayed some similar features. Above all, more than 10 per cent of them ended up dying (15 per cent for the Ringwood workhouse, 13 per cent for the Christchurch workhouse), suggesting that some of them were seriously ill at the point of admission; by contrast, less than 10 per cent of adult female inmates died (7 per cent for the Ringwood workhouse, 8 per cent for the Christchurch workhouse).²¹ Portsmouth's muster books provide information about the health conditions of inmates. According to them, out of sixty-five adult men residing, forty-three had diseases or disabilities, while the number of those in good health was only four.²²

Second, a number of adult men were committed to the workhouses with their children or young siblings. They accounted for 49 and 37 per cent of adult male inmates for the

²⁰ The works of Hitchcock, Tomkins and MacKay suggest that adult men were less represented in workhouses than other groups of inmates. Hitchcock calculates that the proportions of adult men over 16 in workhouses of the parishes of St. Luke, Chelsea, St. Giles-in-the-Fields, London, and Cullompton, Devon was 15.2 per cent. Tomkins also reveals that adult men in workhouses in Oxford, Shrewsbury, York and Chester occupied less than 15 per cent. As the proportions include old men over 55, the actual share of adult men under 55 inside the workhouses is most likely to have been even smaller. On the basis of data for the workhouse in St Martin's, London, arranged by MacKay, adult men aged from 16 to 59 constituted slightly more, about 19.5 per cent, between 1815 and 1819. Hitchcock, 'Workhouses', p. 194; Tomkins, *Experience*, p. 47; Lynn MacKay, 'Moral Paupers: The Poor Men of St. Martin's, 1815-1819', *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 67 (2001), pp. 121-122.

²¹ Ringwood Admittance and Discharge Book, 1786-1823, HRO, 22M84/PO111; Christchurch Register of Inmates, 1812-1835, DHC, BG/CC/X/4/2/1; Portsmouth Muster Books, 1804, 1805, 1808, 1813, PHC, PL6/12-15.

²² Portsmouth Muster Books, 1804, 1805, 1808, 1813, PHC, PL6/12-15. A table in Hitchcock shows that sickness or infirmity, as a reason for adult men's workhouse entry, made up nearly 80 per cent in the workhouse of St. Luke, Chelsea, between 1743 to 1834. Hitchcock, 'Workhouses', p. 197.

Ringwood and Christchurch workhouses.²³ Families overburdened with the young, even though fathers or at least adult sons were alive, occasionally required poor relief and entered the workhouse.²⁴ However, the two workhouses saw different patterns in terms of when fathers left the houses. In the workhouse at Ringwood, an arable town, most fathers were discharged from the house with the whole family. Out of seventeen, two ‘eloped’ alone, leaving their families in the house, and one was left behind by his wife and child. All the fathers and their families sojourned in the house for a short term, less than six months, except Edward Read’s family, which stayed for more than three years, suggesting that normally they entered because of a temporary problem, such as sudden ailments or unexpected layoff. By contrast, relatively high numbers of fathers in the workhouse at Christchurch, a coastal town – nearly 40 per cent (9 of 23) – went out alone or with only a part of their families. All these men stayed for over six months, five even more than a year, with the exception of Martin Kilburn, who was put into a bridewell four months after his workhouse admission. Those who left with their whole family moved out of the house earlier, mostly within six months. The significant minority who were long-term residents presumably entered the workhouse due to chronic troubles, including a serious injury or persistent disability, not uncommon for those involved in dangerous port-related work.²⁵ Family breakups during an extended stay in the workhouse were principally caused by the fact that children old enough to work were more likely to be sent to local

²³ Register books for the Ringwood workhouse and Christchurch workhouse enumerate their inmates by admission date. I can count those with the same last name, listing in a row and entering the workhouses on the same day as a family, whereas it is impossible to identify family ties among those housed in the Portsmouth workhouse as the lists of inmates assort them according to designated rooms. Ringwood Admittance and Discharge Book, 1786-1823, HRO, 22M84/PO111; Christchurch Register of Inmates, 1812-1835, DHC, BG/CC/X/4/2/1.

²⁴ Tim Wales, ‘Poverty, Poor Relief and the Life-Cycle: Some Evidence from Seventeenth-Century Norfolk’, in R. M. Smith, ed., *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 353; Barry Stapleton, ‘Inherited Poverty and Life-Cycle Poverty: Odiham, Hampshire, 1650-1850’, *Social History*, 18 (1993), p. 355; Hindle, *Parish*, p. 274; Samantha Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle under the English Poor Law 1760-1834* (Woodbridge, 2013), p. 102.

²⁵ Robert Lee and Peter Marschalck, ‘The Port-City Legacy: Urban Demographic Change in the Hansestadt Bremen, 1815-1910’ in Richard Lawton and Robert Lee (eds), *Population and Society in Western European Port Cities, c 1650-1939* (Liverpool, 2002), p. 258.

businessmen. In Christchurch, some local industries, such as watchchain manufacture run by Robert Harvey Cox, requested child labourers from the workhouse (as will be discussed later).²⁶

Table 4.2 shows that, though no adult men were offered the workhouse in Selborne, they accounted for 20.6 per cent of the total number of offers in South Stoneham and 18.2 per cent in Boldre. More adult men were offered the workhouse in South Stoneham than ended up residing there (Table 4.3). Some of these adults may have appeared in resident lists as old men, because the records rarely indicate the age of applicants, just sporadically putting ‘old’ before their names. Yet this may also reflect high rates of workhouse refusal in this group, who probably had more alternatives than other groups.

Those who were offered and accepted places in the South Stoneham workhouse seem often to have been in bad health and in need of care. William Pelham, who had his shoulder dislocated on the way to Romsey, was, for instance, brought to the workhouse to be attended to.²⁷ Some adult men were shortly sent to a hospital after entering the workhouse or died in the house. The workhouse master reported twelve cases of adult men dying from 1801 to 1808.²⁸ Strikingly, in February 1834, the proportion of adult male residents rose to over 20 per cent of the total, the highest for the given years and almost comparable with that of workhouse offers to this group. This unusually high level reflected a recent bureaucratic resolution in relation to unemployment which had constantly been discussed in parish meetings from the early 1820s.²⁹ In August 1833, the decision was made to rent a field of twelve acres belonging to Queen’s College Oxford, at West End, where the workhouse was located, for the employment of jobless

²⁶ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, p. 418; Sue Newman, *The Christchurch and Bournemouth Union Workhouse* (Christchurch, 2000), pp. 25-26.

²⁷ South Stoneham Workhouse Committee Book, 29 August, 1 July 1822, SAO, PR 9/4/2.

²⁸ South Stoneham Workhouse Master Day Book, 1800-1808, SAO, PR9/15/43.

²⁹ South Stoneham Workhouse Committee Book, 3 December 1821, SAO, PR 9/4/2.

labourers.³⁰ The parish then determined that they would admit all ‘young’ men out of work who applied for relief into the workhouse, although, in practice, this was not implemented all at once due to the lack of bedding in the workhouse.³¹ High numbers admitted show paupers accepting this regime. Given that the workhouse master was given responsibility for superintending the land and work taking place there, the newcomers were probably ordered to cultivate it.³²

Boldre seems more consistently to have seen its workhouse as a place of work. Out of twenty-seven adult men directed to the workhouse, nine (33%) applied for work opportunities, and only one was ill.³³ In this parish, several types of manufacturing took place in the workhouse, such as spinning, weaving, glove making and watchchain making (as will be explained in detail in the following chapter on workhouse functioning).

4.2.2 Adult women

Adult women loomed larger on indoor relief rolls than adult men. Table 4.1 shows that they accounted for 13.1, 22.7, and 32.8 per cent of residents in the urban Ringwood, Christchurch and Portsmouth workhouses, respectively (if ‘unknown’ numbers are subtracted from total numbers, the figures increase to 25.9, 24.0, and 45.5 per cent).³⁴

Circumstances driving women to the workhouse were more diverse than for men: other than being sick they might be widowed, deserted by husbands or pregnant.³⁵ A large number

³⁰ South Stoneham Workhouse Committee Book, 12 February, 29 August 1833, SAO, PR 9/4/2.

³¹ South Stoneham Workhouse Committee Book, 28 November 1833, SAO, PR 9/4/2.

³² South Stoneham Workhouse Committee Book, 29 August, 28 November 1831, SAO, PR 9/4/2.

³³ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 3 February 1800, HRO, 84M70/PO1; Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 2 December 1813, 2 November 1815, 1 October 1818, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

³⁴ According to the findings of Tomkins, adult women constituted 28.8, 30.8, 35.7 and 39.6 per cent of inmates of workhouses in Shrewsbury, Chester, York, and Oxford. Hitchcock reveals that over 50 per cent of inmates belonging to his sample workhouses in St. Luke, Chelsea, St. Giles-in-the-Fields, London, and Cullompton, Devon were adult women (though both of these historians' figures for adult women include older women). Hitchcock, ‘Unlawfully’, pp. 79-80.

³⁵ MacKay, ‘Culture’, pp. 221-222; Tomkins, *Experience*, p. 49.

of adult women entered the Ringwood and Christchurch workhouses with their children without a male partner or came to give birth. Of adult women admitted to the Ringwood and Christchurch workhouses, about 17 and 16 per cent (13 out of 75 and 28 out of 170) were single mothers, whereas there were only five cases of single fathers entering the two workhouses. Furthermore, women delivering a baby with no spouse were commonplace, especially in the Ringwood workhouse, where there were twenty-two cases of delivery between 1816 and 1820, over four annually, though only six in the Christchurch workhouse for the same years, one case per year.³⁶ This suggests that the arable district town workhouse placed greater emphasis on a role as a recourse to expectant women than the coastal town workhouse did. As in the Christchurch workhouse, in another coastal but much bigger workhouse, Portsmouth, pregnant women did not form a major group, even though a lying-in ward was set up in the house. Out of 136 women accommodated in the lying-in room, only fourteen were pregnant or with a newborn baby, a very small minority out of a total of 475 female inmates.³⁷ Portsmouth, as a great naval base with a significant Royal Navy dockyard, possessed a high level of medical facilities and professionals from among whom such women may have been able to obtain aid.³⁸

Among adult women admitted to the Portsmouth workhouse, where they loomed unusually large (Table 4.1), a significant number had no physical issues such as illness, disability or pregnancy, which makes it necessary to hypothesise that they chose to enter the workhouse because of economic difficulties. According to the muster books, 16 per cent of adult female inmates (77 of 475) were in good health, higher than the figure for male

³⁶ Ringwood Admittance and Discharge Book, 1786-1823, HRO, 22M84/PO111; Christchurch Register of Inmates, 1812-1835, DHC, BG/CC/X/4/2/1.

³⁷ Portsmouth Muster Books, 1804, 1805, 1808, 1813, PHC, PL6/12-15.

³⁸ Richard Biddle, 'Naval Shipbuilding and the Health of Dockworkers C. 1815-1871' *Family & Community History*, 12 (2009), pp. 109-110; For example, the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, dominated by sick and wounded soldiers, set aside a ward for lying-in to pregnant women. M. H. Kaufman 'Academic Backgrounds of Candidates who Entered the Medical Services of the Army and Navy during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries' in M. H. Kaufman (ed), *The Regius Chair of Military Surgery in the University of Edinburgh, 1806-55* (London, 2003), pp. 26-27.

counterparts, 6 per cent (4 of 65).³⁹ In port towns where men working as seamen or dockers were frequently away or injured, women more commonly effectively became heads of households than in other towns. Moreover, the years covered by the muster books, from 1804 to 1813, fell in the middle of the Napoleonic Wars, when numerous sailors were enlisted, so women often faced marital dissolution and took on all responsibility for their children.⁴⁰ In Portsmouth, there was a significantly imbalanced sex ratio, in that the first five national censuses of 1801, 1811, 1821, 1831, and 1841 return that the female population was, consistently, no less than 3,500 larger than the male population; a peak of more than 6,500 surplus women was recorded in 1831. According to the 1851 census, married women outnumbered married men by 1,740, and the number of widows was 3,160.⁴¹ Even though local entrepreneurs in Portsmouth sought to take advantage of the surplus of female labour, women's capacity for paid work was limited by the need to look after their children and often did not earn them enough to eke out their livelihood.⁴² In this situation, adult women may well have resorted to the Portsmouth workhouse as a cushion against economic distress.⁴³

In less urban settings, Table 4.2 shows that the proportions of workhouse offer made to adult women were 24.3 per cent in the South Stoneham workhouse and 22.4 per cent in the Boldre workhouse – higher than those to adult men. For the parish of Selborne, 24.1 per cent of workhouse offers were made to adult women, but, exceptionally, none to adult men. The figure for South Stoneham slightly exceeded the proportion of adult female inmates, but not as much as for adult men (Table 4.3). Once again, adult women admitted may feature as old ladies.

³⁹ Portsmouth Muster Books, 1804, 1805, 1808, 1813, PHC, PL6/12-15.

⁴⁰ Clark (ed), *Cambridge*, pp. 726-727.

⁴¹ Field, 'Bourgeois', p. 436; Barry Stapleton, 'The Admiralty Connection: Port Development and Demographic Change in Portsmouth, 1650-1900', in Lawton and Lee (eds), *Population*, p. 242.

⁴² Stapleton, 'Admiralty', pp. 242-245.

⁴³ In Hull, a port town in East Yorkshire, wives and children occasionally entered a workhouse to ride out the hardships of life in the absence of their husbands. Gordon Jackson, 'The Economic Development of Hull in the Eighteenth Century' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Hull, 1960), pp. 26, 82-83.

However, they seem less likely to have declined the workhouse than adult men not only because of their economic vulnerability but also because of their high responsibility for childcare as a mother.⁴⁴ They seem to have taken advantage of the workhouse sensibly.⁴⁵ For example, in July 1824, James Jones's wife and her four children were offered either to have an allowance of eight pence per week until her husband was found or to enter the workhouse, and they chose to reside in the house.⁴⁶ Joseph Duff's wife with her seven children appeared before the workhouse committee in a very sickly and distressed state and, it was proposed that she with her family reside in the house. They accepted the offer.⁴⁷

There appear to have been differences in the characteristics of adult women given workhouse offers between rural parishes within the coastal and pastoral divisions. In South Stoneham, a rural parish in the coastal division, even though the condition of those receiving workhouse offers is not noted in all cases, many obviously had physical issues such as illness and late pregnancy. The parish saw the workhouse as a place of refuge for them. Some adult women went in and out of the workhouse several times on an as-needed basis. The workhouse master reported that Mary Surl entered the workhouse in December 1800, went out in April 1801, returned less than twelve days later because of being sick and left again in February the next year.⁴⁸ We may deduce that the workhouse provided her with shelter from the harsh winter as well as looking after her health. In this context, it is little surprise that more than half of workhouse offers to adult women (14 of 26) were concentrated in the winter seasons (from December to February), although Table 4.3 shows no marked seasonality in the workhouse population overall.

⁴⁴ MacKay, 'Culture', p. 223; 'Moral', pp. 121-122.

⁴⁵ Hitchcock, 'Unlawfully', pp. 79-80.

⁴⁶ South Stoneham Workhouse Committee Book, 5 July, 3 September 1824, SAO, PR 9/4/2.

⁴⁷ South Stoneham Workhouse Committee Book, 6 March 1826, SAO, PR 9/4/2.

⁴⁸ South Stoneham Workhouse Master Day Book, 9 December 1800, 8, 26 April 1801, 26 February 1802, SAO, PR9/15/43.

By contrast, in the pastoral parishes of Boldre and Selborne, adult women were rarely given workhouse offers on grounds of health. The concentration of offers on healthy women was probably associated with the parishes' desire to use poor labour inside the workhouses. In Boldre, Mathew Bromfield's wife was the only woman offered a place in the workhouse because of illness.⁴⁹ Few of those who were pregnant or about to give birth received offers, but instead, an allowance and the care of local nurses.⁵⁰ Selborne presents an extreme case in terms of no adult men being taken into the workhouse. The female-dominated pattern seems to have been affected by the character of the workhouse manufactory. In 1801, the parish made a contract with James White to run a woollen workshop in the workhouse, on the understanding that all the profits arising should be taken by him in the first year and then equally divided between him and the parish from the second year.⁵¹ The contractor and the parish needed women labourers to develop this textile business.

4.2.3 Children

Children were also conspicuous by their presence in workhouses.⁵² The proportions of children were, as Table 4.1 shows, 23.9, 41.7 and 16.9 per cent in the urban workhouses of Ringwood, Christchurch and Portsmouth, respectively (if 'unknown' numbers are subtracted from total numbers, these rise to 47.2, 44.2, and 23.4 per cent). In the Ringwood and Christchurch workhouses, children made up the largest subset of the workhouse population, whereas, in the Portsmouth workhouse, they were fewer than adult women and even the old. The lower representation of children in the Portsmouth workhouse probably reflected the

⁴⁹ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 5 February 1807, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

⁵⁰ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 7 May, 5 November 1807, 1 December 1808, 4 January 1810, 2 April 1811, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

⁵¹ Selborne Vestry Minutes, 16 March 1801, 32M66/PV1.

⁵² Tomkins's figures are from 35.1 to 59.6 per cent of all inmates. Hitchcock's figure is 34.0 per cent. Levene's figure from St Marylebone workhouse is 44.5 per cent. Tomkins, *Experience*, p. 47; Hitchcock, 'Workhouses', p. 194; Levene, 'Children', p. 44.

existence of alternative institutions. Lynn MacKay points out that the proportion of children in the St. James Westminster workhouse was 15 per cent, lower than that of a neighbouring workhouse in St Martin's, 25 per cent, since the former parish had a more systematic policy for child paupers in tandem with local nurseries.⁵³ In the big port town, there were voluntary institutions in which impoverished and orphaned children were clothed, fed and educated. For example, John Pounds, a lame cobbler, admitted homeless children into his small workshop from the early years of the nineteenth century, which housed as many as forty at any one time. His effort inspired the movement of ragged schools giving the young poor food, clothing, lodging and other home missionary services, one of which in this town was sponsored by the Royal Navy. Another instance was the Royal Seamen and Marines' Orphans Schools where the poor boys and girls were trained for going to sea or finding work in the dockyard and domestic service.⁵⁴

The admission of child paupers to the workhouse was principally the result of family poverty and parental expedients. In the Ringwood and Christchurch workhouses, the proportions of children entering the houses with family members were 73 and 75 per cent of all child inmates, whereas those coming alone accounted for 22 and 17 per cent.⁵⁵ Children with both their father and mother were outnumbered by those in fractional units, such as with one parent or siblings. Nonetheless, 31 and 25 per cent of children admitted into the Ringwood and Christchurch workhouses were accompanied by both parents, much higher than the equivalent of the Marylebone workhouse in London, where the figure was only 4 per cent.⁵⁶

⁵³ MacKay, 'Culture', p. 218, fn. 17; *Sketch of the State of the Children of the Poor in the Year 1756 and of the Present State and Management of All the Poor in the Parish of St. James Westminster in January 1797* (London, 1797), pp. 3-5.

⁵⁴ Jean Stanford, and A. T. Patterson, 'The Condition of the Children of the Poor in mid-Victorian Portsmouth', *Portsmouth Papers*, 21 (1974), pp. 8-12.

⁵⁵ Ringwood Admittance and Discharge Book, 1786-1823, HRO, 22M84/PO111; Christchurch Register of Inmates, 1812-1835, DHC, BG/CC/X/4/2/1.

⁵⁶ Levene, 'Children', p. 46.

The proportions of children with one or more siblings but without parents at the time of admission to the two Hampshire workhouses were also higher, 17 per cent and 27 per cent each, than in the London workhouse, 11 per cent.⁵⁷ As several historians have suggested, putting children, particularly with siblings, in a workhouse could be a parental tactic, part of a larger survival strategy in which workhouses served as a resource.⁵⁸ From this perspective, parents in the Hampshire towns were as resourceful as those in London. For example, James Tarrant and Charity Tarrant first entered the Christchurch workhouse with five young sons (David, Abraham, William, John and James) at the end of March 1826 and departed altogether in October of the same year. The mother and five boys were re-admitted without the father the following March and discharged after a year. Three years later, in 1830, two eldest sons, David and Abraham, re-entered alone and stayed for one and three months each. In July, Charity returned to the house with all her children, including a daughter, Jane, but the mother moved out with the lastborn, James, though without the other children, who left the house at different points. The two youngest boys came back to the house once more in October 1833, remained there for ten days and then returned to their mother.⁵⁹ The story of Tarrant's family indicates that parents were repeat users of the workhouse as a place of recourse and their children were flexibly accompanied with or separated from them depending on the circumstances of individual families.⁶⁰

The muster books of the Portsmouth workhouse suggest that few children were admitted into the workhouse due to their own issues, such as bad health. Out of 101 child entries with personal information, only five were ill or injured (king's evil, smallpox, fever and

⁵⁷ Levene, 'Children', p. 46.

⁵⁸ Boulton, 'Extreme', pp. 52-53; Tomkins, *Experience*, p. 48; Alys Levene, *The Childhood of the Poor: Welfare in Eighteenth-Century London* (Basingstoke, 2012), p. 119; Harley, 'Material', pp. 90-95.

⁵⁹ Christchurch Register of Inmates, 1812-1835, DHC, BG/CC/X/4/2/1.

⁶⁰ Humphries, 'Care', pp. 122-123.

cripple), while sixty were marked as being in ‘good health’. Child admission rather reflected the unstable situations of parents. The books tagged twelve as bastards or as having been deserted by single parents. In addition, nine child entrants were classified as non-parishioners or having an uncertain settlement, in some cases probably equally affecting their parents’ settlement.⁶¹ It was not uncommon to see workhouses in big cities housing the poor under settlement examinations.⁶² As a burgeoning port town with a large flow of migration, Portsmouth relieved a significant number of people not being parishioners: 2,007 in 1802-1803, although this figure was exaggerated, capturing the demobilisation after the Treaty of Amiens.⁶³

As shown in Table 4.2, children accounted for around half of all those offered workhouse provision in South Stoneham. Nearly 60 per cent of total workhouse offers in Boldre and as much as three-quarters in Selborne were made to children, whether as part of families or otherwise. Table 4.3 indicates that the proportions of young inmates in the South Stoneham workhouse averaged about 40 per cent, moving between 33 and 48 per cent for given years, though exceptionally shrinking to 21 per cent in 1831. Those were far lower than the proportion of the offers to children in this parish. The significant difference derived from that the figure for the offers to the old was extremely underestimated, as we discussed above.⁶⁴ In relation to this, a more crucial consideration is, however, that when the workhouse was offered to all members of a family, parents often sent only some of their children to the house.⁶⁵ The

⁶¹ Portsmouth Muster Books, 1805, 1808, PHC, PL6/13-14. According to Levene’s work, only 8.5 per cent of child entrants to the Marylebone workhouse were with sickness. Levene, ‘Children’, p. 46.

⁶² MacKay, ‘Moral’, pp. 118-119.

⁶³ The 1803 returns, p. 463.

⁶⁴ It is actually not straightforward to make a comparison between a stock (how many people at one time) and a flow (people coming in), because a consideration of turnover is missed here as the records of South Stoneham do not contain information about the length of stay. If the young stayed shorter than the old, they would form a smaller part of the stock than the flow. For example, Levene’s study shows that those under 20 remained in the St Marylebone workhouse for far shorter than those over 60 on average. Levene, ‘Children’, pp. 49-50.

⁶⁵ Levene, ‘Children’, pp. 53-55.

offers to children were in effect made to their parents. Orphaned or abandoned children also formed a significant presence among workhouse entrants, but few offers to them were discussed or reported as their deservedness was unquestionable and, in most cases, the workhouse was the only option left to them.⁶⁶ For poor families whose resources were stretched to breaking point by the burden of caring for their children, it could seem like a good or at least an inescapable choice to transfer the responsibility for some or all of them to the workhouse.⁶⁷ In other words, even in the context of serious pressure and inclusive offers by parish officers, parents still clearly made choices in terms of that they thought was best.

The circumstances of children offered workhouse provision in the rural coastal parish of South Stoneham did not deviate from what we have found in the case of town workhouses. As one of the key reasons for offers to the young in the parish was the disability or absence of their parents, mainly as a result of illness or death, the function of the workhouse was to be a residential care home for children. Mr Lamble's girl, for example, entered the workhouse two days before her father was sent to a hospital and stayed there for seven months, from May to November 1804.⁶⁸ Settlement issues again sometimes gave rise to admissions: the coastal parish probably had a large floating population on account of being on the Itchen Navigation leading to the big port town of Southampton.⁶⁹ Accordingly, it admitted some children with their father or mother, with the intention that they should be removed to their place of origin, or having just been removed from another parish. In these circumstances, the workhouse provided temporary lodging while legal processes were completed.⁷⁰ Children who were

⁶⁶ For lives of orphans in workhouses, see Humphries, 'Care'.

⁶⁷ Tomkins, *Experience*, pp. 47-49.

⁶⁸ South Stoneham Workhouse Master Day Book, 21 May, 24 November 1804, SAO, PR9/15/43.

⁶⁹ See Chapters one and two.

⁷⁰ South Stoneham Workhouse Master Day Book, 20 January 1801, 23 January 1808, SAO, PR9/15/43; South Stoneham Workhouse Committee Book, 1 May 1826, SAO, PR 9/4/2.

offered the workhouse for these two reasons accounted for nearly 40 per cent of the total (8 of 21).

A larger number of workhouse offers made to children in the rural pastoral parishes of Boldre and Selborne than in the coastal parish of South Stoneham reveal these parishes actively shepherding poor children into their workhouses. This seems to have been because they regarded children as a cause of family poverty and hindrance to parents' engagement with labour markets, not simply as innocent victims of familial tragedies. The detail of workhouse offers in Boldre suggests that if parents could not maintain their children from their earnings, they were given a chance to send as many as they chose into the house. In most cases, the offers were made not for a single child but for several. In 1798, Susan Lane applied for support for her child in order to 'get into service', and the parish offered the workhouse. In the same year, Henry Perkins's wife's application for relieving her children was submitted, and the parish determined that if the weekly earnings of her husband were not sufficient to maintain the family, any of her children could come into the house.⁷¹ Boldre and Selborne were confident that their workhouses could turn the labour of young paupers to the general benefit, such that a workhouse offer could be seen as a way of adding both adults and children to the workforce. In the Boldre workhouse, children were employed from as young as four or five years.⁷² A manufactory to knit gloves was built in 1801, and a contract was also made to carry out watchchain making (also introduced in Christchurch at this date) in which no less than twelve children from nine years old were engaged.⁷³ Selborne, likewise, entered into a contract to

⁷¹ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 1 January, 5 February 1798, HRO, 84M70/PO1.

⁷² Walter, Robbins and Gilpin, 'Account', p. 8.

⁷³ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 7 April 1801, HRO, 84M70/PO1; Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 7 October 1808, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

establish a woollen manufactory in the workhouse in 1801, and thereafter the number of workhouse offers for children, in particular girls, increased.⁷⁴

4.2.4 The old

Workhouses undoubtedly played an important part in the treatment of the aged poor. In her recent work, Susannah Ottaway reports that the proportion of inmates aged 60 and above in the workhouse in Terling, Essex, stayed below 25 per cent between 1774 and 1790 but increased exponentially to 82 per cent by 1798.⁷⁵ As Table 4.1 shows, the elderly accounted for 6.8, 16.4 and 18.0 per cent of the poor housed in the Ringwood, Christchurch and Portsmouth workhouses (if 'unknown' numbers are subtracted from total numbers, those increased to 13.4, 17.4 and 24.9 per cent). It is notable that the aged were, along with adult men, the smallest group in the Ringwood workhouse from 1807, when an epidemic struck the parish, to 1823 when the workhouse admission and discharge registers ended, whereas the 1803 returns indicate that 19 per cent of those relieved by all means in Ringwood were aged sixty or more.⁷⁶ Portsmouth presents a contrasting case: the proportion of old workhouse inmates was over 20 per cent in 1804 and 1805, although the elderly constituted less than 10 per cent of total recipients of relief according to the 1803 returns.⁷⁷ It seems that Ringwood was more disposed than Portsmouth to relieve aged paupers in their own houses.

The Ringwood policy of relieving more of the old poor at home was possibly a result of a local catastrophe, the outbreak of a contagious disease. From the middle of September

⁷⁴ Selborne Vestry Minutes, 16 March 1801, 32M66/PV1.

⁷⁵ From the middle of the 1790s, the old who received parochial relief in the Terling workhouse exceeded a third of the total population of the old in receipt of assistance from the parish. Ottaway points out that the dramatic growth in the proportion of elderly workhouse residents occurred in 1793, the year of a pronounced surge in expenditure on the poor. This implies that one of the measures devised by the parish to deal with the increasing burden of the expenditure was to institutionalise the old poor. Ottaway, *Decline*, pp. 250-251.

⁷⁶ The 1803 returns, p. 459.

⁷⁷ The 1803 returns, p. 463.

1807, smallpox appeared and rapidly spread through the town and neighbourhood.⁷⁸ An account book produced by the parish shows that there were more than three hundred people granted financial aid on account of smallpox in November.⁷⁹ The housing of a large number of people in one building raised the danger of infection, possibly fatal to old inmates, although no information about mortality within the workhouse during the epidemic crisis has survived. The prevalence of the diseases may have stimulated the deinstitutionalisation of the elderly, as Mary Barker-Read finds in Kent earlier in the century.⁸⁰

Not only was the proportion of old inmates low in the Ringwood workhouse, but also relatively few aged paupers died in the workhouse, accounting for less than 40 per cent of all workhouse deaths (16 of 41) between 1814 and 1823, whereas in the Christchurch workhouse, more than 65 per cent of fatalities (28 of 43) featured the old over the same period.⁸¹ Deaths of old inmates in the coastal workhouse of Christchurch seem to have arisen from the fact that they used the workhouse as a long-term residence rather than a hospice. Out of seventy-three aged residents who died in the workhouse, only ten (14 per cent) stayed there for less than a year, while thirty-six (49 per cent) remained for more than five years.⁸² The case of another coastal workhouse, Portsmouth, lends weight to this notion. The muster books of the workhouse provide no information about inmates' mortality but comment on their health conditions and work. In 1804, 1805 and 1808, old inmates indicated as 'in good health' comprised 37 per cent of the elderly population of the workhouse (73 of 200). In addition, the percentage of the old assigned work, such as oakum-picking and needlework, was even higher,

⁷⁸ *A Report of the Royal Jennerian Society on the Supposed Failures of Vaccination at Ringwood, in Hampshire* (London, 1808).

⁷⁹ Ringwood Smallpox Account Book, 1807, HRO, 22M84/PO109.

⁸⁰ Barker-Read, 'Treatment', pp. 227-228.

⁸¹ Ringwood Admittance and Discharge Book, 1814-1823, HRO, 22M84/PO111; Christchurch Register of Inmates, 1812-1835, DHC, BG/CC/X/4/2/1.

⁸² Christchurch Register of Inmates, 1812-1835, DHC, BG/CC/X/4/2/1.

exceeding 55 per cent (111 of 200).⁸³ Being located near the dockyard, the Portsmouth workhouse was conveniently supplied with piles of old rope, raw material for oakum-picking. Such work has usually been supposed to be tedious and unprofitable but made substantial profits in some port towns where oakum was easily sold for shipbuilding and the repair of vessels. Alverstoke, a neighbouring port town, for instance, reported that earnings from oakum-picking in the workhouse were over £700 in the first decade of the nineteenth century.⁸⁴ These findings suggest that old inmates in the coastal workhouses were by no means a helpless group, just wanting medical attendance.

Few offers of the workhouse to the old were reported in rural parish records, as I noted earlier, probably because they were typically treated as vulnerable and deserving, so their admission needed no debate. The old composed only 3.7 per cent of total workhouse offers recorded in South Stoneham and 1.2 per cent in Boldre, as Table 4.2 shows. There is no doubt that these figures greatly underrepresent the proportion of the old, as more than a quarter of the total inmates in the South Stoneham workhouse were old (Table 4.3).⁸⁵ Even though the number of reported workhouse offers to the aged in these parishes was too small to identify a clear pattern, it seems worth mentioning the case of Richard Pain in Boldre. He was superannuated from Portsmouth dockyard and had an annuity of £10 per year. Entering the Boldre workhouse, he asked the parish not to requisition all his property, as was normal, but instead to grant a small weekly allowance to himself and his wife out of the sum. The parish granted his request and allowed him one shilling per week.⁸⁶ This challenges previous findings

⁸³ Portsmouth Muster Books, 1804, 1805, 1808, PHC, PL6/12-14.

⁸⁴ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 1801-1810, HRO, PL2/1/1.

⁸⁵ The stock/flow issue is here again, see fn. 64.

⁸⁶ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 11 November 1802, HRO, 84M70/PO1.

that once aged paupers were institutionalised, they had little power to shape their indoor life, instead losing their independence and the control of their possessions.⁸⁷

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has focussed on people living in workhouses. The size of workhouse populations continually changed, not only as a result of nationwide trends, particularly in wheat prices, but also as an effect of local policies. In the case of my workhouses, seasonality in the size of inmate populations was not marked, by contrast to existing studies of London and New Poor Law workhouses, in which seasonal unemployment patterns have been found to have been highly influential.

In terms of the composition of workhouse inmates – whom I have classified into four groups, adult men, adult women, children and the old – what has been argued is that workhouse admission proceeded from the conjunction of paupers' agency and parish authorities' determination. Patterns varied by region because the poor's needs varied by place; parish officers in different places developed different ideas as to what workhouses should do, probably in the light of their perceptions of demand, but also their convictions as to what was possible and right, and then the poor made choices from the options open to them, in the light of their own beliefs and possibilities. The result was an extremely varied mix of patterns across space. The logic of the model developed here is that this is to be expected: we should not expect there to be any one ideal-type of workhouse population.

⁸⁷ Peter King, 'Pauper Inventories and the Material Lives of the Poor in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', in Hitchcock, King, and Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling*, p. 158; Ottaway, *Decline*, p. 253.

Chapter Five: Workhouse functioning

This chapter examines living conditions within the walls of workhouses by reconstructing inmates' lives in relation to workhouse functioning. In their work, the Webbs identified six distinct functions which workhouses were established to perform under the Old Poor Law. It was hoped that they would provide: a device for the profitable employment of the poor; a penal establishment for the idle; a deterrent to relief claimants; an asylum for the 'impotent' poor; a test by regimen, namely the 'workhouse test' and an institution for specialised treatment.¹ They suggested that parish authorities rarely distinguished between these functions but instead tended to combine them in administering their workhouses, whether intentionally or not. The workhouse therefore tended, they pointed out, to degenerate into a 'general mixed workhouse', where all sections of the poor were indiscriminately admitted and maintained. In their view, deterioration towards a haphazard form of the institution was caused by the fact that it was managed not by specialists in particular forms of indoor relief but by 'mixed officials' who treated inmates as an aggregate.²

However, workhouse functions probably cannot be fully explained in terms of official capacity and intentions or the lack of them. It seems more likely that certain situations encouraged an emphasis on particular elements within the mix of possible functions. Furthermore, the Webbs' classificatory scheme resulted from their survey of a wide variety of

¹ One might find it tricky to realise the difference between a deterrent and a test by regimen. Basically, the Webbs distinguished them by time, even if not so plausible. They claimed that the first systematic use of the workhouse offer as a deterrent was traced to Knatchbull's Act of 1723 and inspired by successful experimental examples of Matthew Marryott in the 1710s and 1720s. It developed into the 'workhouse test' a century later, they said. This is why an asylum for the 'impotent' poor is inserted between a deterrent and a test in the list. In the Webbs' view, workhouses played a role as an asylum nearly exclusively in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. They also argued that a deterrent and a test differed characteristically, the former relying on bad treatment by underfeeding and overcrowding, while the latter on hygienic treatment under strict regulation. Webb and Webb, *English*, pp. 219-264.

² Webb and Webb, *English*, p. 218.

cases but made too many distinctions to be useful in interpreting patterns on the ground and determining how they may have varied by region. Workhouse functions are here categorised into three: care, discipline and work. Even though every workhouse had its own distinctive system, most performed all these functions. What differed was the balance between the functions and the different approaches to the same functions. It is argued here that the varying balance was also influenced by different sets of local circumstances.

5.1 Care

It is not hard to find parish authorities who counted improving the comforts of the poor as one of the key roles imposed on workhouses. A Hampshire magistrate suggested that the aim was that ‘persons collected together in one general house [should be] ... properly subsisted in health, more carefully attended in age or infancy, more ably remedied in sickness’.³ To assess how workhouse inmates were looked after, workhouse diets and medical treatment must be closely explored from this point of view. Records regarding diets in parish workhouses are scarce, so bills of fare set out in A’Court’s notes are highly useful, though they only illuminate conditions by 1834.

We will not only examine the quantity and quality of institutional diets but also address (insofar as the sources allow) whether there were local and temporal variations in workhouse food and, if so, what spawned them. It will be demonstrated that calories supplied from diets in Hampshire workhouses varied in number but, on the whole, fulfilled the basic energy needs of inmates, just as many historians have indicated. Since, as Alannah Tomkins points out, the poor were not wholly concerned to fill their stomach, this section will also appraise the palatability of the workhouse diets, which have been somewhat under-researched.⁴ We will

³ Poulter, *Address*, pp. 34-35.

⁴ Tomkins, *Experience*, pp. 53-54.

compute the frequency with which animal meat, beer and potato were served and argue that the workhouse diets became less appetising over time.

In terms of medical relief in workhouses, we will trace an intra-county difference, especially between urban and rural areas, in the extent to which workhouses were medicalised, by examining contracts between surgeons and parishes and space arrangements in workhouses as well as what kinds of medical care workhouse residents received. There were distinct regional features, a response to local situations. Lastly, an interesting pattern of parishes in the eastern end of Hampshire will be identified, where the danger of contagious diseases from London was great, as busy thoroughfares to the capital passed through them.

5.1.1 Workhouse diets

Those who resided in workhouses did not necessarily have a less nourishing diet than those who did not.⁵ Carole Shammas provides information about food consumption in several workhouses from 1589 to 1796 and estimates that the daily diet offered by them was, in most cases, between 2,000 and 2,500 calories per person.⁶ There appears to have been no significant difference from the intake of ordinary families, particularly in the south, whose daily calories per adult work out to 2,109 according to Shammas's calculation from the examples provided by David Davies and Frederick Eden.⁷ In his recent book, Craig Muldrew gives a more systematic examination of diets, including those in different institutions.⁸ He analyses

⁵ Tomkins, *Experience*, pp. 54-55; Griffin, *Politics*, pp. 134-135.

⁶ Carole Shammas, 'The Eighteenth-Century English Diet and Economic Change', *Explorations in Economic History*, 21 (1984), pp. 261-264.

⁷ Shammas, 'Diet', p. 256. Robert Fogel estimates that the daily caloric intake per person in ordinary families ranged from 2,095 to 2,362 between 1700 and 1850. R. W. Fogel, *The Escape from Hunger and Premature Death, 1700-2100: Europe, America, and the Third World* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 9.

⁸ Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness: Work and Material Culture in Agrarian England, 1550-1780* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 117-162. A recent work, however, criticises that some of his conclusion about the domestic economy is rather optimistic because some of his calculations, in particular, concerning spinners and their families, overestimate their productivity and earnings. Jane Humphries and Benjamin Schneider, 'Spinning the Industrial Revolution', *Economic History Review*, 72 (2019), pp. 128-134.

eighteenth-century diets from the three workhouses of St Albans, St Mary Whitechapel and Clerkenwell and from St Bartholomew's Hospital and estimates that they offered 2,366, 2,830, 3,304 and 3,627 calories respectively. A comparison with his calorie counting of domestic diets indicates that at least some inmates were nutritionally better off in workhouses than in their own houses in that the number of calories consumed by an adult male in a poor labouring family was remarkably small, less than 2,000, on the basis of Eden's survey.⁹ However, dietaries were basically a statement of planned policy, so there is no guarantee that they were in practice observed.¹⁰ In order to calculate the average amounts of food per person precisely, it is necessary to employ grocery shopping accounts in conjunction with comprehensive inmate lists, but unfortunately, few Hampshire parishes have left both for the same time period.

Table 5.1 Daily calories of workhouse diets for adult men

Division	Character	Parish	year	Daily calories per adult	Prop. of animal food (%)
Arable	Urban	Fordingbridge	1834	2963	14.1
		Ringwood	1834	2342	10.1
		Romsey Infra	1834	2786	21.4
		Winchester	1834	3124	20.5
	Rural	Hursley	1834	2204	9.9
Coastal	Urban	Alverstoke	1822	4601	50.5
		Alverstoke	1834	3820	58.0
		Portsmouth	1834	2661	14.9
	Rural	North Stoneham	1834	2599	19.3
		South Stoneham	1834	2475	20.8
Pastoral	Urban	Eling	1834	2417	25.0

Source: A'Court's correspondence and papers related to the South Eastern District, 1834; Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 18 December 1822.

⁹ Muldrew, *Food*, pp. 133-140.

¹⁰ Even though the gap between the policy and practice might not be very large, Tomkins alerts us that it possibly leads to misunderstanding about workhouses, including seeing their diet as nutritionally abundant. Tomkins, *Experience*, pp. 51-52.

Nevertheless, dietaries represented the intentions of parish authorities, so it seems that Hampshire workhouses did not strive to deter by parsimonious provision. The allowance scale created by a meeting of magistrates at Speenhamland, Berkshire, in 1795 asserted that a single labourer should have three-gallon loaves per week for his own support (a gallon is eight pounds and eleven ounces), while in 1818, a Hampshire parish, Yateley, announced that a man required two gallons of bread weekly to avoid starvation.¹¹ On a daily average, a single man outside the workhouse should therefore have been offered 3.7 or 2.5 pounds of bread under these two schemes. Applying calorific values suggested by Muldrew, these allowances would have provided 3,407 or 2,271 kcal per day, respectively.¹² On the same basis, the menus for adult men of Hampshire workhouses given in Table 5.1 specifying amounts of daily or weekly food supply per person enable us to estimate that most men in these workhouses would have consumed between the two figures per day.¹³

Among the Hampshire workhouses, only two, in Winchester and Alverstoke, planned to provide their inmates with more than 3,000 kcal per person a day. The unusually large amounts of food may have emanated from the goodwill of local authorities. As the two workhouses were under the influence of Gilbert's Act, which aimed to confine indoor relief to the vulnerable, those inhabiting Winchester and Alverstoke workhouses may have been catered for well simply because of the humanitarian attitude of the act. However, the act also encouraged the resident poor to do as much work as they could.¹⁴ Accordingly, the workhouses maintained an indoor labour scheme for their inmates from their inception until the last year of the Old Poor Law (we will return to workhouse labour in the following section). This implied

¹¹ Arthur Aspinall and E. A. Smith (eds), *English Historical Documents, vol. 11, 1783-1832* (London, 1996), p. 488.

¹² Muldrew, *Food*, p. 118.

¹³ How many calories and nutrients a particular food contains undoubtedly depends on the way of cooking. It should be admitted that the estimations are very rough. Tomkins, *Experience*, pp. 54-55.

¹⁴ Shave, *Pauper*, pp. 56-60.

that they needed a decent diet. There was a manufactory in the Winchester workhouse where inmates were employed in silk and sack manufacture.¹⁵ The Alverstoke workhouse also had not only a workshop to employ inmates in sack-making and oakum-picking but also a farmyard to raise hogs and pigs and to grow potatoes and vegetables.¹⁶ Estimates of the energy costs of different activities made by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) suggest that handicraft manufacturing, such as shoemaking and tailoring, expends about 94 kcal per hour for men and farming work like ploughing with a horse, spraying crops, harvesting and tending animals (feeding, watering, cleaning stables) require more energy, ranging around from 206 to 238 kcal per hour for men.¹⁷ If we assume that workhouse labourers worked for 10 hours, those working in a manufactory needed 940 kcal and those on the land more than 2,000 kcal per day.¹⁸ Muldrew estimates that the minimum calories to survive for men in the early modern era were 2,100, which includes maintaining the basal metabolic rate (as determined from their skeletal size) and basic energy consumed for eating and essential hygiene; the daily caloric requirement for men engaged in manufacturing work amounted to slightly over 3,000 kcal.¹⁹ This number is interestingly close to calories implied by the Winchester workhouse diet. In the same vein, workhouse men working in agriculture needed more than 4,000 kcal, corresponding to the figures for the Alverstoke workhouse. It is, therefore, possible that some workhouse diets reflected intentions about the use of inmates' labour.

¹⁵ The 1803 returns, pp. 462-463, fn. (m); Vancouver, *Agriculture*, p. 410; A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on every Parish in the Winchester Division', 'Winchester', November 1834, TNA, MH32/1.

¹⁶ The 1803 returns, p. 459, fn. (x); Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 9 April 1803, HRO, PL2/1/1; A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the parishes in the division of Fareham including Portsmouth', 'Alverstoke and Gosport', 21 December 1834, TNA, MH32/1.

¹⁷ The calculations possibly have a considerable margin of error, as a level of calorific consumption could highly vary, depending on the size of workers and their intensity of labour. *Human energy requirements Report of a Joint FAO/WHO/UNU Expert Consultation*, Annexe 5 (2001), pp. 92-96, <https://www.fao.org/3/y5686e/y5686e.pdf>

¹⁸ The rule of the Alverstoke workhouse states that between 25 March and 29 September, inmates worked from 6 am to 6 pm, and between 29 September and 25 March, they did from 7 am to 5 pm with an hour break for dinner, meaning ten-working hours a day on average. Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 18 December 1822, HRO, PL2/1/1.

¹⁹ Muldrew, *Food*, pp. 129-132.

At the other end of the spectrum was the Hursley workhouse, built in 1829, one of the last workhouses established under the Old Poor Law in Hampshire, whose diet was lower in calories than any other of the documented workhouses. The average daily intake of energy for men in the workhouse can be estimated at about 2,204 kcal, barely enough to keep them alive, on the basis of Muldrew's calculation.²⁰ Furthermore, it was only in the Hursley workhouse that the proportion of calories derived from animal foods such as meat, cheese, butter and milk was less than 10 per cent, whereas more than 50 per cent of calories came from foodstuffs of animal origin in the Alverstoke workhouse, as milk porridge was often served at the table. Instead, cereal broths or gruels were provided not only for breakfast but also for dinner every day, except on Sunday, the only day that meat was served for dinner – whereas, in other workhouses, such broths or gruels were for breakfast only.²¹ The broth-gruel must have made workhouse life as well as workhouse foods unpalatable.²²

²⁰ A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the parishes in the division of Winchester', 'Hursley', November 1834, TNA, MH32/1.

²¹ A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the parishes in the division of Winchester', 'Hursley', November 1834, TNA, MH32/1.

²² Tomkins, *Experience*, pp. 55-56.

Table 5.2 Makeup of weekly workhouse menus

Division	Char.	Parish	year	Freq. of serving animal meat	Freq. of serving beer	Freq. of serving potato
Arable	Urban	Fordingbridge	1834	5	7	4
		Ringwood	1834	3	7	1
		Romsey Infra	1834	3	11	0
		Winchester	1834	3	10	2
	Rural	Hursley	1834	1	0	7
		Petersfield	1795	4	14	0
		Isle of Wight	1795	5	10	6
		Isle of Wight	1804	3	7	3
Coastal	Urban	Alverstoke	1823	4	0	7
		Alverstoke	1834	4	0	7
		Lymington	n.d.	7	14	7
		Portsea	1795	3	11	0
		Southampton	1795	3	Several	0
		Southampton	1834	4	12	3
	Rural	Botley	1834	3	0	0
		Milford	1799	3	Several	1
		North Stoneham	1834	3	9	1
		South Stoneham	1834	3	11	0
		Sopley	1834	4	10	1
Pastoral	Urban	Eling	1834	3	4	0
	Rural	Boldre	1796	6	Several	If needed

Source: A'Court's correspondence and papers related to the South Eastern District, 1834, TNA, MH32/1; Eden, *State of the Poor*, Volume 1 (London, 1797), pp. 224, 226, 230, 237; Walter, Robbins and Gilpin, *An Account of a New Poor-house Erected in the Parish of Boldre, in New Forest near Lymington* (London, 1803), pp. 9-10; Milford Overseers Account Book with Various Minutes, 27 November 1799, HRO, 87M98/5; Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 18 December 1822, HRO, PL2/1/1; Lymington Menu for the Week for the 62 Inmates of the Workhouse, n.d., HRO, 42M75/PO31.

The quality of the diet can be evaluated by examining how often animal food was on a bill of fare, which could reflect local environments. A Hampshire Quarter Sessions report comments that some animal food was necessary to the sustenance of labourers and their families, though 'they differ in some degree as to the frequency of it; once a day being the greatest, and three times a week the least extreme in them'.²³ The workhouse menus presented in Table 5.2, even if lacking in information as to the quantity of food served per meal, suggest

²³ Poulter, *Address*, pp. 26-27.

that the inmates were expected to eat meat at least three or four times per week – except in the Hursley workhouse. It is, however, noteworthy that workhouses in or adjoining the New Forest gave a meat-based meal more frequently than the others: meat was to be served five times in the workhouse of Fordingbridge on the eastern edge of the New Forest, six times in the workhouse of Boldre in the middle of the forest, and every day in the workhouse of Lymington, a port town to the south of the forest.²⁴ The New Forest workhouses were, moreover, distinguished by the variety of animal foods on their menus. For example, the Lymington workhouse menu indicates that its inmates were supplied with various sources of animal fats and protein, even from the pig's 'inwards'.²⁵ In particular, the proximity to the New Forest, well-known for pigs, probably made it possible to use the intestine as the main ingredient for workhouse meals, considering that it spoils faster than meat.

Of additional interest are other articles of diet, namely beer and potatoes, where change over time is manifest. In the late eighteenth century, it was not uncommon for beer to be provided for workhouse inmates as either liquid nourishment or an occasional indulgence.²⁶ The dietaries before 1800 suggest that people inside the workhouses relatively freely drank beer with their meals, though what was specified was mostly a weekly or monthly total of beer. For example, in the 1790s, the Boldre workhouse planned to offer four bushels and a half of malt for beer to inmates a month, the Milford workhouse, twenty-eight gallons of small beer per week, and the Southampton workhouse three pints per person a day.²⁷ The menus before 1800 reveal that workhouse inmates were given beer at least ten times a week. However, as

²⁴ Walter, Robbins and Gilpin, *Account*, pp. 9-10; Lymington Menu for the Week for the 62 Inmates of the Workhouse, n.d., HRO, 42M75/PO31; A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on every Parish in the Ringwood Division', 'Fordingbridge', 27 November 1834, TNA, MH32/1.

²⁵ Lymington Menu for the week for the 62 Inmates of the Workhouse, n.d., HRO, 42M75/PO31.

²⁶ Muldrew, *Food*, pp. 65-78.

²⁷ Walter, Robbins and Gilpin, 'Account', p. 8; Milford Overseers Account and Poor Rate Book, 27 November 1799, HRO, 87M98/5; Eden, *State*, p. 230.

public aid became stringent after the Napoleonic Wars, in the context of post-war depression and labour markets overflowing with demobilised soldiers, the beer policy also seems to have become meaner.²⁸ The shift in policy arose from a desire not only to economise but also to improve paupers' morals.²⁹ Jeremy Bentham advanced the principle of 'sobriety or no-fermented liquor' in the workhouse, that is, 'fermented liquor, even of the weakest kind, is a drink not natural to the human frame' and 'in its abuse it is the most fertile of all sources of vice and misery'.³⁰ In 1825, the overseers of Odiham sent round lists of its paupers on relief rolls to local public houses and requested them not to sell beer to them, intimating that 'if any such paupers be found tipping in any of the public houses, the keepers thereof will be proceeded against'.³¹ Basingstoke, in 1817, embarked on regulating local public houses by employing a watchman paid out of poor rates in an attempt to control disorders committed by those resorting to the houses. South Stoneham used other means to the same end in 1819 by intervening in the process of license renewal and counselling magistrates in charge of it.³² In this context, it is not surprising that the workhouse dietaries reported by Colonel Charles Ashe A'Court in 1834 specifying the frequency with which beer was offered per week show that many workhouses served the alcoholic drink less than ten times, and three of them made no mention of beer, except for the infirm and old.

When it came to potatoes, the trend went in the reverse direction. Use of the new foodstuff appears to have increased during our period. Whereas potatoes were rarely found in

²⁸ Mark Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New', *Journal of Economic History*, 23 (1963), pp.161-162.

²⁹ Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872*, 22nd edn (Staffordshire, 1994), p.89. Griffin, *Politics*, pp. 137-138.

³⁰ Bentham, *Pauper*, p. 70.

³¹ Odiham Vestry Minutes, 11 June 1825, HRO, 47M81/PV3.

³² Basingstoke Vestry Minutes, 26 December 1817, HRO, 46M74/PV1; South Stoneham Workhouse Committee Book, 13 April 1819, SAO, PR 9/4/2. It was not rare to refuse the renewal of licenses to public houses on the ground of rising poor rates. Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *The History of Liquor Licensing in England* (London, 1903), pp. 68-69.

menus of the 1790s, except in the Isle of Wight, most after 1800 included them. Potatoes became increasingly common in the diet generally during the eighteenth century, becoming cheaper than grain. Several severe food shortages contributed to the spread of potatoes as a source of carbohydrates. Particularly the harvest failures of 1795 and 1800 led to an increase in attention to potatoes as a safeguard against wheat crisis.³³ Some workhouses not merely purchased potatoes but also formed gardens to cultivate them for use within the houses. Despite the cost of building and maintaining the gardens, they could be beneficial in that they used inmates' labour and reduced expense on diets.³⁴ In the Alverstoke workhouse, which served potatoes every day, new ground was brought into a state of cultivation by inmates, which yielded thirty-six tons of potatoes in 1803. This workhouse ascribed a diminution in expenditure on flour to the huge consumption of potatoes, such that annual spending on victualling fell sharply from £2,124 for 214 people in 1802 to £1,562 for 223 in 1803.³⁵ Beyond the economic rationale, emphasis on potatoes, a part of 'the lowest species of fare', was associated with a tightening workhouse regime.³⁶ The Hursley workhouse offered potatoes daily and meat once a week. In parallel, the Hursley workhouse's regulation did not allow inmates to take luxurious, though less substantial, foods – sugar, butter and tea, not to speak of alcohol – without a surgeon's order.³⁷ The distasteful diet in this workhouse seems to have come closest to embodying the principle of 'less eligibility', one of the key tenets of the New

³³ Salaman Redcliffe, *The History and Social Influence of the Potato* (Cambridge, 1949), pp. 494-517; Joan Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760* (London, 2006), pp. 179-182; John Lidwell-Durnin, 'Cultivating Famine: Data, Experimentation and Food Security, 1795-1848', *British Society for the History of Science*, 53 (2020), p. 165.

³⁴ Peter Collinge, 'He shall have care of the garden, its cultivation and produce': Workhouse Gardens and Gardening, c.1780-1835', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 44 (2021), pp. 21-39.

³⁵ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, Easter 1803, HRO, PL2/1/1.

³⁶ Mandler, 'Making', p. 146. Nassau William Senior, who was to be one of the architects of the New Poor Law, divided wealth into 'necessaries, decencies, and luxuries' and potatoes were contained in necessaries to support mere physical existence. Satoshi Fujimura, 'Nassau William Senior and the Poor Laws; Why Workhouses Improved the Industriousness of the Poor', *History of Economics Review*, 70 (2018), p. 54.

³⁷ A Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the parishes in the division of Winchester', 'Hursley', November 1834, TNA, MH32/1.

Poor Law of 1834.³⁸ In fact, It continued in use as a union workhouse after 1834 (as will be explored in chapter six).

5.1.2 Medical aid

Under the heading of care, we must also consider medical provision. More recent studies on medicine in the workhouse under the Old Poor Law have mainly been concerned with larger metropolitan and provincial town workhouses, which have more often left medical documents.³⁹ However, Steven King's book, *Sickness, Medical Welfare and the English Poor 1750-1834*, is a remarkable exception. He carries out an expansive and well-sourced study, drawing on an enormous mass of records not only from 117 core parishes across seven counties (Berkshire, Norfolk, Wiltshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Lancashire and West Yorkshire) and 146 supplementary parishes in the same or additional counties but also from 12,904 pauper letters throughout the country. He attempts to capture a typological variation in terms of institutional medical aid, as well as inter-county one, by picking up several variables shaping practice. He suggests that 'urban and industrial areas seem to have made greater use of workhouses [as sites of medical aid] than arable or pastoral areas, but the differences are small'.⁴⁰ My findings also indicate a difference between workhouses in rural and urban areas in medical terms. Basically, rural workhouses have left few medical records and possibly, therefore, were less medicalised than urban workhouses.

³⁸ The workhouse was run ironically under the lead of Sir William Heathcote, who had been educated at Oriel College, Oxford and was intimate with John Keble, who was one of the well-known Tractarians, a group bitterly critical of political economy and its spawn, the New Poor Law, and was to become vicar of Hursley in 1836. Simon Skinner, 'Liberalism and Mammon: Tractarian Reaction in the Age of Reform', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 4 (1999), p. 210.

³⁹ Kevin Siena, *Venereal Disease, Hospitals, and the Urban Poor; London's "foul Wards," 1600-1800* (Woodbridge, 2004), Chapter four; Jeremy Boulton and Leonard Schwarz, 'The Medicalization of a Parish Workhouse in Georgian Westminster: St Martin in the Fields, 1725-1824', *Family & Community History*, 17 (2014), pp. 122-140; Reinartz and Schwarz (eds), *Medicine*.

⁴⁰ King, *Sickness*, p. 254.

A common finding from records of Hampshire parishes is that contracts were made between parishes with a workhouse and local surgeons, covering outdoor paupers and requiring surgeons to call at the workhouse and enquire about the health of inmates on a regular basis. It seems that the appointment of parish doctors became increasingly widespread as time progressed.⁴¹ Eighteen parishes in Hampshire have accounts of doctoring contracts. Although it is not guaranteed that the recorded contracts were the first ones they made, in the case of surviving contracts, four parishes signed them before 1800, the rest after 1800, notably nine after 1815. Around that year, as Anne Digby notes, the medical market became more competitive, and a growing number of medical professionals competed for parochial medical appointments.⁴² There was a time gap between urban and rural parishes in Hampshire in that the four with earlier contracts were the towns of Alton, Lymington, Titchfield, and Portsmouth, whereas contracts for rural parishes lagged behind, none dating from before 1815, except that for Boldre in 1807.⁴³ This contrasts with King's finding on the basis of a broader sample that 'there was little variation in the timing between different typological subsets'.⁴⁴

Doctoring contracts across Hampshire showed varying degrees of importance being attached to institutional medical relief. Surgeons appointed by port towns with a larger workhouse assumed a heavy responsibility in caring for workhouse inmates. In 1818, Alverstoke detailed the duties of appointed surgeons, requiring them to visit the workhouse once a day to attend to the sick, 'patients in midwifery' and 'all surgical cases which may arise from accidents'. Also, the parish stated that there were now sixty-two people in need of medical

⁴¹ According to King's empirical analysis, the proportion of spending on doctors out of total medical expense doubled from 36 to 72 per cent between 1750-55 and 1830-34 for his sample parishes. King, *Sickness*, pp. 150-151.

⁴² Anne Digby, *Making a Medical Living: Doctors and Patients in the English Market for Medicine, 1720-1911* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 226.

⁴³ Alton Vestry Minutes, 25 March 1799, HRO, 29M84/PV1; Lymington Vestry Minutes, 6 April 1790, HRO, 42M75/PV1; Titchfield Vestry Minutes, 1 April 1777, HRO, 37M73/PV1; Portsmouth Committee Minutes, 7 October 1785, PHC, PL15/1; Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 30 March 1807, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

⁴⁴ King, *Sickness*, p. 152.

support in the workhouse (the average number of paupers in the house that year was 517).⁴⁵ In the same year, Southampton elected a surgeon named Joseph Stace exclusively for the workhouse, free from every additional charge for attendance on the poor outside; parish officers were recommended not to send any pauper to him but in case of absolute necessity.⁴⁶ In the case of South Stoneham, a rural parish in the coastal division, institutional medical services formed only a part of the entire job an appointed surgeon assumed. In 1830, an agreement made between the parish and Mr Attwood, a surgeon, clarified that he was to visit the workhouse every Monday at eleven and enquire of the governor respecting the health of inmates, even if there was no report of sickness.⁴⁷

Dozens of ground plans of workhouses attached to A'Court's Hampshire notes of 1834 also deserve attention as revealing similar differences in emphasis.⁴⁸ They indicate that little space was restricted to the sick in rural workhouses. From this source, it appears that the Hursley workhouse was the only one that possessed a separate room for the treatment of sick inmates called the 'surgeon's room'. We should not, however, assume that, in other workhouses, no space was devoted to the sick. According to the original plan, the Boldre workhouse, for instance, reserved a room at the end of the men's apartment with a separate staircase for the sick.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, parish officials seem not to have been convinced that smaller rural workhouses were appropriate places for the poor to receive professional medical care, as we have found in the previous chapter about workhouse admission patterns. In the Boldre workhouse committee books, there are only three cases where the workhouse was recommended to relief applicants who became ill or were injured or had a family member with

⁴⁵ Alverstoke Minute Book of the Committee, 1 December 1818, HRO, PL2/1/2; Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 7 April 1819, HRO, PL2/1/1.

⁴⁶ Southampton Board of Guardians Minute Book, 21 December 1818, 20 December 1819, SAO, SC/AG1/1/1.

⁴⁷ South Stoneham Workhouse Committee Book, 15 July 1830, SAO, PR 9/4/2.

⁴⁸ See the appendix.

⁴⁹ Walter, Robbins and Gilpin, 'Account', p. 6.

health issues between 1797 and 1822, when overall workhouse management was taken over by a contractor who ceased to supply information about workhouse offers.⁵⁰ The physical state of the inmates was, in fact, good, such that ‘the face of the parish doctor is hardly known’, and ‘the inhabitants are all employed in that business they are most fit for’.⁵¹ Among those who entered the South Stoneham workhouse because of ill health, some with casual sickness stayed in the house for a short term and went out after being cured, but others whose health issues were more serious were sent to the county hospital in Winchester. John Bath was admitted into the house with his daughter in February 1801 and sent to the hospital two months later, though he returned and died in the workhouse in May.⁵² Some died in the workhouse without having medical treatment in the hospital, for example, Sarah Casons, who entered the house in October and died in December 1808. Most of them were probably elderly, fragile or already seriously sick when entering the workhouse; for them, it was a last port of call before death, a possible cause of high death rates in workhouses.⁵³ At this time, some hospitals, such as in Winchester and Bristol, were designed to provide medical care to sick working men temporarily fallen on pauperism and to return them to physical health and economic productivity, meaning that the old might not have been a primary target for them.⁵⁴

A’Court’s layouts show that larger urban workhouses tended to place more weight on medical functions. There were four urban workhouses with medical rooms named ‘infirmary’,

⁵⁰ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 5 February 1798, HRO, 84M70/PO1; Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 5 February 1807, 1 December 1808, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

⁵¹ Walter, Robbins and Gilpin, ‘Account’, pp. 8, 13.

⁵² South Stoneham Workhouse Master Day Book, 26 February, 29 April, 25 May 1801, SAO, PR9/15/43; Jeremy Boulton, Romola Davenport, and Leonard Schwartz, “‘These ANTE-CHAMBERS OF THE GRAVE’? Mortality, Medicine and the Workhouse in Georgian London, 1725-1824’ in Reinartz and Schwarz (eds), *Medicine*, pp. 67-68.

⁵³ South Stoneham Workhouse Master Day Book, 1 October, 22 December 1808, SAO, PR9/15/43; Boulton, Davenport, and Schwarz, ‘ANTE-CHAMBERS’, pp. 79-80.

⁵⁴ Mary Fissell, ‘The Physic of Charity: Health and Welfare in the West Country, 1690-1834’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1988), pp. 90-92. For more detail about the division of medical roles between the workhouse and the hospital, see Kevin Siena, ‘Contagion, Exclusion, and the Unique Medical World of the Eighteenth-Century Workhouse: London Infirmaries in Their Widest Relief’, in Reinartz and Schwarz (eds), *Medicine*, pp. 19-39.

‘foul ward’, or ‘insane room’, which were all located in port towns (Lymington, Alverstoke and Portsea), apart from one in Winchester.⁵⁵ In 1822, the Southampton workhouse also erected an additional building at the bottom of the poor house yard as a hospital for the accommodation of the sick separate from the other apartments.⁵⁶ Another port town workhouse, in Portsmouth, allocated some space for medical care, such as a ‘sick room’ and ‘lying-in room’, according to its muster books.⁵⁷ The risk of injury was characteristically high for those involved in dockyard work, as the main motive power in the yard was their muscle, and labouring environments with a great deal of metal were dangerous.⁵⁸ In the Portsmouth workhouse, adult men noted as injured were few in number, as all dockworkers were entitled to have free treatment for any injuries, but, as we saw above, there were a large number of past labourers with lifelong disabilities like being lame, crippled or blind, possibly due to industrial accidents.⁵⁹ Such physical impairments may have left them needing constant medical care in the workhouse. Labouring women in port towns faced inadequate employment opportunities, low wages and the frequent and lengthy absence of partners, so had to look for ways to get by.⁶⁰ Prostitution was one of the options, whether temporary or not, and it proliferated in the context of demand from merchant seamen and naval men.⁶¹ A major occupational hazard for prostitutes was venereal disease. Town workhouses in the coastal division served as an important medical resource for venereal patients.⁶² In the Alverstoke, Portsea, and Portsmouth

⁵⁵ A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on the parishes in the division of Winchester’, ‘Winchester’, November 1834, ‘Notes on the parishes in the division of Lymington’, ‘Lymington’, 3 December 1834, Notes on the parishes in the division of Fareham including Portsmouth, ‘Alverstoke’ and ‘Portsea’, 21 December 1834, TNA, MH32/1.

⁵⁶ Southampton Board of Guardians Minute Book, 7 January 1822, SAO, SC/AG1/1/1.

⁵⁷ Portsmouth Muster Books, 1804, 1805, 1808, 1813, PHC, PL6/12-15.

⁵⁸ Biddle, ‘Naval’, pp. 107-116.

⁵⁹ Biddle ‘Naval’, p. 110; Portsmouth Muster Books, 1804, 1805, 1808, 1813, PHC, PL6/12-15.

⁶⁰ Field, ‘Bourgeois’, pp. 436-437.

⁶¹ Wilson, ‘Government’, pp. 500-503; Judith Walkowitz, ‘The Making of an Outcast Group: Prostitutes and Working Women in Nineteenth-Century Plymouth and Southampton’, in Martha Vicinus (ed), *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women* (London, 1977), pp.72-81.

⁶² For London workhouses treating those with venereal disease, see Siena, *Venereal*, pp. 149-180.

workhouses, detached space was allotted to this sort of inmates, though hard separation seems to have failed in practice.⁶³ Given that local hospitals did not willingly receive women with venereal disease, entrance to the workhouse was one of the few choices left to them.⁶⁴

Parishes also paid careful attention to contagious diseases, chiefly smallpox, in running their workhouses.⁶⁵ Some arable-division parishes located near the eastern border of Hampshire, on routes to London, were particularly concerned about such diseases. According to its workhouse ground plan of 1834, the north-eastern town of Basingstoke had a pesthouse within the walls of the workhouse but detached from the main building.⁶⁶ It is likely that the pesthouse was used as a preventive measure against smallpox from the capital, where it seems to have become one of the most common causes of death, increasing from between 4 and 6 per cent of all burials in the mid-seventeenth century to more than 10 per cent in the third quarter of the eighteenth century.⁶⁷ However, treating contagious patients in a small workhouse without segregated space was a challenge. The practice for smaller workhouses such as Odiham and Milford was to examine paupers on their admission in order to screen out those with infectious diseases.⁶⁸ If an inmate was recognised to be contagious, he or she was usually discharged from the workhouse and given outdoor relief.⁶⁹ However, three arable parishes – Odiham, East Meon, and Petersfield – close to the eastern border of the county established

⁶³ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 18 December 1822, HRO, PL2/1/1; A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the parishes in the division of Fareham including Portsmouth, 21 December 1834, TNA, MH32/1.

⁶⁴ A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the parishes in the division of Fareham including Portsmouth, 21 December 1834, TNA, MH32/1.

⁶⁵ Gilbert's report published in 1776 on the state of selected workhouses contained information about the number of deaths in the workhouses, representing his worry that the institutions might act as epidemic hotspots. Boulton, Davenport, and Schwarz, 'ANTE-CHAMBERS', p. 63.

⁶⁶ Basingstoke Union Correspondence, 27 March 1835, TNA, MH 12/10669.

⁶⁷ R. J. Davenport, Max Satchell, and Leigh Shaw-Taylor, 'The Geography of Smallpox in England Before Vaccination: A Conundrum Resolved', *Social Science & Medicine*, 206 (2018), pp. 75-85.

⁶⁸ Draft Agreement for the Management of the Workhouse of Odiham, 22 February 1782, HRO, 47M81/PO29; Milford Overseers Account and Poor Rate Book, 27 November 1799, HRO, 87M98/5.

⁶⁹ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 5 February 1798, HRO, 84M70/PO1.

special institutions, pesthouses or smallpox houses to isolate victims of contagious disease.⁷⁰ The Great Plague struck London in 1665, and its aftermath arrived at Petersfield the next year and reportedly carried off 235 victims. In spite of having many fewer casualties, East Meon, five miles from Petersfield, decided to combat the disease by erecting a pesthouse in 1703. The house remained in use until superseded by the Petersfield union workhouse in 1834.⁷¹ The running cost of the pesthouse was placed under the workhouse account, suggesting that the pesthouse may have been regarded as an annexe to the workhouse.⁷²

5.2 Discipline

Even though many historians have argued that under the Old Poor Law, workhouses were more generous and benign than has been supposed, discipline and restrictions on freedom inside were fundamental to the workhouse regime. This section consists of three parts. First, little work has been done on day-to-day efforts to maintain discipline within the workhouse.⁷³ We will investigate workhouse rules that regulated workhouse life and differences between workhouses. Workhouse rules and orders have survived in the six parishes of Odiham, Hursley, and the Isle of Wight in the arable division, Milford and Alverstoke in the coastal division and Boldre in the pastoral division. Secondly, we will look at the resistance of the poor inside and outside workhouses, although documents produced by parish officials report only a few such cases. Welfare historians have recently tried to uncover the agency of inmates by examining their infractions of workhouse rules and complaints about workhouse officers, though

⁷⁰ Basingstoke Vestry Minutes, 19 March 1822, HRO, 46M74/PV1; Petersfield Vestry Minutes, 5 July 1764, HRO, 108M70/PV1; Bishop's Waltham Vestry Minutes, 14 October 1808, HRO, 30M77/PV1; Sheila Millard and Edward Roberts, 'The 'Pest House' at Odiham', *PHFCAS*, 44 (2005); Keith Vokes, 'A Brief History of East Meon, A Hampshire Village', *The Hampshire Family Historian*, 40 (2013), pp. 246-253.

⁷¹ Vokes, 'Brief', p. 252.

⁷² F. G. Standfield, 'A Village Workhouse, 1727-33', *Local History Magazine*, 53 (1996), pp. 14-16.

⁷³ There is a recent study on discipline and punishment in the workhouse under the New Poor Law, Samantha Williams 'Paupers Behaving Badly: Punishment in the Victorian Workhouse', *Journal of British Studies*, 59 (2020), pp. 764-792.

disproportionately in relation to large workhouses in London and provincial cities.⁷⁴ While these previous studies have focused on internal dynamics, this section will deal not only with protests of inmates within the workhouse but also threats to and assaults on workhouses from the outside. Finally, we will consider possible advantages to parishes of the deterrent workhouse. Existing works have habitually highlighted the fact that workhouse projects were capital-intensive, and expenditure per indoor pauper was higher than that per outdoor, but none of them has explained clearly why such uneconomical institutions survived very long.⁷⁵ This section will explore the administrative merit of the deterrent workhouse and argue that it was used as an administrative device not only in negotiating with the poor but also in improving administrators' control over their parishes.

Rules and orders laid down for the six workhouses demonstrate the existence of powerful constraints on the movements and activities of inmates, although there is little evidence to tell us whether they were enforced. Among them, the regulations of the incorporation workhouse in the Isle of Wight and the urban workhouse in Alverstoke, which were large in size and exceptionally well documented, may be representative of larger workhouses in Hampshire, especially given that the management of these two workhouses affected or was affected by that of other large workhouses in this county.⁷⁶ Southampton and Titchfield used the Isle of Wight workhouse as a source of inspiration, dispatching people to or inviting an expert from the isle to learn how the workhouse was managed.⁷⁷ Right after a resolution to build a new workhouse was made, Alverstoke appointed a committee to collect

⁷⁴ Green, 'Protests', pp. 137-159; Boulton and Black, 'Paupers', pp. 79-91; Susannah Ottaway, "'A Very Bad Presidente in the House": Workhouse Masters, Care, and Discipline in the Eighteenth-Century Workhouse', *Journal of Social History*, 53 (2020), pp. 1-29.

⁷⁵ Digby, *Palaces*; Boyer, *Economic*, pp. 23, 202-203; Ottaway, *Decline*, pp. 252-253; Green, *Capital*, pp. 37-38. Even a contemporary commentator, Frederick Morton Eden, admitted that the poor were not maintained at a cheaper rate than they could be at their own home. Eden, *State*, pp. 227-228.

⁷⁶ Shave, *Pauper*, pp. 153-154.

⁷⁷ Southampton Board of Guardians Minute Book, 1 October 1832, SAO, SC/AG1/1/3; Titchfield Vestry Minute Book, 9 April 1776, HRO, 37M73/PV1.

information about other town workhouses in Alton and Winchester. Information from Alton laid before the committee was practical, illustrating the manner of employing the poor, the sort of manufactory carried on, the mode of feeding paupers, the cost of building the workhouse and the earnings of workhouse labour. Accounts provided by Winchester were relevant to the legal framework as the city established a workhouse under Gilbert's Act, on which basis Alverstoke also decided to adopt the act.⁷⁸

The Alverstoke workhouse and the Isle of Wight workhouse drew up regulations minutely, but their details are almost identical reflecting Alverstoke's use of the Isle of Wight as a model.⁷⁹ First, both workhouse rules specified a daily timetable for diet. In both workhouses, breakfast was to be ready at eight and dinner at twelve; in the Alverstoke workhouse, supper was to be at five in winter and at seven in summer, as opposed to 'at the time the workers leave off work' in the Isle of Wight: probably different ways of stating much the same thing, in that hours of work were influenced by the length of daylight.⁸⁰ The rules also imposed stringent limits on freedom of movement in and out of the house, which contributed to shaping its dungeon-like image and encouraging resistance from inmates.⁸¹ No inmates of either workhouse were allowed to go out without the consent of the master or matron. Furthermore, residents in the Alverstoke workhouse who were permitted to have a day out were to return to the house by eight in winter and nine in summer. In the Isle of Wight workhouse, outward doors were to be locked at eight in the evening and not opened before six in the morning in summer, and were to be locked at six and not opened before eight in winter.⁸²

⁷⁸ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 26 November 1799, HRO, PL2/1/1.

⁷⁹ *Bye-Laws for the Regulation and Government of the House of Industry, in the Isle of Wight* (Newport, 1792); Alverstoke Minute Book of the Committee, 24 November 1818, HRO, PL2/1/2; Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, Easter 1803, HRO, PL2/1/1.

⁸⁰ *Bye-Laws for the Regulation & Government of the House of Industry, in the Isle of Wight*, p. 16; Alverstoke Minute Book of the Committee, 24 November 1818, HRO, PL2/1/2.

⁸¹ Ottaway, 'Presidente', pp. 1-29.

⁸² *Bye-Laws for the Regulation & Government of the House of Industry, in the Isle of Wight*, pp. 12, 14; Alverstoke Minute Book of the Committee, 24 November 1818, HRO, PL2/1/2.

Moreover, the two workhouses' rules prescribed in detail what kinds of punishment should be inflicted on rule-breakers. These do not seem very harsh, mostly involving the loss of meals or short confinement with basic food, bread and water. Physical chastisement in the workhouse was rare because major or chronic offenders tended to be summoned to workhouse committees or vestries, or if charges were serious, magistrates, who had the power to commit them to houses of correction for misbehaviour in the workhouse.⁸³ In the Isle of Wight workhouse, the poor who demeaned themselves indecently or neglected to execute the work that they were required to perform were to forfeit their next meal, and if they repeated the misdeed, they were to be brought before a weekly committee or a magistrate. The Alverstoke workhouse's regulation stipulated that any paupers coming back to the house drunk should be put into the bridewell on site for the night and not be permitted to go out again for three months.⁸⁴

There is less reason to suppose that workhouse regulations for the other rural parishes of Odiham, Milford and Boldre were representative; they show varying degrees of rigour in control inside. In comparison with the two larger workhouses' rules, those made by Odiham in the arable division were more constricting, while those of Milford in the coastal division and Boldre in the pastoral division were looser. The Odiham workhouse's rule specified a more specific daily timetable with set times for rising, prayer, work, breakfast, dinner, supper and going to bed.⁸⁵ The rules of 1793 and 1799 for the workhouses of Boldre and Milford show a relatively lax management routine, setting mealtimes only.⁸⁶ Variation in the concreteness of the daily schedule suggests a difference not merely in how strictly inmates' lives were regulated

⁸³ Ottaway, 'Presidente', pp. 12-17.

⁸⁴ *Bye-Laws for the Regulation & Government of the House of Industry, in the Isle of Wight*, p. 10; Alverstoke Minute Book of the Committee, 24 November 1818, HRO, PL2/1/2.

⁸⁵ Draft Agreement between the Churchwardens and Overseers of Odiham, and Henry Cooper and James Mulford for the Management of the Workhouse, 22 February 1782, HRO, 47M81/PO29.

⁸⁶ *Rules and Orders to be Observed by the Governor and Matron of the Poor-house of Boldre* (Southampton, 1793), p. 5; Milford Overseers Account and Poor Rate Book, 27 November 1799, HRO, 87M98/5.

but in how tightly control over workhouse masters was exercised. As Susannah Ottaway points out, workhouse masters were closer to hired stewards mediating between the poor and parish officials than ‘technicians of discipline’, so their work was apparently subject to constant review.⁸⁷

There was also a difference between the rural workhouses in the strength of control over going in and out. Given its profile on other issues, it is not surprising that the Odiham workhouse enforced a more muscular restriction on movement than the others, in that without leave from the workhouse committee, no pauper was permitted to go in and out of the workhouse.⁸⁸ In the case of the Milford workhouse, it was at the discretion of the master and matron, just like in the larger workhouses.⁸⁹ The Boldre workhouse rules did not mention who was in charge of movements in and out of the workhouse, so we may doubt if there was much attention paid to security. In fact, there is a report of a theft that ‘was committed in the [workhouse] gardens, and at least two hundred weight of cabbages carried off’. When someone bemoaned the loss, the workhouse master remarked that ‘it was a pitiful thing to steal from a parish workhouse’, though he offered assurance that it would not be critical.⁹⁰

Taking the rules of the three workhouses together, the type and level of punishment did not differ much not only from one to another but also by comparison with the larger workhouses considered previously. In all cases, emphasis was laid on decent behaviour at divine services and dining tables, respect for workhouse officers, and hygiene. However, there was one notable divergence among the rural parishes. In order to keep inmates at work, the Odiham workhouse chose a hard-line policy involving punishment, whereas the Boldre and

⁸⁷ Ottaway, ‘Presidente’, pp. 9-10.

⁸⁸ Draft Agreement between the Churchwardens and Overseers of Odiham, 22 February 1782, HRO, 47M81/PO29.

⁸⁹ Milford Overseers Account and Poor Rate Book, 27 November 1799, HRO, 87M98/5.

⁹⁰ Walter, Robbins and Gilpin, ‘Account’, pp. 15-16.

Milford workhouses promised a reward. In the former case, those who refused to work would, for the first offence, be confined and fed on bread and water, and for the second offence, be called before a vestry. By contrast, the latter announced that those who discharged work given to them with care and diligence should be granted gratuities out of their earnings.⁹¹ This suggests that the parish authorities of Boldre and Milford believed work carried out in their workhouse was productive and profitable and not just a means to afflict the work-shy.

Regulations for the Hursley workhouse, built by 1829, appear to have been cognate with workhouse rules subsequently nationally circulated under the New Poor Law.⁹² In the twilight of the Old Poor Law, there had already been many attempts to reform poor relief administration centred on workhouses' disciplinary regime, which may have influenced the Hursley case. One of them was led by Robert Lowe, the rector of Bingham, who accentuated classification, order, and regularity in the workhouse. His main goal was to force able-bodied paupers to support themselves through the terror of a well-disciplined workhouse. Another similar experiment was initiated at Southwell, only a few miles from Bingham, by the Rev. J. T. Becher in friendly communication with Lowe. A workhouse was erected in 1824 under Becher's leadership. He induced George Nicholls, who was a retired officer of mercantile marine service and was to be appointed as one of the first poor-law commissioners, to take over the post of parish overseer and to visit the Bingham workhouse to observe a strict institutional regimen.⁹³ The Webbs point out that this experiment was based on 'enforced quiet, regularity, cleanliness, monotony, confinement and deprivation of alcohol and tobacco'.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Draft Agreement between the Churchwardens and Overseers of Odiham, 22 February 1782, HRO, 47M81/PO29; Milford Overseers Account and Poor Rate Book, 27 November 1799, HRO, 87M98/5; Walter, Robbins and Gilpin, 'Account', p. 12.

⁹² A Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the parishes in the division of Winchester', 'Hursley', November 1834, TNA, MH32/1.

⁹³ Webb and Webb, *English*, pp. 254-259.

⁹⁴ Webb and Webb, *English*, p. 256.

The Hursley regulations present three parallels with the workhouse system of the New Poor Law. First, Hursley workhouse pursued a policy of segregation by sex, appropriating the southern yard to men and boys and the northern yard to women and girls and keeping the doors between them always locked to prevent communication, though the New Poor Law rules sought a yet more elaborate classification of paupers.⁹⁵ Secondly, food provision in the Hursley workhouse conformed to ‘less eligibility’, meaning that ‘the diet of the paupers [in the workhouse] shall be so regulated as in no case to exceed, in quantity and quality of food, the ordinary diet of any class of able-bodied labourers’.⁹⁶ The total intake of calories from the diet of the Hursley workhouse was, as we saw above, clearly low compared with its contemporary counterparts. In addition, no indulgences such as tea, alcohol and tobacco were permitted.⁹⁷ Lastly, Hursley aimed to enforce a strict ‘workhouse test’, stating that no paupers should be offered any allowances in money and in kind except workhouse residents, anticipating a primary object of the New Poor Law to cease all outdoor relief to the able-bodied.⁹⁸

There are a few, though not many, records from Hampshire parishes documenting protests within workhouses. One article in the Milford workhouse rules – that if anyone thought themselves aggrieved by the workhouse officers, they could state their grievance at a weekly parish meeting – however hints at inmates being active agents and negotiating with those in charge of their lives.⁹⁹ In Boldre, an accusation was, in fact, brought against the workhouse

⁹⁵ Indoor paupers were classified into seven groups, namely aged or infirm men, able-bodied men and youths above 13, youths and boys above seven years old and under 13, aged or infirm women, able-bodied women and girls above 16, girls above seven years of age and under 16, children under seven years of age. *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (London, 1835), p. 60.

⁹⁶ *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (London, 1835), p. 60. However, as we will discuss later, a key element of less eligibility was not parsimonious diets, but strict inmate separation policy and distasteful labour schemes.

⁹⁷ A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on the parishes in the division of Winchester’, ‘Hursley’, November 1834, TNA, MH32/1.

⁹⁸ A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on the parishes in the division of Winchester’, ‘Hursley’, November 1834, TNA, MH32/1; *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (London, 1835), p. 37.

⁹⁹ Milford Overseers Account and Poor Rate Book, 27 November 1799, HRO, 87M98/5.

master by Daniel Rowe and William Cutter, respecting the management and provisions of the house, though it was judged to be a fabrication. The workhouse committee concluded that the provisions in the workhouse were good in quality and the allowance apportioned to each individual inmate quite sufficient.¹⁰⁰ In some cases, poor people applying for relief threatened to leave their families to the workhouse during negotiations with parish officers. In Selborne, Mary Wheeler threatened to desert her children, leaving them in the workhouse, and succeeded in gaining eighteen pence a week.¹⁰¹ However, excess ambition might backfire. Joseph Thorn, together with his wife and children, forced his way into a workhouse committee meeting at South Stoneham, contrary to the wishes of those present, and intimated that he might leave his family in the workhouse unless he was given an advance in ‘the price of his work’. The committee resolutely refused his claim and severely censured his aggressive conduct; the names of his family members can be found on a list of workhouse inmates shortly after.

Struggles involving workhouses were also waged by people not in the house. Hampshire workhouses were occasionally threatened or attacked by rioters. Such aggression from the outside was more menacing and triggered not simply by complaints about institutional provision but by deep-rooted structural problems in society, concerning for example unemployment, low wages and high tithes. In the midst of the Swing riots, there were several cases that have gained much attention. On 22 and 23 November 1830, the Selborne and Headley workhouses were assaulted by mobs of about 300 and 1,000, respectively. At that time, the two workhouses had thirty and forty-two inmates, but in neither case did their inmates take part with the protesters.¹⁰² The main interest of those engaged in the assaults lay in tithes and wages. After the destruction of the Selborne workhouse, the mob thronged toward William Rust

¹⁰⁰ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 2 September 1819, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

¹⁰¹ Selborne Vestry Minutes, 3 November 1795, 32M66/PV1.

¹⁰² *PP* (1834), xxviii, pp. 302A-303A.

Cobbold, the vicar of Selborne, and demanded that he cut his tithes by half. Cobbold signed the agreement in fear.¹⁰³ A ringleader, Robert Holdaway, and his close aides then turned to local farmers in neighbouring parishes to obtain their consent to raise labourers' wages. While the Headley workhouse was under attack, some of the rioters attended a farmers' meeting and presented a similar paper to that of Selborne. The rector of Headley, Robert Dickinson, and local farmers also agreed to lower tithes and increase wages. Kingsley was the next stop for the rioters, but they dispersed here. Before the breakup, they made a threat to go to Alton and destroy its workhouse, though it came to nothing.¹⁰⁴ Targeting workhouses seem to have been symbolic, as they were presumably the only public buildings in a parish, apart from churches.¹⁰⁵

The parish of Odiham enervated the agency of workhouse inmates by dividing them. In the workhouse rules of this parish, it was enshrined that if any inmates discovered others committing offences, they should report them to the master and would receive four pence after the conviction of the offenders.¹⁰⁶ The approach was not confined to the workhouse. In 1829, the parish resolved to employ some of the labouring poor, having provided them with a suitable dress, to apprehend other poor people begging or loitering.¹⁰⁷ One year later, while the neighbouring parishes of Alton, Headley, and Selborne were directly hit by the Swing riots, Odiham was the exception among populous parishes located along between the London Basin and the Hampshire Downs, in that no agitation was reported. Even though it has been claimed that this was because of pauper policies in the 1810s involving the building of cottages with modest rents for the poor in 1814 and a proactive measure to stop the use of threshing machines

¹⁰³ Eric Hobsbawm and George Rudé, *Captain Swing* (London, 1969), pp. 119-120.

¹⁰⁴ Griffin, *Rural*, pp. 108-110.

¹⁰⁵ Crowther, *Workhouse*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁶ Draft Agreement between the Churchwardens and Overseers of Odiham, 22 February 1782, HRO, 47M81/PO29.

¹⁰⁷ Odiham Vestry Minutes, 8 November 1829, 47M81/PV3.

in 1816, the cunning tactics of controlling those with the potential to be a social threat may have contributed to averting trouble.¹⁰⁸

Parish authorities had long taken advantage not only of the actual bricks and mortar of the workhouse but also its forbidding representation to exert a deterrent effect. However, the practical effects of the deterrent workhouse and the workhouse test remain almost unexamined. It is, of course, difficult to determine the effect of workhouses, whether they raised or reduced a parish's spending. It is even harder to know more specifically how a general deterrent effect or tactical use of the workhouse test worked in this respect. A report on Hampshire from the 1834 Report of the Royal Commission claimed that workhouses played a role in reducing poor relief expenditure, so the south of the county spent less on the poor than the north, the latter probably equating to the arable division of my categorisation where there were comparatively few workhouses.¹⁰⁹ However, evidence from Kingsclere and Milton shows that the (re)establishment of a workhouse, in practice, had little relevance to a decline in the expenditure, as Figure 5.1 shows. Kingsclere decided to erect a workhouse in May 1796; the building was completed before May 1798.¹¹⁰ Relief expenditure per capita then went slightly down but subsequently shot up, coinciding with a sharp rise in the price of wheat in 1800 and 1801. In Milton, a new building was purchased for use as a workhouse in 1813.¹¹¹ Once the workhouse opened, the expenditure per capita declined until 1815 but began climbing in 1816 when the wheat price also rallied. We might conclude that the economic impact of workhouses was not strong enough permanently to curb expenditure, which instead still closely mirrored the trend in wheat prices.

¹⁰⁸ Bethanie Afton, 'The Motive which has Operated on the Minds of my People: 1830, the Propensity of Hampshire Parishes to Riot', *PHFCAS*, 44 (1988), p. 112.

¹⁰⁹ *PP* (1834), xxviii, p. 295A.

¹¹⁰ Kingsclere Overseers' Account and Rate Book, 3 May 1796, HRO, 90M72/PO3; Kingsclere Overseers' Account and Rate Book, 4 July 1797, 15 May 1798, HRO, 90M72/PO4.

¹¹¹ Milton Overseers' Account and Rate book, 6 May 1813, HRO, 56M83/PO3.

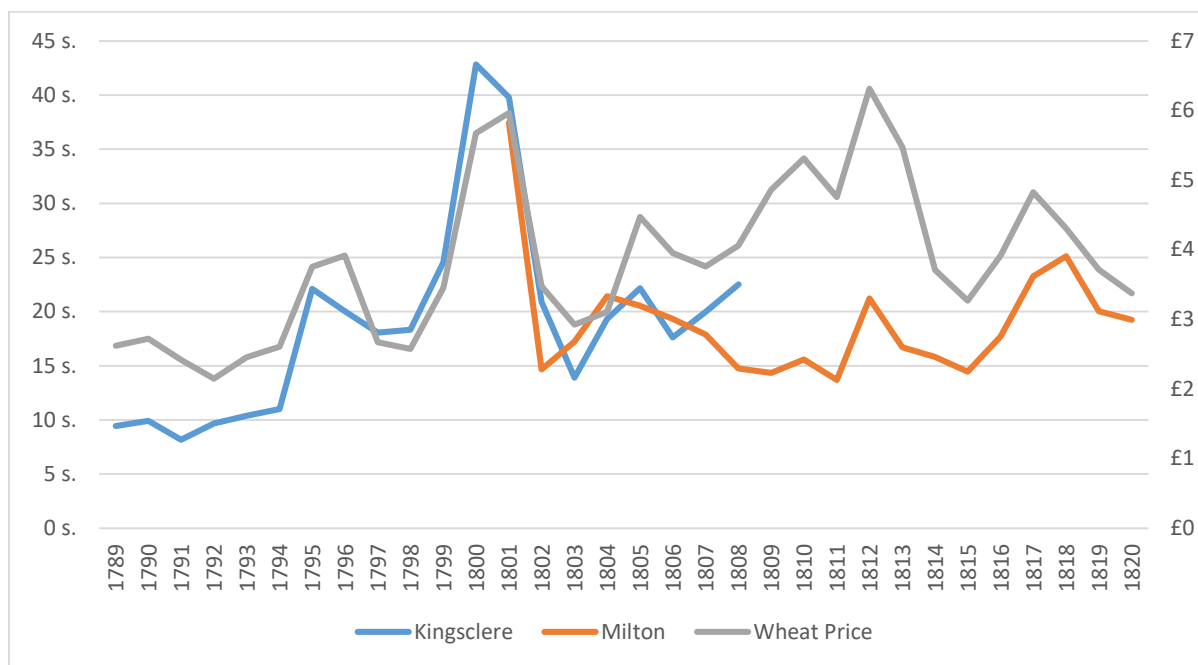


Figure 5.1 Relief expenditure per capita on poor relief in Kingsclere and Milton and wheat price per imperial quarter

Source: Kingsclere Overseers' Account and Rate Book, 1789-1796, 1796-1803, 1802-1809; Milton Overseers Account and Rate Book, 1801-1813, 1813-1821; For wheat prices, Mitchell, *Statistics*, p. 756.

Parochial poor law administrators possibly utilised workhouses to enhance administrative efficiency. I hypothesise that it was no coincidence that workhouses were popular in parishes with a heavy workload of poor law administration. As we demonstrated in chapter two, parishes which established workhouses under the Old Poor Law tended to be overpopulated and busy with migrating people, while their officers were less wealthy and needed to keep working for their living; consequently, they must have found official duty burdensome. In this connection, it is noteworthy that, according to A'Court's reports of 1834, the 'Rural Queries' and 'Town Queries' of the 1834 Poor Law Report and some parochial accounts, at least 80 per cent (53 of 64) of parishes running a workhouse by 1834 appointed special paid officers such as 'assistant overseer', 'permanent overseer', 'acting overseer', and

‘salaried guardians’ who undertook some or all of the duties of the office of overseer.¹¹² Sturges Bourne’s Act of 1819 permitted the appointment of assistant overseers with the sanction of two magistrates, although many parishes had already hired a specialist to assist overseers, for instance, in Petersfield, a former overseer was employed an assistant at an annual salary of six guineas as early as 1774.¹¹³ Parishes with an assistant overseer were predominantly large in size, places where the overseers’ tasks, like collecting poor rates and distributing relief provision, were particularly onerous.¹¹⁴ The main effect of the appointment of salaried officers was, as David Eastwood indicated, to drive ‘a few would-be bureaucrats to devote themselves to parish administration’ and improve the professionalisation of poor relief administration, which helped lighten the burden on voluntary officers.¹¹⁵ The high incidence of parishes with a paid standing officer running a workhouse, therefore, suggest that the institution may also have had an administrative function.

In negotiating with poor relief applicants, parish officials used the offer of the workhouse as a bargaining counter, relying on it usually not being the applicant’s preferred option.¹¹⁶ This was the case particularly in arable and coastal towns with large populations. In some cases where those in receipt of poor relief claimed extra aid or asked to increase their allowances, the workhouse was offered to them. Likewise, when giving notice that they intended to discontinue outdoor assistance to a person or family, parish officers usually

¹¹² A’Court’s Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 1834, 1835, TNA, MH 32/1-2; Basingstoke Union Correspondence, 27 March 1835, TNA, MH 12/10669; A’Court’s Correspondence and Papers related to the County of Hampshire, Odiham Division, TNA, MH 12/10804; *PP* (1834), xxviii, Appendix B.1. Answers to Rural Queries, Question 32, Appendix B.2; Answers to Town Queries, Question 9; Fordingbridge Poor Relief Committee Minute Book, 1 April 1808, HRO, 24M82/PV4; Droxford Vestry Minute Book, 11 November 1819, HRO, 66M76/PV3; Micheldever Vestry Minutes, 4 February 1834, HRO, 7M80/PV1.

¹¹³ Petersfield Vestry Minutes, 5 April 1774, HRO, 108M70/PV1.

¹¹⁴ Shave, ‘Impact’, p. 404.

¹¹⁵ David Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government 1780-1840* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 177-178.

¹¹⁶ Even though the Boldre workhouse seems to have been relatively generous, two poor ladies said they would rather die under a hedge than go into the house. Walter, Robbins and Gilpin, ‘Account’, p. 19.

recommended the workhouse as a remaining option – presumably anticipating that at least some relief claimants would then withdraw their applications. For example, Fordingbridge, an arable town, granted Sarah Padden five shillings a week on 3 June 1808, which was halved the next week. The following month, the parish notified her that she would no longer be relieved but might enter the workhouse.¹¹⁷ In July 1811, Sarah Kenchington, who received one and a half shillings for her bastard child, refused to reveal who the father was. The parish resolved that if she would not name him, the allowance should be discontinued and instead, she should be offered a place in the workhouse with her child.¹¹⁸ The coastal town of Lymington saw Robert Alexander applying for formal assistance repeatedly. In June 1815, he made an application, and the parish allowed him 5s. or a shirt. Half a year later, he applied again, and the parish decided to reduce his allowance to 2s. or admit him into the workhouse. Yet, his train of applications never stopped, and he continued to be provided with relief in kind such as shirts and shoes at intervals. In 1820, the parish finally determined to give him ‘no further allowance’ and offered to send him to the workhouse. It responded to his next applications in January and February 1821 by giving him notice to go into the workhouse.¹¹⁹ A further attraction for parish officers of a workhouse offer was that if the workhouse was suggested as an alternative, paupers whose applications were turned down by their parishes were unlikely to be able to get magistrates to overturn the refusal, even after the law was changed in 1796 to make it possible for them to do that.¹²⁰ One parish officer of North Mymms, Hertfordshire, Joseph Sabine, stated to the House of Commons in 1817 that the effect of a workhouse offer

¹¹⁷ Fordingbridge Poor Relief Committee Minute Book, 3, 10 June, 1 July 1808, HRO, 24M82/PV4.

¹¹⁸ Fordingbridge Poor Relief Committee Minute Book, 12 July 1811, HRO, 24M82/PV4.

¹¹⁹ Lymington Vestry Order Book, 1 June 1815, 11 January, 22 August 1816, HRO, 42M75/PO9; Lymington Vestry Order Book, 6 February, 21 August 1817, 5 February, 23 April, 5 November 1818, 15 July, 30 December 1819, 20 April, 28 December 1820, 25 January, 22 February 1821, HRO, 42M75/PV11.

¹²⁰ Sir William Young’s Act of 1796 (36 Geo. III c.23) stipulated that parishes with a workhouse should not preclude magistrates from ordering outdoor relief. Peter King, ‘The Rights of the Poor and the Role of the Law: The Impact of Pauper Appeals to the Summary Courts 1750-1834,’ in Jones and King (eds), *Obligation*, p. 258.

was, among other things, to remove one ground on which paupers might complain to magistrates.¹²¹ The Rural Queries contain a question about how ‘the power of [magistrates] ordering relief to be given to persons who should refuse to enter the workhouse’, prescribed in the 1796 act, was actually exercised and the opinion of individual parishes on it.¹²² Two coastal parishes with a workhouse, Milton and Milford, answered that ‘the [m]agistrates refuse to order relief to paupers who refuse to go into the [w]orkhouse when offered by the [p]arish [o]fficers’ and ‘[o]ffering to take young men into the [h]ouse has had the effect of making them exert themselves, from their dislike to confinement’.¹²³

Workhouses were used as a means of social control, especially in the pastoral division in which smallholders were predominant, while strong landlords were few, and there was no effective manorial regulation. In such places, squatting and encroachment tended to become prevalent, which was the case in the New Forest.¹²⁴ When the workhouse committee of Boldre, a parish in the middle of the forest, held a meeting in July 1797, William Piper, a keeper responsible for a bailiwick (the New Forest was divided into nine), presented that there were a number of encroachments against commons and wastes in the forest involving the erection of ‘mud-cottages’, which he would be unable to repress without the assistance of the parish. The committee resolved to hire proper people to crack down on them and to defray the expense incurred out of poor rates.¹²⁵ The next year, James Prince was caught erecting a house on wasteland, and the committee decided to prevent the house from being built.¹²⁶ Along with discouraging illicit dwellings, the committee offered the workhouse to poor-relief claimants with housing problems. In 1807, John Fryer and Charles Payne applied for help with their rents

¹²¹ *PP* (1817), lxxxiv, p. 72.

¹²² *PP* (1834), xxviii, Appendix B.1. Answers to Rural Queries, Question 45.

¹²³ *PP* (1834), xxviii, Appendix B.1. Answers to Rural Queries, pp. 424 d-425 d.

¹²⁴ Broad, ‘Housing’, pp. 154-155; Griffin, ‘Enclosures’, pp. 274-295.

¹²⁵ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 4 July 1797, HRO, 84M70/PO1.

¹²⁶ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 8 May 1798, HRO, 84M70/PO1.

but were instead offered the workhouse.¹²⁷ In another pastoral parish nearby, Fawley, Philadelphia Head and her family were offered accommodation in the workhouse; at the same time, the parish decided to take down their house, perhaps because it was held to be an encroachment.¹²⁸ Boldre needed to pay attention not merely to its own parishioners making an unlicensed dwelling but also to squatters from adjoining parishes. In 1811, the workhouse committee complained that numerous people from Beaulieu intruded into this parish and built cottages with no permit, and announced that no allowance should be made for them, but all of them should be indiscriminately ordered into the workhouse.¹²⁹ Unlike Beaulieu, where the owner of the manor and estate, the Duchess of Buccleuch, exerted strong control over the community, Boldre, with no manorial authority to defend itself against the squatters, had to rely on the workhouse.¹³⁰

At first blush, the deterrent aspect of workhouses seems to have run counter what we have found in the previous chapter, namely that workhouse offers were selectively given depending much on what parish authorities intended the institution to provide for them. However, the use of workhouses as a deterrence never meant that workhouses were equally likely to be offered to all relief applicants. There were, we have shown above, specific groups of the poor whom a policy of deterrence targeted. In the arable and coastal divisions, those targeted were those seen as dissolute and imprudent, habitually claiming formal aids and mounting a burden on ratepayers, and in the pastoral division, those seen as threatening social security by violating common and wasteland or parish boundaries with no official certificate. Therefore, workhouses were not administered indiscriminately by what the Webbs called

¹²⁷ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 7 May, 5 November 1807, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

¹²⁸ Fawley Select Vestry Minutes, 29 September 1819, HRO, 25M60/PV1.

¹²⁹ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 4 July 1811, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

¹³⁰ J. James, *East Boldre: A New Forest Squatters Settlement, 1700-1900* (Southampton, 1994).

‘mixed officials’ treating the poor as an aggregate, but rather strategically with careful consideration of internal and external conditions.

5.3 Work

Despite its name, ‘workhouse’, historians have paid strikingly little attention to work carried out in these institutions. Even studies commenting on workhouse labour disproportionately focus on its intended role in developing industrious habits among inmates or giving force to the deterrent effect and say little about how work was practically organised and how much income resulted.¹³¹ This tendency reflects the lasting influence of Beatrice and Sidney Webb, who regarded the profitability of workhouse labour as of ‘secondary importance’ and suggested that the hope that workhouses might prove profitable recurred throughout the eighteenth century but proved unfeasible in reality.¹³² Although it is true that most attempts to employ workhouse inmates for pecuniary benefit ended in failure and useful forms of work were increasingly replaced by task work that was designed to reform the morals of the inmates and reinforce a deterrent regime, and this was particularly the case after the Napoleonic Wars, there yet remains a need to study workhouse labour more carefully. There were cases in which it was taken very seriously, and some of them seem to have enjoyed some short-term success. In this section, the objects of workhouse labour will be classified into three: for profit, for training and for discipline. Even though those three categories in most cases overlapped, differing degrees of significance were attached to each in individual workhouses in the different divisions. Of course, we will keep an ecological approach in mind in this context.

It is not difficult to find instances of parishes expressing a desire to establish lucrative workhouse employment. In particular, as we discussed in the previous chapter, many

¹³¹ Digby, *Palaces*, p. 44; Anderson, ‘Leeds’, pp. 92-93; Hitchcock, ‘Workhouses’, p. 121; Mandler, ‘Making’, pp. 141-142.

¹³² Webb and Webb, *English*, pp. 221-233.

workhouses (re)established across Hampshire in the 1790s sought profits from workhouse labour. For example, the parish of Overton in the arable division decided to erect a workhouse in 1796 and stated that its primary purpose was to furnish employment to the industrious poor and to tackle the soaring expense of poor relief.¹³³ A manufactory set up in the walls of the new workhouse was designed to hold approximately forty, while the total capacity of the house was estimated to be fifty. The hope was to employ not only workhouse residents but also people out of the house who would work in the daytime and return to their own homes at night. The parish officers drew up a blueprint suggesting that after two years of settling down, the workhouse business should be flourishing.¹³⁴ Similarly, in the first meeting held at Alverstoke, a coastal town, in 1799 to resolve on the establishment of a new workhouse, it was planned to ‘put the management of the poor on a new footing to employ them in some manufacture, the profit of which may lessen the expenses of their maintenance’.¹³⁵ The Alverstoke workhouse made provision for manufactories of coverlids, blankets, and flannel, and it was also supplied with a garden ground, where not only potatoes and vegetables but pigs were raised.¹³⁶ A leading figure in a workhouse project in Boldre in the pastoral division stated his intention of encouraging the inmates to work.¹³⁷ Workshops for knitting gloves and making watchchains were introduced into the workhouse in 1799 and 1808, respectively. Local ratepayers required the parish officers to liquidate a loan they had taken on to build the workhouse out of earnings from employing the poor, not out of poor rates.¹³⁸

¹³³ Overton Vestry Minutes, 3 November 1796, HRO, 81M72/PV1.

¹³⁴ Overton Vestry Minutes, 5 December 1796, HRO, 81M72/PV1.

¹³⁵ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 9 November 1799, HRO, PL2/1/1.

¹³⁶ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, Easter 1803, HRO, PL2/1/1.

¹³⁷ William Gilpin, Henry Addington - New poor house at Lymington to be taken on forest land, 20 September 1786, DRO, 152M/C/1786/OZ/7.

¹³⁸ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 4 October, 2 December 1799, 6 January 1803, HRO, 84M70/PO1; Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 7 October 1808, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

In the arable division, most attempts to establish a remunerative form of workhouse employment appear to have been abandoned with little achievement. In 1796, the vestry of Whitchurch, an arable parish, made a decision to set up a woollen manufactory in the re-opened workhouse, and three years later, a sack manufactory was added to the house.¹³⁹ However, in 1802, the parish, in effect, gave up on the hope of making a profit from workhouse labour by signing a contract with Richard Dibley, who was ‘entitled to all the earnings and benefit of the labour of the paupers’.¹⁴⁰ Even the workshops under the control of this contractor were transformed into a tenement in 1817.¹⁴¹ In 1789, Basingstoke, a town in the arable division, appointed a committee and hired a local manufacturer, under whose superintendence a blanket manufactory was established to employ workhouse inmates.¹⁴² Three years later, just as at Whitchurch, a workhouse contract was made between the parish and George Goves, guaranteeing that the contractor would retain all the profits from the labour of the inmates.¹⁴³ In 1813, a spinning room was added, though not for profit, but for education, an indicator of a shift in the object of workhouse work.¹⁴⁴ According to the 1803 returns providing information about annual incomes from workhouse labour, the Whitchurch workhouse earned £290 but expended £300 on work materials, meaning it ended up £10 in the red, while the Basingstoke workhouse earned nothing. The workhouse of Ringwood, another town in the arable division, though at the edge of the New Forest, gained £166 from its inmates’ work in 1811, but most of the money was made by those let out to local farmers; only 15 per cent of the money (£25) was generated by work, chiefly textile, within the walls of the workhouse.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ Whitchurch Officers’ and Visitors’ Order Book, 5 September 1796, 4 June 1799, HRO, 83M76/PO3.

¹⁴⁰ Whitchurch Officers’ and Visitors’ Order Book, 3 April 1804, HRO, 83M76/PO3.

¹⁴¹ Whitchurch Officers’ and Visitors’ Order Book, 8 April 1817, HRO, 83M76/PO3.

¹⁴² Basingstoke Vestry Minutes, 15 October 1789, 1 May 1792, HRO, 80M99/2.

¹⁴³ Basingstoke Vestry Minutes, 1 May 1792, 1 May 1792, HRO, 80M99/2.

¹⁴⁴ Basingstoke Vestry Minute Book, 23 February 1813, HRO, 46M74/PV1.

¹⁴⁵ Ringwood Workhouse Account Book, 1811, HRO, 22M84/PO104.

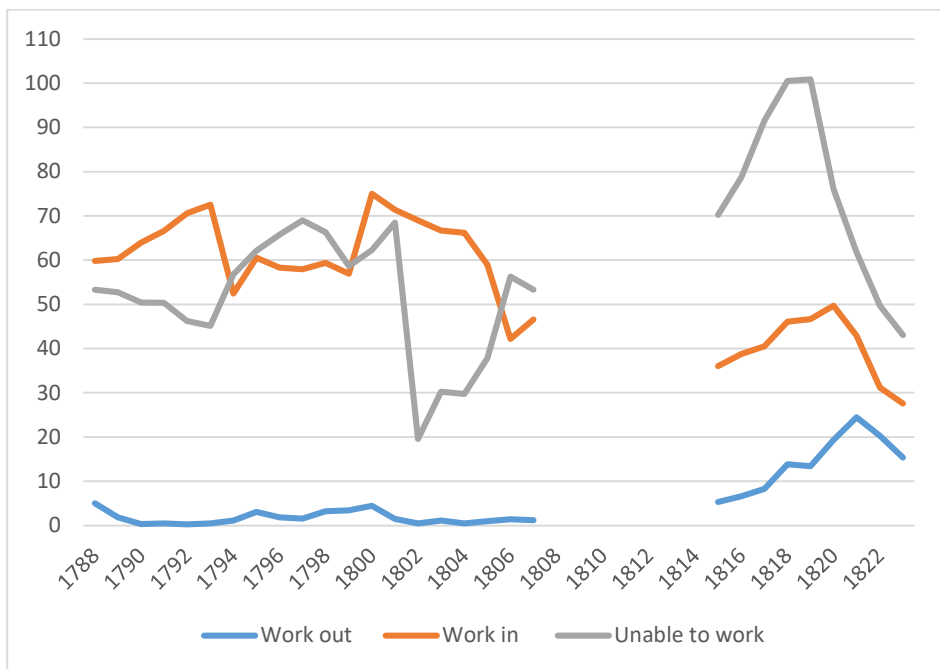


Figure 5.2 Numbers of inmates in the Christchurch workhouse classified by labour
 Source: Christchurch Weekly Returns of the Employment of Inmates Book, 1787-1793, 1793-1802, 1802-1807, 1815-1824.

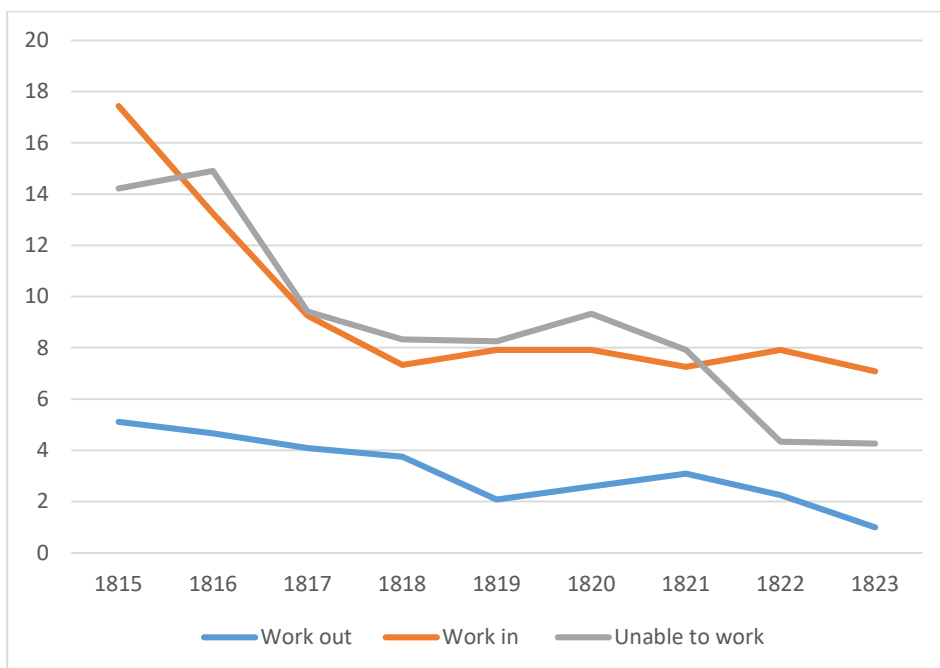


Figure 5.3 Numbers of inmates in the Hordle workhouse classified by labour
 Source: Hordle Account Books of Labour in the Workhouse, 1815-1823.

By contrast, workhouses in the coastal and pastoral divisions were sometimes successful in generating an economic gain from inmates' work, to the benefit of parochial funds; at least they paid more sustained attention to such projects, even if they were not successful in

the long term. In the case of two workhouses in the coastal division, one in the port town of Christchurch and one in the rural parish of Hordle, surviving overseers' accounts display the numbers of inmates set to work and their income and classify them according to the work that they were assigned, suggesting that close attention was paid to the employment of inmates.¹⁴⁶ In the Christchurch workhouse, the number of those employed – in work ranging from textile work such as spinning flax and worsted to gardening – was larger than the number unable to work during the period covered by the workhouse's accounts, except in the later 1790s, although after the Napoleonic Wars, the working population was exceeded by those unable to work. In the Hordle workhouse, the two numbers of inmates working in the workhouse and those unable to work run in parallel even after the wars, for all that the total workhouse population was gradually falling. Inmates' labour in the Christchurch workhouse was clearly lucrative in that annual income from labour was, on average, £150 for the first seven years of the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁷

Belief in the profitability of workhouse labour was strong among parishes in the pastoral division. In 1801, Selborne, a heathland parish in the northeast, selected James White to operate a woollen manufactory in the workhouse. The contract with him indicated that he would be given an annual salary of £20 and retain all the profit that arose out of the workhouse business in the first year, but from the second year, he would share the profit with the parish. This contrasts with what we saw in the case of arable parishes, which granted contractors exclusive rights to take the entire proceeds from inmates' labour. Following the making of this contract, several cases of local girls who came into the workhouse to be employed were

¹⁴⁶ Christchurch Weekly Returns of the Employment of Inmates Book, 1787-1793, 1793-1802, 1802-1807, 1815-1824, DHC, BG/CC/X/4/3/5-7; Hordle Account Books of Labour in the Workhouse, 1815-1823, HRO, 26M79/PO24-28.

¹⁴⁷ Christchurch Workhouse Committee Accounts, 1801-1807, DHC, BG/CC/X/4/1/1.

reported in the vestry minutes.¹⁴⁸ Similarly successful was the work scheme of the Boldre workhouse in the New Forest. Workhouse accounts of this parish are unique among rural parishes in that they describe in detail how much money was earned by workhouse labour as well as what types of work were performed by inmates.¹⁴⁹ As Figure 5.4 shows, the total income from workhouse employment from 1801 to 1806 was no less than £736 (amounting to an annual average of about £123), nearly commensurate with the sum of £800 invested in building the workhouse. If these total earnings are compared with those made in a far bigger workhouse, accommodating 300, at Portsea, whose annual income from work was on average around £183 between 1782 and 1784, the amount earned by the Boldre workhouse inmates seems all the more extraordinary.¹⁵⁰

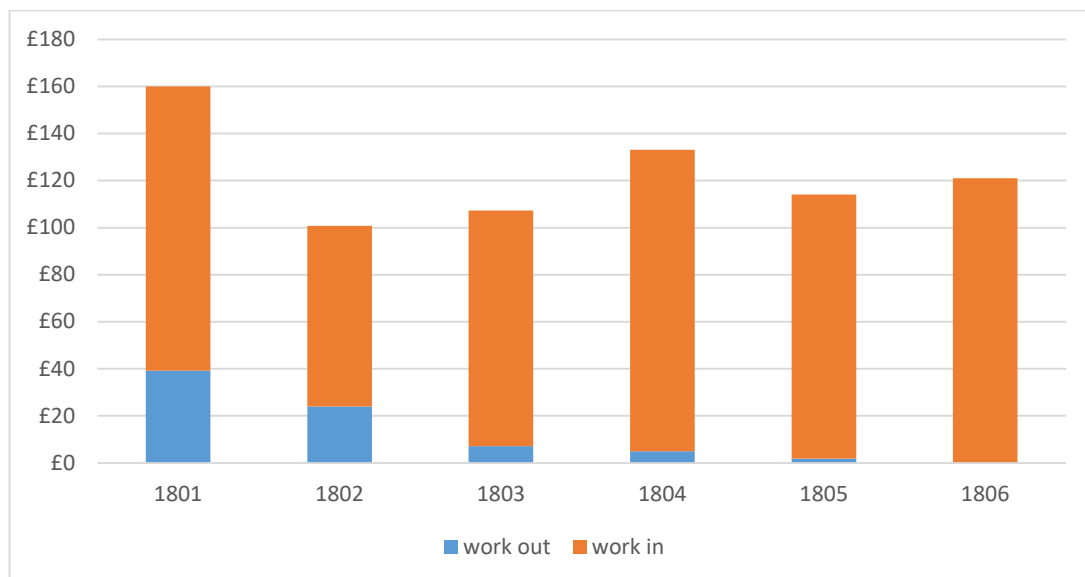


Figure 5.4 Earnings of inmates' labour in the Boldre workhouse
Source: Boldre Overseers' Accounts, 1800-1807.

Why were workhouse labour schemes aiming at profit more successful in the coastal and pastoral divisions than in the arable division? The key was probably the nature of the relationship between local industries and workhouses. The possibility of workhouse labour

¹⁴⁸ Selborne Vestry Minutes, 16 March 1801, 26 November 1802, 18 January 1803, 32M66/PV1.

¹⁴⁹ Boldre Overseers' Accounts, 1800-1807, HRO, 1A09/A1.

¹⁵⁰ Eden, *State*, p. 225.

competing with other local industries concerned local businessmen and farmers. The arable parish of Overton made a plan to build a new workhouse with a manufactory, as an independent enterprise, in 1796, but it faced considerable opposition. One opponent was a local tradesman owning a silk mill on the river Test, who was concerned about the appearance of another manufactory of a similar nature and the resulting overstocking of the market.¹⁵¹ Local farmers, chiefly tenants, were also hostile, objecting that the project would aggravate their financial hardship arising from the shortage of agricultural workers and rising wages.¹⁵² Even after the workhouse was completed and a new master was appointed, popular hostility was not dispelled. In 1801, when relief expenditure increased dramatically, even though high food prices were the more obvious culprit, the workhouse business was attacked again and investigated to ascertain whether it had contributed to the crisis.¹⁵³

The relationship of the coastal and pastoral workhouses to local economies seems to have been non-competitive or even symbiotic. To be more specific, there were two models: one, the large workhouse in a populous place, where it was feasible to aim at increased self-sufficiency through inmates' labour and the other, the small workhouse linking into outwork in parishes where workhouse labour was already part of local economies. The port town of Alverstoke employed its paupers in manufacturing and cultivating workhouse land for their own use, not for sale. In 1806, when the building of manufactories was completed, it was reported that the amount of production was nearly enough to meet consumption in the workhouse and 'if purchased, would have cost upwards of £69'.¹⁵⁴ Besides the manufactories, the parish invested in a series of constructions of a bakehouse, a brewhouse and a corn mill in

¹⁵¹ Vaidya, *Mill*, pp. 85-86.

¹⁵² Overton Vestry Minutes, 5 December 1796, HRO, 81M72/PV1. As Bromsgrove workhouse in Worcestershire made a manufactory for making nails, farmers in the neighbourhood complained that they could not get a sufficient workforce. Webb and Webb, *English*, p. 239.

¹⁵³ Overton Vestry Minutes, 16 January 1801, HRO, 81M72/PV1.

¹⁵⁴ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 8 April 1806, HRO, PL2/1/1.

the premises, aiming to create a self-supporting institution.¹⁵⁵ Pastoral parishes entered into a subcontract with industrial capitalists to link their workhouse inmates with them, a sort of ‘putting-out’ system.¹⁵⁶ In pastoral areas, the lack of other work opportunities drove women and children in particular to seek non-agricultural by-employment. As Joan Thirsk has argued, the pastoral economy had to be supplemented by cottage industry.¹⁵⁷ It is not surprising to find the parish trying to take advantage of the labour of local women and children, who had possibly been familiar with the kinds of work involved even before they entered the workhouse.¹⁵⁸ Gilbert White observed that in the heathland parish of Selborne, women spun wool to supply material for barragons, genteel corded stuff, which were manufactured by Quaker merchants at a neighbouring town, Alton.¹⁵⁹ Children in the Boldre workhouse were employed in spinning thread for Mr Roach at Fordingbridge, who supplied flax for their work.¹⁶⁰ The Boldre workhouse entered into another subcontract with Robert Harvey Cox, a watchchain manufacturer of Christchurch, to use the labour of children in 1808.¹⁶¹ The Christchurch workhouse had associated with him since 1800, setting young inmates to work for his manufacture.¹⁶² According to the workhouse’s returns, a large number of inmates were engaged by him, accounting for more than 30 per cent of the total population of the workhouse between 1800 and 1807, when the returns finished.¹⁶³ During the same years, earnings from

¹⁵⁵ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 8, 16 April 1805, 20 April 1813, HRO, PL2/1/1.

¹⁵⁶ It was not exceptional to see that local businessmen took advantage of workhouse labour. See Humphries and Schneider, ‘Spinning’, p. 139.

¹⁵⁷ Joan Thirsk, ‘Industries in the countryside’, in F. J. Fisher (ed), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 85-86.

¹⁵⁸ Thirsk, *Agricultural*, p. 48.

¹⁵⁹ White, *Natural*, p. 15.

¹⁶⁰ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 6 November 1797, HRO, 84M70/PO1.

¹⁶¹ Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 7 October 1808, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

¹⁶² Newman, *Christchurch*, p. 25.

¹⁶³ Christchurch Weekly Returns of the Employment of Inmates Book, 1800-1802, 1802-1807, DHC, BG/CC/X/4/3/5-6.

watchchain-making were more than £865, over 70 per cent of total labour income in the workhouse.¹⁶⁴

However, it is also notable that the workhouse labour plans, at least aiming at profit, declined even in the coastal and pastoral divisions following the end of the Napoleonic Wars. During the wartime, a large body of able-bodied men was removed from the labour market into the armed forces and a scarcity of labour disturbed the economy.¹⁶⁵ Accordingly, it can be assumed that there was strong attraction in tapping alternative labour supplies and thus workhouses were seen as one of possible sources of labour, although they chiefly contained the young and the infirm. However, the end of the war may have reversed the situation. There came to be more of a problem about unemployment among young men and the need for using the inferior workforce in workhouses no longer existed. Boldre and Alverstoke both decided to farm their workhouses out and grant contractors a right to use all facilities in the house, including ones for inmates' labour in manufactories and gardens, renouncing the direct management of the houses and any hope of profit from inmates' work.¹⁶⁶ The returns of employment in the Christchurch workhouse starting from 1815 reveal that the contract with Cox had been discontinued and, as Figure 5.2 illustrates, the number of those employed in the workhouse had become smaller than the number of those unable to work.¹⁶⁷

Nevertheless, the collapse of work schemes for profit did not necessarily entail the extinction of work in workhouses. Workhouse labour continued to be used for the training and discipline of inmates. In an agreement made in 1817 between the pastoral urban parish of Eling and John Musselwhite, who was appointed as workhouse master, the instruction of inmates in

¹⁶⁴ Christchurch Workhouse Committee Accounts, 1800-1807, DHC, BG/CC/X/4/1/1.

¹⁶⁵ E. L. Jones, 'The Agricultural Labour Market in England, 1793-1872', *Economic History Review*, New Series, 17 (1964), p. 323.

¹⁶⁶ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, 18 December 1822, HRO, PL2/1/1; Boldre Workhouse Committee Minutes, 10 December 1822, HRO, 84M70/PO2.

¹⁶⁷ Christchurch Weekly Returns of the Employment of Inmates Book, 1815-1824, DHC, BG/CC/X/4/3/7.

the manufacture of flannels is stressed as one of his key tasks, though there is no mention of expected earnings from their labour.¹⁶⁸ In 1831, Lymington installed a school for needlework and knitting within the workhouse. It was resolved that ‘when there are children unemployed, they be furnished with knitting at the house; that if they cannot knit, they be sent for 2-3 hours each day to the workhouse school to learn, otherwise that no relief be granted for such children’.¹⁶⁹ This was another case of employment being provided in the workhouse for people who were not residents there, as in Overton where a workhouse manufactory employed those from the outside. Alverstoke also stated that several looms were set up in the workhouse to instruct inmates in carding, spinning and weaving despite the expense of materials wasted by learners. The parish asserted that ‘the pecuniary loss would have been a moral gain’, as more than a hundred boys and girls found constant occupation in the workhouse instead of allowing them to remain in ignorance and in idleness.¹⁷⁰ The disciplinary benefits of workhouse labour had long been stressed.¹⁷¹ In 1800, Winchester claimed that as the poor employed in the workhouse were in a progressive state of improvement, it was now possible to place them out ‘in comfortable situations, no longer a burden on their parishes, but useful members of society, instead of that disgrace they were to it before they were placed under this roof’.¹⁷²

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored diverse functions workhouses could perform and categorised them into care, discipline, and work. It has also demonstrated that there was regionality in the combination of the functions. When it came to caring, food and medical support were pivotal. Diets served in Hampshire workhouses generally met basic energy requirements for survival,

¹⁶⁸ Eling Vestry Meeting Minutes, 2 January 1817, HRO, 4M69/PV1.

¹⁶⁹ Lymington Vestry Minute Book, 10 January 1831, HRO, 42M75/PV3.

¹⁷⁰ Alverstoke Workhouse Committee Minutes, Easter 1820, HRO, PL2/1/1.

¹⁷¹ Mandler, ‘Making’, p. 134.

¹⁷² Report on the Winchester House of Industry, 4 April 1800, HRO, 71M81W/PO80.

but it has also been found that there was a significant difference in calories between workhouses. Workhouses with a labour scheme such as in Winchester and Alverstoke planned to provide their inmates more calories, whereas the Hursley workhouse – seen as a precocious example anticipating the New Poor Law regime – supplied less. In addition, the palatability of workhouse diets changed over time, but for the worse, in the light of a rise in potatoes and a fall in beer in diets, which made workhouse life less pleasant. In terms of medical support, urban and rural workhouses varied in the extent to which they were medicalised. Urban parishes with a workhouse made a contract with a medical specialist earlier than rural parishes did. Moreover, details of the contracts reveal that medical officers working for urban parishes, particularly port towns, were expected to give much attention to institutional medical assistance. This was not only because workhouses in port towns were spacious enough to install medical facilities but also because the local circumstances of seaports drove up demands for medical aid.

Among essential aspects of workhouse regimes were discipline and restrictions. It seems probable that regulations in larger workhouses in towns were much the same, as there were networks of information exchange between them. For rural workhouses, rules were, by contrast, different in the degree of tightness. Those for workhouses in the arable division were stricter than those for the coastal and pastoral regions. However, paupers in workhouses were not passively obedient to workhouse rules and orders but, at times, defied them and negotiated with those in charge of their lives to fulfil their interests. Protests against workhouses were also provoked by those not in the house. However, their aim was not to complain about workhouses themselves but to exploit them as a means of expressing grievances against broader social issues. For their part, parish authorities used the disciplinary regime of workhouses as a deterrent. Yet, the deterrence was not exclusively for cost-saving but possibly also served an

administrative function. Poor law administrators expected workhouses to be a weapon in negotiating with paupers and a device for social control.

Although figuring in the name, work in the workhouse had been underexplored, especially in its remunerative aspect. A desire to make a profit from workhouse labour underlay the workhouse boom of the 1790s across Hampshire. The labour scheme lasted only for a short while and achieved little in arable workhouses compared to their coastal and pastoral counterparts. What made a difference was their contrasting relationship with local industries. In arable parishes, workhouse labour seems to have been regarded by local businessmen and farmers as a potential risk that might put pressure on the local labour market. By contrast, work schemes in coastal and pastoral workhouses fitted harmoniously with local industries in that the workhouses made subcontracts with local tradesmen to employ inmates' labour. Workhouse labour plans for profit gradually waned even in the coastal and pastoral divisions after 1815. However, workhouse inmates continued to be set to work for training and moral reform.

Chapter Six: Workhouses on the eve of the New Poor Law

This chapter will exhibit patterns and features of Hampshire workhouses at the very end of the Old Poor Law and examine to what extent they laid a foundation for the new poor-law system as that was implemented from 1835. In the first place, we will provide an overview of the physical dimensions of Hampshire workhouses, namely their geography at this point, their size and capacity; these set the scene for discussions about which workhouses could be adopted and regenerated into a ‘reformed’ institution. Second, we will look at workhouses’ inner conditions and regimes to identify how far they anticipated the central doctrines of the new regime. Our focus in this regard will be on the share of the able-bodied among inmates, the separation between classes of inmates, and the existence and nature of workhouse labour.

A Royal Commission of Inquiry was appointed in 1832 to investigate poor-relief practices all over the country and to lay the foundations for reforming the poor law. A mass of evidence was collected and digested into a gigantic report published in February 1834. The report blamed allowance provision and relief-in-aid of wages to able-bodied males and their families for promoting pauperism and asserted that all outdoor relief to them should cease, henceforth being instead reserved solely for the ‘impotent’. The former were to be given relief only within the walls of a well-regulated workhouse under the principle of less eligibility, so that ‘[the pauper’s] situation, on the whole, shall not be made really or apparently so eligible as the situation of the independent labourer of the lowest class’.¹ Under the New Poor Law, which embodied the principal tenets of the report, workhouses were expected to become such austere institutions as to deter all but the truly destitute from applying for relief, not only

¹ *PP* (1834), xxviii, p. 127.

through prison-like outward appearance but also through a draconian indoor regimen including a monotonous daily routine, separation of inmates and taskwork.

One of main concerns of the Royal Commission was to prepare the way for change by surveying workhouses across the country to lay the groundwork for the transformation of the workhouse system. The Rural and Town Queries, the Commission's questionnaires sent to rural and urban parishes, each have a question about the physical size and distribution of workhouses.² Moreover, as workhouses in urban areas were the most obvious candidates to be adapted to the new system, the Town Queries include further questions about the internal conditions of workhouses, such as inmates' labour, the extent of separation between classes of inmate and weekly expense per inmate.³ Likewise, assistant commissioners appointed and sent around the country for local inspection after the passage of the New Poor Law made returns of workhouses. Notes written by Colonel Charles Ashe A'Court, an assistant commissioner in charge of Hampshire, are wide-ranging and well-informed, drawing a vivid picture of Hampshire workhouses just before the implementation of the new act. Not only do they indicate which parishes possessed a workhouse, but also they describe the structure of workhouse buildings and detail workhouse capacity, workhouse staff and actual size of populations living in workhouses.⁴

² *PP* (1834), xxviii, Appendix B.1., Part II, Question 22, and Appendix B.2., Part II, Question 15.

³ *PP* (1834), xxviii, Appendix B.2., Part II, Questions 16, 19, 21.

⁴ The notes are now contained in the record series MH32 in the National Archives.

Table 6.1 Hampshire workhouses by 1834

Divisions	No. of parishes	No. of parishes with a workhouses (%)	No. of workhouses capable of holding over 100
Arable	232	32(13.8)	6 ^a
Coastal	34	20(58.8)	7 ^b
Pastoral	23	12(52.2)	0
Total	289	64(22.1)	13

Note: (a) Alton, Fordingbridge, Ringwood, Romsey, Winchester and the Isle of Wight.

(b) Alverstoke, Christchurch, Portsmouth, Portsea, Southampton, South Stoneham, and Titchfield.

Sources: The 1834 report of the Royal Commission; A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District; Basingstoke Union Correspondence; Hartley Wintney Union Correspondence.

According to the Royal Commission's report and A'Court's notes, more than one in five Hampshire parishes had a workhouse by 1834, although (as this thesis has already noted) there was a significant difference between the arable division and the others: less than 15 per cent of arable parishes had workhouses, while more than 50 per cent of the others did. However, even within the arable division, all market towns with a population of more than 2,000 (the threshold beyond which this thesis counts parishes as 'urban'), already ran a workhouse of a certain size. Most of these places were to be centres of the New Poor Law districts, while any of their workhouse buildings would be kept as a basis for the new generation of institutions on account of their big sizes and locations in a local hub, although the population size of parishes the new institution was to cover was another critical consideration. Urban parishes were the sites of almost all large workhouses housing more than 100, the only exceptions being in the Isle of Wight and South Stoneham.⁵ Even if other smaller workhouses would be found useless and disposed of soon after the New Poor Law, running them had provided experience of institutional relief to local inhabitants – including local administrators, ratepayers and the poor

⁵ As illustrated in Figure 2 in chapter three, the size distribution of Hampshire workhouse in 1834 suggests that a capacity of 100 could be a clear distinction between a range of smaller and of larger workhouses. The interval of 100-109, at which the curve begins to ascend again, can be taken as a borderline distinguishing large workhouses.

themselves – and thus may have helped to soft-land the new workhouse-based regime. In addition, smaller workhouses, prevalent especially in the pastoral parishes where there was no large workhouse, made a financial contribution to the New Poor Law system. Their buildings and premises would be sold to raise funds for constructing a new workhouse, just as Thomas Gilbert had once envisaged that they might be (as will be seen in depth in the following chapter).

If workhouse buildings in Hampshire had laid useful foundations for the new regime, this was less the case with their internal arrangements. Some workhouses, mostly in rural parishes, received no able-bodied men, catering only for the vulnerable.⁶ In general, able-bodied males and their families were as yet a minority. For instance, in 1834, among male inmates in the Portsmouth workhouse, only three were able-bodied, and they were all casual cases under suspended orders for removal.⁷

New Poor Law workhouses would be asked to ensure the strict classification of inhabitants. The term ‘general mixed workhouse’, meaning one where all paupers were indiscriminately lumped, irrespective of age, sex and conditions, has enjoyed wide currency to represent the Old Poor Law workhouses, and with some justice.⁸ In some small workhouses in rural parishes, the kind of place A’Court called a ‘wretched hovel’, there was actually no classification.⁹ However, many large workhouses in urban towns had already attempted to enforce segregation, at least between male and female inmates, although their effort was not

⁶ A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on the several Parishes in the Division of Romsey’, ‘Michelmersh’, 21 November 1834, ‘Notes on the Parishes in the Division of Lymington’, ‘Boldre’, 3 December 1834, ‘Notes on the Parishes in the Division of Southampton’, ‘Beaulieu’, ‘Fawley’, 14 December 1834, TNA, MH32/1; A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on the Parishes in the Division of Petersfield’, ‘Bramshot’, January 1835, ‘Notes on the Magisterial Division of Alton’, ‘Droxford’, ‘Buriton’, 23 February 1835.

⁷ A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on the Division of Fareham including Portsmouth’, ‘Portsmouth’, 21 December 1834.

⁸ Webb and Webb, *English*, p. 218.

⁹ A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on every Parish in the Winchester Division’. ‘Bishopstoke’, November 1834, ‘Notes on the several Parishes in the Division of Romsey’, ‘Minstead’, ‘Michelmersh’, 21 November 1834, ‘Notes on the Parishes in the Division of Lymington’, ‘Boldre’, ‘Hordle’, 3 December 1834, TNA, MH32/1; Hartley Wintney Union Correspondence, ‘Farnborough’, 1835, TNA, MH 12/10804.

so systematic and perfect as to prevent communication. One exceptional case was the Portsea workhouse, where inmates were distinguished into three classes: ‘the destitute infant poor’, ‘the profligate from diseases and bad character’ and ‘the aged and impotent’. The separation between the inmates at night after seven o’clock was stated to be absolute.¹⁰

Another engine of deterrence in workhouses under the New Poor Law would be hard but fruitless and unappealing labour. It was very rare to see Hampshire workhouses forcing their residents to do meaningless work so as to punish or degrade them until the last year of the Old Poor Law. Most common labour in rural workhouses took the form of household work or the cultivation of a garden on-site for vegetables, work light enough for women and the old to do. Manufactories in a few larger workhouses were in operation, although there was a tendency to abandon attempts to maintain profitable workhouse labour programmes after 1815, as we saw in the previous chapter. A sack manufactory in the Winchester workhouse employed young inmates only, presumably not merely for economic gain but for their training to turn them into independent labourers.¹¹ In the Alverstoke workhouse, the labour of boys who were set to do spinning, weaving and sacking was of similar tenor, even though the work scheme turned out to be ‘of no use to the boys’ as ‘there is great difficulty in finding them places when they leave the house’.¹² It is also notable that picking oakum, regarded then and later as deterrent taskwork, was prevalent in coastal workhouses. However, the work was by no mean worthless economically, especially in workhouses near dockyards; it made a considerable profit.¹³

¹⁰ A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on the Division of Fareham including Portsmouth’, ‘Portsea’, 21 December 1834.

¹¹ It was returned that their earnings were from 9 d. to 3s. 6d. per week per head, while the weekly cost of their maintenance per capita was also 3s. 6d. on average. A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on every Parish in the Winchester Division’. ‘Winchester’, November 1834; *PP* (1834), xxviii, Appendix B.2., Part II, p. 212g.

¹² *PP* (1834), xxviii, Appendix A., p. 292 A.

¹³ See the case of the Alverstoke workhouse in chapter four.

In summary, the physical development and expansion of workhouses in Hampshire provided a basis for forming the New Poor Law system in the county, and indeed some of older workhouses were adapted in the new workhouse arrangement. By contrast, the internal arrangements of Hampshire workhouses, namely the fact they had little need to cater for able-bodied inmates, the underdevelopment of classification, and the absence of a harsh labour scheme made them ill-prepared to respond to the disciplinary principles of the new workhouse system. Therefore, the intention of imposing uniformity on poor law administration would not be accomplished easily at a local level.

Chapter Seven: Workhouses and poor law unions

The New Poor Law of 1834 brought about a considerable change to poor relief arrangements all over Hampshire, though to different degrees in different places. First, this chapter will look at how this process of change was set in train and how its impact differed in different parts of the county. The new act involved a massive shift in decision-making systems, in terms both of national direction and new local systems being instituted. A Poor Law Commission consisting of three commissioners (Thomas Frankland Lewis, George Nicholls and J. G. Shaw Lefevre) was appointed and authorised to supervise poor law administration across the country and issue orders and regulations to local officials. All the parishes of England and Wales were to be clustered into unions, meaning a change of the basic unit of poor-relief administration from the former to the latter, though the cost of supporting a pauper was allocated to the parish until the Union Chargeability Act of 1865.¹ Each union was to possess a union workhouse large enough to house paupers from constituent parishes.

Secondly, we will begin looking at what implementation of the act entailed in Hampshire in terms of changes to the existing workhouse stock. There have been relentless challenges to the view that the new act succeeded in replacing local discretion with central supervision in reorganising the poor relief system, instead asserting various forms of continuity between the pre-and post-1834 periods.² In this context, this chapter will address one key element of the question of how much continuity or change the new act represented in a Hampshire context. It will demonstrate that regional experiences under the old regime had an

¹ Maurice Caplan, 'New Poor Law and the Struggle for Union Chargeability', *International Review of Social History*, 22 (1978), pp. 267-300.

² For historiography of the debate, see the introduction.

impact on the way that the new system was implemented, in that the previous matrix of workhouse provision affected the patterns of provision under the new act

7.1 The implementation process

This section will follow the stages of the implementation process, so it seems best to begin by explaining what these were. In Hampshire, Colonel Charles Ashe A'Court was in charge of supervising the implementation of the New Poor Law. He was one of the nine initial assistant commissioners appointed in October and November 1834 and was assigned the counties of Hampshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire. Born in 1785, the third son of Sir William A'Court, MP for Heytesbury in Wiltshire, he spent his childhood at Heytesbury House. As a younger son, not surprisingly, he joined the army and served in Spain, Egypt, Italy and Sicily. After leaving the army, he returned to his home. During the Swing riots of 1830, because of his military career, he was asked to control his area.³ His military background was considered an excellent qualification. Four of the assistants appointed during the first eighteen months of implementation were also former officers.⁴

³ Ian Anstruther, *The Scandal of the Andover Workhouse* (London, 1973), pp. 37-39.

⁴ Anthony Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law: The Politics of Inquiry, Enactment, and Implementation, 1832-1839* (London, 1978), pp. 82-83.

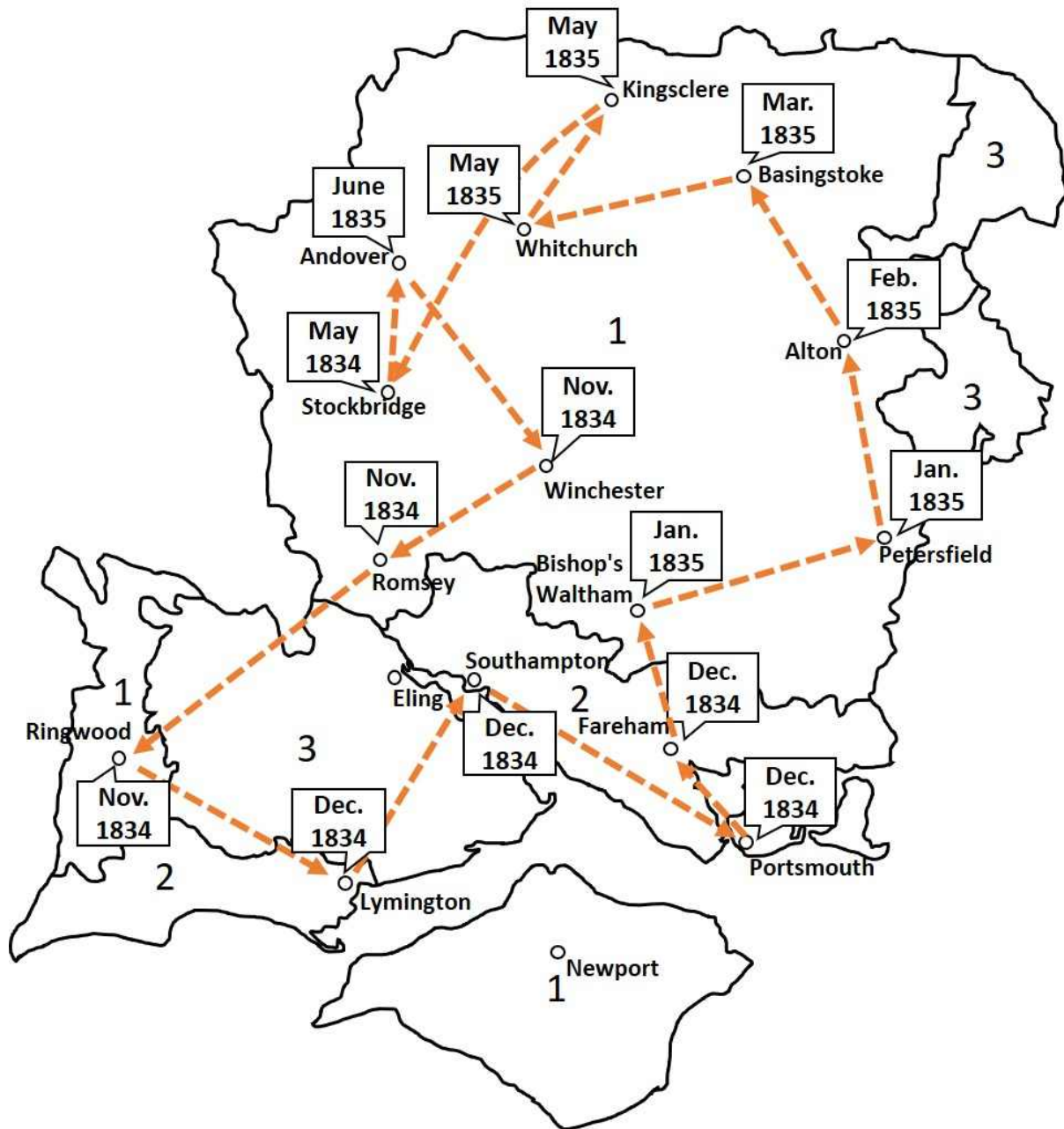


Figure 7.1 Map with A'Court's travel across Hampshire by 1835

Note: 1. Arable division, 2. Coastal division, 3. Pastoral division

Source: A'Court's correspondence and papers related to the South Eastern District, 1834-5.

Immediately after his appointment, in November 1834, A'Court started to travel around the county of Hampshire. According to the order of his notes on individual parishes and places where his letters were written, A'Court's survey trip can broadly be reconstructed as in Figure 7.1, though he visited and revisited some places off the route to discuss with local authorities in some cases and kept up constant correspondence during the trip. Starting in Winchester, the

administrative capital of Hampshire, his tour proceeded to forest regions, the Avon Valley and southern coastal areas, then passed through the central farming areas and eastern heathland surrounding the Gilbert union of Headley and ended up in the arable centre and north. In his notes on parishes, two areas, the Gilbert union of Farnborough in the northeast heathland and the Andover division, are omitted. The reason why there is no record of Farnborough and its neighbourhood throughout his volumes is, perhaps, that this area was not in A'Court's charge. Considering its location on the borderline between Hampshire and Surrey, another assistant commissioner of Surrey and Sussex, W. H. T. Hawley, was possibly responsible for this area. It is, however, uncertain why notes on parishes within the Andover division are not found in A'Court's volumes, even though he visited Andover in June 1835, so it is impossible to know how many workhouses were in the Andover division and what their condition was in 1834.

According to instructions that the Poor Law Commission gave to the assistants just prior to dispatching them, the principal task that A'Court had to perform on his initial journey was to make detailed notes about the distribution and conditions of existing workhouses across the country, to distinguish which parish workhouses were capable of becoming a New Poor Law workhouse.⁵ When the assistant commissioner found existing parish workhouses too small to fulfil the objectives of the new system, he was to turn his attention to the adjoining parishes and strive to form a union capable of supporting a new larger workhouse.⁶ At the same time, he was to find out the most practical mode of grouping parishes into unions in terms of implementing the new workhouse system smoothly.⁷ In other words, based on the results of workhouse surveys and other enquiries, decisions as to whether and where to build a new union workhouse or whether to adopt one of the existing workhouses were made, even if they were

⁵ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, TNA, MH 32/1-2.

⁶ Samantha Shave, 'Poor Law Reform and Policy Innovation in Rural Southern England, c.1780-1850' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Southampton, 2010), p. 74.

⁷ Poor Law Commission, Minute Book, 4, 6 November 1834, TNA, MH 1/1.

sometimes provisional, before setting union boundaries. As well as workhouse arrangements and union formation, there were several other issues which A'Court had to deal with: the share that each parish was to contribute to union funds based on the previous size of its relief expenditure for the past three years; the number of guardians which each parish was to be allocated on the basis of its population, the property qualification of guardians, and the time, place and manner of taking the votes for electing guardians.⁸ He visited mainly the central towns of existing petty sessional divisions and held public meetings, where he consulted local ratepayers to make arrangements for new workhouse provision and to secure their consent to union boundaries.

The First Annual Report notes that A'Court succeeded in establishing twenty-one unions in Hampshire up to 11 August 1835.⁹ The last remaining two unions, New Forest and Portsea Island unions, were declared on 29 August 1835 and 18 July 1836.¹⁰ After the initial tour in Hampshire, his focus seems to have moved on to the county of Wiltshire. According to the Second Annual Report, A'Court grouped 280 parishes in Wiltshire into 15 unions between August 1835 and October 1836.¹¹ However, he continued to be involved with Hampshire unions, attending local meetings and investigating their workhouses on a regular basis.

Hampshire unions were declared by the Poor Law Commission in a different order from that in which A'Court visited them in his initial survey tour. In March and April, seven unions in the arable division and one in the coastal division finished the process of their formation, followed by the south coast in May and northwest arable regions in June. The forest in the southwest and neighbouring areas completed their unions relatively late, in July and August,

⁸ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 23 November 1834, TNA, MH 32/1.

⁹ *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, pp. 246-248.

¹⁰ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 550.

¹¹ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, pp. 509, 558-560.

and large port towns only during the next year, 1836. Although the Poor Law Commission had the power to declare a union regardless of local consent to it under section 26 of the New Poor Law, the central authority did not recommend doing so until the assistant commissioner, in this case A'Court, was convinced that he had secured the consent of a majority of local ratepayers, so as not to leave a legacy of too much frustration and resentment.¹² Accordingly, the fact that the process of the union formation was sequential and yet did not conform to the order of visits suggests that amenability to the new regime and the issues A'Court encountered varied.

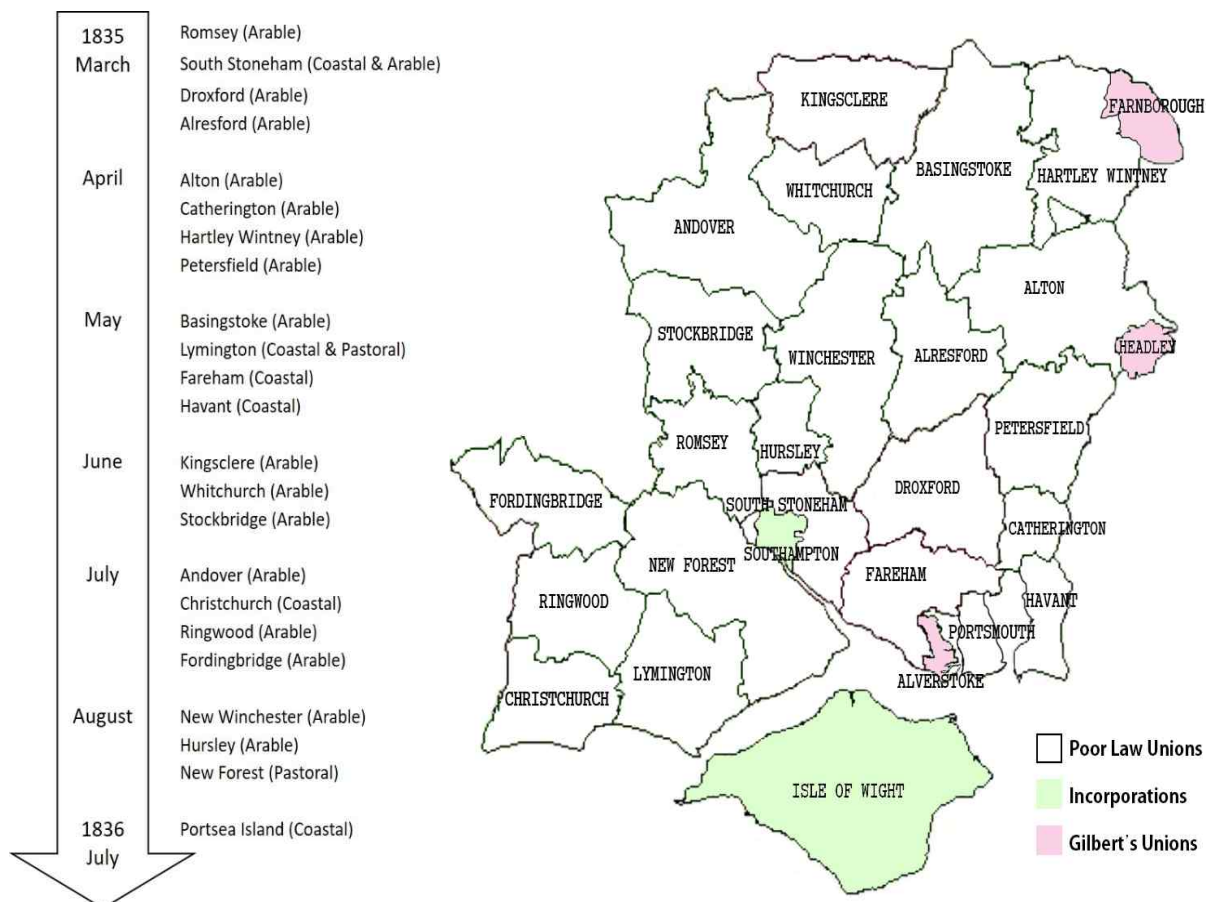


Figure 7.2 Timeline of union declarations
Source: *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, pp. 246-248, *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 550.

Figure 7.3 Poor law unions in Hampshire
Source: A part of map from Shave, 'Poor Law Reform and Policy Innovation in Rural Southern England, c.1780-1850', p. 59.

7.2 Establishing union boundaries

¹² A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 26 November 1834, TNA, MH 32/1.

For the drawing of union boundaries, the petty sessional divisions provided a basis. Under the Division of Counties Act of 1828, the county of Hampshire was broken up into fourteen sessional divisions, as shown in Figure 7.4.¹³ These divisions were employed as the framework for the investigation of local conditions carried out by A'Court in 1834 and 1835.¹⁴ At the same time, A'Court tried to establish union boundaries relatively uniformly in accordance with the general instruction from Somerset House that 'the most convenient limits of unions has [sic] been that of a circle, taking a market town as a centre, and comprehending those surrounding parishes whose inhabitants are accustomed to resort to the same market'.¹⁵ Sessional districts had presumably been drawn up on the same kind of principle, making them a good starting point. The first step that the assistant commissioner took was to consider whether the form and extent of a magisterial division might allow him to recommend the formation of one single union for the whole district. Substantial similarities between union boundaries and magisterial divisions would potentially enhance administrative expediency and minimise confusion and anxiety among local magistrates who were to act as *ex officio* guardians.¹⁶ The borderlines of the Basingstoke union, the Andover union and the Droxford union were essentially coterminous with existing petty sessional boundaries.

¹³ 9 Geo. IV. c. 43. The fourteen divisions were Alton, Andover, Basingstoke, Droxford, Fareham, Kingsclere, Lymington, Odiham, Petersfield, Ringwood, Romsey, Southampton, Winchester, and the Isle of Wight. *PP* (1832), xxxviii, *Parliamentary Representation: Further Return to an Address to His Majesty, Dated 12 December 1831*, pp. 205-208.

¹⁴ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 1834, TNA, MH 32/1; A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 1835, TNA, MH 32/2.

¹⁵ *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (London, 1835), p. 12.

¹⁶ Song, 'Continuity', pp. 336-338.



Figure 7.4 Map of Quarter Sessional Divisions in 1835, Hampshire
 Source: Map of Hampshire, by John and Charles Walker, 1835, HRO, 139M90/59/1.

However, there were divergences. Some divisions were subdivided to make unions. The main cause was the distance from constituent parishes to a central town, normally possessing a union workhouse and serving as an assembly point for weekly guardian meetings. If a parish was too far from the union centre, there was a danger that its representative guardians would find it troublesome to attend weekly meetings.¹⁷ Here one might want to ask a question: why was distance not an issue for petty sessional division but for poor law unions? It was probably because the unions held a meeting every week on a regular basis, while petty sessions

¹⁷ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 11 May 1835, TNA, MH 32/2; Song, 'Continuity', p. 331.

were held less frequently, depending on local conditions; also that guardians attending the weekly meetings came from middling-sort farmers or tradesmen, who were likely to be more conscious of travel time and costs and thus more sensitive to distance than gentry magistrates presiding over petty sessions. The process of forming the Alresford union was typical of the subdivision of petty sessional divisions. Despite his initial intention of creating a larger union in Alton sessional division, including its two centres, Alton and New Alresford, A'Court soon realised that the distance of more than ten miles between Alton and New Alresford presented a serious obstacle. New Alresford was, therefore, selected as the centre of a new union, which was to include some neighbouring parishes belonging to the petty sessional divisions of Alton, Droxford and Winchester. These parishes were all closer to New Alresford than to the centres of the three adjoining unions.¹⁸ The resulting Alresford union was located in the midst of the Alton, the Droxford and the New Winchester unions.

A combination of using petty sessional divisions and taking into account travelling distances meant that union formation did not start with a blank slate, but especially when changes were to be made, it was still essential to obtain agreement at the parish level to the proposed union boundaries.

The social context for persuasion differed by region. In the arable division, where power was more likely to be concentrated in the hands of one or two, or at most a handful of large landowners, A'Court's main concern was to consult and persuade them. Accordingly, he needed a comprehensive insight into the current situation and a sophisticated negotiating technique.¹⁹ In chalking out the Whitchurch Union, he realised that William Portal, a most

¹⁸ Alton Union Correspondence, 12 February 1835, TNA, MH 12/10625.

¹⁹ In his work, Anthony Brundage presents many examples of consultations between local magnates and assistant commissioners in setting up unions in the Midlands. Brundage, *Making*, pp. 105-112.

influential proprietor in this district, could in no way be conciliated.²⁰ At first, Portal opposed any intervention of the Poor Law Commissioners. After much persuasion, he abandoned this very general opposition but still continued to protest in relation to the parish of Laverstoke, which was under his direct control. As Portal, now eighty-three years old, clung to his aversion to including this parish in a union proposed by the central authority, A'Court judged that it was courteous and politic to defer to this old man's opinion, even if faulty in principle. Leaving Laverstoke unattached induced Portal no longer to oppose action in other neighbouring parishes, making possible the formation of the Whitchurch Union. As A'Court mentioned, his endeavour to meet the local magnate's wishes gained him many friends in this district whose assistance made it possible to carry the proposed union to a successful issue.²¹ Once he was able to report the consent of Portal at a public meeting, no one seems to have complained further, and follow-up discussions regarding the election of guardians and workhouse establishment commenced in earnest. To sum up, in the agricultural areas of the north, it was essential for the stable settlement of the new relief administration to demonstrate to a few privileged people that no significant damage to their grip on their deferential communities would follow from the reform.

However, some landlords were unusually intransigent, so that A'Court also had to grant other concessions. For example, the Catherington union and the Hursley union (both carved out of larger petty sessional divisions) were exceptionally small because A'Court agreed under pressure that their boundaries should follow the landholding patterns of large local landlords.²² Sir Jervoise Clarke-Jervoise had inherited the 8,000-acre Idsworth Park, comprising nearly the

²⁰ In 1711, Henri Portal, a Huguenot refugee, set up business as a paper maker at Laverstoke with the support of Sir William Heathcote. His son, Joseph Portal, purchased the Laverstoke estate in 1759, which was inherited by Joseph's first son, Harry, who died unmarried in 1801. Harry Portal's heir was his brother William. When Melville Porter succeeded to this estate in 1848, it covered 10,500 acres. Foster, *Politics*, p. 10.

²¹ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 11 May 1835, TNA, MH 32/2.

²² Catherington Union Correspondence, 26 February 1835, TNA, MH 12/10701; A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 19 November 1834, TNA, MH 32/1.

whole of the parishes of Blendworth, Catherington, Charlton, Clanfield, and Idsworth, of which the Catherington union was to consist. He conferred actively with A'Court in determining the boundaries of the Union.²³ In the case of the Hursley Union, Sir William Heathcote of Hursley Park was a key figure in establishing the Union, playing the same role as Clarke-Jervoise in Catherington.²⁴ Heathcote even became the first chairman of the board of guardians.²⁵

By contrast, in the pastoral and coastal divisions with fewer dominant figures, A'Court had to rely on persuading middle-class ratepayers in public meetings.²⁶ As he had to face and deal with diverse interests in person, the process of negotiation tended to be more complex and time-consuming. This helps to explain why the New Forest union and the Portsea Island union were completed at the very end. In these districts, when encountering strong objections, rather than having a private consultation with a minority of men of power, A'Court had to participate in open meetings to grasp diverse opinions and complaints of different types of interests on the forming of a union.

Some public meetings held to discuss the making of a union incorporating pastoral and/or coastal parishes revealed that their ratepayers bitterly opposed combining with neighbouring parishes. Among vivid examples were the coastal towns of Lymington and Portsmouth. The level of protest came to be so strong that, in both towns, petitions signed by lesser ratepayers, mainly petty tradesmen and artisans, were written and sent to the Poor Law Commission.²⁷ Lymington saw vehement opposition from a large number of ratepayers to a

²³ Catherington Union Correspondence, 26 February 1835, TNA, MH 12/10701.

²⁴ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 19 November 1834, TNA, MH 32/1.

²⁵ *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (London, 1837), p. 120.

²⁶ Dunkley, 'Landed', pp. 840-841; Angela Miller finds that large landowners had little effect on the forming of unions in Suffolk as a whole. Angela Miller, 'The Introduction and Operation of the New Poor Law in Suffolk 1834-70' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Essex, 2020), pp. 71-72.

²⁷ Lymington Union Correspondence, 17 April 1835, TNA, MH 12/10865; Portsea Island Union Correspondence, 24 May 1836, TNA, MH 12/10916.

proposed union with poorer and less governable forest parishes nearby. The signatories to the Lymington petition stated that an extra burden would be passed on from the neighbouring parishes to their parish if the proposed union with them was formed.²⁸ In order to complete the union, A'Court attended a meeting on 23 April 1835 to communicate directly with a corps of the ratepayers in an open hall. He tried to bring those present in person around to the proposed union but was instead humiliated by them, including by John Templer, an opulent grocer in Lymington, possessing considerable influence, who made coarse and mischievous remarks about the New Poor Law and interrupted A'Court's statement persistently until the meeting was dismissed.²⁹ Similarly, a union was proposed to consist of the parishes of Portsmouth and Portsea, but the former, less populated, did not want to be associated with the latter, more populous and disorderly.³⁰ In contrast to Portsmouth, an enclave within Portsea, Portsea was expanding its boundaries, increasing both inhabitants and buildings. As a result, a considerable augmentation of pauperism in Portsea seemed bound to ensue. Petitioners from Portsmouth insisted that their parish would, on the average of one-fifth, incur an amount of expense greater than it ought to bear if left to manage its own concern, whilst Portsea would be relieved to a remarkable extent at the cost of Portsmouth.³¹

However, despite this stubborn resistance, the zealous assistant commissioner made ceaseless efforts to clarify the anticipated benefits from a union. As he presented it, combined management of poor relief within a union would definitely be efficient and economical, given that experience across the country clearly indicated that a large diminution of pauperism in constituent parishes followed the completion of unions. At the same time, the relatively decent towns should not be concerned about how much pauperism was increasing in the poor

²⁸ Lymington Union Correspondence, 17 March 1836, TNA, MH 12/10865.

²⁹ Lymington Union Correspondence, 23 April 1835, TNA, MH 12/10865.

³⁰ Portsea Island Union Correspondence, 18 May 1836, TNA, MH 12/10916.

³¹ Portsea Island Union Correspondence, 25 May 1836, TNA, MH 12/10916.

adjoining parishes, as each parish still needed to bear the expense of its own paupers: it was only facilities and management that were to become common.³² To sum up, in order to win the consent of cost-conscious ratepayers, A'Court stressed the economic advantages that would follow from combined management with common standards.

7.3 Constitution of boards of guardians

Once union boundaries were fixed, the next step was to constitute boards of guardians to take charge of the administration of the union. This board was to consist of *ex officio* guardians from Justices of the Peace including major landlords, businessmen and clergies who formed the county elite, and elected guardians representing the ratepayers of individual parishes (every parish was to have at least one guardian). However, before a union was declared, a couple of fundamental principles had to be determined: what the property qualification of guardians should be and how guardians should be allocated to each parish. Although section 38 of the New Poor Law prescribed an annual rental of £40 as the minimum qualification of guardians, the Poor Law Commissioners thought it too high for some unions, so it was often necessary to adjust the qualification through an inspection of local rate books and by consulting with local ratepayers. They advised A'Court that for a less wealthy union, including forest parishes surrounding Minstead and Lyndhurst, it was desirable to fix a lower qualification for fear that there should not be a sufficient number of persons eligible for the office.³³

The number of guardians allocated to each parish seems to have been roughly based on population. The New Poor Law had, though, failed to set clear criteria to determine what was a fair number, just stating that each parish was to elect at least one. An order which the Poor

³² Portsea Island Union Correspondence, 18 May 1836, TNA, MH 12/10916.

³³ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 10 November 1834, TNA, MH 32/1.

Law Commissioners sent to A'Court indicates, however, that the board should not be inconveniently numerous.³⁴ The effect was that agricultural parishes tended to be overrepresented and populous market towns underrepresented.³⁵ For example, the most populous of thirty-seven parishes in the Basingstoke union was the market town of Basingstoke, with 3,581 inhabitants in 1831, to which only four guardians were assigned (one in every 895), while the remaining rural parishes with a total population of 11,898 were represented by thirty-seven guardians (one in every 322).³⁶ If the market parish had been given a proportionate number of guardians according to the population, they should have had nine or ten guardians, approximately 25 per cent of the total number. Nassau Senior, a leading member of the Poor Law Inquiry Commission of 1832, had already recognised the problem and tried to delete the proviso that every parish should have at least one guardian, but he failed. It was, of course, in the interest of rural landlords that populous urban parishes should be swamped by rural parishes and underrepresented in boards of guardians. They probably regarded this as an efficient instrument to restrain the advance of tradesmen out of their control in relation to poor relief administration.³⁷

In the case of the Portsea Island union in the coastal division, A'Court had to use his ingenuity in allocating guardians. The two parishes of Portsea and Portsmouth were grouped together in the union, the last one in Hampshire to be agreed. From the outset, the parish of Portsmouth was reluctant to associate with the far more populous and disorderly Portsea. It was well known that because of the massive population of Portsea, six times more than that of Portsmouth, there would be a significant difference in the number of guardians, such that

³⁴ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 10 November 1834, TNA, MH 32/1. In this order, the Poor Law Commissioners suggest that 'twelve guardians is quite a sufficiently large body for all useful purposes', although most of the Hampshire unions had far more than twelve guardians.

³⁵ Brundage, 'Landed', pp. 27-48; Brundage, 'Reply', pp. 42-43.

³⁶ *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 247.

³⁷ Brundage, 'Landed', pp. 33-34.

Portsmouth would have less power at board meetings. Because Portsmouth was wealthier and had a record of higher spending, it would be likely to contribute more to joint expenses; if Portsmouth's representatives were greatly outnumbered by Portsea representatives, they would have difficulty controlling expenditure. In effect, Portsea would be able to spend Portsmouth's money. To appease Portsmouth's discontent, A'Court had to allot guardianships, not on the basis of population but borough rates. Portsea still had more guardians, but now only fourteen to Portsmouth's seven.³⁸

The pastoral division to the west was covered by two unions: the New Forest union and the Lymington Union. However, forest parishes were predominant only in the New Forest Union.³⁹ In this union, apart from five out of a total of seventeen guardians allocated to Eling, a satellite town of Southampton, the remaining twelve guardians all represented forest parishes. The Lymington union was split approximately in half between southern coastal parishes and New Forest parishes, seven guardians being allocated to the former and five to the latter. The distribution of guardians in these two unions was relatively fair on the basis of population, with one guardian per thousand. The forest parishes in the Lymington Union, which had around 38 per cent of the population, had about 40 per cent of guardians; those in the New Forest Union, which accounted for 60 per cent of population, occupied 70 per cent of guardian seats.⁴⁰

7.4 Election of guardians, the appointment of chairmen and inclinations of boards

As soon as a union was declared, A'Court announced the date of the election of guardians, and churchwardens and overseers of each parish affixed the notice to the principal doors and boards. Elections of guardians were held annually at the end of March. In arable unions, there were few cases of contested elections, and elected guardians consisted of a

³⁸ Portsea Island Union Correspondence, 18, 21, 24 May 1836, TNA, MH 12/10916.

³⁹ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 550.

⁴⁰ *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 247.

majority of farmers or gentry representing rural parishes and a minority of tradesmen and professionals from market-town parishes. For instance, there were twenty-four elected guardians for the Andover Union, out of which the three representing the town of Andover were a banker, a land surveyor and an innkeeper, all the rest were classified as ‘yeoman’ or ‘gentlemen’.⁴¹ By contrast, in the Portsea Island union in the coastal division, the elections were contentious, as we shall see below, and the composition of the guardians was different. In 1839 when the Portsea Island union minute book started, out of twenty-one elected guardians, except for two gentlemen, all were categorised as professionals or businessmen.⁴² In forest areas, due to a lack of the early records for the New Forest and Lymington unions, it is impossible to clarify the backgrounds of the people chosen to serve as guardians in the 1830s.

Just as the composition of boards of guardians was different by region, so also there was diversity in their culture, as is suggested by who was appointed as chairmen of boards and by what process they were selected. The chairman’s position was key since he not only presided over the meetings of guardians but also had a casting vote when votes were equally divided upon any question.⁴³ In arable unions, chairmen who are listed in the *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* were usually drawn from among magistrates or major farmers.⁴⁴ In the cases of the Andover union and the Basingstoke Union, both of which selected a magistrate as a chairman, other magistrates serving as *ex officio* guardians took the lead in shaping this selection and then, once they had achieved this goal, tended to withdraw from

⁴¹ Andover Union Correspondence, 25 March 1841, TNA, MH 12/10661. In her doctoral thesis, Karen Rothery indicates that the board of guardians in the rural union of Hitchin, Hertfordshire, was dominated by those involved in farming. Karen Rothery, ‘The Implementation and Administration of the New Poor Law in Hertfordshire c1830-1847’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2016), p. 155.

⁴² Portsea Island Union Minute book of Board of Guardians 27 March 1839, Portsmouth City Record Office BG/M1/1. Another urban board in large towns such as Birmingham was also occupied by men from a commercial and manufacturing background. Paul Tolley, ‘The Birmingham, Aston and Kings Norton Boards of Guardians and the politics and administration of the Poor Law, 1836-1912’ (Ph.D. thesis, De Montfort University, 1994), pp. 159-164.

⁴³ *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 48.

⁴⁴ *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 120.

union business.⁴⁵ In other words, the main interest of the *ex officio* magistrate guardians seems to have been to plant someone whom they could see as representing their point of view in a commanding position on the boards.⁴⁶ However, in another union in the arable division, Droxford, the attendance rate of the *ex officio* members was extremely low from the beginning, leading to a farmer-dominated union and the election of a wealthy farmer as chair. The farmer chairman, R. H. Stares, believed that a reason for the non-attendance of the *ex officio* guardians was that the magistrates in this district did not like the power of ordering relief being taken out of their hands.⁴⁷ When a select committee formed to investigate the operation of the New Poor Law asked him whether it would have been better to elect one of the magistrates as chair to increase their interest in poor law administration, he answered that farmers would not have attended the board.⁴⁸ This reflected a local tradition of conflict and enmity between generous magistrates and frugal middling-sort farmers who had worked as overseers under the Old Poor Law. Notwithstanding their different backgrounds, all the chairmen of unions in the arable division seem to have been sympathetic to New Poor Law principles, curtailing the rights which paupers had enjoyed and highlighting the deterrent function of union workhouses.⁴⁹ This attitude on the part of the chairmen must have contributed to steering poor relief administration in the arable division away from 'paternalism' into 'liberalism' in the words of Mandler, which (as we shall see) was what now happened.

In the large coastal towns of Portsmouth and Portsea, magistrates were powerful and affluent men, more interested in voluntary charitable activity than in formal poor relief

⁴⁵ Andover Union Minute Book, 4 April 1836, HRO, PL3/4/7; Basingstoke Union Minute Book, 2 April 1836, HRO, PL3/5/1.

⁴⁶ Digby, 'Rural', p. 153.

⁴⁷ *PP* (1837-38), xviii, *Fourth Report from Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act with the Minutes of Evidence*, p. 39.

⁴⁸ *PP* (1837-38), xviii, p. 46.

⁴⁹ Mandler, 'Tories', pp. 81-103; W. L. Selater, *A letter to the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales on the working or the new system* (Basingstoke, 1836).

administration. The board was effectively occupied by small traders, petty producers and dockyard officials.⁵⁰ Because the board offered a great opportunity to take leadership on the part of those who had been excluded from closed leading groups, elections to the board were highly contentious and politicised to such an extent that the chairman changed every year, whereas the chairmen of the Andover Union and the Basingstoke Union held their post for decades. In the first Portsea Island election of guardians in 1836, a Tory board took shape and selected Revd. Edmund Dewdney as the chairman. He seems to have taken a critical view of the new plan, maintaining that the interference of magistrates was still necessary and doubting that the offer of a place in the union workhouse should be employed as a test of destitution.⁵¹ In the next election in 1837, a majority of places on the board were won by the Liberals led by Joseph Oates Travers, who became the next chairman; the more radical Edward Casher succeeded him in 1838. The Tory Dewdney, having been ousted, started to write to the newspapers to complain about the new board of guardians and its administration. In response, Travers and Casher also used local newspapers to refute the angry curate's arguments, and a pamphlet war broke out. Interestingly, in the course of this, it was revealed that even the liberal and radical guardians had reservations about the intentions of the New Poor Law, particularly in relation to the new union workhouse. They claimed that since the New Poor Law was merely an 'experiment', it was necessary to wait and see until it was ascertained whether the workings of the act were for good or for bad, based on a rational scientific inquiry.⁵²

In the New Forest Union, the only union containing a majority of forest parishes, the scarcity of early records makes it impossible to learn much about how the board of guardians was constituted or who led the decision-making processes initially. All we know is who was

⁵⁰ Field, 'Bourgeois', pp. 461-462.

⁵¹ *PP* (1837), xvii, *Ninth Report from Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act with the Minutes of Evidence*, pp. 13-16.

⁵² *Hampshire Telegraph*, 13 August 1838.

elected as the first chairman. According to the annual reports of the Poor Law Commission, this was Rev. W. J. G. Philips, vicar of Eling. I have not discovered any evidence of his inclinations towards the New Poor Law system. The absence of early records may well reflect the difficulty experienced in settling the new regime down. In this context, notes made by a workhouse chaplain on the workhouse provision and profiles of workhouse inmates of the New Forest Union are particularly valuable. They support my hypothesis about the delay.⁵³

7.5 Appointing a union workhouse

Workhouse issues such as its capacity and design affected the constitution of a union in a more substantial sense.⁵⁴ The case of South Stoneham demonstrated the possibility of matching workhouse capacity to the union boundaries. However, when the assistant commissioner floated the idea that there should be a union with South Stoneham parish as its centre, he faced strong protests from the parish, which wished to continue with the existing arrangement whereby it maintained its paupers under Gilbert's Act in a big workhouse capable of holding 150 people; local residents saw no advantage in being incorporated into a New Poor Law union.⁵⁵ At a meeting held on 18 December 1834, the view was expressed not only that the proposed union could be injurious to the interests of the parish but also that the workhouse was adequate to accommodating the poor of South Stoneham. Rapid population growth in neighbouring parishes would have made it necessary substantially to enlarge the house if their paupers were also to be received. In fact, between 1801 and 1841, the population of the parishes forming the South Stoneham union exhibited the steepest upward trend among Hampshire

⁵³ Herbert Smith, *A Letter to the People of England in Behalf of the Deserving Poor* (London, 1838); *An Account of a Union Chaplaincy, Containing Extracts from the Chaplain's Book* (London, 1839).

⁵⁴ In Norfolk and Suffolk, where large institutions in the form of incorporated houses of industry and Gilbert union houses had already existed, the abundant accommodation had an impact on the union formation. Oxfordshire also watched workhouses influencing the size of unions, although marginally in most cases. Digby, 'Rural', pp. 150-151; Song, 'Continuity', p. 355; Miller, 'Introduction', pp. 69-70.

⁵⁵ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 1835, TNA, MH 32/2.

unions, increasing dramatically from 6,074 to 12,693, over 100 per cent, because most of them, representing outer suburbs of Southampton, had a large number of residents who had moved outwards from the big port town.⁵⁶ The population of the parish of South Stoneham also increased sharply during this period, by nearly 150 per cent, from 1,255 to 3,122. The debates finally led to a compromise whereby a union was formed, but Durley, a border parish, was transferred from the proposed South Stoneham union to the Droxford union.⁵⁷

A provisional decision about whether to keep using an existing workhouse with alterations and enlargements or to build a new workhouse in each case was made during A'Court's initial survey. At the very first public meeting in Winchester on 15 November, the main topic was the workhouse; in this case, A'Court suggested that without considerable alteration or rebuilding, the present building could not provide the advantages available under the New Poor Law.⁵⁸ Thereafter, there were unremitting discussions about workhouse issues between A'Court and local authorities. The discussions were divided into three stages. First of all, they had to decide whether to build a new workhouse or continue to use an old workhouse. Then secondly, if they resolved to erect a new one, it was necessary to set the share that each parish should contribute to building costs, whereas if, conversely, they chose to keep using an old one, they had to find a reasonable way of compensating the parish which possessed the old workhouse for its prior investment. The last issue was how to handle other parish workhouses not required for union purposes. A'Court usually granted individual parishes discretion as to what they did with workhouses not selected for use in the new system, and most of the workhouses were sold off to meet parish contributions to union funds or building costs, while

⁵⁶ Shave, 'Poor', p. 60.

⁵⁷ South Stoneham Union Correspondence, 1835, MH 12/11035; Digby, 'Rural', pp.150-151; Song, 'Continuity', pp. 336-338.

⁵⁸ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 17 November 1834; A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 15 November 1834, TNA, MH 32/1.

a few were assigned a special purpose, mostly housing the young, the old and the infirm since, in principle, union workhouses should accommodate only able-bodied paupers. Lymington, for instance, decided to retain its old workhouse until a new workhouse was erected and made suitable for the reception of paupers. Later, it was also resolved that the old house should remain in operation as an asylum for the aged and infirm only.⁵⁹ Before unions were declared, at least the first phase (whether to build a new workhouse) had usually been completed, even if the second and third phases (consequences of that decision) had to wait for the decision of newly created boards of guardians. As a result, in September 1835, immediately after the formation of all twenty-two unions in Hampshire had been accomplished (except the Portsea Island Union, which was formed the next year), A'Court was able to report the outcomes of the first phase to the Poor Law Commissioners. In this report, he noted that twelve unions would maintain an old workhouse with alterations, while the other nine unions would erect a new workhouse; only the New Forest union was still in discussion.⁶⁰ The proportion of Hampshire unions building a new workhouse was low compared to the national average. According to the *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* of 1836, out of reported 205 unions, 127 unions (62%) were to erect a new workhouse.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Lymington Union Correspondence, 11 January, 22 May 1835, TNA, MH 12/10865.

⁶⁰ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 17 September 1835, TNA, MH 32/2.

⁶¹ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, pp. 567-569.

Table 7.1 Distribution and capacity of workhouses and ratio of capacity to population

Divisions	Workhouse Decision	Unions	No. of parish ^a	No. of workhouses in unions by 1834 ^b	Capacity of workhouse in central towns ^b	Union Population in 1831 ^a
Arable	Old workhouse	Alton	19	5	110	10,342
		Catherington	5	1	50	1,950
		Fordingbridge	9	1	104	5,567
		Hartley Wintney	13	3	100	9,830
		Hursley	5	2	49	2,718
		Kingsclere	15	1	42	7,885
		Ringwood	5	1	120	4,907
		Romsey	12	3	140	9,969
		Whitchurch	7	2	60	5,175
	New workhouse	Alresford	18	1	50	6,971
		Andover	32	1	No info	16,481
		Basingstoke	37	1	70	15,479
		Droxford	11	5	50	9,549
		New Winchester	32	3	150	16,807
		Petersfield	13	3	70	7,111
Stockbridge		15	0	0	6,552	
Coastal	Old workhouse	Christchurch	3	2	120	7,089
		Havant	6	2	100	6,398
		South Stoneham	9	5	150	9,447
		Portsea Island	2	2	840	50,389
	New workhouse	Fareham	9	3	No info	12,137
		Lymington	6	6	100	9,501
Pastoral	New workhouse	New Forest	8	4	80	11,613

a. The data from the First and Second Annual Reports of Poor Law Commission

b. The data from notes made by A'Court (A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 1834 and 1835, TNA, MH 32/1-2)

* To gloss what is meant when the table says 'no info', Andover division was totally omitted from his notes, while the central town of Fareham had a workhouse, his notes report, but there is no mention of its capacity

What was then the chief determinant of this decision? In the first place, the workhouse capacity was crucial and determinative in the decision-making process. A'Court had a high opinion of a workhouse in Alton parish, remarking that it was not merely a most convenient building containing nearly 150 now, but well-constructed for enlargement, so with a minor alteration costing only £600 or 700, its capacity could increase to 300. Given that the Alton vestry objected to the use of the workhouse, which had been built at parish expense, for the general purposes of the union, A'Court had to organise adequate remuneration for the parish.

Having done this, he was able to fulfil his wish to adopt the old workhouse.⁶² A workhouse in Catherington parish was also chosen to be retained, though A’Court described it as inconvenient with regard to situation and arrangement and scarcely admitting the possibility of alteration. Despite its deficiency, he maintained that with a small addition, the parish workhouse would be commodious enough for the five small parishes which were to be included in the exceptionally small Catherington Union, all belonging to the same proprietor, Sir Samuel Jervoise.⁶³ This suggests that A’Court was prepared to revisit his initial judgements, taking into account capacity proportionate to population and other circumstances.

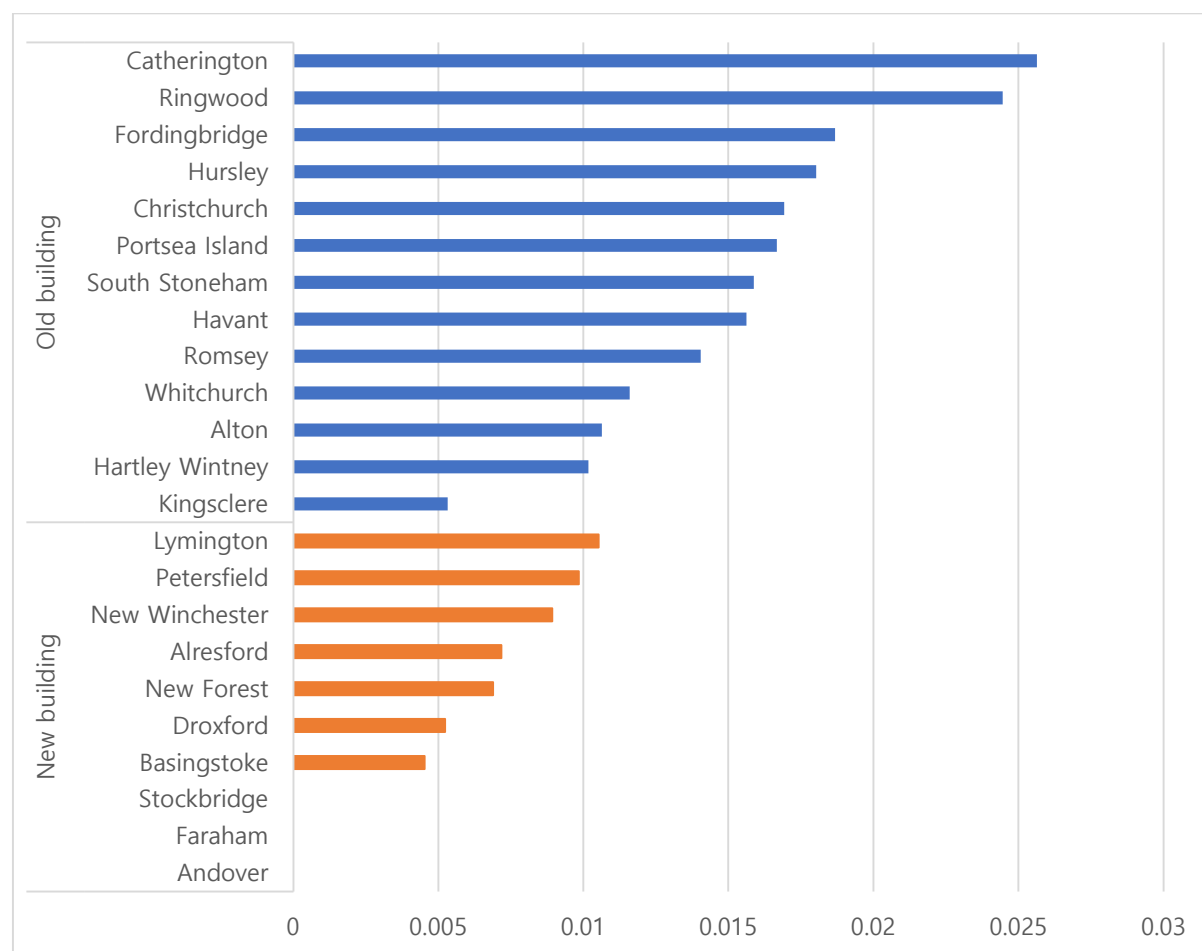


Figure 7.5 Ratio of capacity of previously existing workhouses in central towns to population of unions

Sources: For capacity, A’Court’s Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 1834; A’Court’s Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 1835; Basingstoke

⁶² Alton Union Correspondence, 12 and 25 February 1835, TNA, MH 12/10625.

⁶³ A’Court’s Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 3 February 1835, TNA, MH 32/2.

Union Correspondence, 1835; Hartley Wintney Union Correspondence, 1835. For population, the 1831 census.

The importance of workhouse capacity proportionate to a population in making decisions seems to be convincingly demonstrated in Figure 7.5. The graph displays ratios of the capacity of existing workhouses in central towns, that is, those workhouses which were the most obvious candidates to become a union workhouse – to the total population of each union. Interestingly, the pattern of the graph seems clear. The figure of 0.01 can be seen as a tipping point, largely determining the decision whether to build a new workhouse or alter an old one. That is to say, when the old workhouse had the capacity to hold 1 per cent of the total population of the union, it was likely that it would be adopted as the basis for the union workhouse. Only in Kingsclere was a smaller workhouse adopted as the base, and this proved to be a mistake: the Kingsclere union was never satisfied with the insufficient space of its workhouse and later invested as much as £4,225 to enlarge the existing building.⁶⁴ As Figure 7.6 shows, this sum was the largest spent among the unions altering or enlarging an old building, nearly equal to the cost of erecting a new workhouse.

⁶⁴ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 569.

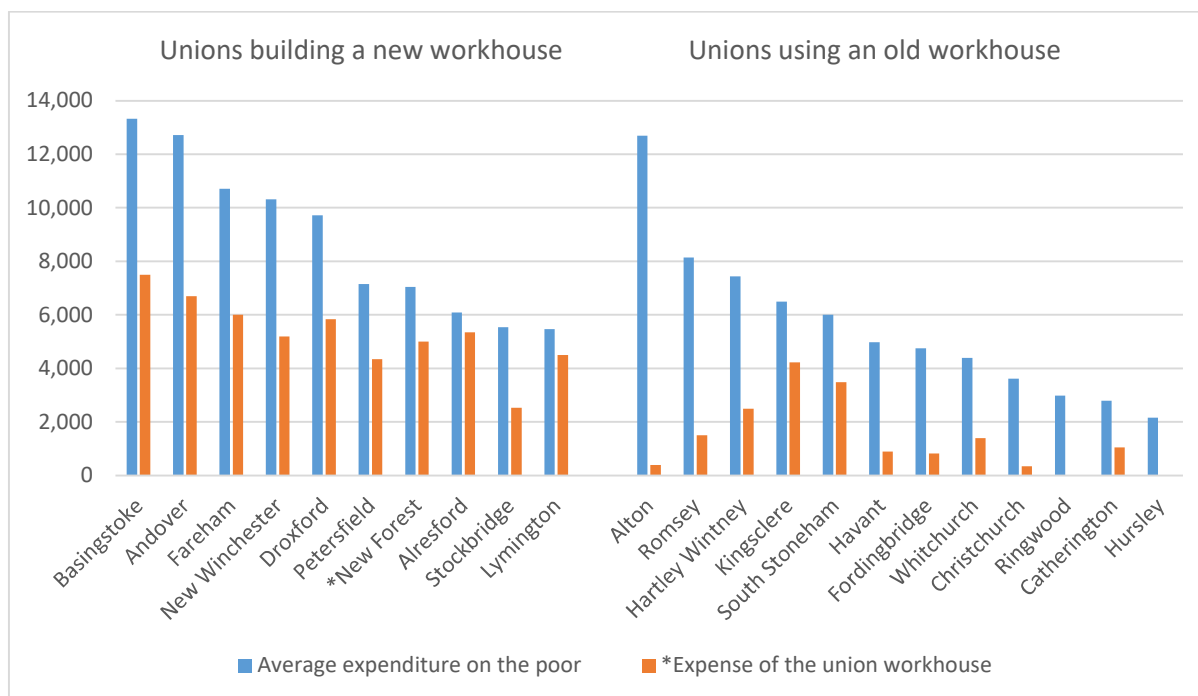


Figure 7.6 Average expenditure on the poor from 1832 to 1835 and expense of the union workhouse

*The average expenditure of the New Forest is from 1833 to 1835.

*The amount was officially sanctioned by the Exchequer Bill Loan Commission. Thus, it is possible that the figures may misrepresent or underestimate the actual workhouse expense since a local union could incur extra expenditure on the workhouse out of the rates without central sanction.

Source: For the expenditure, *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, pp. 246-248; *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 550; for the expense of the union workhouse, *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, pp. 123-125; *Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, pp. 195-198.

Cost considerations may also have played a part. Given that annual relief expenditure could be regarded as an indicator of the amount of resources available to each union with no more than accustomed strain, the statistics of average relief expenditure provided an important reference point for those making a decision about a union workhouse: the more money that was expected to be available, the easier it was for guardians to proceed ambitiously. At first glance at Figure 7.6, there appears to have been a break-point in the scale of relief expenditure between the unions which built new workhouses and the ones that retained old workhouses, even though it is not as clear as in the previous graph. Every union spending over £9,000 on the paupers on an annual basis between 1832 to 1835, apart from the Alton Union, decided to erect a new union workhouse, while all the seven unions expending less than £5,000 decided

to keep the old workhouse with enlargements or alterations. Taking both the issues of cost and capacity into account, a high-spending union without a workhouse big enough to cope with the union population was likely to resolve to construct a new union workhouse.

In this context, nine unions in the middle, with expenditure from £5,000 to £9,000, merit more attention since their decisions were nearly evenly split, four deciding to retain an old workhouse and five to build a new one. Why did they choose differently, in spite of their similar expenditure levels? Although discussions about the workhouse tended to be fiercer here than in high and low-spending counterparts, ultimately, workhouse capacity was the major determinant. In the case of the South Stoneham Union, which figures in this group, the workhouse comfortably exceeded the cut-off point of 0.01, so it is not surprising that the decision to keep an old workhouse was made. A'Court judged an old workhouse in South Stoneham parish sufficiently adaptable for the New Poor Law system because, in his view, it was now able to contain some 150, and with only minor enlargement, the accommodation could be doubled.⁶⁵ But a history of relatively low past spending made inhabitants of South Stoneham parish reluctant to undertake even the relatively minor new building work entailed. As we have seen, some principal ratepayers in this parish who had already been involved in relief administration insisted that the enlargement of the house for the purpose of receiving the paupers from six additional parishes, many of which are very populous and rapidly increasing, would be attended with considerable expense, which would be a heavy burden on the ratepayers. A'Court had to promise to protect their interests by guaranteeing the payment of an annual rent of £50 to the parish from union funds.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 14 December 1834, TNA, MH 32/1.

⁶⁶ South Stonham Union Correspondence, 18 December and 27 March 1835, HRO, MH12/11035; South Stonham Workhouse Committee Book, 18 December 1834 and 19 March 1835, SAO, PR9/4/2.



Figure 7.7 The locations of Hampshire workhouses after 1834 (Red circle – the unions building new workhouses, Blue circle – ones taking existing workhouses, Yellow circle – ones still under local acts or Gilbert’s Act)

Putting these considerations together helps us to see why, out of ten new union workhouses built in the second half of the 1830s, seven were located in the arable division. For in this division, as previous chapters have indicated, under the Old Poor Law, the scale of relief payment was larger, and workhouses were scarcer relative to population than in forest and heathland regions and big port towns. However, we should also note that two new workhouses were set up in the New Forest, where, by comparison with the arable division, relief provision had been mean, and workhouses prevalent before 1834.

The Lyminster union covering a part of the forest but also the coastal town of Lyminster, in fact, constituted a peculiar case because, among the unions building a new workhouse, it was both the only one whose existing central workhouse was capable of housing more than 1 per cent of the union population, and it spent less on poor relief than any other of

the unions in the group spending between £5,000 and £9,000 – less than many unions which (presumably with an eye to the economy) retained old workhouses. In terms of the patterns that we have identified, the union should not have resolved to build a new workhouse, but it did. It is, therefore, not surprising that the decision provoked sporadic resistance. The forest parish of Boldre, which had a great number of smallholders, was so aggressively averse to the establishment of a new workhouse at great expense that it refused to join the Lymington Union.⁶⁷ The parish of Lymington itself also witnessed a stubborn backlash mainly from middle-class ratepayers such as petty tradesmen. The protesters sent a petition to the Poor Law Commissioners, stating that the erection of a new union workhouse would be fruitless.⁶⁸ These significant protests on the part of lesser ratepayers underlines something that we have already noted, namely that, whatever may have been the case in arable parishes, in coastal and forest and heathland parishes, it was not straightforward for larger proprietors to sew things up. However, despite the widespread hostility, A’Court sanguinely predicted that once the union was declared, all difficulties and asperities would be overcome. What allowed him to be optimistic was not only his belief that gentlemen ‘of property, character, influence and education’ were in favour of the union system and the erection of a new union workhouse, but also because there were multiple parish workhouses in the forest and coastal areas.⁶⁹ According to Table 7.1, the Lymington union and the New Forest union possessed six and four parish workhouses, which meant that every constituent parish of the former and half of the latter had their own workhouses. The density of parish workhouses in these two unions was incomparably higher than in the other unions. A’Court drew this to the attention of the Poor Law Commissioners. In reply, they ordered that parishes which were to constitute the Lymington union should be permitted to dispose of their old workhouses to cover their share of the expense

⁶⁷ Lymington Union Correspondence, 19, 22, and 26 January 1835, TNA, MH 12/10865.

⁶⁸ Lymington Union Correspondence, 17 March 1835, TNA, MH 12/10865.

⁶⁹ Lymington Union Correspondence, 17 April 1835, TNA, MH 12/10865.

of a new workhouse.⁷⁰ Starting with Brockenhurst workhouse, several parish workhouses were accordingly sold off.⁷¹ The fact that these workhouses could be sold, and the proceeds used towards the cost of a new workhouse, in all likelihood, facilitated the decision to erect a new union workhouse, which one might not otherwise have expected given traditionally low expenditure levels.

7.6 Incorporations and Gilbert unions

There were areas not incorporated into a New Poor Law union. The *Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* reveals that there were, across the country at that point still 375 parishes under local acts of incorporation and 283 parishes under Gilbert's Act.⁷² The population of the areas incorporated under local acts (1,517,006) and Gilbert's Act (198,118) in 1841 amounted to over 10 per cent of the total population of England and Wales (16,906,829).⁷³ In Hampshire, two poor law incorporations formed by local acts of Parliament and two unions and one single parish under Gilbert's Act maintained their old frameworks after 1834. Based on the census of 1841, they covered approximately 12 per cent of the land within Hampshire and accounted for nearly 25 per cent of its population. Hampshire exceeded the national average because the populous coastal towns of Southampton and Alverstoke and the sizable area of the Isle of Wight all chose to continue operating under their old statutory framework.

The managers of the incorporations and the Gilbert unions seem to have regarded the agent of the central poor law authority not as an aggressor bent on forcing their dissolution but rather as a well-informed adviser. They had no intention of being at odds with Somerset House.

⁷⁰ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 2 January 1834, TNA, MH 32/1.

⁷¹ Lymington Union Correspondence, 1 May 1835, TNA, MH 12/10865.

⁷² *Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (London, 1838), p 3.

⁷³ *PP* (1844), x, *Report from the Select Committee on Poor Relief (Gilbert Unions)*, p. 31.

Just like his colleagues working in Norfolk with its several local act incorporations, A'Court seems to have realised that it was advantageous to concede them some independence while fulfilling the substance of his major goals by bringing them under his control in all but name.⁷⁴ The first issue he paid attention to was the unsystematic administration and the deficient qualifications of their personnel. A'Court thus recommended the incorporation of the Isle of Wight to hire paid poor law officers, such as relieving officers and collectors, who should be subject to the same rules and regulations as those in the unions under the New Poor Law.⁷⁵ In practice, the incorporation proceeded to divide the Isle of Wight into five districts and assign each district to new relieving officers in the very same way that the poor law unions inland did.⁷⁶ In the case of the Farnborough Union, which remained under Gilbert's Act, the Poor Law Commissioners sent a letter to intervene in the appointment of a new auditor, indicating that the candidate did not hold proper qualifications to assume the office, using the standards applied to auditors in unions under the New Poor Law.⁷⁷ The incorporation and the union seem to have been prepared to accept the recommendations, even though they still rested on a different legal framework.

By contrast, the incorporations and the Gilbert unions remained obdurate on their own workhouse arrangements. Presumably, they were unwilling to alter and enlarge their old workhouses or even build a new building which could be expected to impose a considerable financial burden on them, as opposed to accepting administrative adjustments which cost little money. As parishes constituting the Farnborough union still paid instalments to a total of £2,050 borrowed for the erection of a joint workhouse, an additional cost to the workhouse

⁷⁴ Digby, *Palaces*, pp. 59-60.

⁷⁵ The Isle of Wight Correspondence, 18 April 1836, TNA, MH 12/11084.

⁷⁶ The Isle of Wight, Quarterly Minute Book House of Industry, 5 July 1836, IOWRO, Z/HO/A2.

⁷⁷ Farnborough Union, Minute Book, 20 May, 27 June, and 7 July 1837, HRO, PL2/2/1.

could have overloaded them.⁷⁸ The assistant commissioner failed to get any new workhouse erected in the incorporations and the unions. The incorporation of Southampton rejected A'Court's recommendation to build a new workhouse and used an old workhouse inconvenient for the classification of inmates, while he did not even attempt to do something about Gilbert union workhouses, although they were too small to allow new guidelines to be followed in full.⁷⁹

The revision of the workhouse admissions policy also came up for discussion. In the Farnborough Union, there was a debate prompted by Capt. Maser, the Visitor, over the admission of the able-bodied into the workhouse, although this was against the original tenor of Gilbert's Act. In 1838, the union resolved that Michael Watts should be discharged as being an able man under a certificate from a medical man.⁸⁰ However, recognising that the prohibition on receiving able-bodied men into the workhouse ran counter to the design of the New Poor Law, so had the potential to be a cause of conflict with the New Poor Law authority, the union determined that it should be possible to admit the able-bodied into the workhouse at the discretion of the visitor and guardians.⁸¹ In practice, nonetheless, no able-bodied paupers were admitted into the workhouse. In 1840, as two inmates were found able and healthy, the union decided to dismiss them and agreed that 'no able bedsmen [sic] should remain in the house of industry'.⁸²

7.7 Conclusion

⁷⁸ Hartley Wintney Union Correspondence, 15 April 1835, TNA, MH 12/10804.

⁷⁹ Southampton, Board of Guardians Minute Book, 10 Aug 1835, SAO, SC/AG1/1/4.

⁸⁰ Farnborough Union, Minute Book, 2 March 1838, HRO, PL2/2/1.

⁸¹ Farnborough Union, Minute Book, 6 March, and 6 April 1838, HRO, PL2/2/1.

⁸² Farnborough Union, Minute Book, 3 April 1840, HRO, PL2/2/1.

This chapter has outlined how the New Poor Law was implemented with the effect of changing the poor relief system dramatically in Hampshire. The great transition, however, did not come out of nothing. The demarcation of poor law unions basically followed petty sessional divisions, and some deviations were the result either of consulting a few local magnates in the arable division or of persuading a host of middle-class smallholders and tradesmen in the coastal and pastoral divisions. The new law entailed a transformation in workhouse provision, the superseding of smaller parish workhouses by larger union workhouses. However, past regional patterns of workhouse capacity and density under the Old Poor Law clearly affected the transformation and sustained continuity to a large extent. Out of twenty-four union workhouses, only eleven were new, and they were concentrated in the arable division; by contrast, thirteen, more than half, were old workhouses remained in operation, though with some alterations and enlargements. In the incorporations and Gilbert unions, largely in the coastal and pastoral divisions, falling outside the New Poor Law regime, existing workhouses unsurprisingly continued in use with no great renovation and with their accustomed mode of operating nearly intact.

Chapter Eight: Workhouses and less eligibility

The previous chapter has shown that the New Poor Law constituted a radical break with the past by forming poor law unions and establishing a new landscape of union workhouses in Hampshire, but at the same time, the reformed system was bent to conform to local circumstances. The new act was also intended to impose uniformity on poor relief administration throughout the country, and union workhouses were supposed to be run on uniform principles. As envisaged in the Poor Law Report of 1834, the new system's primary goal was to abolish outdoor relief to the able-bodied male and their families and offer them only entry to a 'well-regulated' workhouse, while the sick and impotent could be relieved at home.¹ The first instructions from the Poor Law Commission to assistant commissioners state that those who were distressed merely because they were idle, improvident, or dissolute should be offered relief within the walls of union workhouses, which would 'become a self-acting test for measuring the true extent of actual pauperism as contradistinguished from that which is artificial'. By refusing all relief except within the houses, the great mass of the labouring population would be saved from pauperism.² General Orders were issued nationwide to prohibit outdoor relief to the able-bodied at the beginning of the 1840s; these were consolidated in the Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order of 1844. All unions in Hampshire were on the list of unions to which the order applied.³

In order to exercise a deterrent effect, the doctrine of 'less eligibility' was intended to be enforced not only in terms of the offer of the workhouse, but also in terms of the operation of these workhouses, meaning that living conditions should be at a lower level than those of

¹ *PP* (1834), xxviii, p. 146.

² Poor Law Commission Minute Book, 4 November 1834, TNA, MH 1/1, pp. 66-67.

³ The details of the order and the names of unions in which the order applied are noted in William Glen, *The Consolidated and Other Orders of the Poor Law Commissioners and the Poor Law Board* (London, 1859), pp. 244-266.

independent labourers of the lowest class outside. However, this did not imply that ‘the food or comforts of the pauper should approach the lowest point at which existence may be maintained’. Nonetheless, all inmates were meant to be subject to monotonous regularity and strict discipline, which would be ‘intolerable to the indolent and disorderly’ while rendering ‘the workhouse a place of comparative comfort to the aged, the feeble and other proper objects of relief’.⁴ The disciplinary regime of union workhouses was, therefore, centred upon psychological measures such as the tight separation of inmates and meaningless taskwork. The austere management of the new workhouses was undertaken by salaried officials, which was not novel, but they were now expected to be more professionalised and experienced.⁵

This chapter will focus on who entered and who staffed union workhouses in Hampshire and how inmates were treated. The first section will begin by examining the composition of inmates in union workhouses with special attention to the proportion of the able-bodied and their families, and then move on to identify varying patterns of workhouse admission in individual unions. It then examines the personnel employed to maintain union workhouses and ascertains how qualified they were to enforce strict indoor policies. The second section will determine how far the principle of less eligibility provided a basis for institutional policy. We will look at the classification of workhouse inmates and workhouse labour as crucial indicators of less eligibility and disclose regional variations in commitment to this principle. This chapter will argue that though uniformity in institutional relief practice was the ideal, in reality, concessions to local culture and inclination were inevitable. Diversity in practice operated even within a county.

8.1 Workhouse people

⁴ *PP* (1834), xxviii, p. 129.

⁵ Alan Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century England* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 34-36.

8.1.1 Workhouse inmates

The top priority embodied in the New Poor Law was the drastic reduction of able-bodied male pauperism and of poor rates. In order to abolish imprudent outdoor relief to the able-bodied, the architects of and officials administering the new law aimed to establish a harsh workhouse programme under which a key function of workhouses would be to receive able-bodied claimants of public aid.⁶ A line was to be drawn between the able-bodied and the vulnerable. The former were only to be offered formal relief within the walls of a workhouse, whereas the latter would continue to be eligible for outdoor relief.⁷ The early minutes of the Poor Law Commissioners state that ‘the aged, infirm and sick paupers should be not of necessity be forced into workhouses as they now generally are in preference to the sturdy and able-bodied paupers’.⁸ This did not mean that the New Poor Law workhouse would serve only the able-bodied. The institution was expected to continue to act as a refuge for the ailing and helpless, but in the context of clear classification and separation from the able-bodied.⁹ Nonetheless, workhouses were intended to play a relatively more significant part in the relief of the able-bodied than in that of vulnerable paupers. Therefore, the proportion of the able-bodied in workhouses can be regarded as a significant sign displaying how far the new regime was adopted in each union.

How were the ‘able-bodied’ defined? The 1834 act did not define them, and later guides and orders made by the Poor Law Commissioners also did not set clear criteria to distinguish them, leaving some room for interpretation.¹⁰ However, Keith Snell suggests that Official Circulars issued in 1848 by the Poor Law Board, which replaced the Poor Law Commission in 1847, are helpful inasmuch as they seek to clarify how able-bodied should be understood. The

⁶ Karel Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981), pp. 52-58; Englander, *Poverty*, p. 14.

⁷ Kidd, *State*, p. 28.

⁸ Poor Law Commission Minute Book, 17 March 1835, TNA, MH 1/2, p. 135.

⁹ Crowther, *Workhouse*, p. 3; Driver, *Power*, pp. 64-65; Kidd, *State*, p. 34.

¹⁰ Green, *Capital*, p. 162; Snell, *Parish*, p. 332.

central authority then stated that no one should be taken ‘out of the description of able-bodied’ unless they ‘are sick, have met with an accident, or are labouring under bodily or mental infirmity’, although there was no complete consistency in the definition throughout the New Poor Law era.¹¹

In fact, despite what was said here, physical health was not the only criterion used to determine whether a pauper was regarded as able-bodied. Economic capacity was also a significant consideration. In the official circulars, the Poor Law Board instructed that even people of weak constitutions who had frequent ailments should be treated as able-bodied if they could potentially receive the usual amount of wages.¹² Conversely, orders released by the central poor law authority to prohibit the provision of outdoor relief to the able-bodied constantly exempted able-bodied women with little economic power, such as widows, single mothers and wives deserted by their husbands and their children as exceptional cases. In this context, from the early years of the New Poor Law, the general prohibition on out relief was primarily aimed at able-bodied ‘males’ and their families.¹³ In other words, not all able-bodied, but able-bodied men and their families were the core group whom the central poor law authority required unions to relieve in the workhouse only. Therefore, the following analysis will centre on able-bodied male inmates and their families.

¹¹ *Official Circulars of Public Documents and Information: Directed by the Poor Law Commissioners to be Printed, Chiefly for the Use of the Members and Permanent Officers of Boards of Guardians, under the Poor Law Amendment Act*, vol. VII (17 April 1848), pp. 227-8; Snell, *Parish*, p. 236.

¹² *Official Circulars*, pp. 227-228.

¹³ J. F. Archbold, *The Act for the Amendment of the Poor Laws, with a Practical Introduction, Notes and Forms* (London, 1835), p. 165; *Seventh Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (London, 1841) pp. 64-65; Snell, *Parish*, pp. 236-237; Williams, *Pauperism*, p. 65.

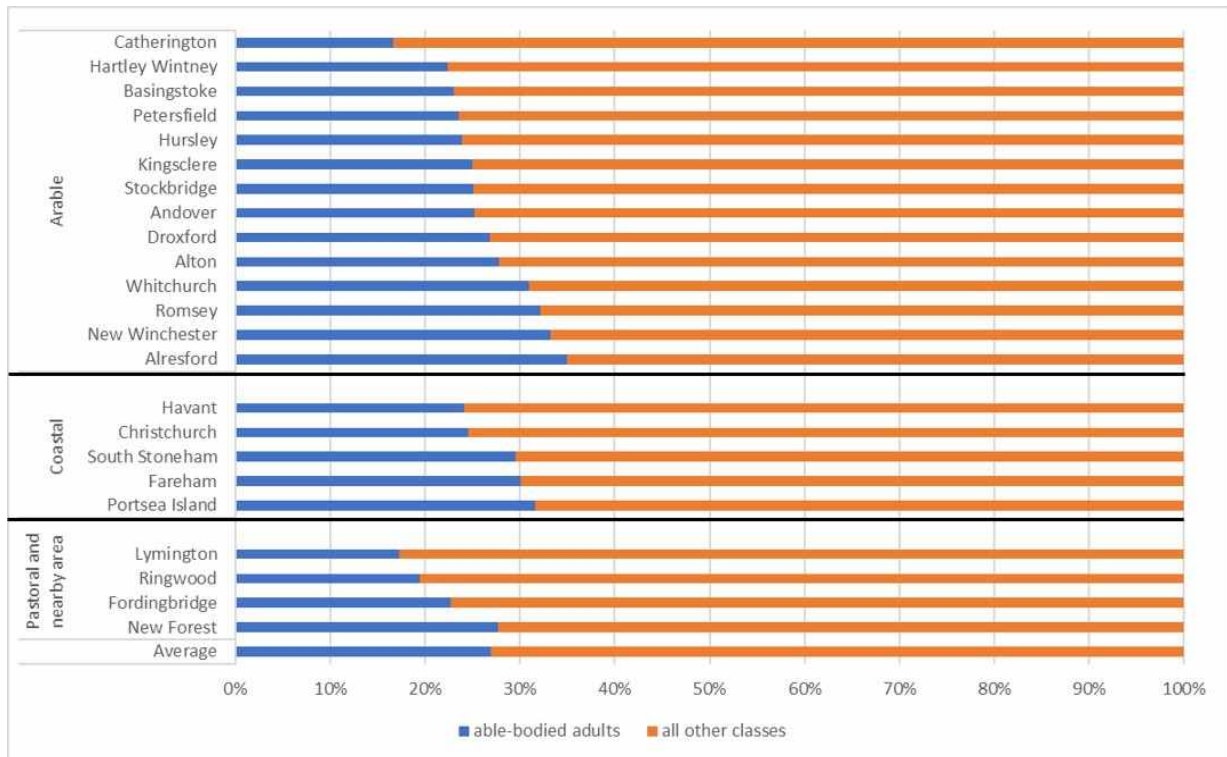


Figure 8.1 Proportion of able-bodied adults and other classes on outdoor relief during the quarter ending Lady-day 1842 (size-ordered)

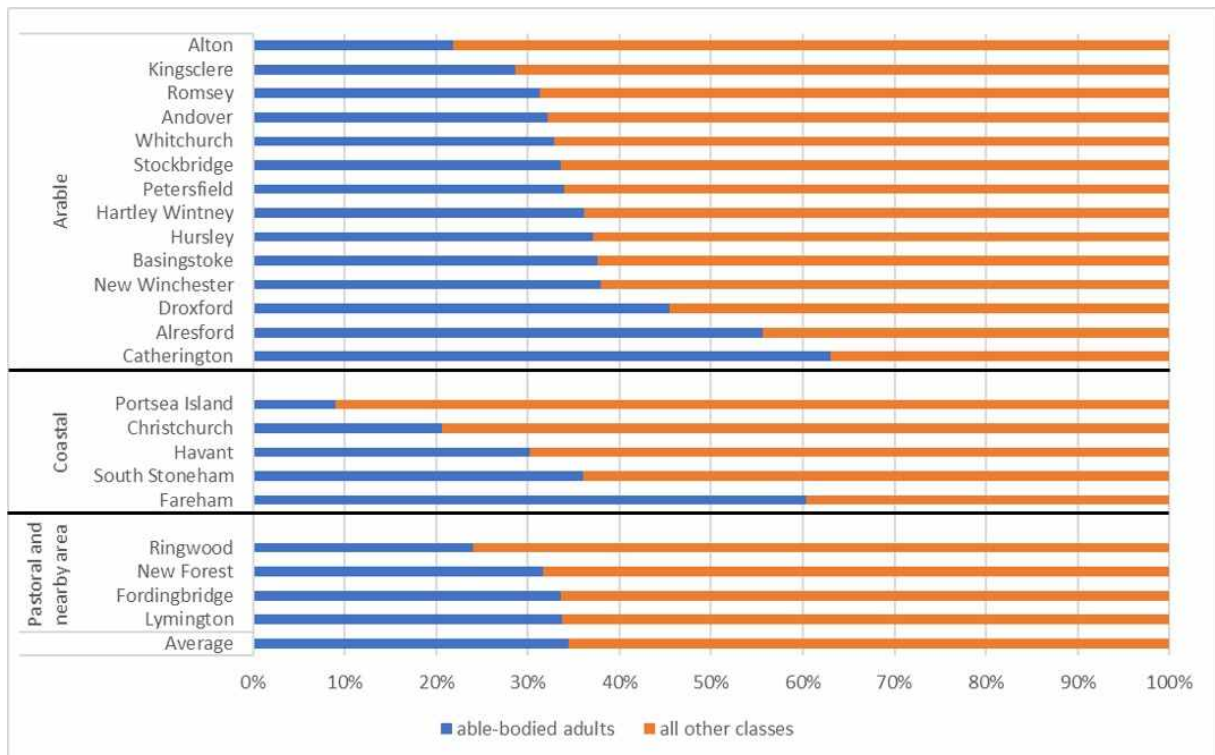


Figure 8.2 Proportion of able-bodied adults and other classes on indoor relief during the quarter ending Lady-day 1842 (size-ordered)

Source: 1843 Return of sums expended for relief of poor in unions in England and Wales, 1841-42

The return of 1843 first deserves our attention. It includes data relating to those in receipt of indoor and outdoor relief and classifies them into able-bodied adults and others. Despite the data being a snapshot, covering only the quarter ending lady day of 1842, they provide a national picture of the population on indoor and outdoor relief, broken down by county and by union. Union totals are shown in figures 8.1 and 8.2. By this report, in Hampshire, the average proportions of able-bodied adults to the total receiving indoor and outdoor relief were 34.5 and 26.9 per cent, comparable with English averages 38.1 and 27.2 per cent.¹⁴ Relief provision for the able-bodied out of workhouses had by no means been eradicated. The proportions of the able-bodied on outdoor relief in individual Hampshire unions never exceeded 35 per cent, spread relatively evenly, irrespective of where the unions were located (Figure 8.1). Although it is difficult to be certain exactly what percentage of those in receipt of outdoor relief were able-bodied in the last years of the old poor law, answers to the Rural and Urban Queries of 1834 submitted by Hampshire parishes provide some hints. For instance, the parish of Catherington, comprising a major part of the Catherington union, returned that, in 1832, there were seventy-five on the list of those given regular allowances outside the workhouse, out of whom about fifty (67%) were labourers, and by implication able-bodied.¹⁵ This means that in this parish, the share of able-bodied recipients of outdoor relief did drop steeply under the New Poor Law, as Figure 8.1 shows that the proportion of the union was less than 20 per cent.

By contrast, the proportion of able-bodied paupers inside Hampshire workhouses probably increased after 1834. As we saw in chapter six, the reports of Colonel Charles Ashe A'Court mention, albeit in passing, that few able-bodied paupers were to be found in most

¹⁴ *PP* (1843), xlv, *Return of Sums Expended for Relief of Poor in Unions in England and Wales*, pp. 14, 23.

¹⁵ *PP* (1834), xxviii, Appendix B.1., Part II, p. 417b.

workhouses.¹⁶ This suggests that there was a substantial rise in the proportion of able-bodied adult inmates across Hampshire. If their children were counted, the contribution of the able-bodied group to later population profiles could be even bigger. However, there was a remarkable difference between unions. As Figure 8.2 illustrates, the Portsea Island union stands out as an exceptional case: its proportion of able-bodied among workhouse inmates was under 10 per cent. Another port town union, Christchurch, also displayed a relatively low figure, slightly over 20 per cent. By contrast, proportions in the Catherington and the Fareham unions were much higher, over 60 per cent. Figures for unions in the New Forest and neighbouring areas were somewhat lower than the average but not very different from those of arable unions. In sum, the New Poor Law repressed out-relief to the able-bodied across all Hampshire unions, though it failed to achieve complete abolition. Under the new regime the workhouse admission of able-bodied paupers generally increased. However, variations between union workhouses were so marked as to make it necessary to look at individual cases.

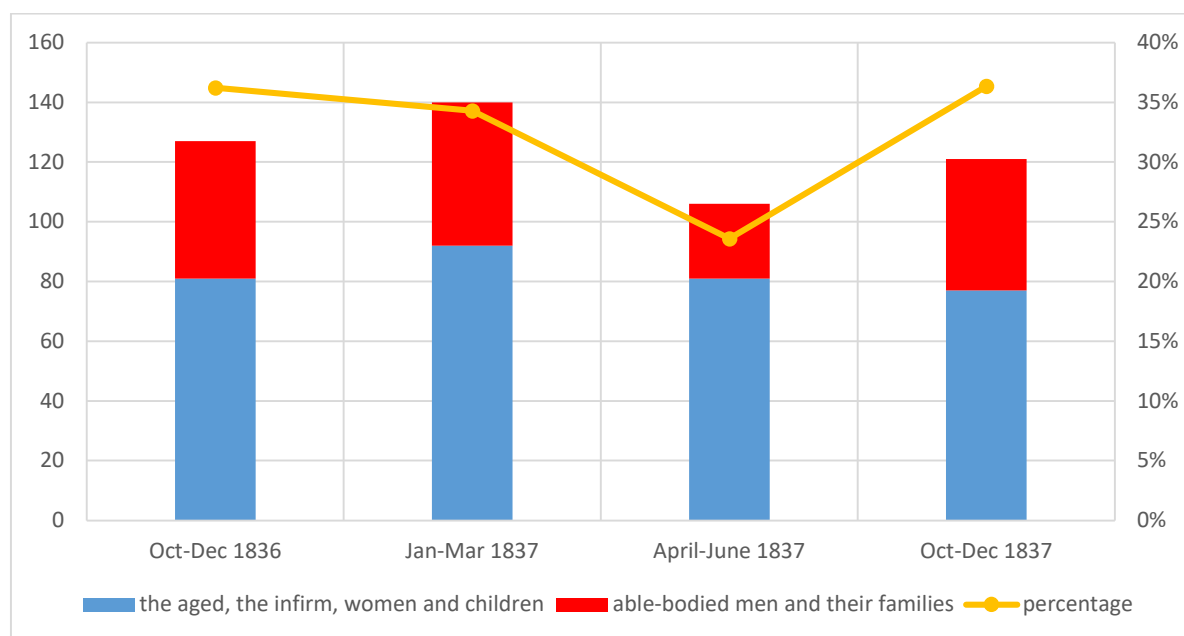


Figure 8.3 The composition of inmates in the Hartley Witney union workhouse by quarter
Source: Hartley Wintney Union Quarterly Abstract of Separate Accounts, 1836-1837.

¹⁶ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 15 November 1834, TNA, MH 32/1; A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 23 February 1835, TNA, MH 32/2.

The Hartley Witney union, one of the arable unions, kept neatly-organised quarterly accounts of relief provided between October 1836 and December 1837 (with only an account covering July to September 1837 missing); these supply detailed data on workhouse inmates.¹⁷ Figure 8.3 shows that proportions of the able-bodied inmates were around 35 per cent, except in April-June 1837. Although there is no comparable record relating to the inmates in the former Hartley Witney parish workhouse, the Rural Queries reveal that the parish workhouse of Odiham, which was among the parishes that were grouped in the Hartley Witney union, had possessed forty-five inmates, described as orphans and old and decrepit people.¹⁸ The influx of the able-bodied into the Hartley Witney union workhouse seems to have begun with the adoption of the New Poor Law, representing compliance with the central authority of local poor law officers, on the one hand of overseers, churchwardens, relieving officers and workhouse masters, who could issue a provisional order for admission, and on the other hand of the board of guardians, who alone could issue definitive admission orders.¹⁹

¹⁷ Hartley Wintney Union Quarterly Abstract of Separate Accounts, 1836-1837, HRO, 59M72/PU2. In the accounts, single mothers, widows and their children are put on a list of the able-bodied. As the main target of the new workhouse principle was, however, the able-bodied men and their families, I count the group of women and their children as the non-able-bodied. If I just follow the category of the accounts, the proportion of the able-bodied would be more than 50 per cent.

¹⁸ *PP* (1834), xxviii, Appendix B.1. Answers to the Rural Queries in Five Parts. Part 2. Question 22.

¹⁹ *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 59.

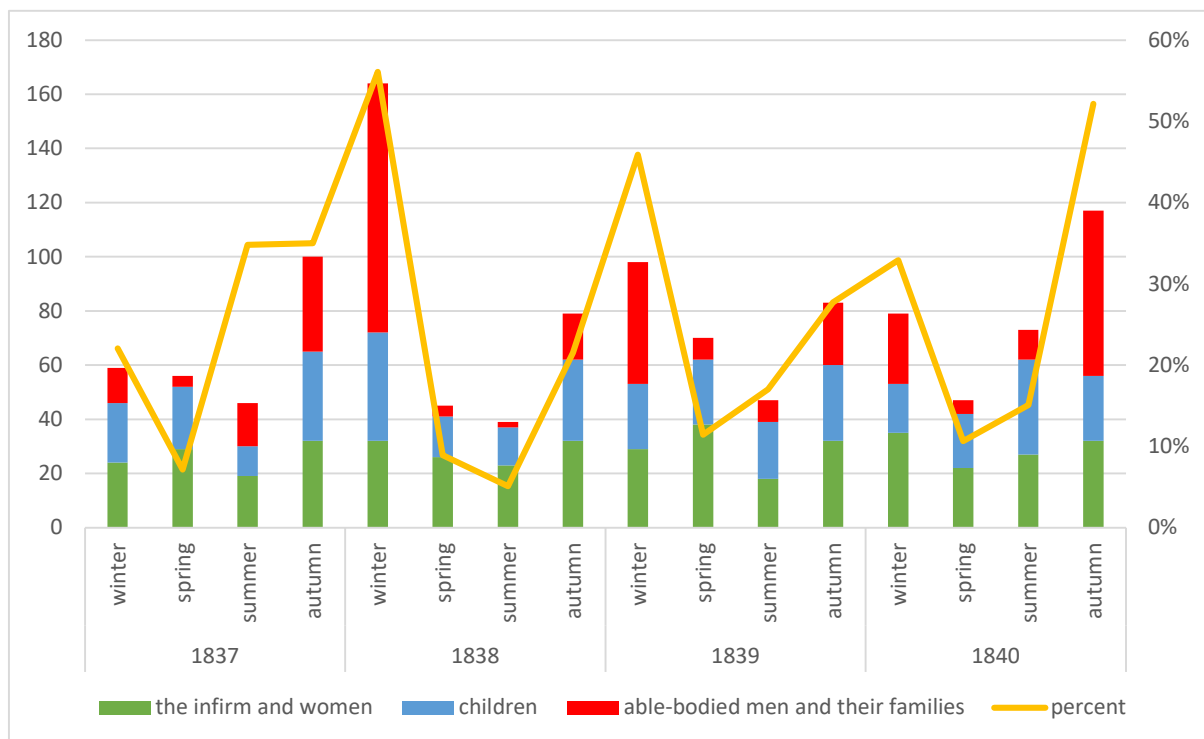


Figure 8.4 The number of paupers admitted into the New Winchester union workhouse by seasons

* Winter: December to February, Spring: March to May, Summer: June to August, Autumn: September to November

Source: New Winchester Union admission and discharge book, 1836-1839; New Winchester Union admission and discharge book, 1839-1843.

Another arable union, the New Winchester union, created even more comprehensive books recording admission and discharge, making it possible to draw a still more vivid picture of workhouse inmates. The union books tell us not only the names of paupers admitted and the dates of their admission and discharge but also the causes of their applications for relief and whether they were able-bodied or not.²⁰ Whilst the data on the Hartley Witney union workhouse inmates suggest that the union placed itself under the influence of the New Poor Law regime, the comprehensive accounts of the New Winchester union show that the admission of able-bodied paupers varied across the year according to the local seasonal employment pattern. Certainly, from the point at which the New Poor Law was adopted, the able-bodied started coming into the workhouse on a large scale. Earlier Town Queries indicate

²⁰ New Winchester Union Admission and Discharge book, 1836-1839, HRO, PL5/11/15; New Winchester Union Admission and Discharge Book, 1839-1843, HRO, PL5/11/16.

that a few years previously, the Winchester workhouse serving Winchester town and a few nearby rural parishes held twenty-three people, out of whom seven were under 20, while the adults were said to be generally old and infirm.²¹ However, more striking were seasonal ups and downs. There was clear seasonality, with admission into the Winchester workhouse peaking in winter and lowering in summer, corresponding to what Andrew Hinde and Fiona Turnbull's study of this workhouse in 1851-1861 also found.²² The seasonal pattern was attributable to fluctuations in numbers of able-bodied inmates, not paralleled among the infirm, women, and children. As George Boyer explains, seasonal fluctuations in labour demand were more profound in grain-farming areas. According to his account, during planting, haying and harvest, the redundant labour force tended to be small, whereas winter months witnessed the highest unemployment rate. To support this conclusion, he cites a statement made by a gentleman from Hampshire, that every hand was employed at haytime and harvest, but labourers were then burdensome to the parish from Christmas till May.²³ It was thus not a coincidence that, out of about a hundred cases of admission caused by the applicant being 'out of employment', more than 50 per cent were concentrated in the winter season, while only five were made in summer.

²¹ *PP* (1834), xxviii, Appendix B.2. Answers to the Town Queries in Part 2. Question.

²² Hinde and Turnbull, 'Populations', pp. 43-47.

²³ Boyer, *Economic*, pp. 88-91.

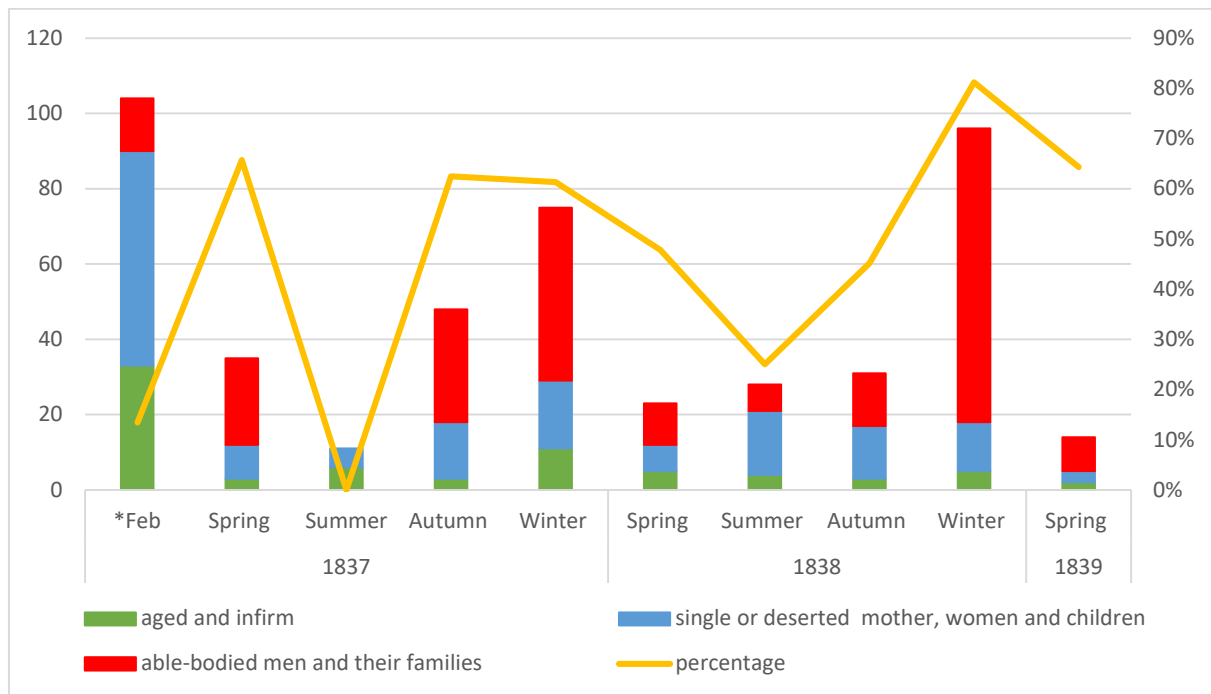


Figure 8.5 The number of paupers admitted into the New Forest union workhouse

* The total number of inmates living in the workhouse in February 1837 when the workhouse opened
 * Winter: December to February, Spring: March to May, Summer: June to August, Autumn: September to November

Source: Smith, *An account of a union chaplaincy: containing extracts from the chaplain's book*, pp. 45-57.

The account drawn up by Herbert Smith, the chaplain of the New Forest union workhouse, in 1839 ends with a comprehensive list of those admitted, in which we can identify not only their names and the dates of their admission and discharge but also the parishes to which they belonged. Moreover, he selected some inmates and provided information as to their reasons for applying for admission.²⁴ Figure 8.5 categorises the inmates into three groups and displays seasonal differences in the number of people entering the workhouse by group over the year. As in Figure 8.4, the number of able-bodied men and their family members coming into the workhouse fell to its lowest point in summer and reached its peak in winter. However, in this instance, their proportions rose to over 60 per cent in the winter of 1837 and even exceeded 80 per cent the following winter, significantly surpassing the highest total reached in the Winchester workhouse. More than half of the workhouse admissions of the able-bodied

²⁴ Smith, *Chaplaincy*, pp. 45-57.

group were concentrated in winter (124 of 232). What is particularly interesting is that the seasonal pattern of admission to the workhouse in the pasture-farming area appears almost the same as that of the workhouse in the grain-farming area. As Snell indicates, the demand for labour tended to be distributed more evenly over the year in pastoral areas. Although livestock producers needed more labour during haymaking and calving, these seasonal fluctuations were small compared to those arising from grain farming.²⁵ Therefore, it is not clear that we can explain the pattern in the New Forest union workhouse entirely in terms of the economic cycle.

A closer look at the account reveals that almost all able-bodied inmates entering the New Forest union workhouse in winter came from two parishes, Eling and Fawley. Among parishes constituting the New Forest union, Eling was the most populous and the only urban parish, lying at the head of the Southampton Water, with docks for shipbuilding and warehouses for storing corn and merchandise, while Fawley was a parish on the inlet of the Southampton Water with a regular ferry service to Southampton and an extensive yard for shipbuilding at Hythe.²⁶ The scale of unemployment in the two parishes overwhelmed those in the pastoral constituent parishes. The Poor Law Report of 1834 reveals that Eling received more than a hundred relief applications from unemployed labourers in winter and set them to work on the parish land near the workhouse, though, in summer, only some old men applied, who were normally employed on the roads. Labourers from this parish, as the report indicates, were often not able to gain a job at Southampton, where ‘men come all the way from Ireland and procure work’.²⁷ A’Court’s returns of 1834 note that in Fawley, ‘there are nearly thirty able-bodied men out of work’, whereas in Lyndhurst, the administrative centre of the New Forest as well as a member of the union, ‘nearly the whole [labouring] populations is in

²⁵ Snell, ‘Agricultural’, p. 423; Boyer, *Economic*, p. 93.

²⁶ *Pigot and Co’s Royal National and Commercial Directory and Topography* (London, 1844), p. 83; Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of England* (London, 1831), pp. 446-447.

²⁷ *PP* (1834), xxviii, Appendix A., pp. 301A-302A, Appendix B.I., Part I., p. 419 A.

employment'.²⁸ In the forest, common rights over wastes and commons, surviving to a large extent at least until the middle of the nineteenth century, afforded extra employment opportunity to people living there even in winter.²⁹ As Eling disposed of the parish workhouse and the neighbouring land to erect a new union workhouse just after the implementation of the New Poor Law, a host of unemployed able-bodied paupers who had been forced to work on the land may have flooded into the union workhouse.³⁰ The enormous flow obviously distorted the demography of the workhouse. If we strip the able-bodied from Eling and Fawley from the calculation of workhouse admissions, the proportions of the able-bodied inmates and their families admitted in the winter of 1837 and 1838 drop sharply to 9 and 28 per cent each. Therefore, the other parishes forming the New Forest union still used the workhouse more as a receptacle for the vulnerable than as a disciplinary institution for the able-bodied. This finding supports King's proposal, based on pension lists, that the New Forest workhouse population was dominated by 'old men, young widows, children and presumably the younger men with families'.³¹ This suggests that they were not fully absorbed into the New Poor Law regime yet.

²⁸ A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the several Parishes in the Division of Romsey', 'Lyndhurst', 21 November 1834, 'Notes on the Parishes in the Division of Southampton', 'Fawley', 14 December 1834, TNA, MH32/1.

²⁹ The chief rights comprised common of turbary, of pannage and of pasture. A footnote in the 1831 census tells that in a forest parish, Boldre, about 150 men were employed in cutting turf and furze. See the 1831 census, p. 573, fn. (q); Briscoe Eyre, *The New Forest: Its Common Rights, and Cottage Stock-Keepers* (Lyndhurst, 1883), pp. 37-53; Tubbs, 'Development', pp. 32-35; David Moody, 'Godshillwood and Woodgreen: A Squatter Settlement on the Edge of the New Forest 1600-1840', *PHFCAS.*, 71 (2016), pp. 137-138. For a view of common right in forest parishes as a source of makeshifts including day labour, by-employment and casual jobs, see Steve Hindle, "'Not by Bread Only"? Common Right, Parish Relief and Endowed Charity in a Forest Economy, c.1600-1800', in Steven King and Alannah Tomkins (eds), *Poor in England, 1700-1900: An Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester, 2010), pp. 39-75.

³⁰ Eling Vestry Meeting Minute Book, 7 January, 18, 25 February 1836, HRO, 4M69/PV1.

³¹ King, *Poverty*, p. 242.

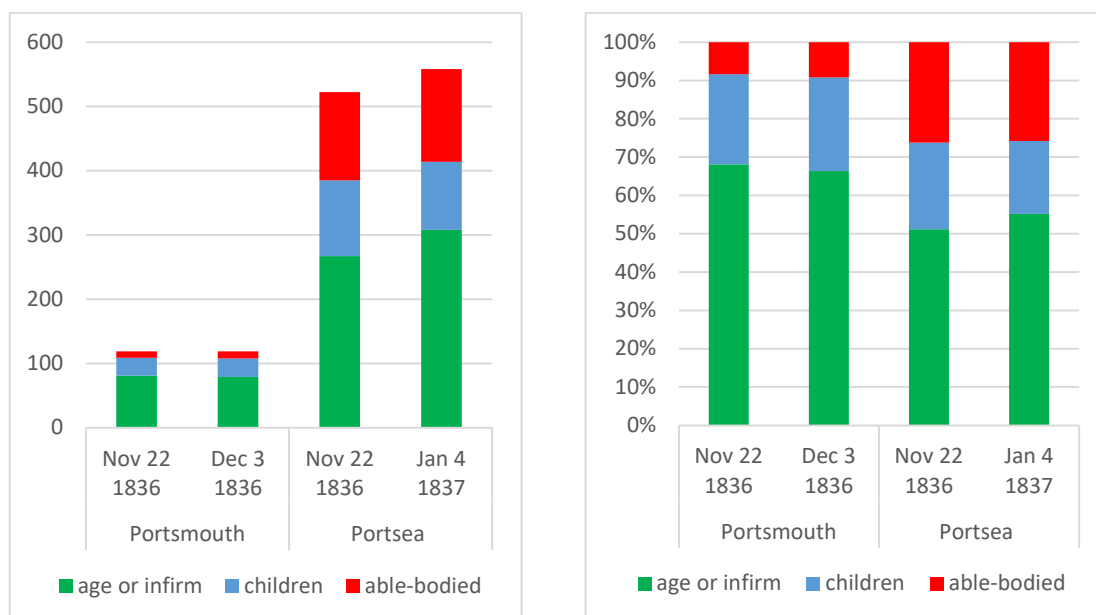


Figure 8.6 Number and proportion of inmates in Portsea and Portsmouth workhouses
 Source: Portsmouth Workhouse Visitor's Book, 22 November, 3 December 1836, January 1837.

As Figure 8.6 shows, the Portsea Island union ran two workhouses before a new union workhouse opened in 1846, and they continued to operate in their own distinctive way up to that point. The union has not left information on workhouse inmates over time; we have to rely on scattered one-off accounts.³² As a result, it is, unfortunately, impossible to identify seasonal or yearly changes in the composition of workhouse inmates. Moreover, what information we do have, presented in the graphs, shows the situation prior to the reshuffle of inmates between the two workhouses from July 1837. Nonetheless, they suggest that the able-bodied were no more than a minority in the workhouses in the early years of the new regime, constituting less than 30 per cent of their inmates, while the aged and the infirm accounted for over 50 per cent. Furthermore, even before 9999999999the reshuffle, it seems that most able-bodied paupers were committed to the Portsea workhouse (alongside some old and young paupers), whereas the Portsmouth workhouse was reserved almost exclusively for the old and the young. There were some ten able-bodied women in the Portsmouth workhouse, but they were there just to do the laundry work for the old and young inmates.³³ Contrasting inmate populations seem to

³² Portsmouth Workhouse Visitor's Book, 22 November, 3 December 1836, January 1837, PHC, PL17.

³³ Portsmouth Workhouse Visitor's Book, 10 August, 10 October, 22 November 1836, PHC, PL17.

have dated from the old regime. A petition submitted by the parish of Portsmouth in 1836 claims that the workhouse population of this parish, 'consists of aged and infirm persons whilst the paupers in the poor-house of Portsea are of a different description and include ... considerably more able-bodied persons than the whole of the paupers in the poor-house of Portsmouth'.³⁴ That is to say, there was no remarkable change made in the composition of inmates in the two workhouses even after the Portsea Island union was formed.

8.1.2 Workhouse staff

The profiles of workhouse officers also differed by region. In the arable unions, there was a strong preference for choosing a professional master with experience, to facilitate the smooth implementation of the New Poor Law regime. An annual report by the Poor Law Commissioners stated that no person should be appointed as a master of the workhouse 'who cannot keep accounts, who is in trade, or who will not undertake to devote his whole time to the general service'.³⁵ In accordance with these guidelines, the newly-formed board of guardians of the Whitchurch union in the arable division, when asked by the assistant commissioner to employ a new workhouse master, selected William Rockett, a former master of the South Stoneham union workhouse.³⁶ It was lucky for him to be taken on again as a master by the Whitchurch union since he had been dismissed by the South Stoneham union for insolence and abuse of the infirm.³⁷ However, the Whitchurch union soon found him guilty of misconduct while intoxicated, and he also had to leave his new position.³⁸ The next person chosen by the union was John Penfold, at the time of his appointment, the porter of Lambourn

³⁴ Portsea Island Union Correspondence, May 1836, HRO, MH 12/10916.

³⁵ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 79.

³⁶ South Stoneham Union Correspondence, 27 March 1835, TNA, MH 12/11035; Whitchurch Union Minute Book, 3 November 1835, HRO, PL3/18/1.

³⁷ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 48.

³⁸ Whitchurch Union Minute Book, 19, 27 January 1836, HRO, PL3/18/1.

workhouse in Berkshire.³⁹ Clearly, the union preferred those with experience of workhouses, even if they lacked a clean record.

In addition to former workhouse officers, former military men were often favoured, given the habits of firmness, self-control and coolness that they were expected to obtain from military experience.⁴⁰ The Andover union accordingly hired sergeant-major Colin McDougal, as the workhouse master in December 1836.⁴¹ In the Basingstoke union, William Spier of Reading, previously master of a workhouse there, was initially employed as workhouse master in August 1836, but because of continuous problems with inmates stealing and absconding and consequent disorder in the workhouse, he resigned in March 1838. There were then three candidates for the post, two of whom were ex-servicemen, sergeant-major Duffy and sergeant Sutton.⁴² Not only did the guardians seek advice from the master of the Andover union workhouse, but also they ordered the applicants to proceed to the Andover house for the purpose of inspecting and acquainting themselves with its state under the control of the military master.⁴³ Sutton was eventually selected as the new master.⁴⁴ As these military professionals were charged with all indoor arrangements, it could be hoped that their workhouses would be characterised by strong discipline, which in turn might be expected to have a deterrent effect.⁴⁵

As the existing workhouses were kept in operation in the port towns of Southampton and Portsea Island, their masters also maintained their position. In 1837, the Poor Law Commissioners requested the Portsea Island union to consider whether the present masters, William Dixon of Portsmouth and Thomas Bannister of Portsea workhouse, were competent to keep the workhouses in good order and discipline according to new expectations and stated

³⁹ Whitchurch Union Minute Book, 23 February 1836, HRO, PL3/18/1.

⁴⁰ Anstruther, *Scandal*, p. 76.

⁴¹ Andover Union Minute Book, 17 December 1836, HRO, PL/3/4/7.

⁴² Basingstoke Union Minute book, 16 March, 6, 20 April 1838, HRO, PL/3/5/2.

⁴³ Basingstoke Union Minute book, 16 March, 6, April 1838, HRO, PL/3/5/2.

⁴⁴ Basingstoke Union Minute book, 27 April 1838, HRO, PL/3/5/2.

⁴⁵ Mandler, 'Making', p. 142.

that if they were not, it was the guardians' duty to appoint more appropriate people.⁴⁶ In the following year, the assistant commissioner again reported that he found the management of the Portsea workhouse insufficient to carry out the new workhouse principles, for which the master was certainly responsible, and asked the guardians to determine whether he was fit for the position.⁴⁷ The central authority clearly believed that not only a new building but also a change of master was necessary to implement the new workhouse system. However, in response, the union merely exchanged the masters of the two workhouses, Dixon moving to the Portsea workhouse and Bannister to the Portsmouth workhouse.⁴⁸ In fact, the guardians confidently reported that the conduct of the masters was not deficient, and the whole of the accounts was carefully kept as directed by the Poor Law Commissioners.⁴⁹ Later judging himself unsuitable to his duty due to his serious illness, Dixon on many occasions intimated his wish to give up his office to a guardian, William Purchase, but the board of guardians delayed the discussion of the master's wish and pushed him to stay. During this period, interestingly, an exchange of posts between Dixon and Thomas Hobbins, a collector of poor rates for the union, was discussed, rather than finding someone entirely new.⁵⁰ By sticking with existing staff and rotating them, the union probably aimed to preserve the existing regime of workhouse management.

It is also noteworthy that the scale of workhouse staff in these port towns was incomparably greater than in the rural workhouses. In 1836, just after the union was declared, the Portsea Island union reported to the Poor Law Commissioners that excluding workhouse masters, the two workhouses in the union employed people in a broad range of occupations from schoolmaster, nurse, cook, factory man, to shoemaker, tailor, carpenter, barber, and even

⁴⁶ Portsea Island Union Correspondence, 27 June 1837, TNA, MH 12/10916.

⁴⁷ Portsea Island Union Minute Book, 5 July 1838, PHC, BG/M1/1.

⁴⁸ Portsea Island Union Minute Book, 23 July 1838, PHC, BG/M1/1.

⁴⁹ Portsea Island Union Workhouse Visitor's Book, 1 April 1837, PHC, PL17.

⁵⁰ Portsea Island Union Minute Book, 18 March 1839, PHC, BG/M1/1.

washer and their wages with their board and lodging amounted to £3 17s. per week, more than £200 yearly. The total number of nurses hired in these workhouses was as many as eighteen, even if not all were full-time.⁵¹ Even though, after the report of 1836, there is little evidence of the total number of jobs in most workhouses, nothing indicates that there were so many staff or jobs in the workhouses of the two biggest unions, Andover and Basingstoke.⁵² According to these arable workhouses' accounts, the only full-time posts apart from masters and matrons were a schoolmaster and/or schoolmistress, porter, and chaplain. Rather than hiring full-time or part-time workers, the workhouses paid local businessmen or artisans for their services from time to time as the need arose.⁵³

One of the Gilbert union workhouses in the pastoral division described another approach in relation to masters. As in the port towns, the master of the Farnborough Gilbert union workhouse, James Peters, did not change after the implementation of the New Poor Law. In 1839, when he died, unusually, the guardians of the union resolved that his wife, Mrs Peters, and his son John Dendey Peters should take over the position of master.⁵⁴ The family succession probably reflects the lack of a systematic appointment process. It would never have been acceptable in the unions keener to comply with the New Poor Law, particularly in arable areas; they inserted in the local press an advertisement to gather candidates whenever the post of master fell vacant. In the union workhouse in the New Forest, furthermore, there was no professional paid master: John Andrews, one of the inmates, acted instead.⁵⁵ The New Forest union workhouse possessed only a chaplain, schoolmaster and schoolmistress during the second half of the 1830s. Since among these few staff, the main role of the chaplain, schoolmaster and schoolmistress was to care for the inmates rather than to supervise and

⁵¹ Portsea Island Union Correspondence, 27 October 1836, TNA, MH 12/10916.

⁵² Portsea Island Union Correspondence, 1 May 1837, TNA, MH 12/10916.

⁵³ Basingstoke Union Minute Book, 23 March 1837, HRO, PL/3/5/2; Andover Union Minute Book, 15 July 1837, HRO, PL/3/4/7.

⁵⁴ Farnborough Gilbert Union Minute Book, 12 April 1839, HRO, PL2/2/1.

⁵⁵ Smith, *Chaplaincy*, p. 1.

control them, it seems that the New Forest workhouse was still in ethos a paternalistic refuge institution, as under the Old Poor Law.

Medical provision in workhouses required staff with more specialised expertise. Even though the 1601 Elizabethan Poor Law made no reference to it, many individual parishes had at least in recent decades paid local doctors for their medical and surgical treatments of the poor, while a minority of parishes had established even more regular medical arrangements by drawing up an annual contract with them (as we saw in chapter five). In some few cases, especially in large urban parishes, a medical officer was employed specifically for the institutional care of the sick in an infirmary ward of a workhouse.⁵⁶ The New Poor Law devoted few words to medical provision, but according to sections 46 and 109, unions were permitted to appoint paid officers, one of whom could be a person duly licensed to practise as a medical man. As these stipulations were so vague regarding medical staff and provision, the arrangement of medical relief could easily vary depending on the circumstances and previous experiences of localities.⁵⁷

Instructions in Poor Law Commissioners' annual reports intended to fill gaps in the New Poor Law's specifications suggested that unions should select medical officers by open tenders. The tender, in general, related to 'all cases of sickness, surgery, medicines &c., which may be necessary for paupers becoming ill', though whether to include midwifery varied in different unions.⁵⁸ A'Court added that those managing the tender should decide what salary was fair and reasonable remuneration for the services and notably that there was no obligation

⁵⁶ M. W. Flinn, 'Medical Service under the New Poor Law' in Fraser (ed.), *New*, p. 47; Digby, *Making*, pp.224-225; King, *Sickness*, pp. 251-285; Reinarz and Schwarz (eds), *Medicine*, pp. 19-120.

⁵⁷ Samantha Shave, "'Immediate Death or a Life of Torture Are the Consequences of the System': The Bridgwater Union Scandal and Policy Change', in Reinarz and Schwarz eds., *Medicine*, pp. 164-170.

⁵⁸ *Morning Chronicle* 17 August 1836; *Hampshire Chronicle* 6 March 1837.

to accept the lowest.⁵⁹ In practice, appointments nonetheless tended to be driven by cost-cutting, particularly in arable unions.⁶⁰

One of the arable unions vividly illustrates how the tendering system disregarded long experience, instead seeking above all to curtail expenditure. By 1837, the Droxford union had selected three people as medical officers, two of whom, Mr Bore and Mr Lovekin, were very young, 24 or 25. When a select committee appointed to inquire into the administration under the New Poor Law raised the question of how the young officers had come to be chosen, the chairman of the board of guardians simply answered that the board let the offices by tender and took the lowest. As a result, a local veteran doctor, Mr Bulbeck, who had been involved in parochial medical relief for 30 years, had to yield his position to a novice, Bore, who had been resident in this union for only about a year and a half.⁶¹ John Bulbeck, a son of the old doctor and another local surgeon, expressed his concern that it could be hard for the young medical officer to undertake cases requiring experience such as midwifery.⁶² One local clergyman took his side, stating that ‘it is much better to have a person as medical officer of the union who is acquainted with the constitutions of the persons, than a stranger’.⁶³ Despite those concerns, the vice-chairman, Henry Wooldridge, still conceived the new appointee to be perfectly competent to attend the poor and presented that his diploma was very satisfactory, and he graduated from the colleges with great credit.⁶⁴

In the Portsea Island union, by contrast, the outcomes of tendering processes indicate that economic considerations were not a top priority; on the contrary, medical experience and

⁵⁹ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, pp. 283-284.

⁶⁰ Digby, *Making*, pp. 244-245.

⁶¹ *PP* (1837), xvii, *Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act with the Minutes of Evidence*, p. 17.

⁶² *PP* (1837-38), xviii, *Eighth Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act; with the Minutes of Evidence*, p. 17.

⁶³ *PP* (1837-38), xviii, *Third Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act; with the Minutes of Evidence*, p. 85.

⁶⁴ *PP* (1837-38), xviii, *Third Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act; with the Minutes of Evidence*, p. 145.

work continuity were clearly prioritised (as in the case of other workhouse officers of this union). In December 1837, the tendering process for the No. 2 district containing the Portsea workhouse was so fierce and competitive as to trigger protestations from two candidates, in contrast to districts which straightforwardly picked the lowest. In their letters of protest to the Poor Law Commissioners, the unsuccessful candidates, Edward Sabben and Charles Scott, argued that it had been improper to select a tender presented by William Garrington because, while they had bid £55 and £44 a year each, he had bid £80, the highest among the tenders.⁶⁵ The board of guardians had to explain the grounds of their selection. Above all, they argued that ‘they ought not to seek to obtain medical assistance at the lowest cost’ and ‘they might reserve to themselves a discretionary power in making the selection’; instead, more emphasis should be placed on experience. Although the lowest tenders were chosen in all Portsea Island districts except the No. 2 district, in all other cases, those submitting the lowest tenders had been working for the union. The guardians pointed out that the appointment of Garrington should be understood in the same context. He had been one of the surgeons serving the parish of Portsea prior to the union. From the first year of the union, he acted as a medical attendant to the Portsea workhouse to the satisfaction of the inmates. In the guardians’ view, it was better to leave medical provision in the hands of someone who was thoroughly acquainted with it than to give it to another at a lower price when he would enter upon the duties in perfect ignorance of the inmates or the system of management.⁶⁶ Garrington, in fact, kept working for the workhouse until it was closed in 1845.⁶⁷

8.2 Less eligibility

⁶⁵ Portsea Island Union Correspondence, 23 December 1837, TNA, MH 12/10916.

⁶⁶ Portsea Island Union Correspondence, 5 January 1838, TNA, MH 12/10916.

⁶⁷ Portsea Island Union Minute Book, 18 December 1844, PHC, BG/M1/1.

Less eligibility was an essential logic underlying the New Poor Law system, the aim being to make living conditions inside union workhouses inferior to those experienced by independent labourers outside. One might suppose that parsimonious dietaries would have been an indispensable element of the tight policy. However, the Poor Law Report of 1834 and the subsequent act lack detail about a proper workhouse diet and even the sketchy accounts they do provide sound paradoxical. The report recommends that in ‘well-regulated’ workhouses, there should be strict regulation on ‘the use of acknowledged luxuries, such as fermented liquors and tobacco’, yet at the same time ordered that ‘the workhouse food be more ample in quantity and better in quality than that of which the labourer’s family partakes’.⁶⁸ Edwin Chadwick, one of the designers of the new regime, acknowledged that food independent labourers ate was, in practice, too miserable to be taken as the standard of workhouse diet.⁶⁹ On 4 December 1835, the Poor Law Commission circulated six model dietaries from which unions were to choose the most suitable given local circumstances. An assistant commissioner, Charles Mott, maintained that, apart from Dietary No 1., all the dietaries exceeded the amount normally consumed by agricultural labourers and mechanics who supported themselves.⁷⁰

Given that diet was not relied on to create less eligible conditions, the burden of doing that fell instead on rigid workhouse discipline resting on classification between inmates and useless taskwork.⁷¹ These two distinctive features of the new regime were expected to be uniformly applied across the country. The Consolidated Order for Administration of Relief issued by the Poor Law Commission lists regulations for ‘the discipline of paupers received in the workhouse’, which were to be strictly enforced. Not only do they outline a monotonous

⁶⁸ *PP* (1834), xxviii, p. 129.

⁶⁹ Griffin, *Politics*, p. 152.

⁷⁰ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, pp. 56-59; Valerie Johnston, *Diet in Workhouses and Prisons* (London, 1985) p. 18; Nadja Durbach, ‘Roast Beef, the New Poor Law, and the British Nation, 1834-63’, *Journal of British Studies*, 52 (2013), pp. 965-966; Peter Higginbotham, *The Workhouse Cookbook* (Stroud, 2008), pp. 50-51.

⁷¹ Crowther, *Workhouse*, pp. 40-41.

daily routine, but also they state that all workhouse inmates of different classes should be kept to separate wards and not allowed to move freely, except by permission of the master; also, they should be forced to work in occupations given by the master according to their ages and conditions.⁷² In the next section, we will explore how the required segregation and work schemes were actually implemented in Hampshire workhouses and identify variations within the county.

8.2.1 Classification of inmates

According to an order from the Poor Law Commission, workhouse inmates were to be classified ideally into seven groups: aged or infirm men, able-bodied men and youths of or above thirteen years of age, boys of or above seven years of age and under thirteen, aged or infirm women, able-bodied women and girls of or above sixteen years of age, girls of or above seven years of age, and under sixteen, and children under seven years of age. The classification was to provide a basis for partitioning them spatially. The order specifies that '[t]o each class shall be assigned by the guardians that apartment or portion of the building, or separate building, which may be best fitted for the reception of such class, and in which they shall respectively remain'.⁷³ Physical segregation had at least three different functions. The first and most emphasised was the deterrent effect, in particular for the able-bodied and their families. Under the draconian policy of dividing inmates, workhouse entrance automatically led to family breakup, seen as fundamental to the regime, so as to deter all but the indigent from applying for formal relief. Second, the separation was to provide a basis for fitting treatment for specific classes, notably the aged and infirm. As they were often exempted from strict regulations and given a better diet, and were more likely to receive medical aid, their spatial concentration reflected considerations of economy and efficiency. Third, the strategy of separating especially

⁷² *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 85.

⁷³ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 84.

the young from the other classes aimed at preventing moral as well as physical contagion. Children were often considered to be particularly liable to be depraved morally by disorderly adults, such as by prostitutes, regarded as the most degraded.⁷⁴

However, the ideal sevenfold classification was rarely implemented in full in Hampshire workhouses, though there was a clear regional difference in the extent of implementation. Overall, arable unions showed a strong commitment to the proposed classification scheme. The Basingstoke and Andover unions in the northern arable area, for example, upon deciding to build a new union workhouse, chose the officially recommended workhouse plans of Sampson Kempthorne, who was appointed by the Poor Law Commissioners as their official architect.⁷⁵ Their workhouses were both broadly based on his ‘square plan’ (Figures 8.7 and 8.8). The layouts of these workhouses were amenable to complete spatial segregation, in conformity with the intention of the Poor Law Commission, although the Commissioners recognised that this policy might provoke controversies and social tensions because it divided families.⁷⁶ It was pursued in these two workhouses. When a serious scandal broke out in the Andover workhouse, the inmates testified vividly to a select committee how they were all separated into four yards. If a husband went over to speak to his wife, the first time he would be ordered not to, and if he did it again, he would be locked up as a punishment.⁷⁷ The guardians of the rural unions believed in enforcing this strict policy to ensure that only the destitute would apply or consent to admission, which A’Court said was observably its effect in practice. These guardians adopted the ‘liberal’ view that deterrent

⁷⁴ Driver, *Power*, pp. 64-65.

⁷⁵ Andover Union Minute Book, 10 June and 8 July 1837, HRO, PL3/4/7; Basingstoke Union Minute Book, June 19, 3 and 10 July 1835, HRO, PL3/5/1.

⁷⁶ Crowther, *Workhouse*, pp. 42-43.

⁷⁷ *PP* (1846), v, *Report from the Select Committee on Andover Union; Together with the Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index*, pp. 442, 769.

workhouses would end paupers' abusive 'right to relief' and drive them on to a free labour market, where employers would have to pay them a living wage to access their services.⁷⁸

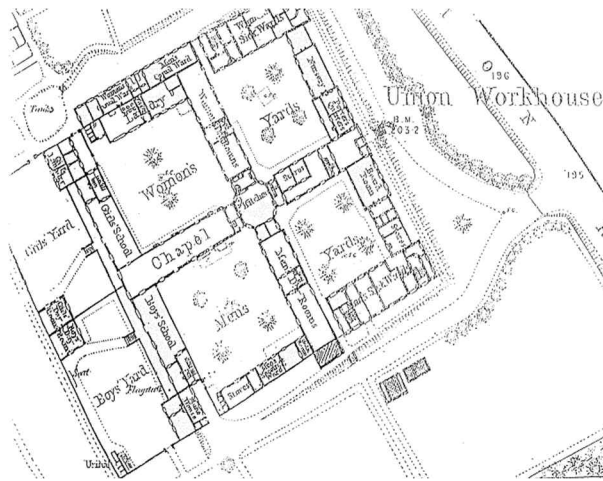


Figure 8.7 Andover union workhouse
Source: <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Andover>

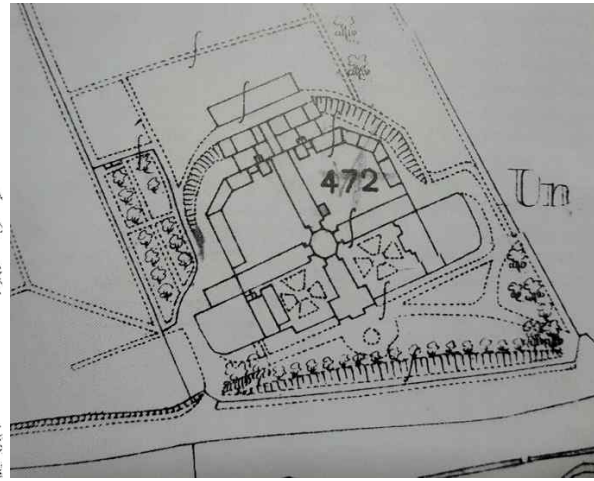


Figure 8.8 Basingstoke union workhouse
Source: Large, *Basingstoke Workhouse* p. 29.

Not only those arable unions which built a new large workhouse but also others which retained old workhouses saw the classification and strict separation of different classes of inmates as a primary goal when altering or enlarging their houses. In the first meeting of guardians in the Kingsclere union, a committee was appointed to consider plans for the union workhouse. It concluded that an old workhouse in Kingsclere parish was the most eligible if two adjoining cottages and their gardens were annexed to it.⁷⁹ According to a plan made by the committee, such an enlargement and alteration of the current workhouse would allow it not only to house 200 inmates but also to provide separate yards for men and women.⁸⁰ That was a rather minimal classification system of course, though it did entail breaking up families. In the Romsey union, which had selected a parish workhouse in Romsey Extra for union purposes rather than erecting a new building, some alterations to the house to ensure proper classification were completed in January 1836.⁸¹ However, that seems not to have been the end of efforts to

⁷⁸ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 15 November 1834, TNA, MH 32/1.

⁷⁹ Kingsclere Union Minute book, 5, 30 June 1835, HRO, PL3/11/1.

⁸⁰ Kingsclere Union Minute book, 16 February 1836, HRO, PL3/11/1.

⁸¹ Romsey Union Correspondence, 21 June 1836, TNA, MH 12/10983.

establish a sophisticated classification. In 1839, the guardians learned not only that there was no sick ward for each sex but also that there was no means of separating more respectable women from disobedient and refractory women. It was said that the constant connection was likely to result in contaminating wholesome inmates morally as well as physically.⁸² Additional alterations were carried out at the cost of £600, borrowed from the Exchequer Bill Loan Commission.⁸³ The layouts of the union workhouses based on old parish workhouses display the effects of efforts to implement at least some elements of the classification of inmates as required by the central authority, even though their plans were much less neatly arranged than in newly built houses (Figures 8.9 and 8.10).



Figure 8.9 Kingsclere union workhouse
Source: <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Kingsclere>

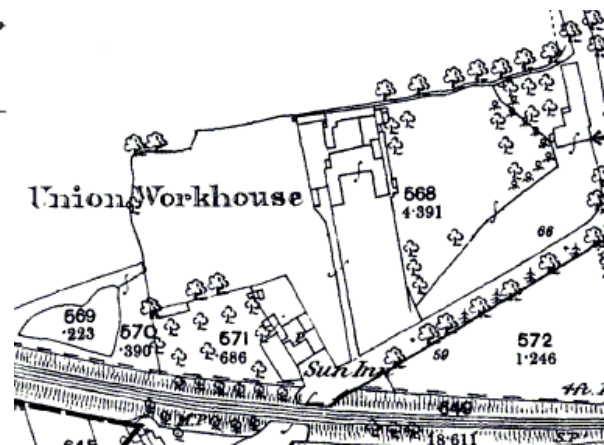


Figure 8.10 Romsey union workhouse
Source: <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Romsey>

In the other unions embracing both arable parishes and pastoral or coastal parishes, such as Ringwood and Fordingbridge unions in the west of the New Forest and Fareham union in the south, willingness and commitment to carry out the classification seems to have been as firm and strong as in the central and northern arable unions. In the first meeting of the board of guardians, the Ringwood and Fordingbridge unions both resolved to alter or enlarge their existing workhouses to introduce a better classification system and appointed a special

⁸² Romsey Union Correspondence, 12 August 1839, TNA, MH 12/10983.

⁸³ Registers of Authorised Workhouse Expenditure, TNA. MH 34/2, pp. 264-265.

committee to deal with this.⁸⁴ The selection of architects and the establishment of building plans took place under the supervision of A'Court, who was to send the plans to Poor Law Commissioners to gain their sanction. In fact, as a plan submitted by the Fordingbridge union did not appear to the central officers to afford enough in the way of classification, another plan had to be made and handed in.⁸⁵ A workhouse for Fareham union, which combined arable and coastal parishes, was erected in 1836 and included a structure to split up inmates. The house had four courts arranged in a cross, one each for men, women, boys and girls; in the men's yard, there was one section for the aged and the rest for the able-bodied.⁸⁶ In quarterly reports of 1838 and 1839, A'Court commented that all the three workhouses operated under the proposed principle and that there was nothing wrong with their provision for inmate classification.⁸⁷ In this regard, the mixed unions were following the same path as the arable unions in the centre and north, being no less compliant with central instructions and guidance. That is to say, as we will see further below, the new workhouse regime seems to have been adopted nearly all over Hampshire with only some ordinary strains, in places that were not port towns or pastoral regions.

By contrast, although A'Court recommended to the Portsea Island union and the Southampton incorporation that they should each build a new large workhouse allowing for proper classification, both these large port towns refused on the grounds of exorbitant building costs.⁸⁸ Another assistant commissioner, W. H. T. Hawley, also examined the Portsea workhouse. He had initially assumed charge of Sussex and Surrey and then took over some

⁸⁴ Ringwood Union Correspondence 30 July 1835, TNA, MH 12/10971; Fordingbridge Union Minute book, 31 July 1835, TNA, PL3/9/1.

⁸⁵ Ringwood Union Correspondence 27 August 1835, TNA, MH 12/10971; Fordingbridge Union Minute Book, 7, 15 September 1835, TNA, PL3/9/1.

⁸⁶ *PP* (1837), xvii, *Seventh Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act with the Minutes of Evidence*, p. 11.

⁸⁷ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 2 April, 3 July, 30 September, 31 December 1838, 31 March, 30 June 1839, TNA, MH 32/4.

⁸⁸ Southampton Board of Guardians Minute Book, 24 December 1834, 10 August 1835, SAO, SC/AG1/1/4; Portsea Island Union Correspondence, 12 July 1837, TNA, MH 12/10916.

parts of Hampshire, including the Portsea Island union, while A'Court focused on Wiltshire until September 1838, when he was sent to Ireland to form poor law unions there.⁸⁹ Hawley reported that the area and layout of the building were too confined and irregular to admit the well-ordered division of inmates. The current layout made it impossible to do more than separate the sexes and place them in distinct wards. Even this basic classification was, however, only imperfectly achieved since the women had constant access to the garden through the men's yard, and a manufactory where female inmates might work was managed by a man. According to Hawley, the separation of the healthy portion of the inmates from those afflicted with bodily or mental diseases was also insufficiently provided for. The sick wards were inconveniently situated in terms of their proximity to the day and sleeping rooms used by sound inmates. As he saw it, with the current imperfect arrangement, if an infectious disease were to break out, it would be impossible to prevent it from spreading to every part of the house. He was also concerned about moral contamination. He deplored the fact that there was no means to block the 'intercourse' of young girls with profligate able-bodied women in the women's yard. The conclusion that Hawley drew from his investigation was that in order to overcome all those problems, it would be necessary to immediately abandon the old workhouse and erect a new one, which had also been A'Court's diagnosis.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the Portsea Island union stuck with their old workhouse with some alterations until 1846, when a new workhouse officially opened, even though in the intervening period, A'Court continued to remark in his quarterly reports that unless the guardians consented to erect a new workhouse, no proper classification of paupers could be achieved.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Portsea Island Union Minute book of Board of Guardians, 5 September 1838, PHC, BG/M1/1; Gerard O'Brien, 'The Establishment of Poor-Law Unions in Ireland, 1838-43', *Irish Historical Studies*, 23 (1982), pp. 98-102.

⁹⁰ Portsea Island Union Correspondence, 13 July 1837, TNA, MH 12/10916.

⁹¹ Portsea Island Union Minute Book, 8 August 1838, 28 October 1840, PHC, BG/M1/1; A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 31 December 1838, 31 March, 30 June, 30 September, 31 December 1839, 31 March, 30 June 1840, TNA, MH 32/4.

In fact, the port town workhouses did classify their inmates, but in a different way. In the Southampton workhouse, there were three separate courts; one for men and boys, one for females, and one for abandoned women with whom the seaport town abounded.⁹² The Portsea workhouse similarly possessed an area called the 'foul ward' for venereal patients only; they were all young females who (it was said) appeared so objectionable in the highest degree that even general hospitals were not willing to receive them.⁹³ This mode of classification suggested that the workhouses in large port towns sought actively to address specific problems in local society by keeping their old system, in contrast to the arable workhouses, which focussed on functioning as a discouraging institution.

Furthermore, the Portsea Island union introduced an elaborate system of redistributing paupers between its two workhouses. In July 1837, a rearrangement of inmates started to take place, entailing moving the able-bodied and children to the Portsea workhouse and the aged or infirm to the Portsmouth workhouse.⁹⁴ The segregation of paupers into the two workhouses was approached on principles very different from what the Poor Law Commissioners had conceived, in that, rather than making a division between the able-bodied and the vulnerable, the union put the able-bodied adults and the young together in one and the old only in the other. Reports made by guardians visiting the Portsmouth workhouse often accordingly report that there were no able-bodied males to be employed. In addition, as all boys and girls were removed to the Portsea workhouse, a school in the Portsmouth workhouse was shut down.⁹⁵ The medical officer for the Portsmouth workhouse remarked to the chairman of the guardians that occupation of the building exclusively by the aged and infirm materially enhanced their physical and moral comfort.⁹⁶ A medical officer for the Portsea workhouse, William

⁹² Southampton Correspondence, 28 December 1834, TNA, MH 12/10997.

⁹³ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 22 December 1834, TNA, MH 32/1.

⁹⁴ Daily Occurrence Books for Portsmouth Workhouse, 24 July, PHC, PL85.

⁹⁵ Portsmouth Workhouse Visitor's Book, 29 July 1837, PHC, PL17.

⁹⁶ *Hampshire Telegraph* 25 December 1837.

Garrington, also reported that there were positive changes in the lives of young inmates after the rearrangement. He found not only the appointment of new schoolmaster and mistress judicious but also young women who had been seen linking arms together, parading the yard and singing in an uproarious manner were now fully employed at their stations.⁹⁷ The transfer of inmates between the two workhouses began under the second board of guardians, elected in March 1837, led by Capt. Joseph Oates Travers as chairman. From the outset of his term of office, Capt. Travers also tried to shepherd boys over a certain age, normally twelve or thirteen, into the army or navy.⁹⁸ Whether this had been part of the intention or not, gathering the young into the Portsea workhouse probably facilitated the selection process. Even after his retirement, Travers visited the house to encourage boys to enlist in the military, and the master expressed thanks to him for his unwearied interest.⁹⁹ Though evidence of the reasoning behind this approach is lacking, it may reflect the endeavour of the guardians, mainly drawn from among businessmen, to minimise the duplication of functions and maximise economic and administrative efficiency given local conditions and not just central instructions.

In the north-eastern pastoral areas and the New Forest, workhouses rarely seem to have been in a position to implement any type of classification, least of all that proposed by the Poor Law Commissioners. Gilbert union workhouses in the northeast, which were kept in use after the introduction of the New Poor Law, were too small and inappropriately designed to separate their inmates into all the desired classes. Reports made by A'Court in 1835 record that Farnborough Gilbert union and Headley Gilbert union workhouses were capable of holding only sixty and seventy-five or eighty each, and no attempt was being made to create separate spaces to make it possible to classify their inmates (Figures 8.11 and 8.12).¹⁰⁰ By contrast, the

⁹⁷ *Hampshire Telegraph* 25 December 1837.

⁹⁸ Daily Occurrence Books for Portsmouth Workhouse, 31 May and 12 July, PHC, PL85.

⁹⁹ Portsea Island Union Minute Book of Board of Guardians, 26 September 1838, PHC, BG/M1/1.

¹⁰⁰ A'Court's Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 23 February 1835, TNA, MH 32/2; Hartley Wintney Union Correspondence, 6 March 1835, MH 12/10804.

New Forest union did construct a new union workhouse capable of housing 200, based on Kempthorne's 'hexagonal plan', which provided the ideal physical structure for classification (Figure 8.13). In his quarterly reports, A'Court repeatedly mentions that the workhouse conformed to proposed regulations and operated effectively as a test. However, some guardians made great complaints during the winter of 1837 about Kempthorne's building plan. They criticised the smallness of windows in rooms and their high location to prevent the inmates from looking out, as giving a prison-like appearance to the house. This suggests that the New Forest guardians were not entirely convinced of the value of promoting a depressing appearance as recommended by the Poor Law Commissioners. In this context, it is not surprising that the heartless classification of inmates was not implemented in this workhouse. According to notes made by the chaplain of the workhouse, in the young women's day room, young mothers and their children lived together.¹⁰¹ It was found that there were about twenty adult inmates and nearly the same number of young children in one apartment. The chaplain suggested a new arrangement to appropriate a room for a nursery, based on which the children could be conveniently separated from their mothers, and at the same time, the mother would gain the liberty to work without leaving the children at the risk of neglect.¹⁰² During the summer and early autumn, when the workhouse population was comparatively small, all female inmates were taken into one room without any division.¹⁰³ When he investigated the inmates, the chaplain categorised 'families' and 'women with illegitimate children' as distinct classes, perhaps implying that neither family members nor single mothers and children were segregated thoroughly in the workhouse.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Smith, *Chaplaincy*, p. 16.

¹⁰² Smith, *Chaplaincy*, p. 31.

¹⁰³ Smith, *Chaplaincy*, pp. 17-18.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, *Chaplaincy*, p. 45.

should not be to obtain a profit but to reduce the poor rates indirectly by repelling the indolent and vicious from turning to the rates and encouraging them to exert themselves to gain proper occupations outside the workhouse. Acting on this principle entailed the discontinuance of manufactories and farms which had been expected to make a profit; instead, discouraging taskwork was introduced, in particular grinding grain and bones, which was to trigger a national workhouse scandal in the 1840s.¹⁰⁶ Although crushed bones could be used as useful fertiliser for agriculture, the making process was, in particular, disagreeable and deleterious.¹⁰⁷ The labour of use and profit was replaced by work involving demeaning and entailing suffering, literally donkeywork. In the view of the Poor Law Commissioners, labour in the workhouse should be not only repulsive, to fulfil the notion of a workhouse test, but also only minimally productive so as to minimise the influence of the workhouse on the market. Ultimately, it was to help to establish the principle of a free-market economy.¹⁰⁸

Given what we have already established in relation to approaches to the workhouse regime, it is unsurprising to find that the arable workhouses were more compliant with the guidelines on workhouse labour than those in the port towns and pastoral areas. The Kingsclere union workhouse provides an example of how, in the arable region, former labour policies in the workhouse were often wiped out. After deciding to rent what had been the workhouse of Kingsclere parish as a union workhouse, the guardians requested the churchwardens and overseers of the parish to dismiss Benjamin Cribb, then in charge of manufacture. They also suggested that many articles piled in the manufactory in the workhouse would be ‘perfectly useless’ for the new workhouse labour regime, so all of them should be given to Cribb as some compensation for the loss he incurred on his sudden removal. In order to avoid unnecessary

¹⁰⁶ A’Court’s Correspondence and Papers related to the South Eastern District, 23 February 1836, TNA, MH 32/3; Anstruther, *Scandal*.

¹⁰⁷ *PP* (1846), v, pp. 1712-1713.

¹⁰⁸ Mandler, ‘Making’, pp. 141-142.

harshness, the parish officers offered him a space in the building until he could find suitable accommodation elsewhere, but he declined the offer and removed himself and his belongings from the house right after the notice.¹⁰⁹ In no more than three months, the old arrangements for workhouse labour were dismantled. When alterations to the buildings were completed in 1837, the union presented its intention to erect a mill to replace the old manufactory.¹¹⁰

While the case of the Kingsclere union showed a radical shift towards a new labour policy, the Whitchurch union, another arable union, attempted a contrary shift. As soon as alterations to the union workhouse were finished, the board of guardians advertised in local newspapers their interest in hiring a manufacturer of ability to re-establish a rope and sack manufactory for employing and instructing inmates; subsequently, Moses Dibley, a sack manufacturer of Cranbourne, Dorset was chosen. It was, however, pointed out in a meeting of the board that Dibley's appointment was subject to the approbation of the Poor Law Commissioners.¹¹¹ A letter sent from Somerset House to the union sets out the reasons why the central authority did not sanction the proposed arrangement. Above all, under the New Poor Law, the intention was that the workhouse should become 'a test of destitution'. When the test was properly and sufficiently applied, the sojourn of the able-bodied within the walls in almost every case should be temporary, so it would not be expedient to provide employment such as rope and sack making, which required time and practice to make a proper workman. The true principle of workhouse employment as the Poor Law Commissioners conceived it was to make it laborious and distasteful, in the general context of rendering a residence in the workhouse abhorrent. Instead, they urged the union to introduce less fruitful and skilled work, including a corn and bone mill and oakum picking.¹¹² Eventually, the union decided to go along with the

¹⁰⁹ Kingsclere Union Minute Book, 8 September 1835, HRO, PL3/11/1.

¹¹⁰ Kingsclere Union Minute Book, 5 December 1837, HRO, PL3/11/2.

¹¹¹ Whitchurch Union Minute Book, 2 May 1837, HRO, PL3/18/1.

¹¹² Whitchurch Union Correspondence, 16 May 1837, TNA, MH 12/11074.

Poor Law Commissioners.¹¹³ The case of Whitchurch shows that not all arable unions were equally enthusiastic about the new principles, but nonetheless, they did succumb to the commissioners' pressure.

The installation of hand mills grinding corn and bone was strongly recommended by the Poor Law Commissioners and frequently discussed in meetings of the arable unions. The commissioners announced that the mills had been found very 'effectual' in several unions in which they had been adopted. What they meant by 'effectual' never related to production but instead to discipline and morality. The annual report of 1836 depicts some examples of the triumph of mills over idleness, where on the introduction of a hand mill, the number of able-bodied but indolent paupers accepting the workhouse offer dwindled to the extent that the mills were rusting away for lack of hands to turn them.¹¹⁴ A guardian of the Andover union also avowed that a bone mill in the union workhouse operated as a means of preventing applications for admission. Poor neighbours stated to him that they would work for almost anything rather than going back to turn the mill.¹¹⁵ The Andover union was among the leaders in setting up a mill in the workhouse. Already in 1837, there was a wheat mill running in there.¹¹⁶ The following year, the Droxford union also began ascertaining the likely effect and cost of a bone mill. One was promptly installed in the same year.¹¹⁷ Subsequently, the Basingstoke union requested from the assistant commissioner information about ways in which other unions operated mills and employed paupers to handle them. A bone mill started to run there in 1841.¹¹⁸ According to a return of 1844, in Hampshire, there were nineteen unions employing

¹¹³ Whitchurch Union Minute Book, 23 May 1837, HRO, PL3/18/1.

¹¹⁴ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, pp. 207-208.

¹¹⁵ *PP* (1846), v, part 2, p. 63.

¹¹⁶ Andover Union Minute Book, 2 September 1837, HRO, PL3/4/7.

¹¹⁷ Droxford Union Minute Book, 23 January, 3 July 1838, HRO, PL3/7/2.

¹¹⁸ Basingstoke Union Minute Book, 12 June 1840, 1 January 1841, HRO, PL3/5/4.

their inmates in grinding bones. Indeed, except Petersfield and Whitchurch unions, all unions in arable areas implemented the bone-crushing scheme.¹¹⁹

The Portsea Island union is not on the list. The union adopted a different labour regime, retaining its existing style. An assistant commissioner, W. H. T. Hawley, expressed his reservations about the employment of paupers in this union, saying that the approach taken hindered the workhouses from working as a test of destitution. He observed that because of the easy accessibility of material and lack of need for great art or physical strength, oakum picking was much employed in the workhouses. However, this provided an insufficient inducement to the inmates to seek work out of the workhouses since oakum picking was not unprofitable, particularly in port towns with a dockyard (see chapter four), though tedious and irksome, and not harsh, especially for male workers.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, some guardians, having visited the Portsmouth workhouse, ordered that oakum should be picked only on the male side of the house and instead, the women should be set needlework and other domestic works. In their view, oakum picking as a degrading job was not suitable for female paupers, except as a punishment for the refractory.¹²¹ Under these arrangements, oakum picking was unlikely to discourage admission to workhouses.

However, what Hawley most objected to was all types of manufacturing surviving from the Old Poor Law period. He claimed that this work tended to be too easy and therefore did not encourage the paupers to move out to find a proper job; moreover, it brought together paupers without any division, undermining workhouse discipline. In essence, these manufactories were inconsistent with the new workhouse principle. If someone was capable of working in the workhouse manufactory and making a profit, by definition, he or she should not be there. He

¹¹⁹ PP (1845), xxxviii, *Union Workhouses. A Return of all Union Workhouses under the Poor Law Amendment Act, in which the Pauper Inmates thereof are or have been Employed in Grinding or Crushing Bones*, pp. 7-8.

¹²⁰ Portsea Island Union Correspondence, 12 July 1837, TNA, MH 12/10916.

¹²¹ Portsmouth Workhouse Visitor's Book, 10 August, 14 October 1836, PHC, PL17.

concluded that for these reasons, more laborious work using flour and bone mills should entirely supersede the looms and spinning wheels of the old system.¹²² However, he did not persuade the guardians of the Portsea Island union. As we have seen above, factory men and women appear on lists of paid officers sporadically. In addition, the guardians noted that, in the Portsmouth workhouse, about thirty female inmates were employed in making shirts for 6 or 7 hours and earned no less than 2s. a day. The wages paid to them were the same as to others out of the workhouse.¹²³ In 1838, Hawley once more urged the erection of a bone mill in the garden of the Portsea workhouse to reform the inefficient labour system, but he seems to have failed to persuade the guardians again.¹²⁴ In fact, given the composition of the board of guardians – mostly businessmen – they probably thought it unacceptable to squander the inmates' labour on backbreaking and fruitless work.

In the pastoral areas, the workhouses seem to have paid less attention to the labour of their inmates, although it is hard to be certain due to the limits of their records. Under Gilbert's Act, the Farnborough workhouse had originally been aimed at vulnerable paupers and still hesitated to admit the able-bodied poor in spite of being aware that their practice was contrary to the New Poor Law, as seen in the previous chapter. Accordingly, the working population in the workhouse was so small that workhouse officers did not need to be concerned with labour. An inventory drawn up when a new master was being appointed allows us to conjecture about the labour regime. Among the items categorised as working tools in the inventory are seven three-grained and two two-grained prongs, a garden rake, five old hoses, a pickaxe, a mattock, a billhook, two old shovels, and two old spades.¹²⁵ These were probably gardening tools. From the account of the chaplain, the only material allowing us to surmise the situation within the

¹²² Portsea Island Union Correspondence, 12 July 1837, TNA, MH 12/10916.

¹²³ Portsmouth Workhouse Visitor's Book, 10 August, 31 January, 27 March 1837, PHC, PL17.

¹²⁴ Portsea Island Union Minute Book of Board of Guardians, 5 July 1838, PHC, BG/M1/1.

¹²⁵ Farnborough Union, Minute Book, 15 January 1841, HRO, PL2/2/1.

New Forest union workhouse, it seems that the workhouse followed neither the path of arable areas nor that of the large port towns but stayed with the old regime. Shortly after starting his duty, the chaplain observed that oakum picking was the only way offered to employ inmates, but old men alone were working on it. Based on the observation, he suggested to the guardians that older boys should also be employed in picking oakum for certain hours every day to train themselves in habits of industry.¹²⁶ Yet, he had to keep proposing this until 1839, when his account ended.¹²⁷ Presumably, throughout this period, the workhouse had no more general organised labour scheme, let alone having installed a hand-mill or run a manufactory.

8.3 Conclusion

The failure to operate Hampshire workhouses on uniform standards and principles in the first decade of the New Poor Law ensured that official indoor relief administration was based on communications and compromise between central and local governments. As many historians have long pointed to a lack of uniformity, in fact, this finding is not in itself striking. What this chapter attempts to demonstrate that is more original is that the variety of workhouse policies reflected long-established regional patterns already evident under the Old Poor Law, rather than idiosyncratic conflicts and tensions between central and local interests.

Poor law unions in the arable division, where workhouse relief had been relatively insignificant in the broader context of poor law administration under the Old Poor Law, tended to readily embrace new workhouse schemes and principles, conforming to the intent of poor law reform. Even though outdoor relief to the able-bodied was never eliminated in arable unions, their share of workhouse inmates markedly increased after the New Poor Law. At the same time, old workhouse officers were, in many cases, replaced by those with ample experience or military careers who were expected to be able to execute new reformatory

¹²⁶ Smith, *Chaplaincy*, p. 6.

¹²⁷ Smith, *Chaplaincy*, pp. 36-37.

practices smoothly. Accepting the spatial separation of inmates as a critical element of the doctrine of less eligibility, those unions did their best to implement it, though the ideal sevenfold classification was rarely realised. The nature of work in their workhouses accorded with what the Poor Law Commissioners desired, entailing labour regimes that were disciplinary and deterrent.

By contrast, workhouses in port towns and the pastoral division, where indoor relief had comprised a significant part of overall welfare provision before the New Poor Law, were more likely to seek to preserve significant elements of their old system. However, coastal and pastoral workhouses were not comparable in many aspects of their management and organisation. The Portsea Island union was presumably aiming to create a ‘workhouse complex’, not a simple reformatory institution but a multi-functional establishment. Non-able-bodied inmates continued to predominate in the Portsea Island union workhouses, accounting for nearly 80 per cent of inmates. In these workhouses, existing officers were kept in their position even after 1834, and they were more varied than workhouse staff in arable unions. The union enforced the policy of separating inmates, but in its own way, by using its two workhouses to make distinctions that made sense to them, rather than according to instructions from the central poor law authority. The union workhouses also refused to set up a work scheme for discipline but used inmates’ labour as a means of making a profit or training them.

Pastoral workhouses, by contrast, seem to have remained ‘underdeveloped’ in many ways. Even setting aside Gilbert unions in the northeast running their workhouses for the vulnerable, pastoral parishes constituting the New Forest union sent only a few able-bodied paupers to the union workhouse, except in the case of two parishes which did battle with large-scale unemployment, Eling and Fawley, in the orbit of Southampton. Many posts in the workhouses were left vacant, and the recruiting process was unsystematic. The strict separation policy also appears to have been unfeasible in both the Gilbert union workhouses and the New

Forest union workhouse because of the lack of spatial capacity in the former case and of administrative capacity in the latter. It is also seen likely that workhouse labour schemes were poorly organised in those workhouses, even though this assumption is, for lack of alternatives, based on minimal evidence: that is, upon the one-off inventory of the Farnborough union workhouse and the sketchy notes of the chaplain of the New Forest union workhouse – though the paucity of evidence is itself suggestive of the nature of these regimes.

Conclusion

This thesis ends just before the Andover workhouse scandal which opened a new conjuncture for poor law administration and workhouse system. In 1845, one of the guardians of the Andover union, Hugh Mundy, ‘a true friend and champion of the poor’ in Ian Anstruther’s words, heard from local labourers on his farm rumours concerning men in the workhouse, who were so starving that they were actually gnawing animal bones, though rotten and stinking, before pounding them.¹ He decided to enquire into them. It was not so long before he was convinced that the story was really true. After his motion, brought to a board meeting, to discontinue the grinding of bones and report the story to the Poor Law commission failed, he wrote to Thomas Wakley, the radical MP and one of the foremost poor law antagonists, with the result of his enquiry. Wakley raised the story in the House of Commons and requested an action against it. The Home Secretary, Sir James Graham, had little choice but to promise to ask the Commission to dispatch an Assistant Commissioner, Henry Parker, for investigation. Parker quickly found out that the accusation was based on truth.²

The Times broke the appalling news in August and the local rumours about cruelties in the workhouse ballooned into a national scandal of major proportions.³ When Parliament reassembled the following January, the MP for Andover, Ralph Etwall, called for a Select Committee of Inquiry in the House of Commons. Even though the Home Secretary described the event as merely a ‘workhouse squabble’, the newly-appointed committee, containing three leading opponents of the law, Thomas Wakley, John Fielden, and Benjamin Disraeli, pushed its powers to the limit. It targeted both central and local officials and revealed what it claimed

¹ Anstruther, *Scandal*, pp. 112, 133-134.

² Anstruther, *Scandal*, p. 136; Peter Gurney, ‘The Andover Cannibalism’: Popular entitlement and the New Poor Law’, in Peter Gurney (ed), *Wanting and Having: Popular Politics and Liberal Consumerism in England, 1830-70* (Manchester, 2015), pp. 83-84.

³ *The Times*, 16 August 1845.

was the Poor Law Commission's incompetence and inner disharmony, as well as the misconduct of Andover guardians and the workhouse master. A fundamental reorganisation of the poor law system was now heralded. In 1847, the five-year term of the Poor Law Commission expired, and a reorganisation bill was introduced under the Lord John Russell's government. The liberal government replaced the Commission with a Poor Law Board. As the president and one of the two secretaries were to sit in Parliament, the new central agency seemingly became less autonomous and also less controversial under tighter public scrutiny and the New Poor Law itself also became less contentious under the new system.⁴ Following the scandal, there was a significant change to the employment practices in union workhouses, as a General Order was issued to prohibit bone-crushing in workhouses in November 1845, and guardians were forced to find an alternative work for their inmates.⁵ However, the scandal achieved little to improve workhouse lives, but instead stuck terror into labouring classes and solidified the menacing reputation of the workhouse according to Peter Gurney.⁶

This thesis has attempted to turn the direction of workhouse studies from a top-down or bottom-up approach to the horizontal integration of diverse variables constituting workhouse ecologies – at least by way of offering a fresh approach; it is not suggested that all studies henceforth should follow this model. As we have seen, the county of Hampshire can be classified into three divisions in geo-economic terms: arable, coastal and pastoral. The three divisions were characterised by distinctive, but multifaceted, socioeconomic structures, each with certain identical features internally, as chapter one has shown. I argue in this first chapter that poor law administrative patterns including workhouse distribution were the outcome of complex combinations characterising the divisional structures as well as the interaction between central and local authorities and the negotiation between poor relief suppliers and

⁴ Brundage, *English*, pp. 88-89.

⁵ Shave, *Pauper*, pp. 227-231.

⁶ Gurney, 'Andover', pp. 94-95.

demanders. This argument has been elaborated in chapter two on the basis of statistical analyses, setting the scene for a deep dive into individual workhouse parishes on the evidence of their administrative documents.

As under the Old Poor Law parishes were permitted to exert discretionary power as to all aspects of institutional provision and administration, they manifest intra-county variation, such as in the timing and the size of establishments, approaches to funding and types of management. As traced in chapter three, these differences reflected not only varying ecological circumstances, including the economic conditions of parochial ratepaying classes, parish population, and the presence of wealthy landlords, but also different parish-level responses adopted to ameliorate either local or broader forms of need. The demography of workhouse residents and their living conditions differed by division, as chapters four and five have shown. The size and composition of workhouse populations were basically determined by negotiations between parish officials and relief applicants. As factors on the demand side and supply side were various and variable and mixed in different ways in different parishes, the number and age and gender profile of workhouse inmates varied between the divisions and changed over time. Workhouse functions are here distinguished into care (diets and medical aid), discipline (tight rules and restrictions) and work (for profit, training or moral reform). Most workhouses multitasked all three functions, but there were regional differences in the balance between the functions and the approach to the same functions.

While many historians who have engaged in debate about the revolutionary nature of the New Poor Law of 1834 have pointed to inter-county variation, I argue here that though there was a significant transition in poor relief arrangements, including in the workhouse landscape, these changes differed in degree even within a single county, Hampshire, where we find that past regional patterns shaped under the Old Poor Law continued to have an impact on

it (chapter seven).⁷ The imposition of uniformity on poor relief administration including the running of union workhouses failed in this county, as previous studies might lead us to expect, but what I emphasise in chapter eight is that regional diversity evident under the Old Poor Law played an important part in shaping intra-county differences in the composition of workhouse populations and workhouse operating policies.

When it comes to the methods employed in this thesis, I have shown that underexploited parliamentary poor law returns contain numerical data that make it possible systematically to study a whole county (or in principle any other collection of parishes a researcher chose to focus on). The returns provide a framework that can help the search for pattern and meaning amidst patchily surviving administrative records. And the county is a worthwhile unit of study, poised between the parish and the nation, particularly insofar as it permits an ‘ecological’ approach to finding patterns and meaning in the records. Of course, many historians have tried to set poor-law regimes in local context, especially since the work of John Broad and Steve Hindle, whose studies emphasised the internal dynamics within parishes as a basis for understanding poor-law practices (Hindle was among the first historians to apply the term ‘ecology’ to exploring local variations in welfare provision). Building on his pioneering explorations of this approach, Steve King’s recent study of medical welfare categorises sample communities into several types (pastoral, arable, lowland, upland, industrial, proto-industrial, urban and small rural areas) to highlight the potential of combining attention to local circumstances with constructing a much larger picture of similarity and difference. That is what I hope also to have done in the context of the three divisions within Hampshire.

Although the divisions have proved to provide a useful analytical framework, supplemented by the urban/rural parish distinction, of course there was also variation within

⁷ Brundage, ‘Landed’ pp. 27-48; Dunkley, ‘Landed’, pp. 836-841; Digby, ‘Rural’, pp. 149-170.

divisions. In the thesis, I have aimed to find patterns, but I have not tried just to generalise: rather, also to be attentive to the distinct features of different places, and to show their bearing on workhouse regimes. For example, a couple of parishes in the New Forest, Eling and Fawley, have been identified as having had more seasonality in employment than other pastoral parishes because of their close association with a big port town, Southampton, and their water-trade oriented economies. Another example is the difference between Portsmouth and Portsea. The former was a fortified garrison town with a sizable dockyard, naval base and barracks while the latter was developed as suburbs outside the wall to house navy and shipbuilding-related labourers. Overall, I have tried to combine generalisation and abstraction with vivid human detail, in terms of highlighting the distinct kinds of need generated by different socio-economic features.

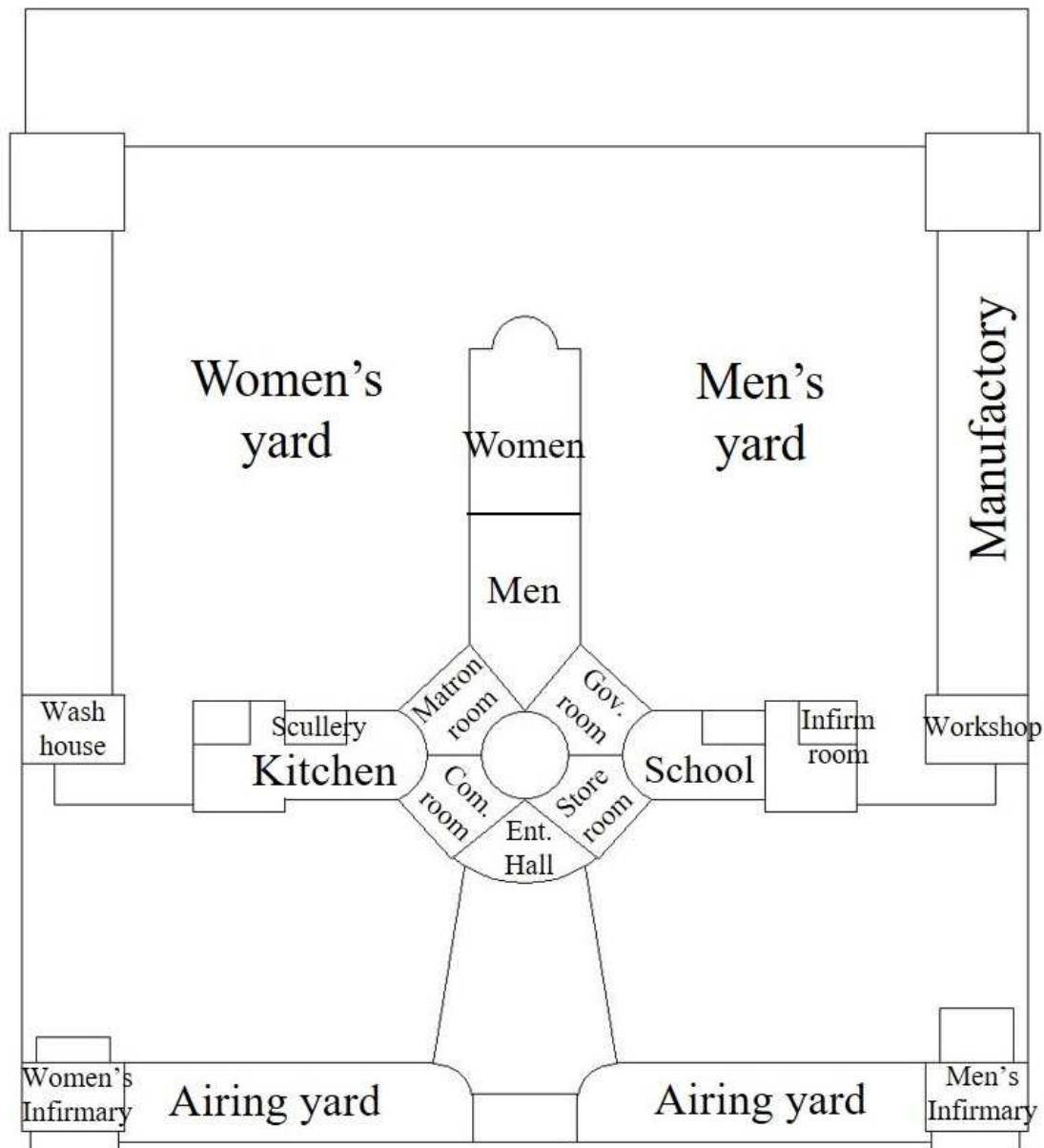
Among the more interesting things illuminated by the thesis, in terms of making points that are new in relation to the existing literature, is, first of all, the statistical demonstration of the existence of varying workhouse ecologies, which justifies what I have done with manuscript documents. The qualitative analysis discloses that there was a considerable expansion in the physical distribution of workhouses in Hampshire in the 1790s, even after the establishment of the Speenhamland system. The thesis furthermore sheds light on diverse dimensions of workhouse functioning. Rather than sticking to well-recognised roles of workhouses, as a deterrent and a shelter for the vulnerable, I attempt to identify other functions to which historians have given little attention, such as operating as holding pens in the removal system and places of useful and productive work for the poor, with implications for their location and timing. Some under-explored aspects of workhouse lives have also been dealt with. For instance, we look not just at the nutritional value but also the enjoyability of workhouse food. Lastly, it is suggested that a lack of uniformity in the New Poor Law regime was to some

extent caused by certain features of workhouse ecologies formed under the Old Poor Law surviving and exercising an influence on the construction of a new workhouse system.

The history of poor relief in general and of workhouses in particular remains an exciting field of study, with much underexploited potential, which historians continue to try to realise. I hope to have made a contribution to that endeavour.

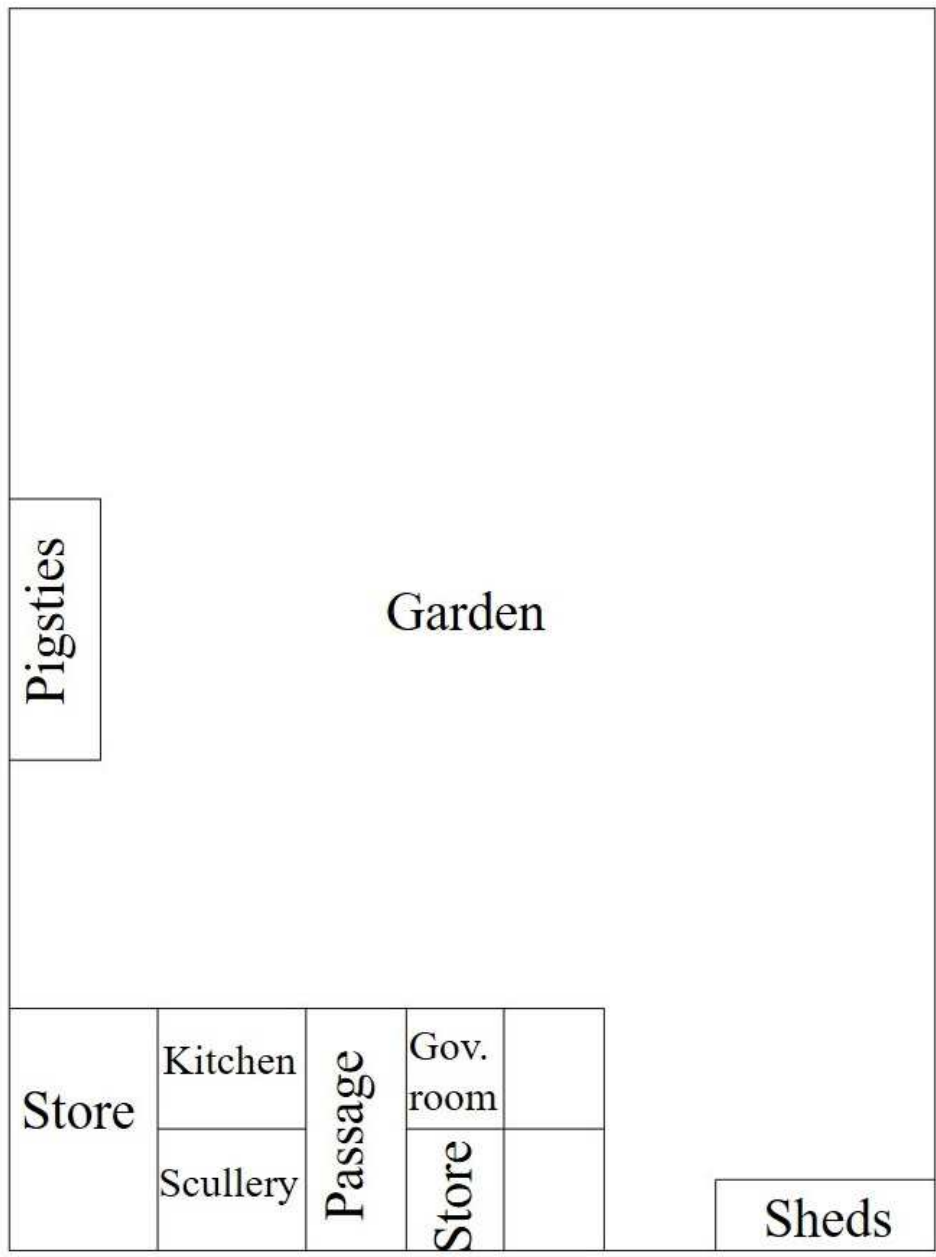
Appendix: Workhouse ground plans from A'Court's correspondence (MH32/1-2)¹

Alverstoke workhouse

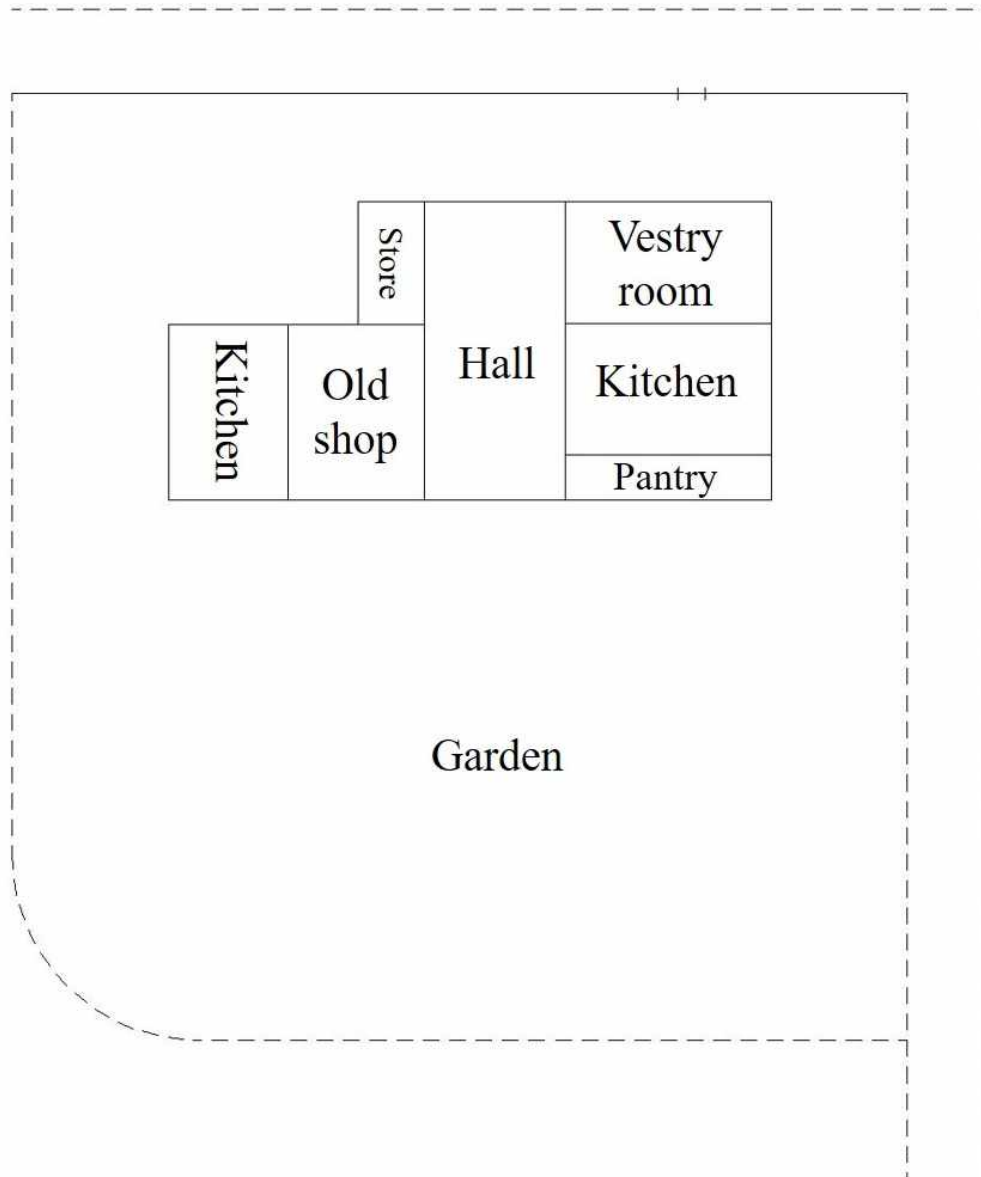


¹ I would like to thank Seungil Kang for drawing the workhouse plans.

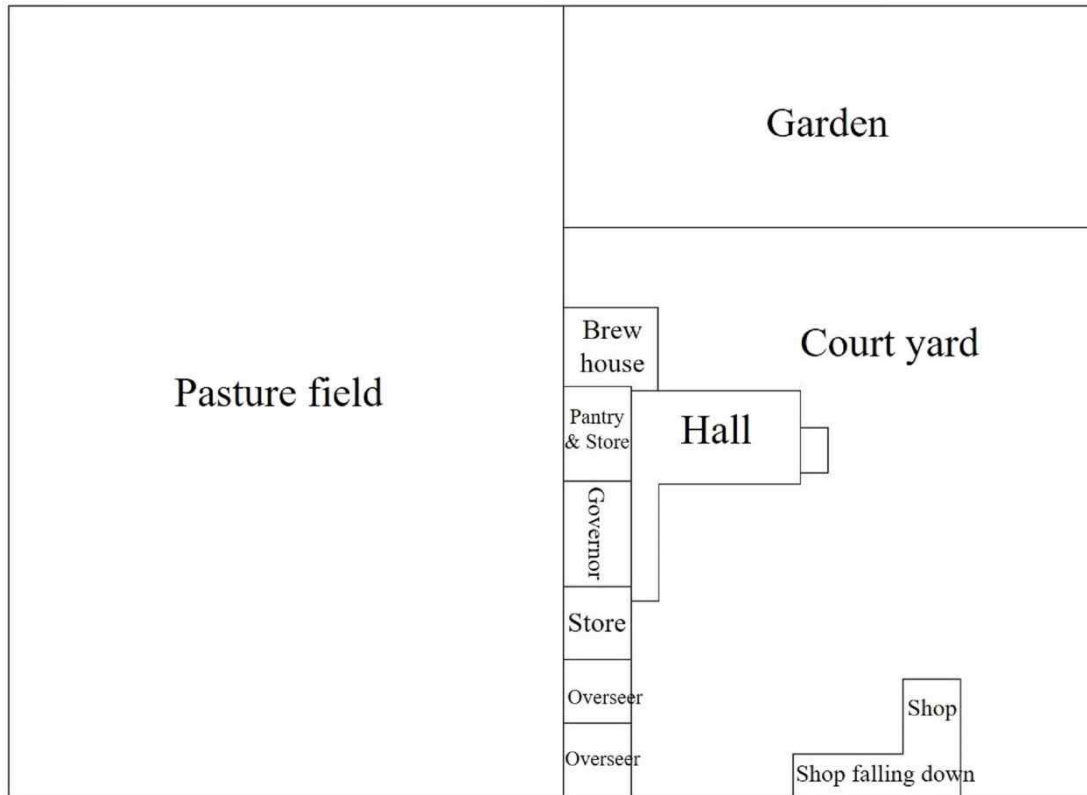
Beaulieu workhouse



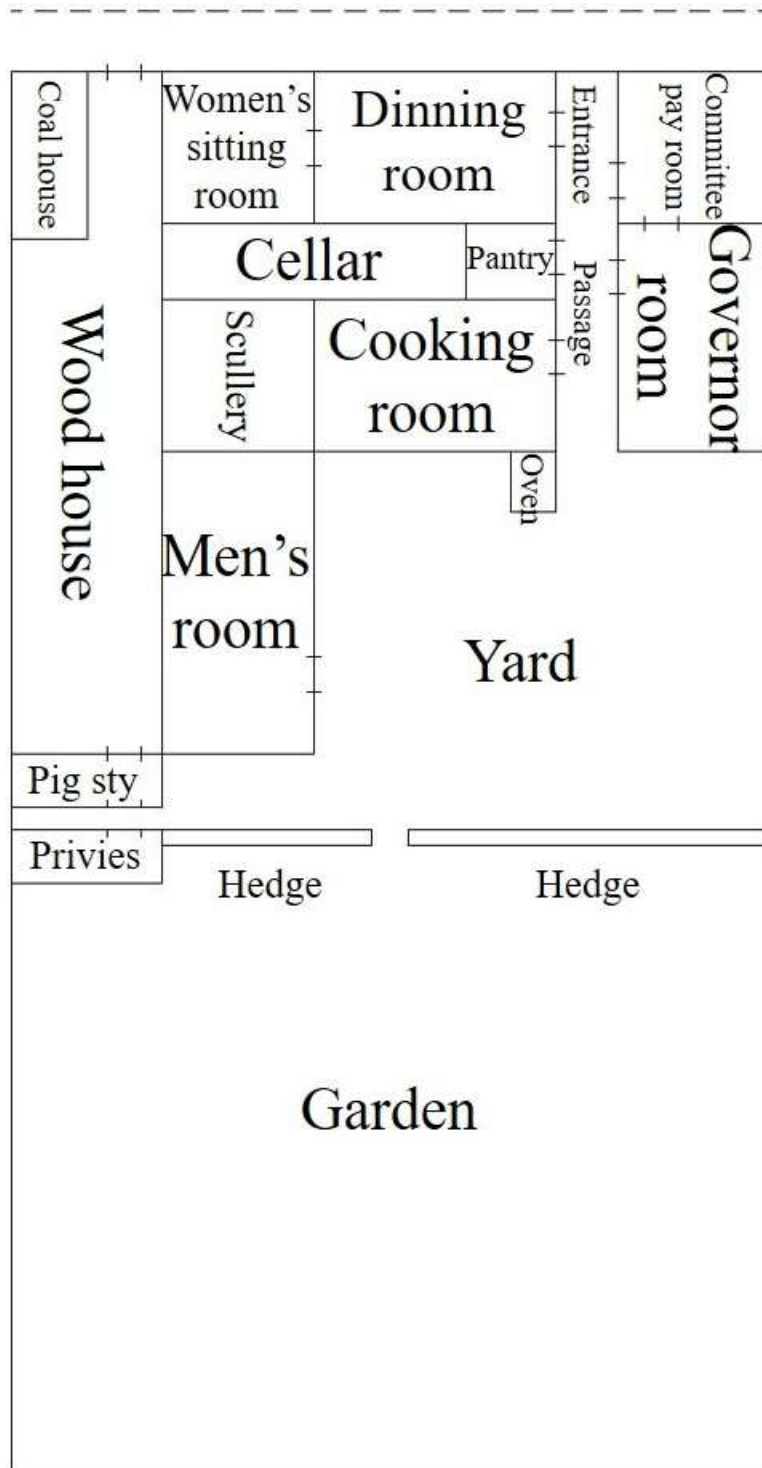
Bentworth workhouse



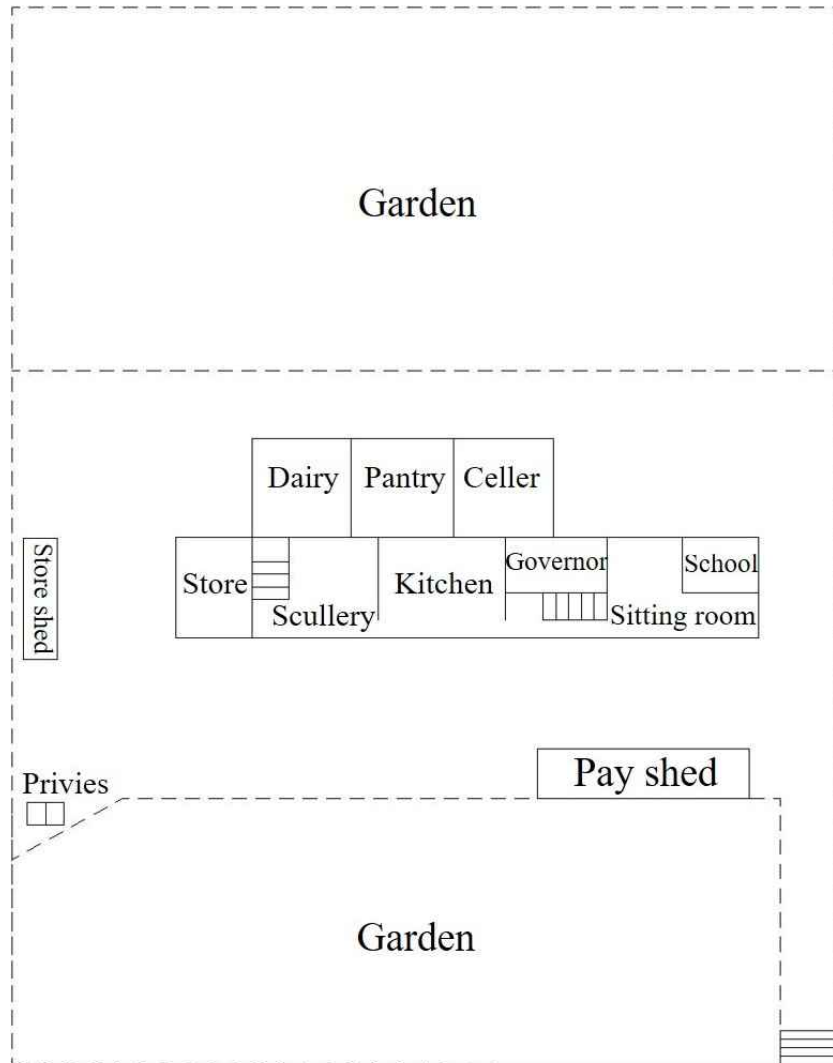
Binsted workhouse



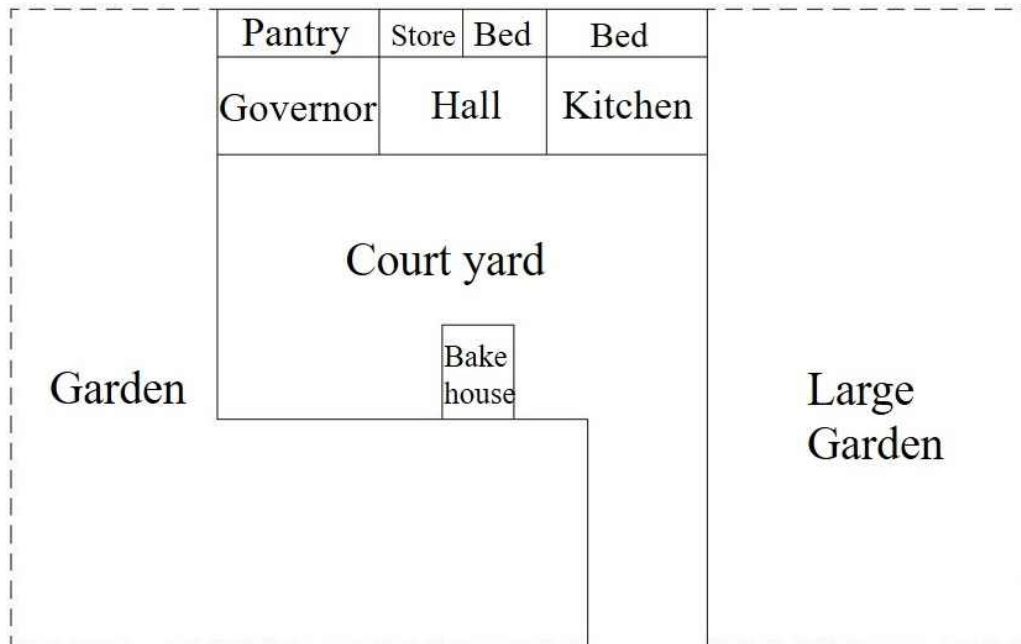
Bishop's Waltham workhouse



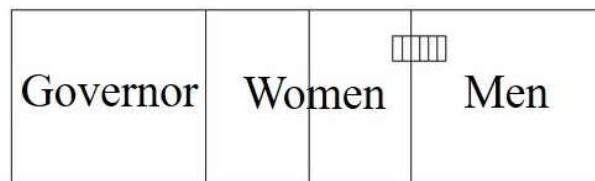
Boldre workhouse



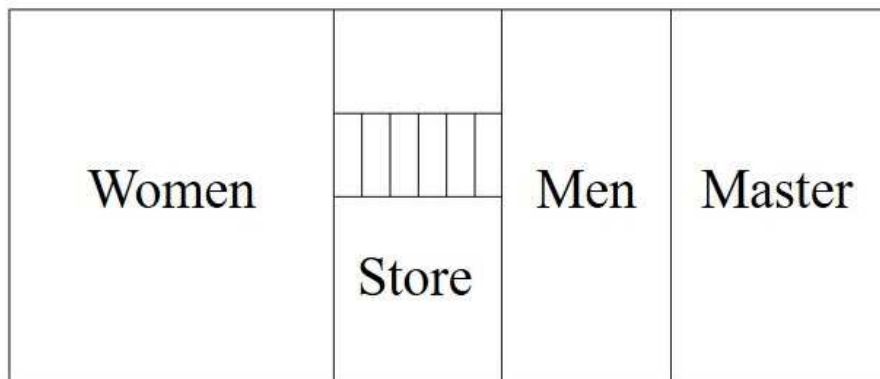
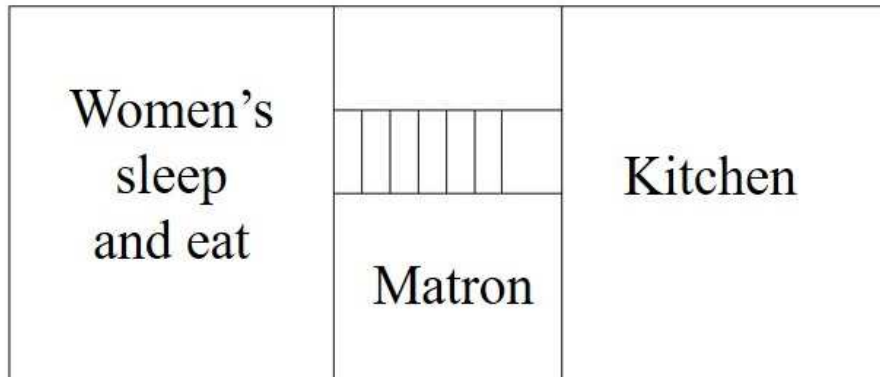
Botley workhouse



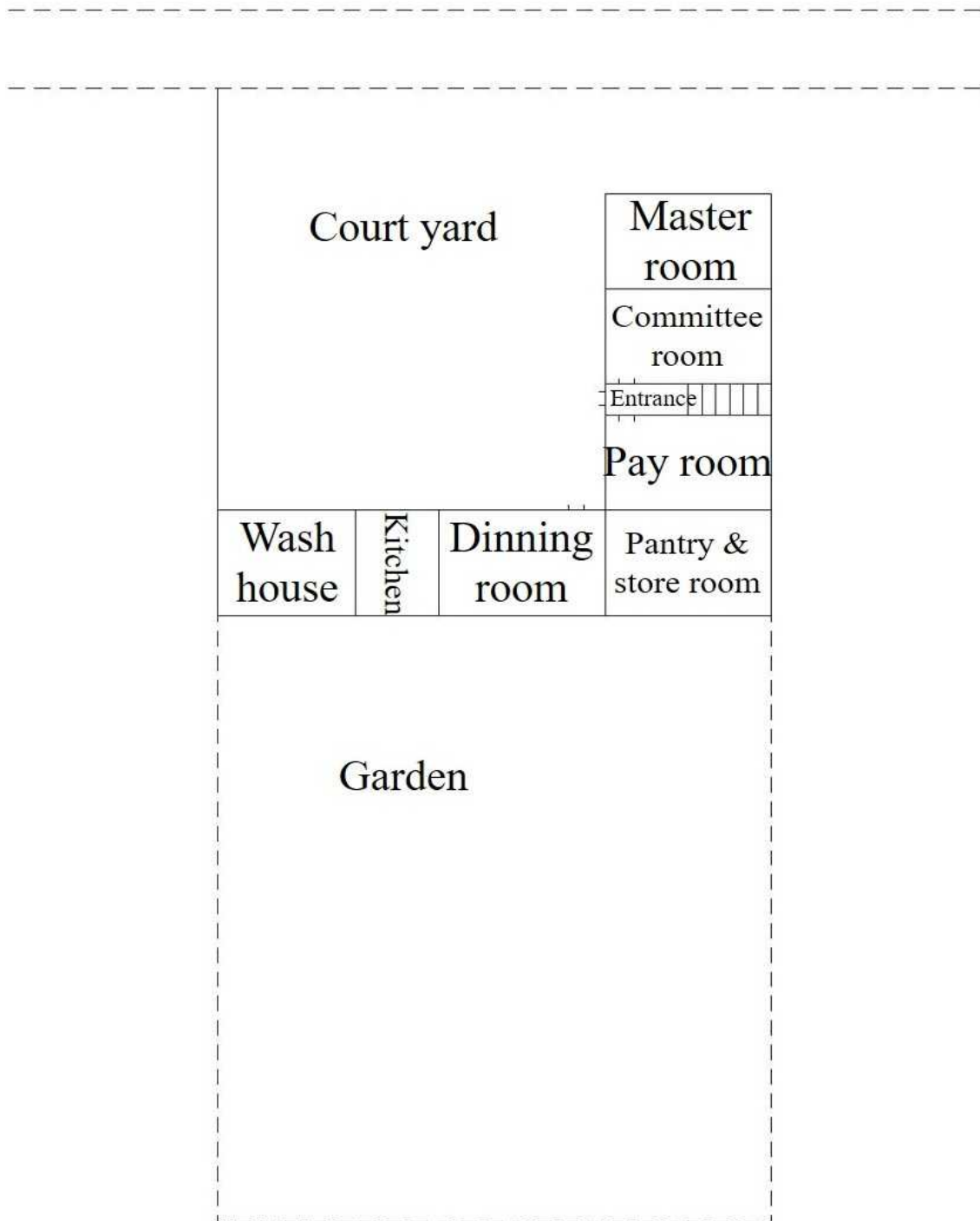
Bed rooms



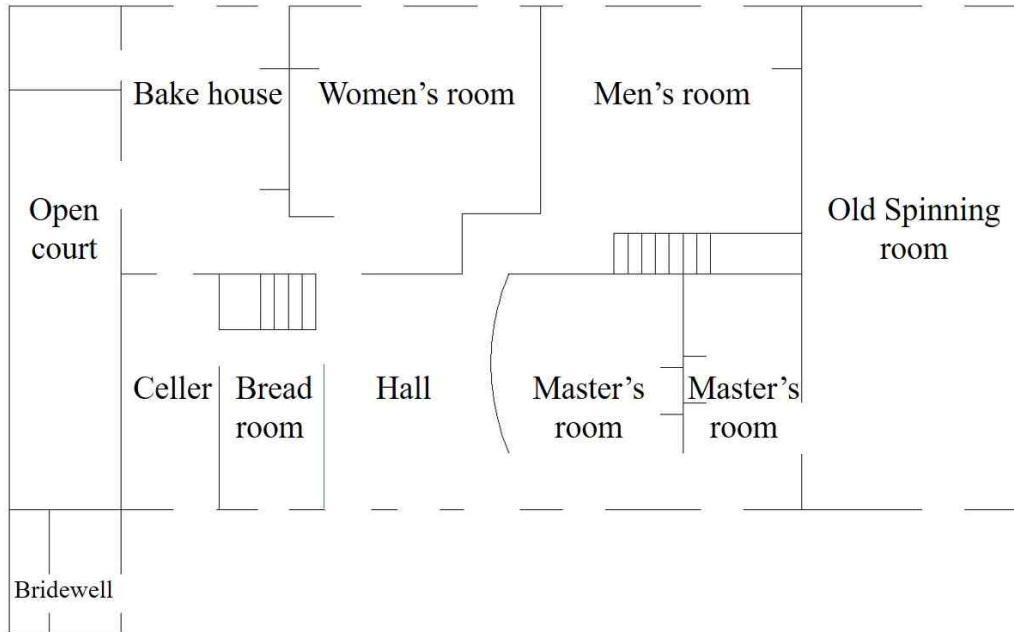
Brockenhurst workhouse



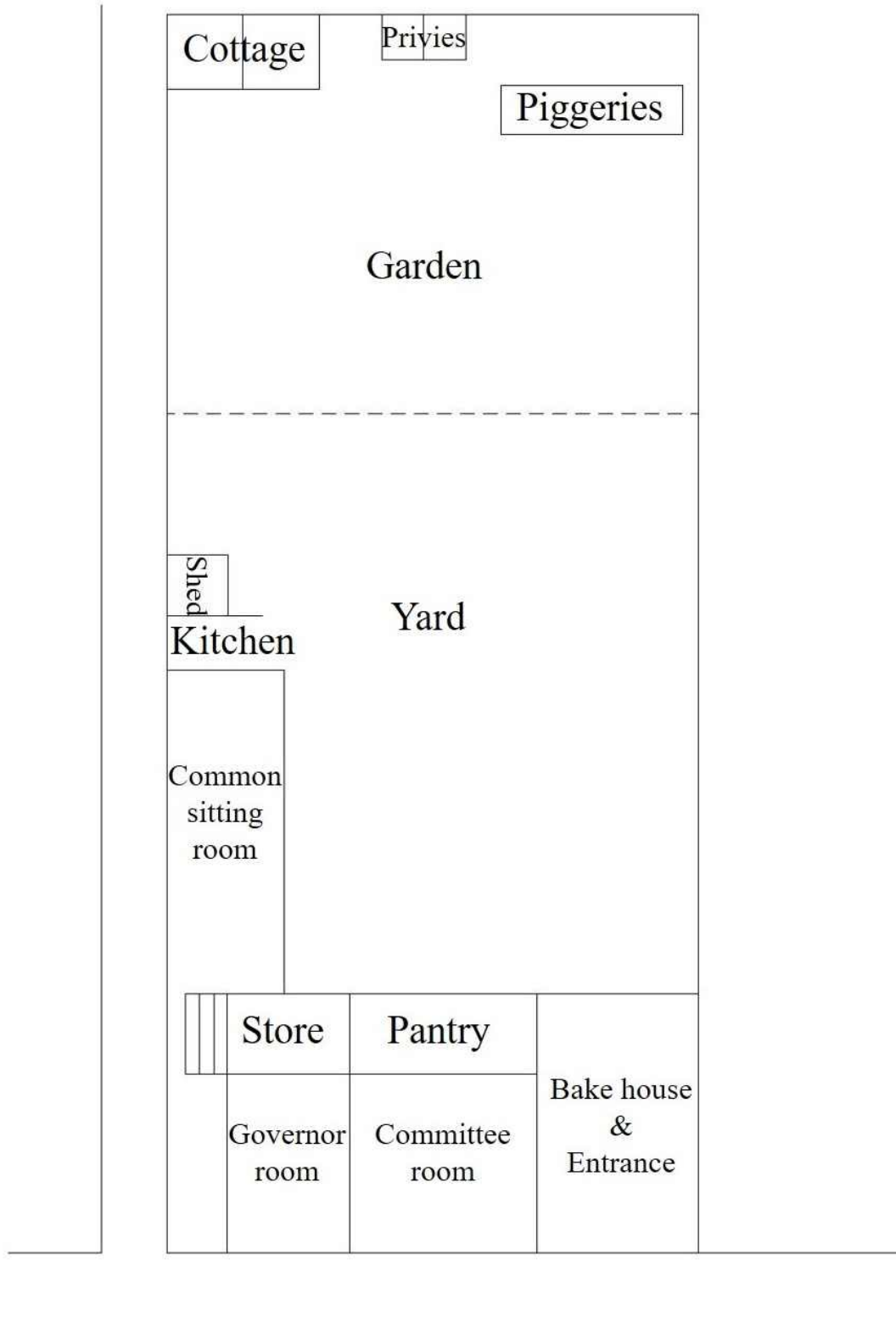
Droxford workhouse



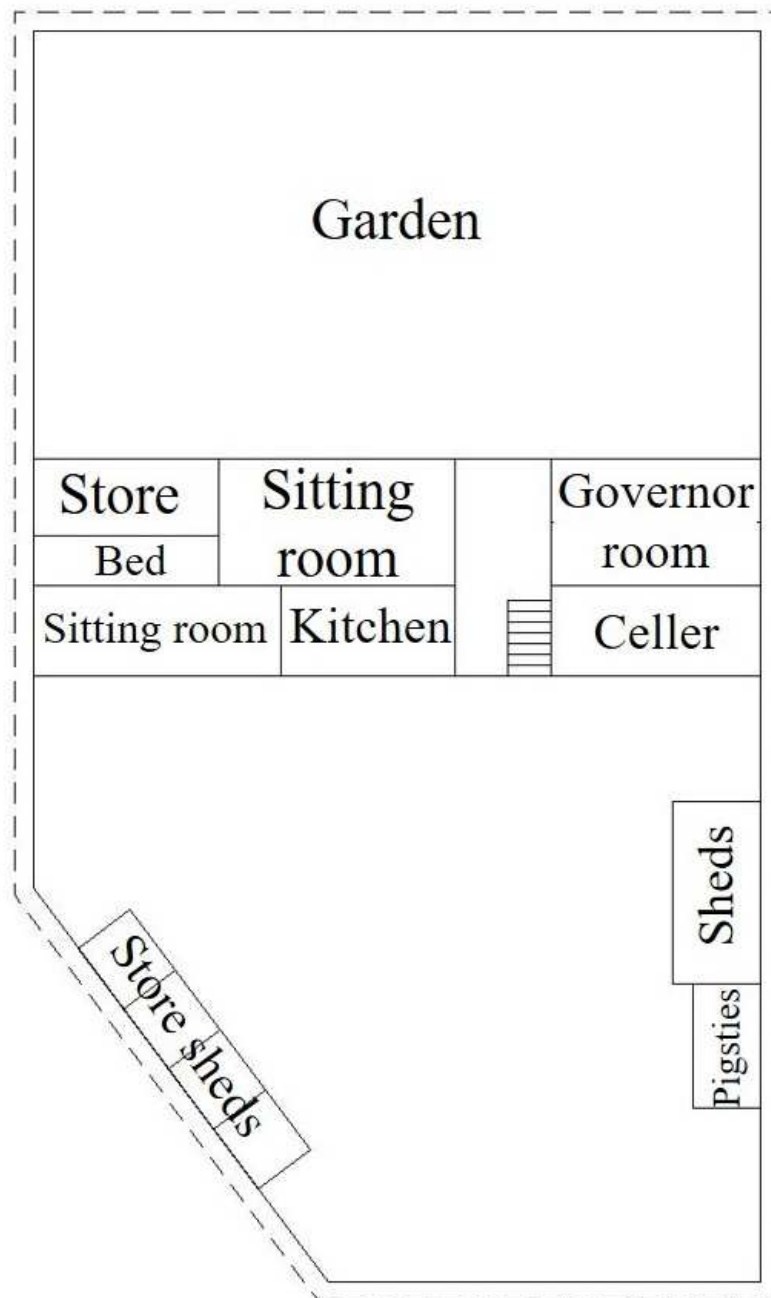
Eling workhouse



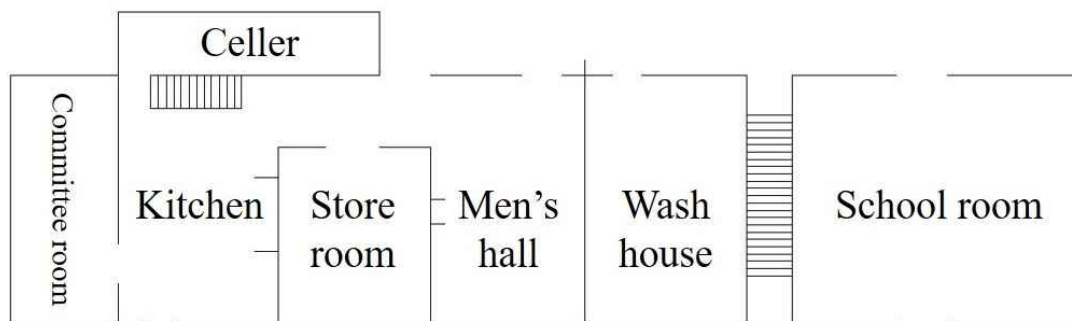
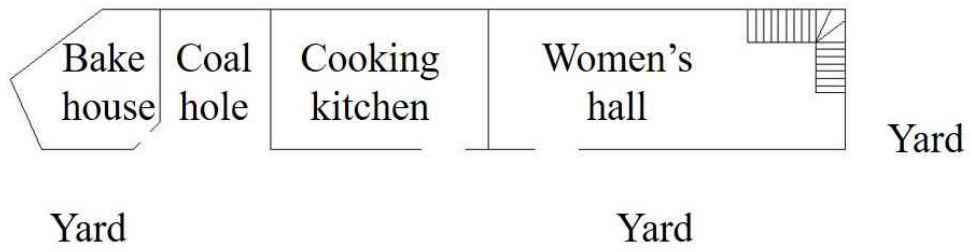
Fareham workhouse



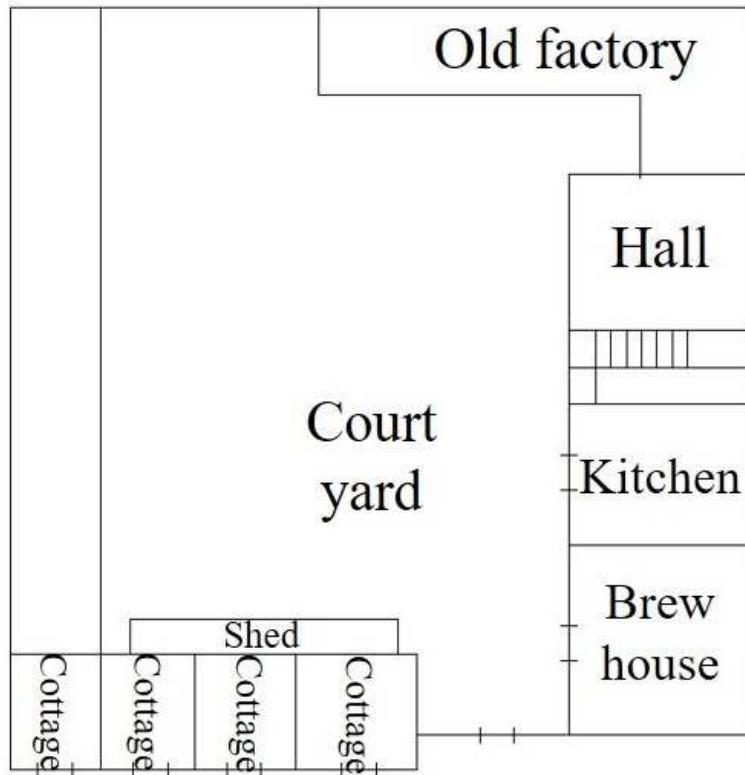
Fawley workhouse



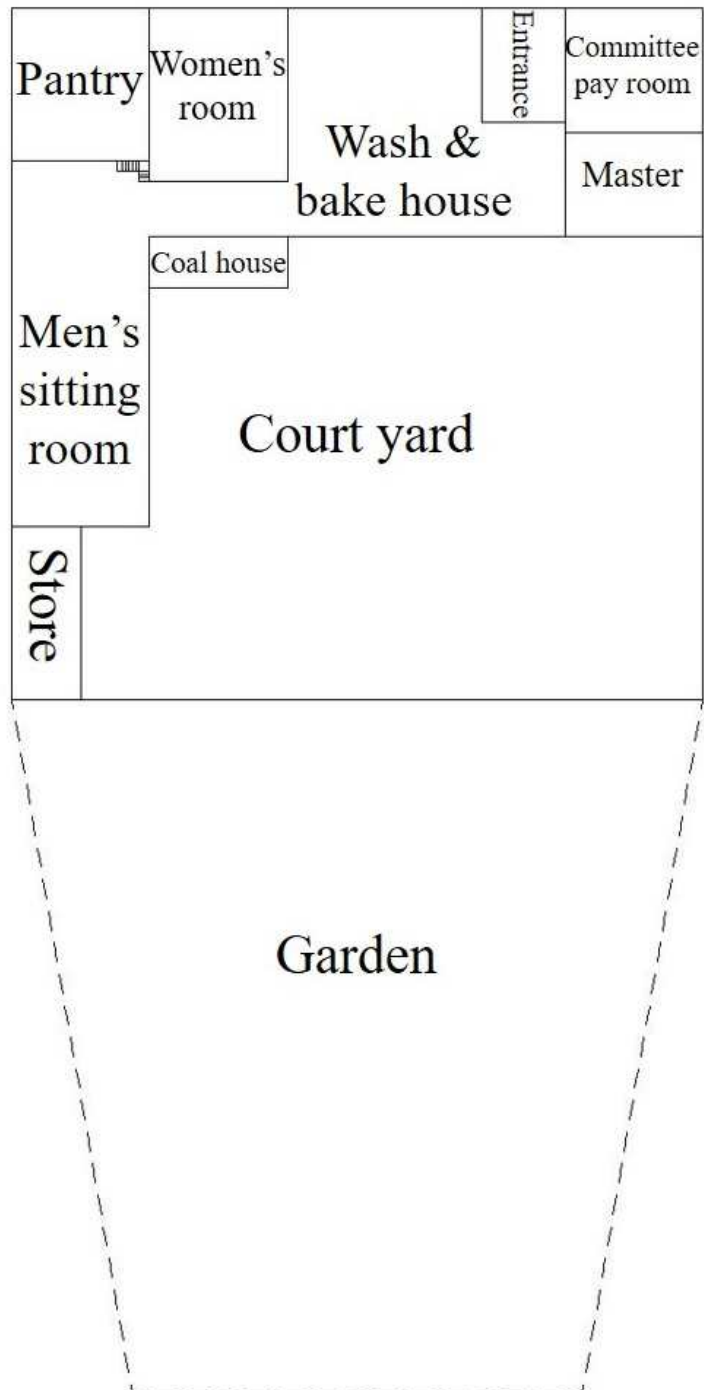
Fordingbridge workhouse



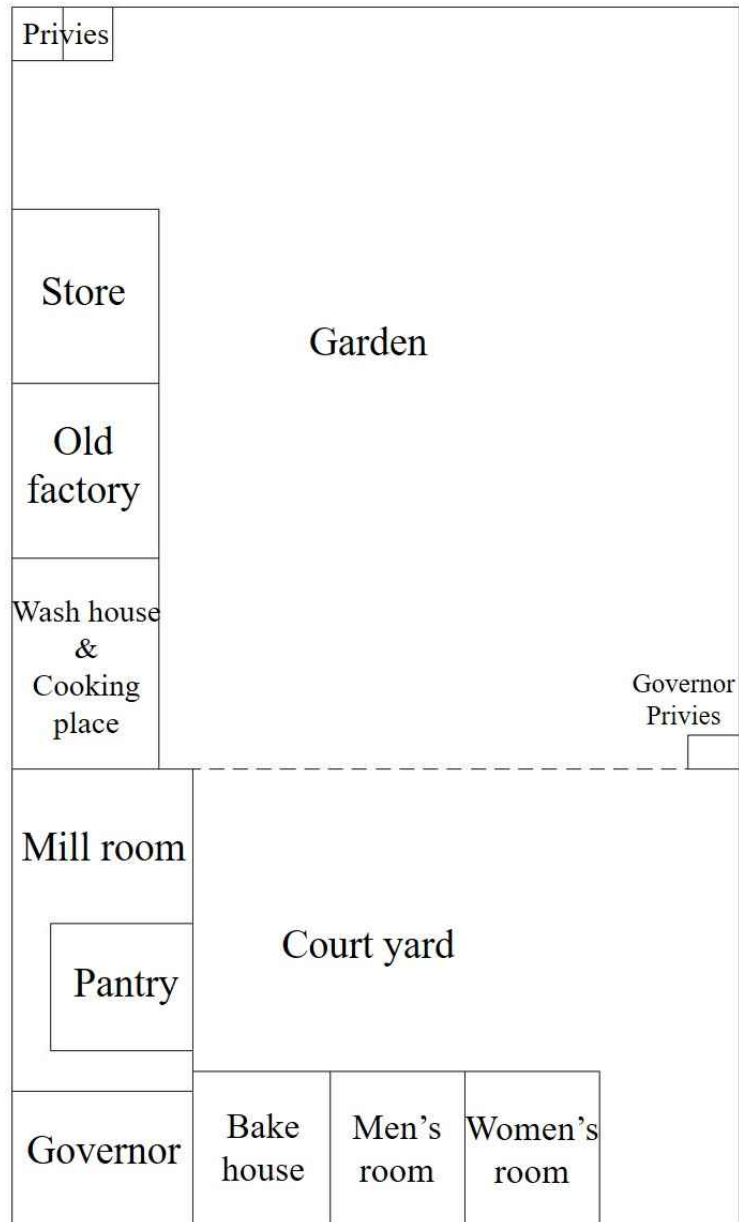
Froyle workhouse



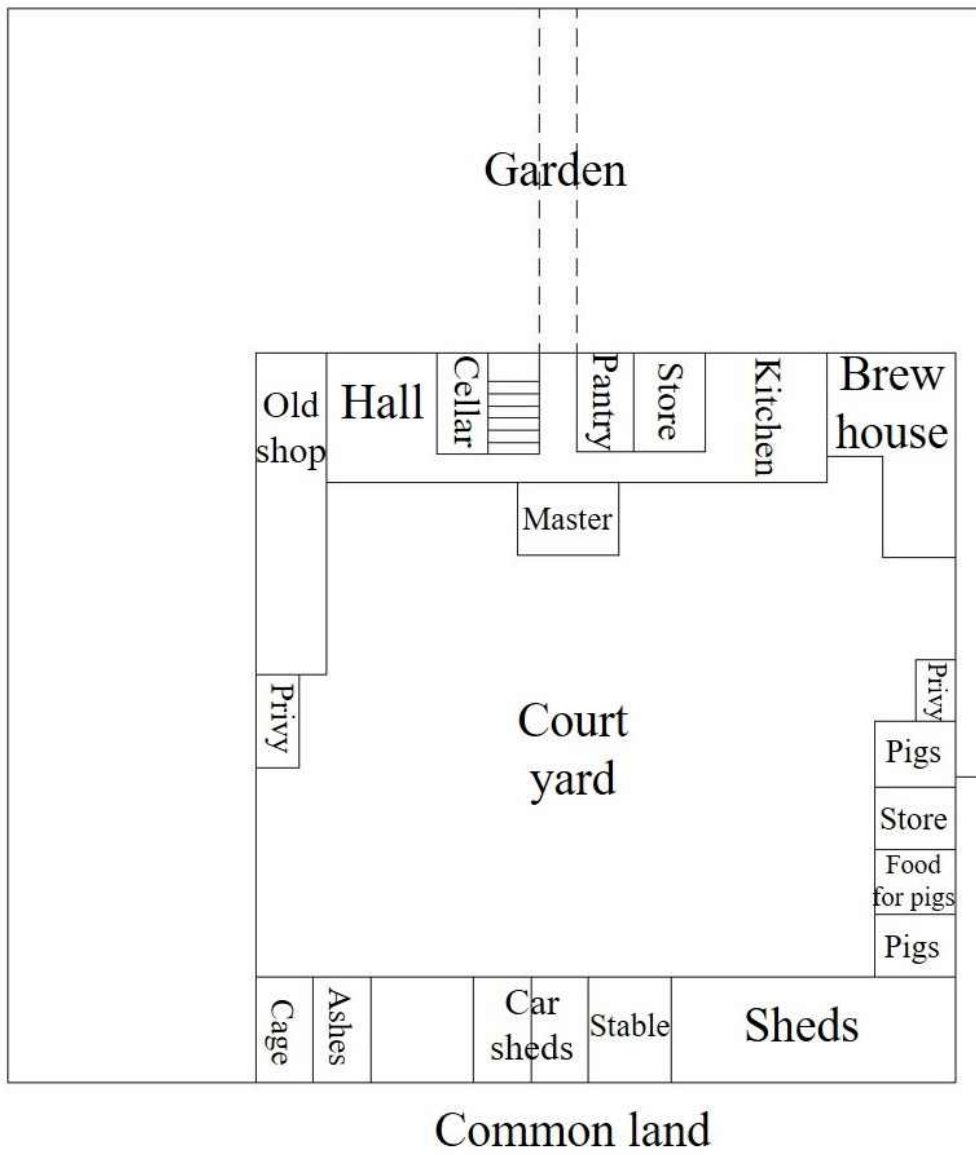
Hambleton workhouse



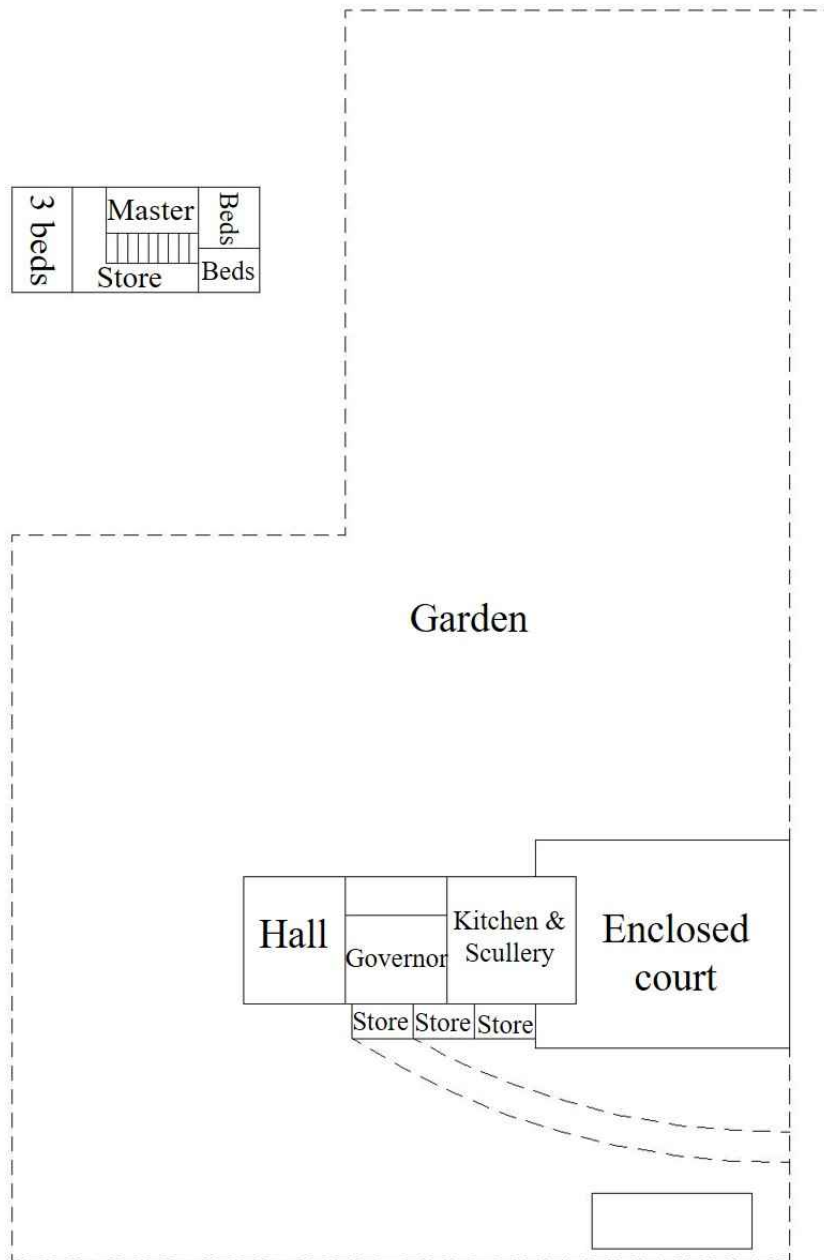
Havant workhouse



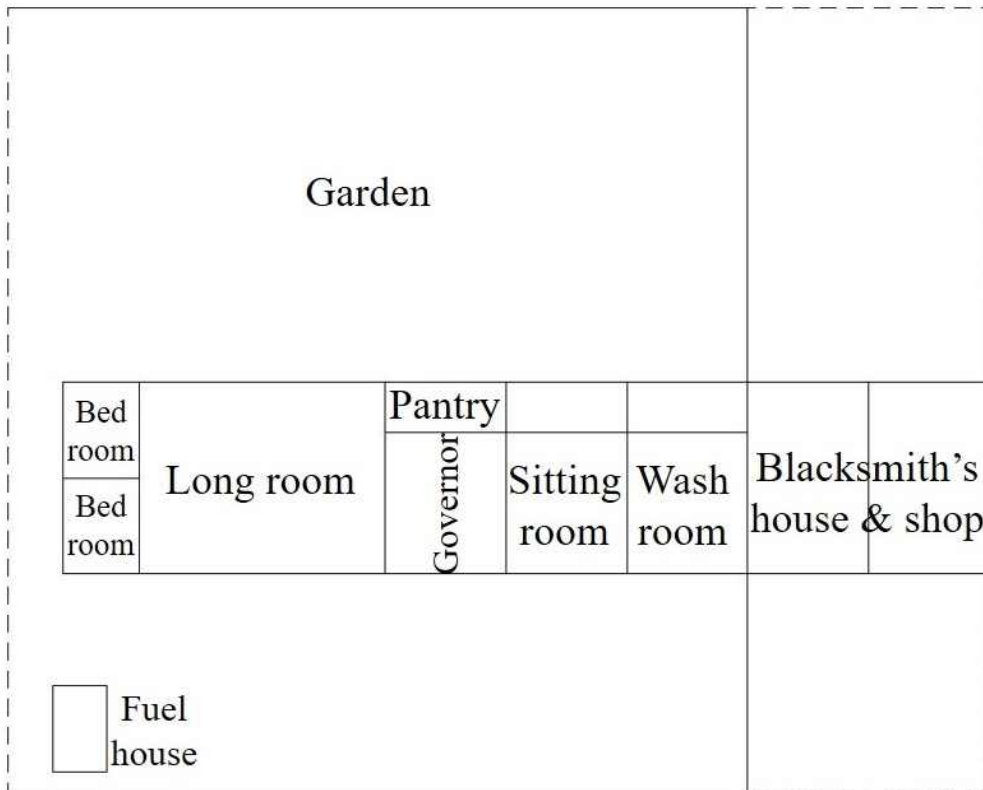
Headley workhouse



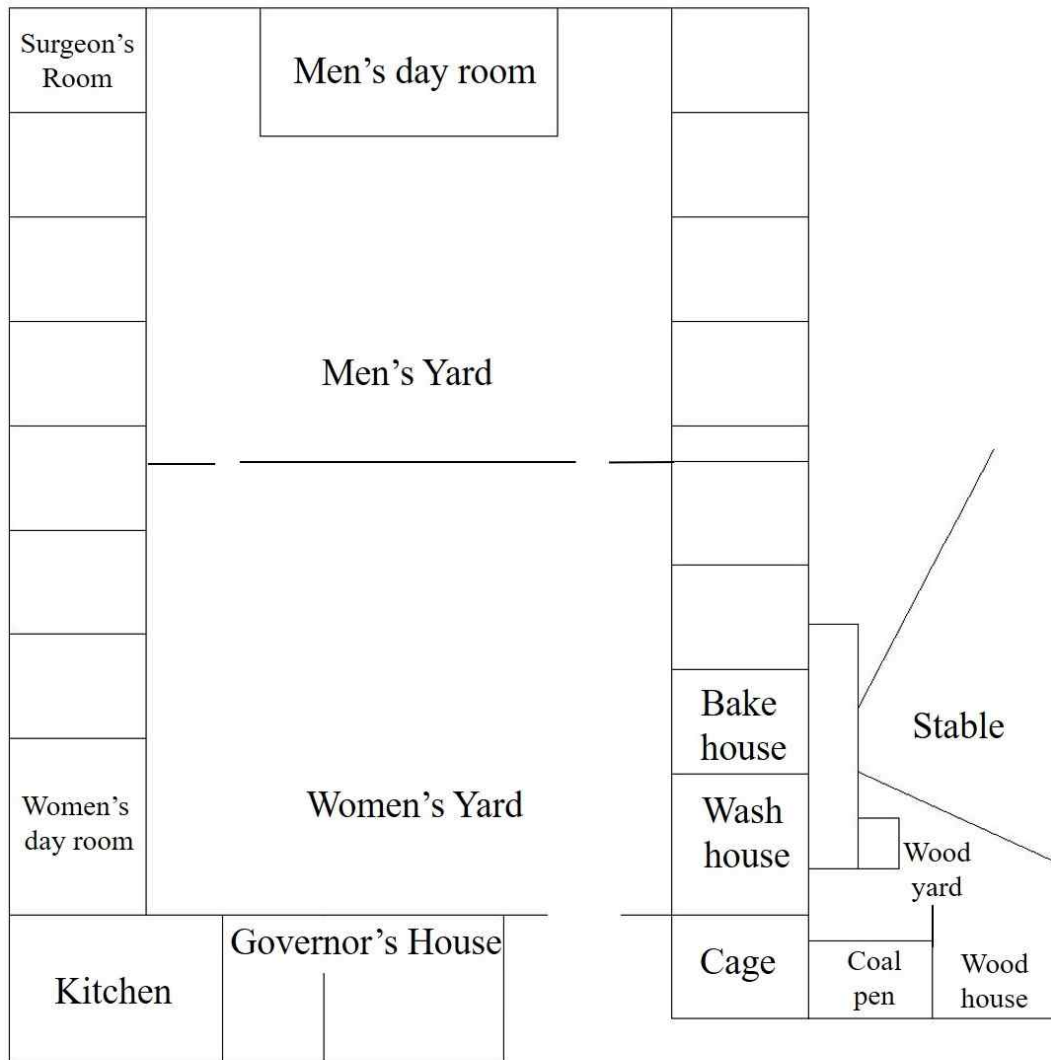
Hordle workhouse



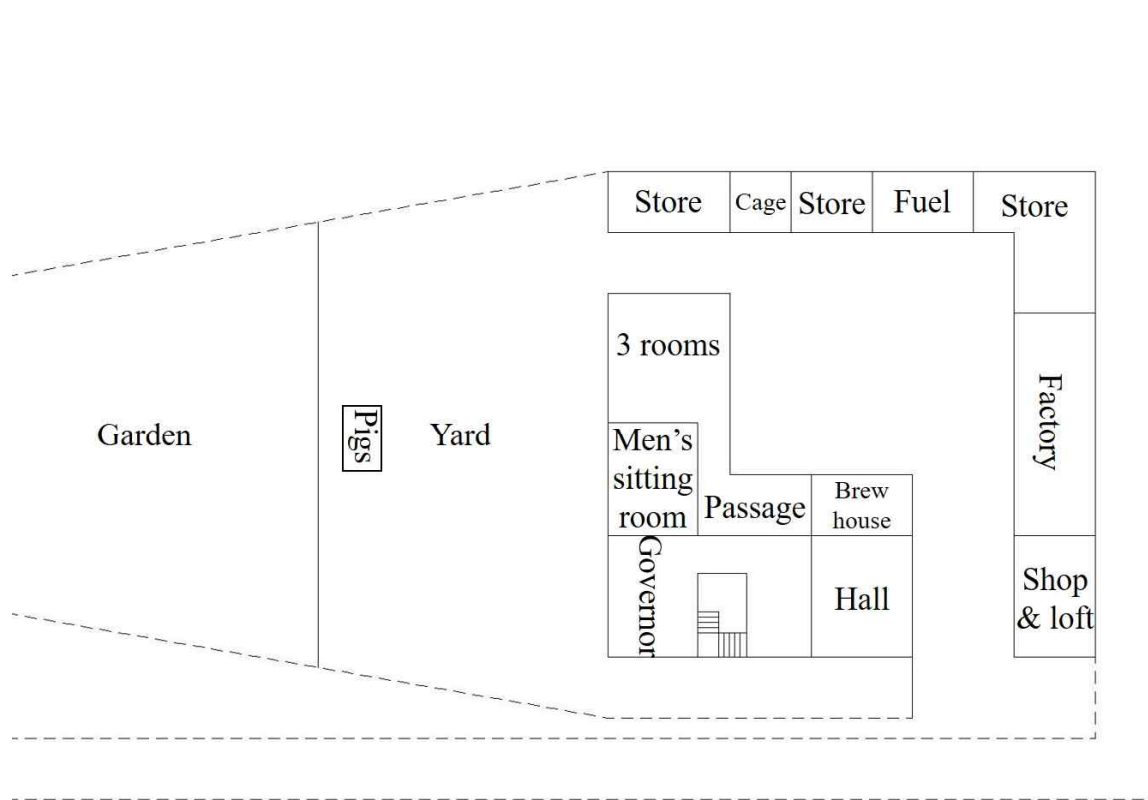
Hound workhouse



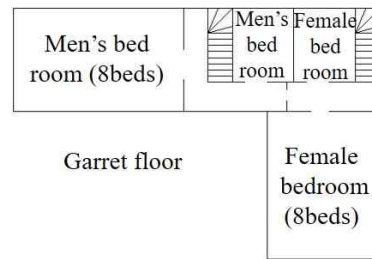
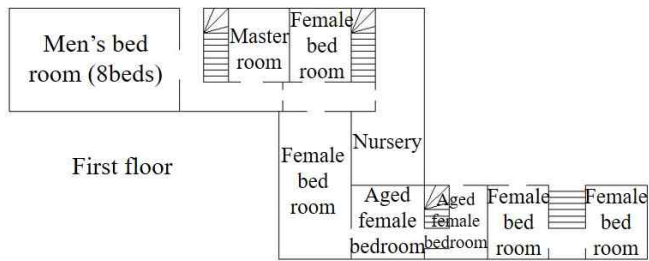
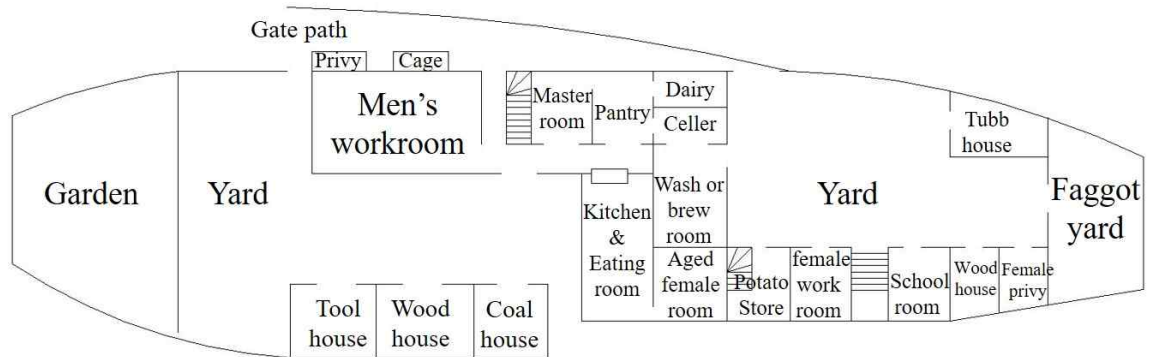
Hursley workhouse



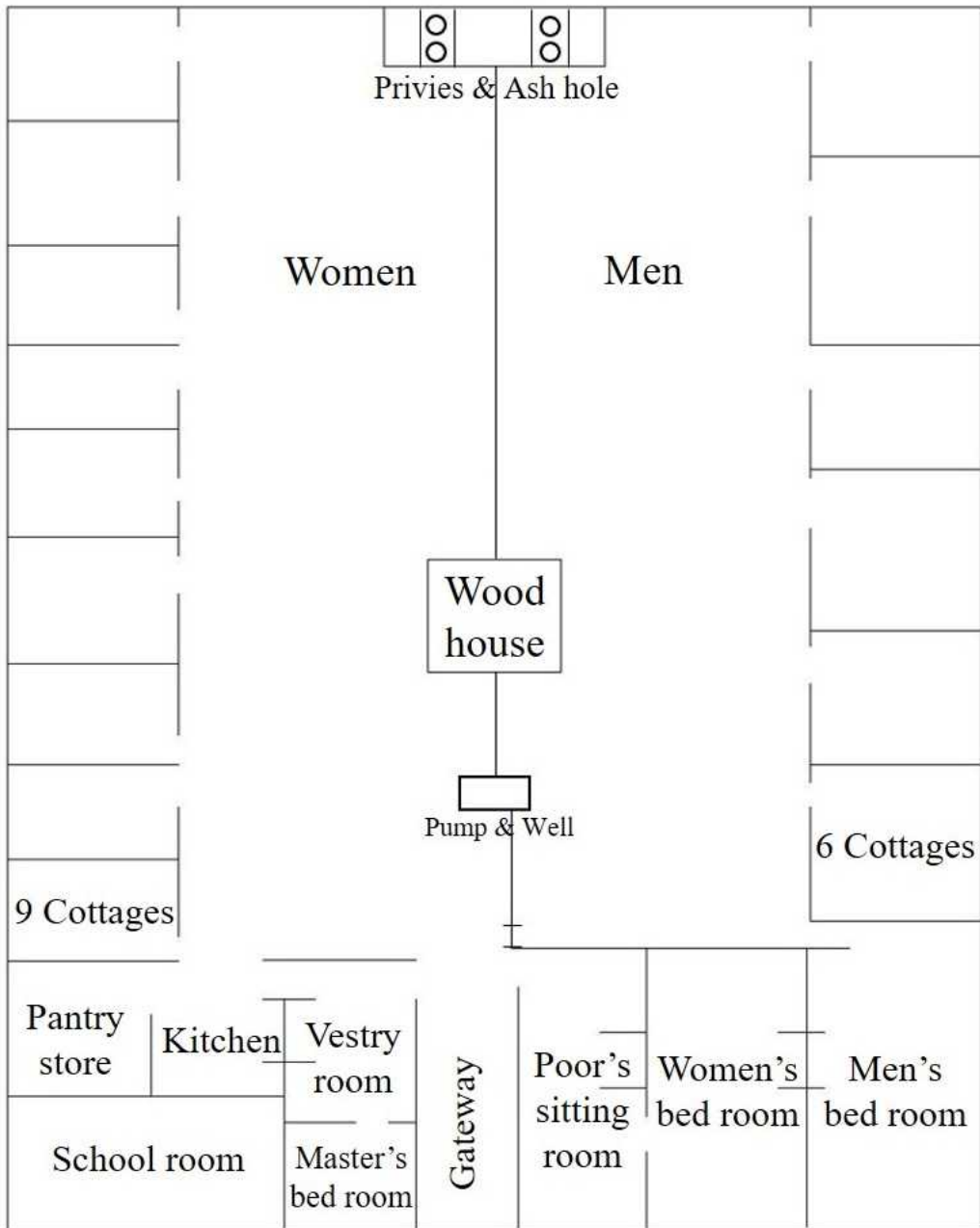
Kingsclere workhouse



Lymington workhouse

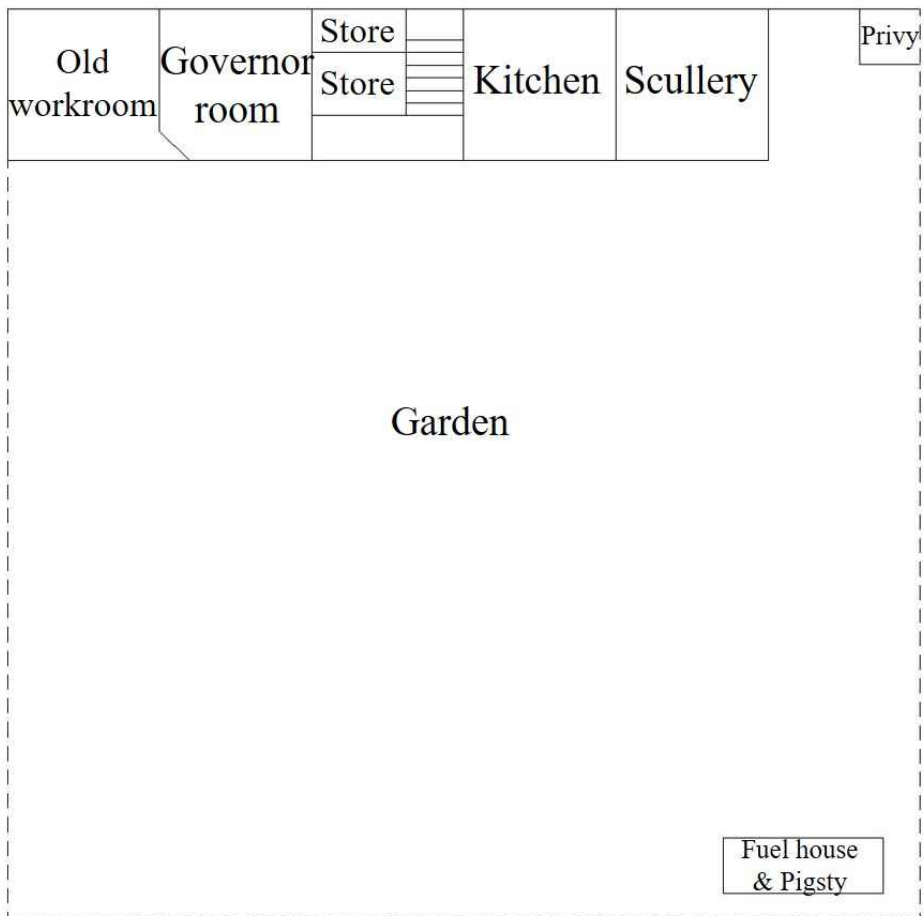


Millbrook workhouse

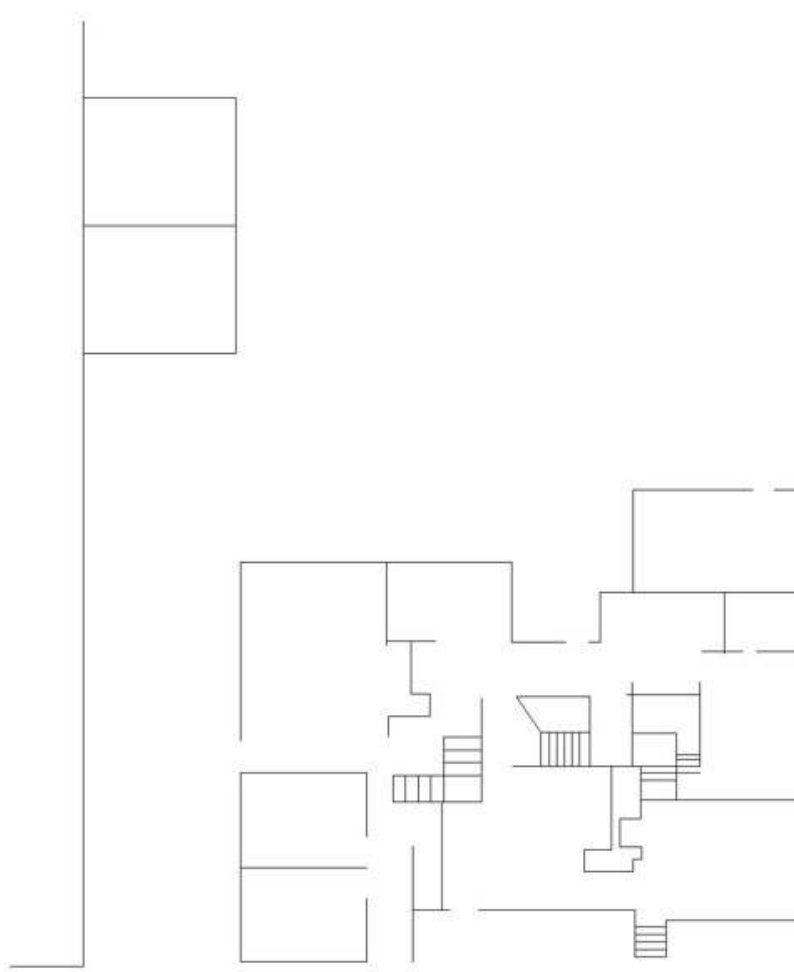


Milton workhouse

Women	Men			Women	Women
Women		Governor bedroom			



New Alresford workhouse



North Stoneham workhouse

Garden

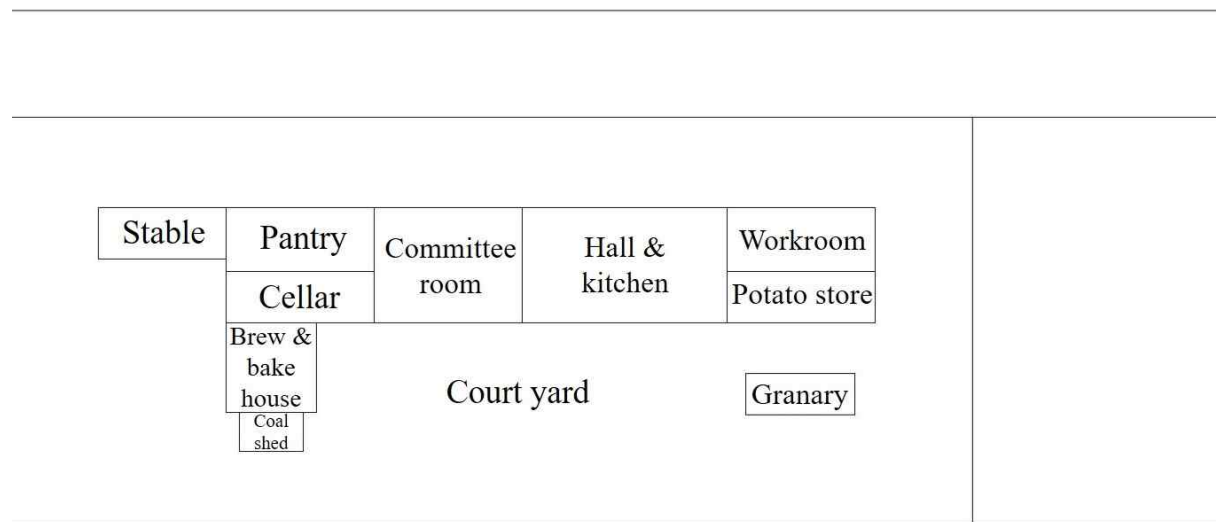
Men & boy's sleeping room	Pantry		Committee room	Women sitting room
	Store			
Men's sitting room	Men's yard		Women's yard	

Garden

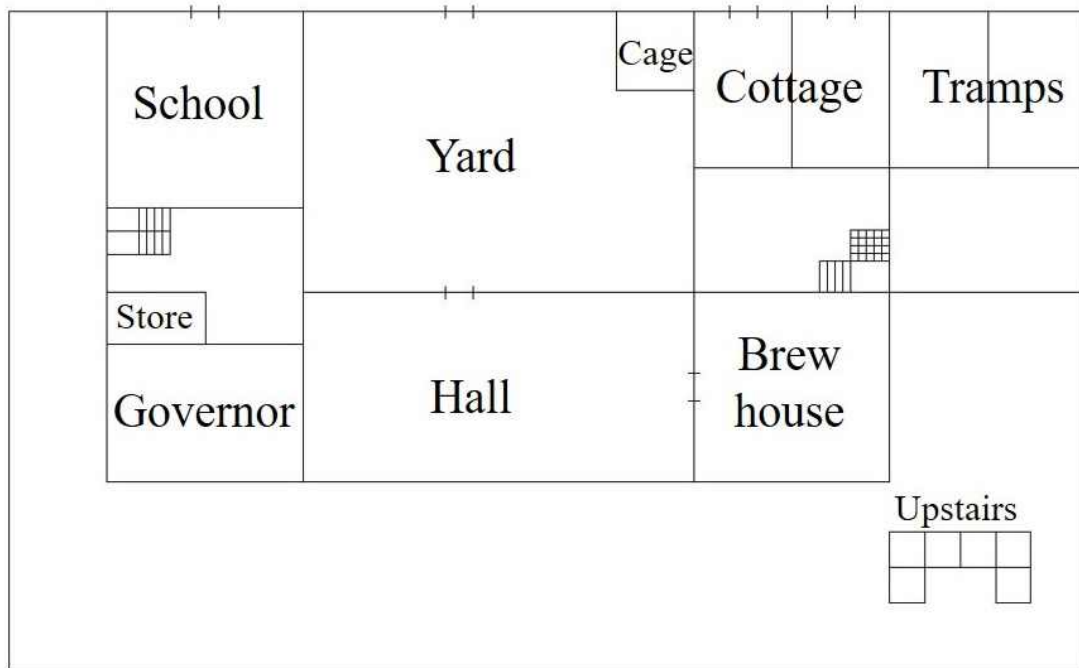
Bedroom floor

Men	Store	Store	Governor bedroom	Women
		Store		
Men				Women
Men				Women
Men				Women

Odiham workhouse



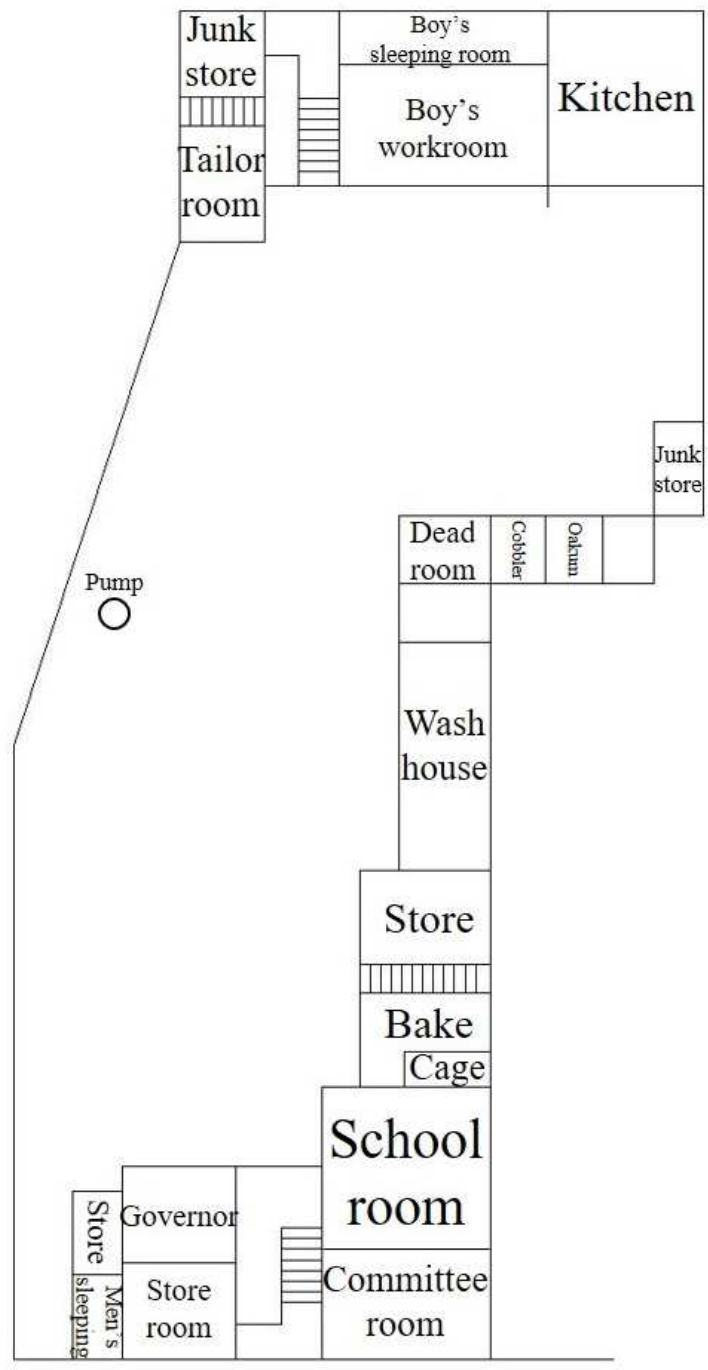
Overton workhouse



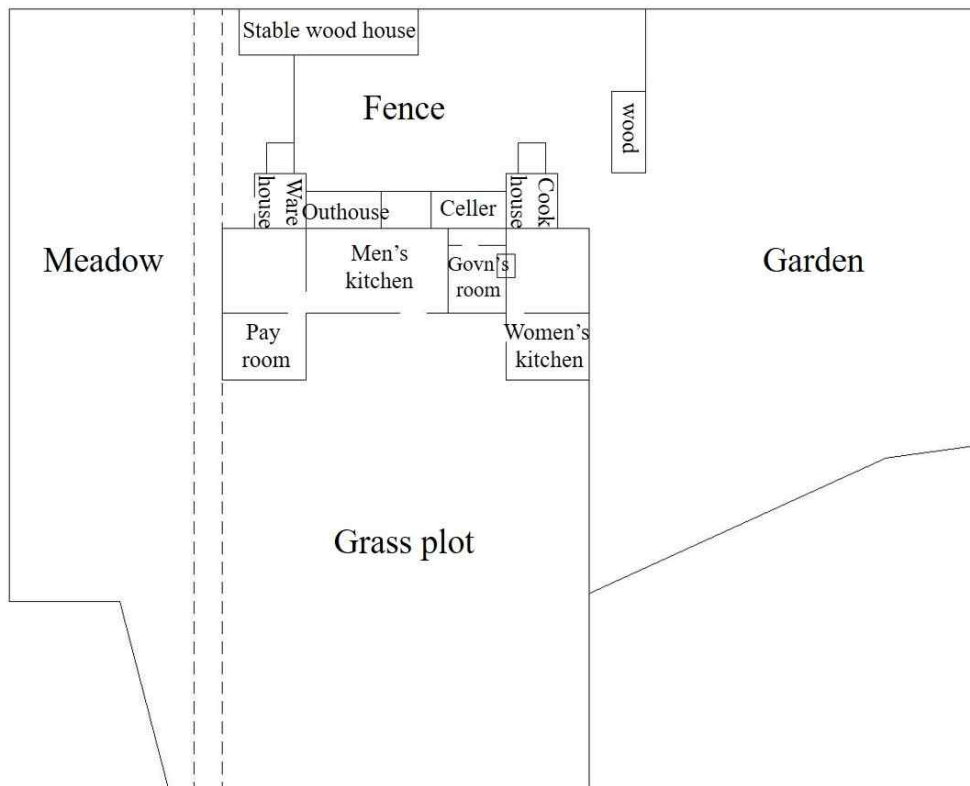
Portsea workhouse

Women's dining room		Factory	Bread room	Cook room		Committee room			
						Lobby			
Large wash room	Women's yard				Entrance				
					Kitchen & Bakehouse				
Foul ward					Brewhouse				
Old women apartments					Women's dining room				
Infant's school room									
Old women apartments									
Small wash room									
Women's vaults					Old women apartments	Old women apartments	Platting room	Second master's apartment	Men's dining room
Men's vaults					Men's yard				
Boy's dinning & school room			Dead house	Insane room	Bed room				

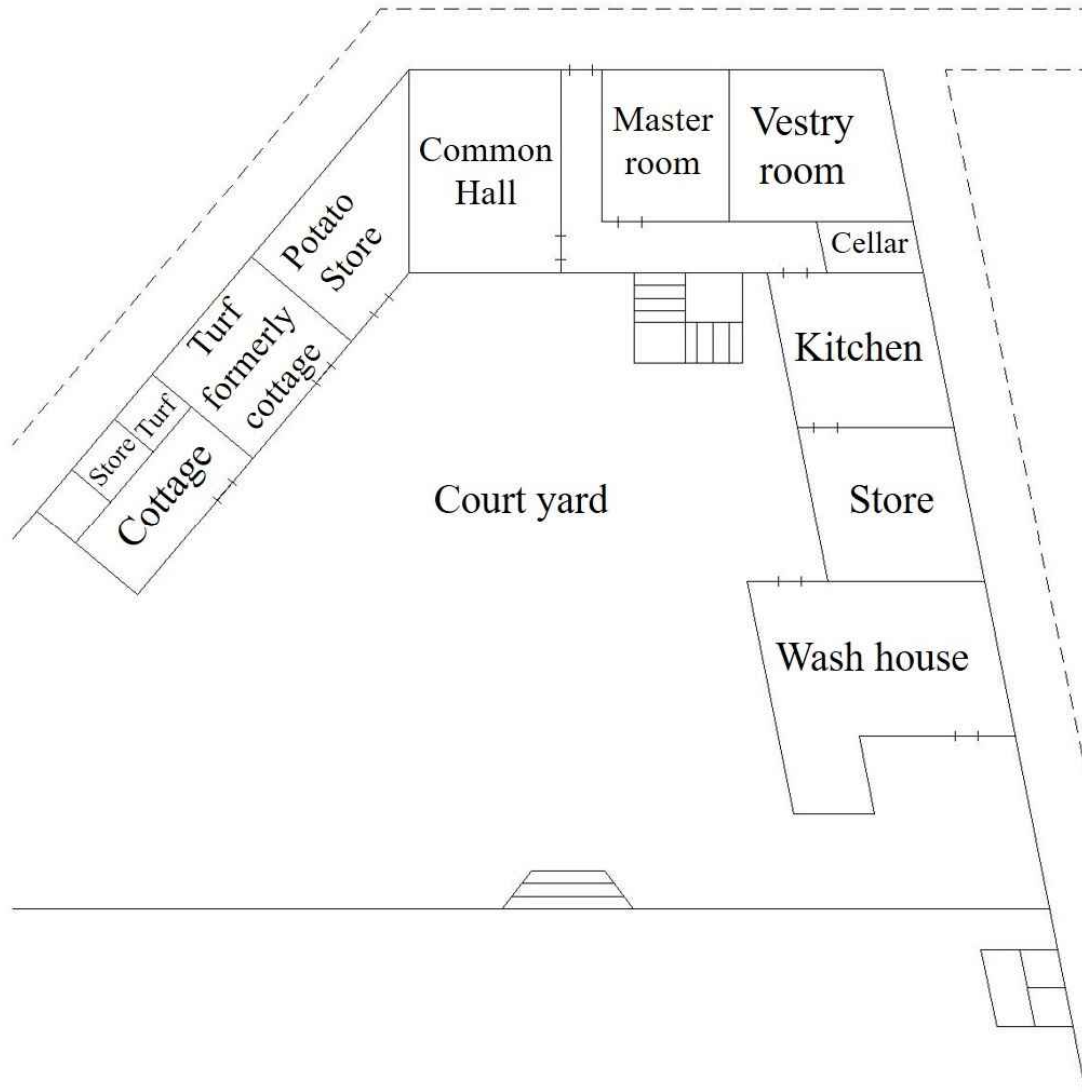
Portsmouth workhouse



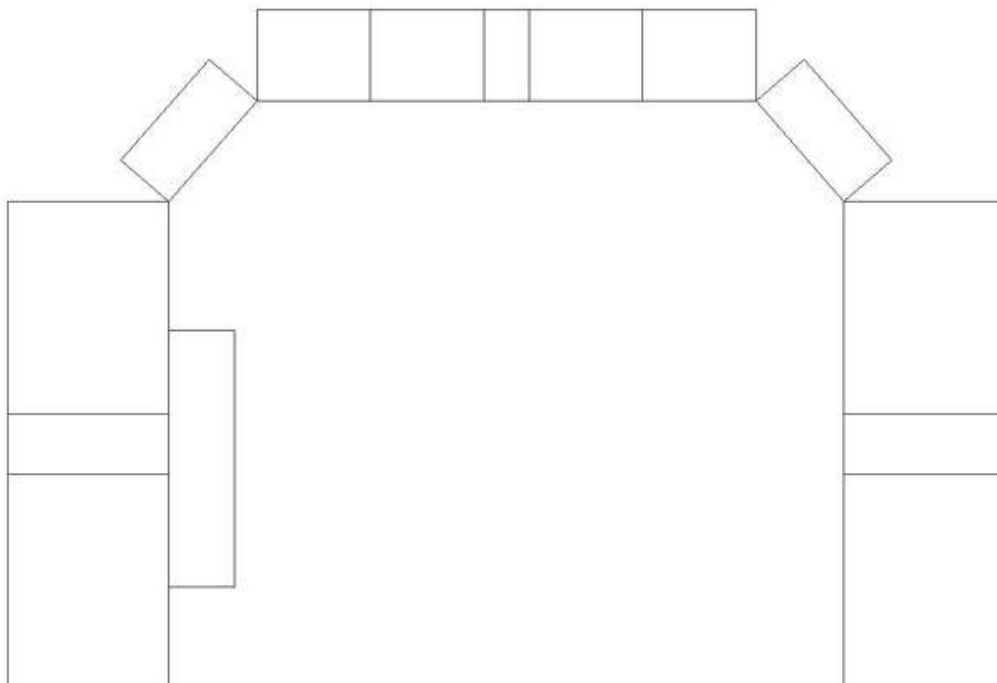
Romsey Extra workhouse



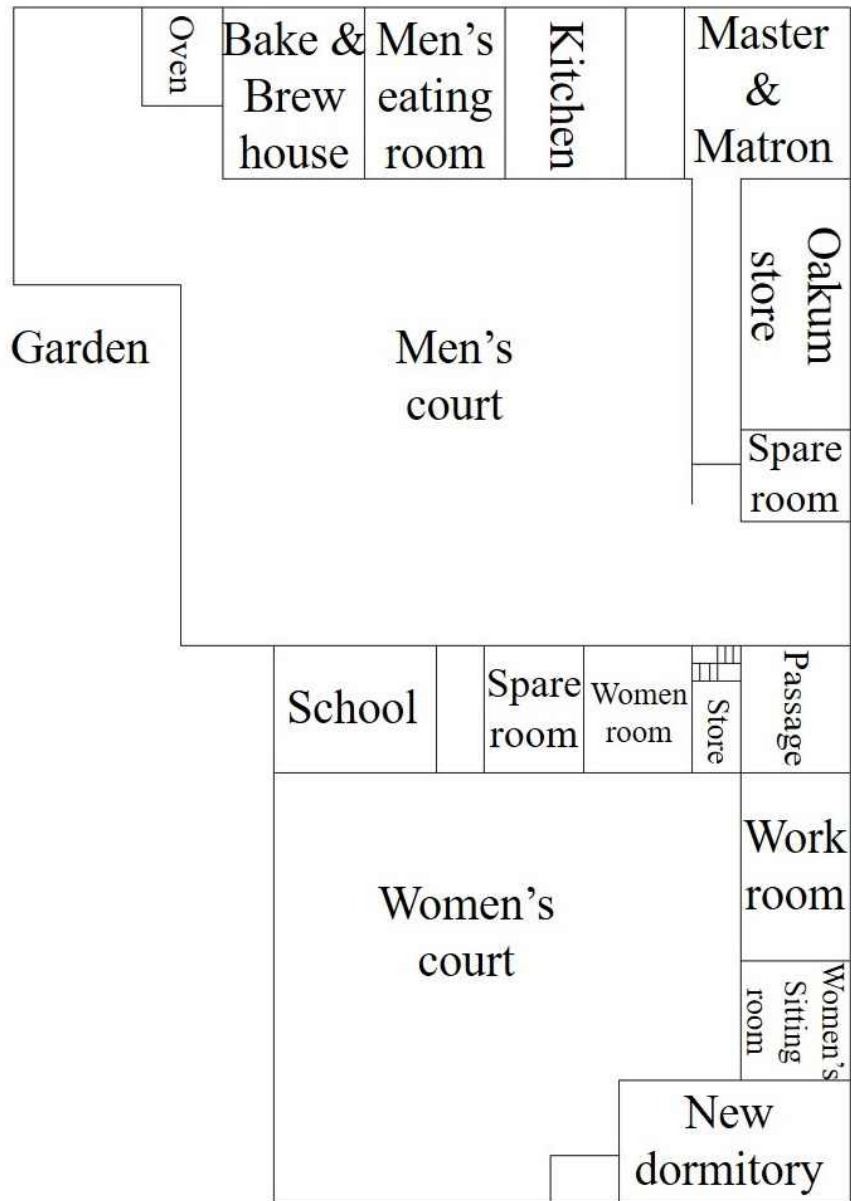
Selborne workhouse



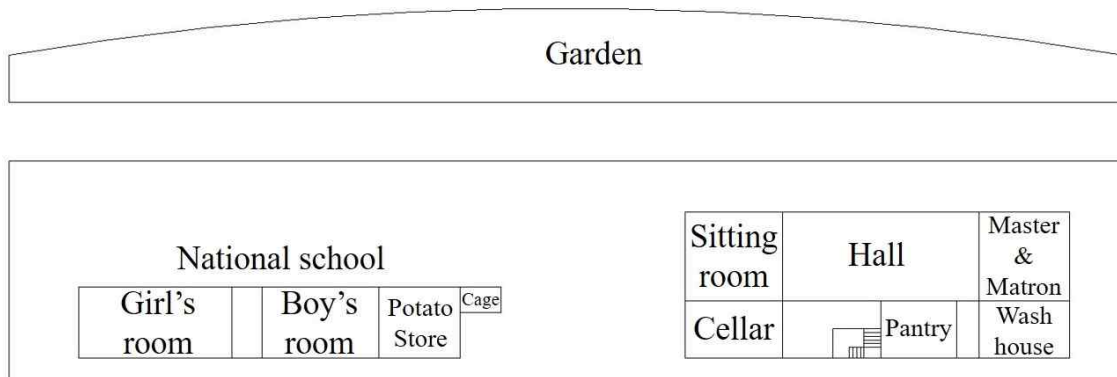
South Stoneham workhouse



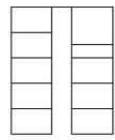
Titchfield workhouse



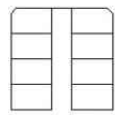
Warblington workhouse



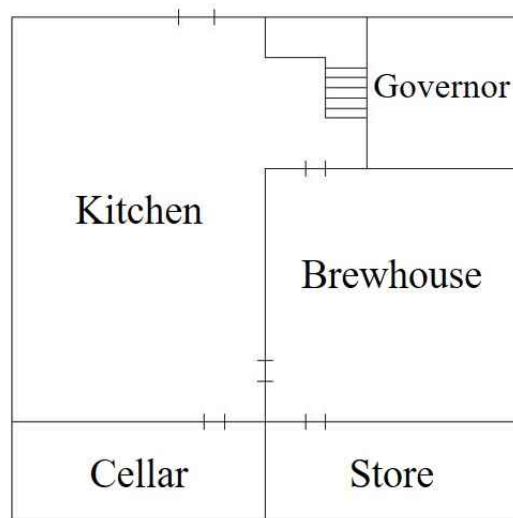
Whitchurch workhouse



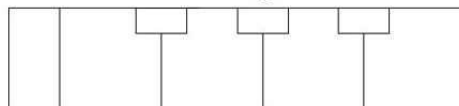
Upstairs



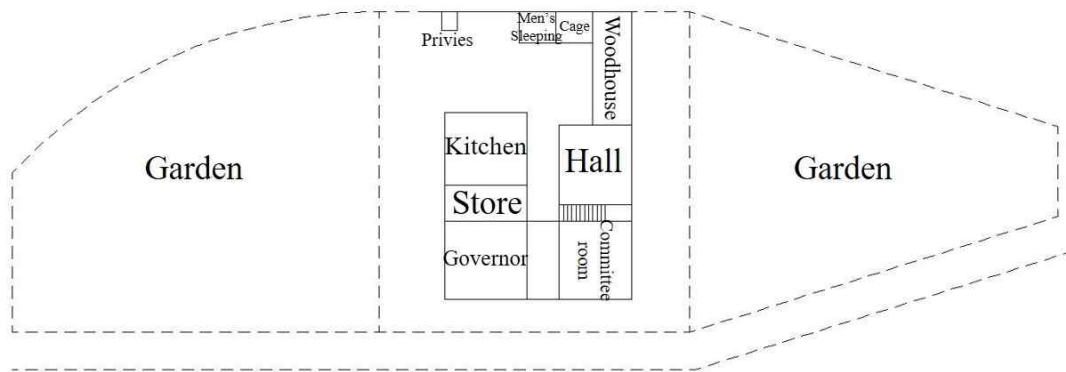
Garrets



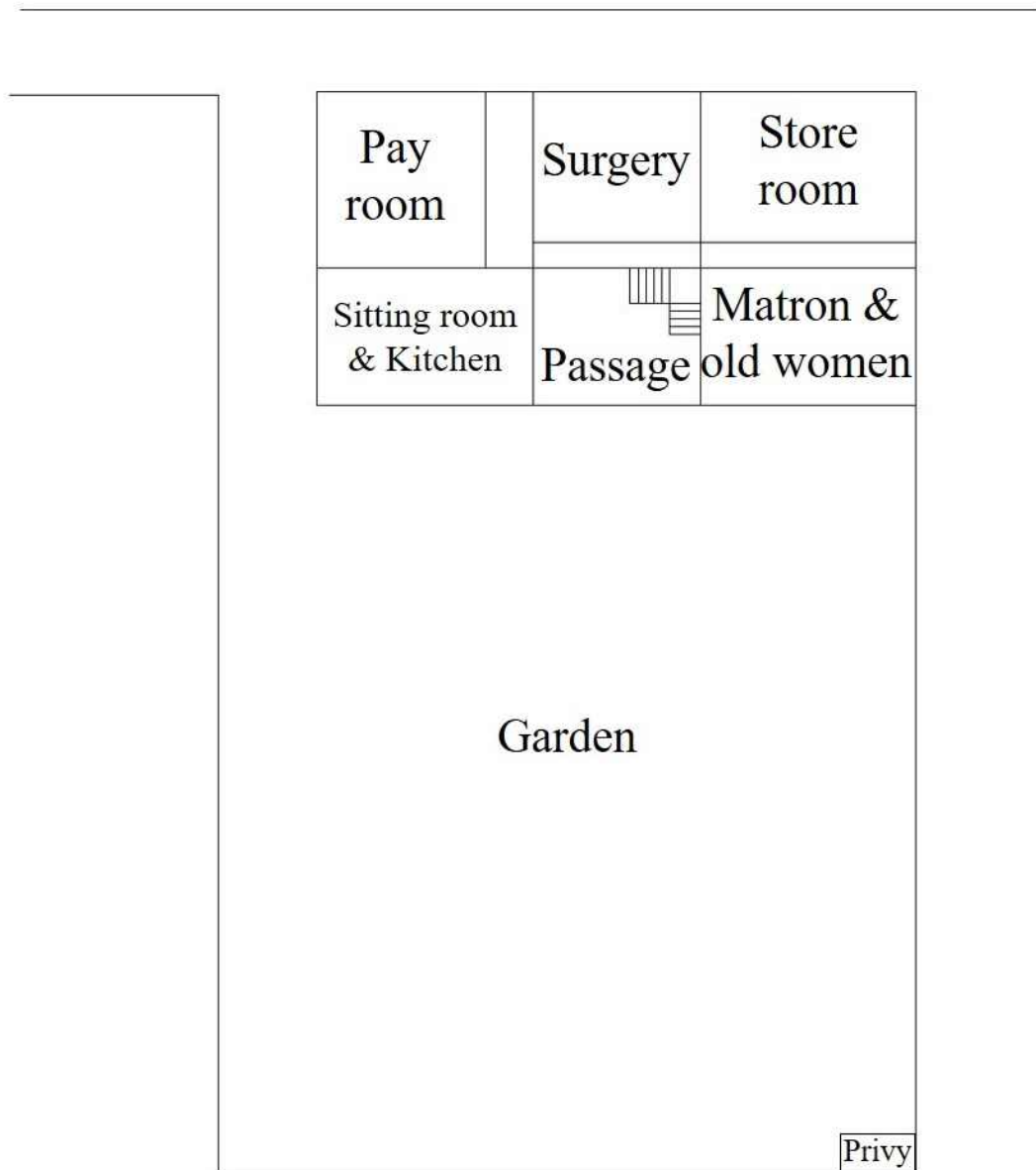
Cottages



Wickham workhouse



Wymering workhouse



Bibliography

Archival sources

Dorset History Centre (DHC)

Coastal	Christchurch	BG/CC/A/1/1	Guardians' minutes book	1835-1840
		BG/CC/A/1/2	Guardians' minutes book	1840-1844
		BG/CC/C/1/1	Day book with a return of inmates	1834-1843
		BG/CC/X/1/1	Minute book of select vestry	1824-1825
		BG/CC/X/1/2	Select vestry's accounts	1821-1835
		BG/CC/X/2/4	Overseers' accounts	1766-1792
		BG/CC/X/2/5	Overseers' accounts	1819-1827
		BG/CC/X/4/1/1	Workhouse committee accounts	1800-1818
		BG/CC/X/4/1/2	Workhouse committee accounts	1818-1835
		BG/CC/X/4/2/1	Register of inmates	1812-1835
		BG/CC/X/4/3/1-7	Weekly returns of the employment	1768-1824
		BG/CC/X/4/7/1	Accounts of provisions	1822-1832
		BG/CC/X/4/7/2	Accounts of provisions	1832-1835

Devon Record Office (DRO)

152M/C/1786/OZ/4-7	William Gilpin, Henry Addington - New poor house at Lymington	1786
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Hampshire Record Office (HRO)

Arable	Alton	29M84/PO2	Lease to establish workhouse	1727
		29M84/PO3	Lease on workhouse	1738
		29M84/PO5	Counterpart Articles of Agreement	1773
		21M71/PO18	Bonds for the Poor	1794-1796
		21M71/PV2	Minutes of select vestry	1830-1835
		29M84/PV1	Vestry minute book	1792-1902
		M744	Poor House day book	1832-1835
	Andover	37M85/13/PA/27	Agreements for workhouse	1733-1751
		37M85/13/PA/3	Vestry minute book	1818-1848
		63M81/1	Andover workhouse accounts	1726-1743
		PL3/4/7	Minute book	1836-1842
	Basing	3M70/45	Overseers' accounts	1788-1801
		3M70/46	Overseers' accounts	1800-1809
		3M70/70	'Proposals for letting the poore'	1822
		3M70/126	Vestry minute book	1819-1835
		11M49/462	General estates	1654-1817
	Basingstoke	21M65/E6/13/201	Chaplain of the Workhouse	1837
		46M74/PV1	Vestry minute book	1797-1841
		80M99/2	Vestry minute book	1755-1797
		PL3/5/1	Minute book	1835-1836
		PL3/5/2	Minute book	1836-1839
		PL3/5/4	Minute book	1839-1842
	Bentworth	25M73/PW1	Churchwardens' account book	1831-1839
	Bishop's	30M77/PV1	Vestry minute book	1803-1830
	Waltham	30M77/PV2	Vestry minute book	1830-1867

	30M77/PV4	Extract from vestry meeting	1794
Bishopstoke	145M82/PO8	Overseers' accounts	1785-1848
	145M82/PO11	Overseers' accounts	1782
	145M82/PO72	Documents about the poorhouse	1792-1793
	145M82/PO73	Draft agreement to farm the poor	1793
	145M82/PO115	Inventory of goods at the poorhouse	1800
	145M82/PO116	Inventory of goods at the poorhouse	1805
	145M82/PO117	Inventory of goods at the poorhouse	n.d.
	145M82/PO119	Vestry to repair the poorhouse	1817
Buriton	73M73/PV1	Vestry minute book	1832-1872
Droxford	66M76/PV1	Vestry minute book	1763-1796
	66M76.PV3	Vestry minute book	1807-1842
	PL3/7/1	Minute book	1835-1837
	PL3/7/2	Minute book	1837-1839
Durley	97M82/PO3	Overseers' accounts	1793-1835
	97M82/PO4	Overseers' accounts	1811-1825
	97M82/PO5	Overseers' accounts	1811-1869
	97M82/PO6	Overseers' accounts	1811-1835
	97M82/PO7	Overseers' accounts	1825-1840
	97M82/PO8	Poor rate assessment book	1798-1826
	97M82/PS1	Surveyor's account book	1789-1829
East Meon	46M68/PO2	Relief book	1819-1826
East Worldham	28M79/PW1	Churchwardens' account book	1623-1816
Fordingbridge	24M82/PO18	Application for workhouse keeper	1788
	24M82/PO25	Workhouse minute book	1813-1815
	24M82/PO26	Workhouse minute book	1821-1823
	24M82/PO39	Application for workhouse keeper	1788
	24M82/PV1	Vestry agreement book	1789-1825
	24M82/PV4	Poor relief committee minute book	1808-1812
Froyle	55M78/PO1	Overseers' account book	1767-1782
	55M78/PO2	Overseers' account book	1808-1836
	55M78/PV1	Vestry order book	1811-1812
Hambleton	46M69/PO8	Account book with minutes	1801-1805
	46M69/PO9	Account book with minutes	1805-1834
	46M69/PO12	Account book	1818-1834
	46M69/PO14	Account book with various records	1824-1833
	46M69/PV1	Vestry minute book	1824-1866
Hartley	59M72/PU1	List of paupers	1835-1837
Wintney	59M72/PU2	Quarterly abstract of accounts	1836-1837
	59M72/PU3	Quarterly abstract of accounts	1837
	85M76/PO6	Workhouse building charge	1798
	85M76/PV2	Vestry minute book	1830-1855
Heckfield	27M79/PW1	Churchwardens' account book	1746-1913
Hursley	39M69/PV1	Vestry minute book	1824-1944
Kingsclere	19M76/PO10	Documents relating to poor relief	1676-1823
	90M72/PO2	Overseers' accounts	1782-1789
	90M72/PO3	Overseers' accounts	1789-1796

	90M72/PO4	Overseers' accounts	1796-1803
	90M72/PO5	Overseers' accounts	1802-1809
	90M72/PO6	Overseers' accounts	1809-1817
	90M72/PO9	Poor rate book with minutes	1817-1828
	90M72/PO10	Poor rate book with minutes	1828-1841
	90M72/PO14	Bond for building the workhouse	1798
	90M72/PO16-29	Pauper relief list	1806-1830
	PL3/11/1	Minute book	1835-1837
	PL3/11/2	Minute book	1837-1841
	PL5/7/66	Pauper description book	1835-1837
Micheldever	7M80/PV1	Vestry minutes	1826-1886
New Alresford	45M83/PO1	Overseers' account and rate book	1795-1803
	45M83/PO2	Overseers' account and rate book	1810-1816
	45M83/PV1	Vestry minute book	1819-1942
	45M83/PW1	Churchwardens' book with minutes	1768-1818
	45M83/PW2	Churchwarden's book with minutes	1818-1838
Odiham	47M81/PO25	Weekly account book	1822-1823
	47M81/PO28	Inventory of goods in the workhouse	1782
	47M81/PO29	Draft agreement for the workhouse	1782
	47M81/PO30	Agreement for the workhouse	1782
	47M81/PO31	Papers relating to the workhouse	1785-1800
	47M81/PO32	Bargain and sale of workhouse land	1791
	47M81/PV1	Vestry minutes	1785-1789
	47M81/PV3	Vestry minutes	1814-1841
	47M81/PO26	Workhouse committee minutes	1781-1782
	47M81/PO27	Accounts for the workhouse	1781-1782
Overton	81M72/PV1	Vestry Minutes	1796-1801
	81M72/PV2	Vestry Minutes	1829-1842
Petersfield	108M70/PO12	Removal orders, also related papers	1708-1817
	108M70/PO16	Papers relating to the workhouse	1747-1778
	108M70/PV1	Vestry minute book	1740-1809
	108M70/PV2	Vestry minute book	1820-1848
	108M70/PW4	Churchwardens accounts and rates	1833-1850
Ringwood	22M84/PO104	Workhouse account book	1812-1823
	22M84/PO105	Workhouse account book	1830-1835
	22M84/PO109	Smallpox account book	1807
	22M84/PO111	Admittance and discharge book	1786-1823
	22M84/PO119	Overseers' or governors' day book	1826-1830
	121A13/1/4/31	A list of persons with small pox	1823
Romsey	10M58/PO1	Overseers' account book	1774-1784
	10M58/PV1	Vestry minute book	1776-1806
	10M58/PV2	Vestry minute book	1806-1827
	10M58/PV3	Vestry minute book	1827-1848
	97M72/DU1	Abstracts of expenditure	1837-1853
Soberton	50M73/PO1	Overseer's account book	1760-1793
	50M73/PO9	Parish doctor's bills	1787-1797
	50M73/PV1	Vestry minute book	1826-1892

	Whichurch	83M76/PO1	Overseers' account and rates book	1769-1780
		83M76/PO3	Officers' and visitors' order book	1796-1838
		83M76/PO8	Accounts of the workhouse	1826
		PL3/18/1	Minute book	1835-1842
	Winchester	1M82W/PO2	Settlement examinations	1780-1793
		1M82W/PO21	Overseers' day book	1777-1785
		1M82W/PO22	Overseers' day book	1786-1794
		1M82W/PO23	Overseers' day book	1794-1802
		1M82W/PV1	Vestry minute book	1792-1835
		1M82W/PV2	Vestry minute book	1835-1846
		1M82W/PV4	Vestry minute book	1837-1922
		55M81W/PO2	Overseers' account book	1786-1920
		55M81W/PO18	Bills for the house of industry	1823-1824
		71M81W/PO80	Report on the House of Industry	1798-1799
		88M81W/PV2	Vestry minute book	1823-1918
		107M81W/PV1	Vestry minute book	1823-1859
		PL3/19/1	Minute book	1835-1839
		PL3/19/2	Minute book	1840-1846
		PL5/11/14	Admission and discharge book	1835-1836
		PL5/11/15	Admission and discharge book	1836-1839
		PL5/11/16	Admission and discharge book	1839-1843
Coastal	Alverstoke	PL2/1/1	Workhouse committee minutes	1799-1831
		PL2/1/2	Minute book of the committee	1818-1819
		PL2/1/3	Weekly report book or minute book	1821-1829
	Botley	40M75/PV1	Vestry minute book	1817-1848
		40M75/PV2	Select vestry minute book	1822-1840
	Hordle	26M79/PO1	Overseers' rate book	1815
		26M79/PO2	Overseers' rate book	1815
		26M79/PO3	Workhouse accounts	1814-1815
		26M79/PO4	Overseers rates	1814-1815
		26M79/PO5	Receipt for pauper labour	1815-1816
		26M79/PO6	Workhouse accounts	1815-1819
		26M79/PO7	Receipts for pauper labour	1816-1820
		26M79/PO8	Workhouse accounts	1816-1820
		26M79/PO9	Workhouse accounts	1817-1819
		26M79/PO10	Workhouse accounts	1817-1820
		26M79/PO11	Miscellaneous overseers accounts	1834
		26M79/PO15	Accounts of the poor with minutes	1820-1830
	Hound	19M81/PV2	Vestry Minutes	1834-1900
	Lymington	21M65/I/2/A/151	Copies of vestry minutes	1791-1793
		42M75/PO9	Vestry order book	1791-1816
		42M75/PO10	Vestry order book	1807-1817
		42M75/PO13	Papers relating to workhouse stock	1798-1811
		42M75/PO16	Overseers' account book	1774-1782
		42M75/PO17	Overseers' account book	1782-1787
		42M75/PO18	Overseers' account book	1800-1807
		42M75/PO31	Menu for the workhouse inmates	n.d.

		42M75/PV1	Vestry minute book	1738-1820
		42M75/PV2	Vestry minute book	1817-1827
		42M75/PV3	Vestry minute book	1827-1847
		42M75/PV11	Vestry order book	1817-1825
		42M75/PV12	Vestry notice book	1822-1829
		42M75/PV13	Special vestry meetings	1824-1866
		42M75/PV14	Notices of vestry meetings	1792-1819
	Milford	31M67/PO29	Workhouse vouchers	1829-1832
		31M67/PO30	Poor House inventory	c.1831
		31M67/PO31	Poor House vouchers	1832
		31M67/PO32/1-4	Documents about sale of Workhouse	1836
		31M67/PV1	Book of vestry resolutions	1803-1835
		87M98/5	overseers accounts and poor rates	1795-1803
	Millbrook	4M92/PS/102/72	leasehold premises of poorhouse	1827-1841
	Milton	56M83/PO2	Overseers' account and rate book	1791-1800
		56M83/PO3	Overseers' account and rate book	1801-1813
		56M83/PO4	Overseers' account and rate book	1813-1821
		56M83/PO6	Guardians' accounts and resolutions	1831-1835
		56M83/PO46	Agreement for the house of industry	1790
		56M83/PO47	Resolutions about the workhouse	1820
	North Stoneham	102M71/E55	Lease for the poorhouse	1800-1823
	Sopley	53M80/PV1	Vestry minutes	1835-1859
	Titchfield	37M73/PV1	Vestry minute book	1672-1819
		37M73/PV2	Vestry minute book	1819-1857
Pastoral	Beaulieu	52M87/254	Survey of cottages	1802
	Binsted	1M67/PO1	Overseers' accounts	1742-1783
		1M67/PO4	Overseers' accounts	1827-1849
		4M51/605	Poor rate list	1813
	Boldre	1A09/A1	Overseers' accounts	1800-1807
		84M70/PO1	Workhouse committee minutes	1797-1805
		84M70/PO2	Workhouse committee minutes	1805-1851
	Bramshaw	Copy/745/7	Copy of proceedings of vestry	1834-1835
	Bramshot	57M75/PV1	Vestry minute book	1822-1832
		57M75/PV2	Vestry minute book	1822-1841
	Brockenhurst	4M81/PO1-5	Overseers' vouchers	1787-1804
		4M81/PO40/66	Letter about the sale of workhouse	n.d.
		66M70/PV1	Minute book of annual parish vestry	1834-1863
	Eling	4M69/PV1	Vestry meeting minutes	1815-1864
		4M70/19/1	Miscellaneous papers	1738-1835
		4M70/19/2	Tenders for supplying the workhouse	1826-1827
	Farnborough	50M63/C65	Account book	1819-1838
		50M63/C66	Account and minute book	1822-1853
		50M63/C68	Bundle for Building a Poorhouse	1794-1795
		50M63/C69	Agreement to unite the parishes	1793
		151M71/PO1	Overseers' accounts with minutes	1804-1812
		151M71/PO2	Overseers' accounts	1804-1818
		151M71/PO3	Overseers' accounts	1818-1837

		151M71/PO4	Overseers' accounts	1830-1844
		PL2/2/1	Minute book	1837-1857
		PL2/2/2	Account book	1794-1822
		PL2/2/3	Account book	1806-1853
Fawley		25M60/PO7	Accounts with vestry minutes	1770-1787
		25M60/PO8	Accounts with vestry minutes	1794-1800
		25M60/PO9	Accounts with vestry minutes	1800-1809
		25M60/PO68	Workhouse accounts	1797-1803
		25M60/PO69	Workhouse accounts	1803-1820
		25M60/PO70	Workhouse document	1824
		25M60/PO71	Workhouse document	1837
		25M60/PV1	Select vestry minutes	1819-1844
		25M60/PV7	Appointment of select vestry minutes	1822
Greatham		40M77/PV1	Vestry minute book	1818-1862
Headley		44M69/J8/2	A letter to guardians of the poor	1822
		57M75/PO16	Accounts for the house of industry	1795-1929
		57M75.PO19	Valuation of goods in the workhouse	1825
Long Sutton		78M72/PO9	Guardians' accounts	1822-1831
		78M72/PO10	Guardians' accounts	1831-1846
		78M72/PV1	Vestry minutes	1799-1929
Lyndhurst		25M84/PO1	Overseers' accounts and rates	1763-1776
		25M84/PO2	Overseers' accounts and rates	1776-1786
		25M84/PO61	Death in the poor house	1823
		25M84/PO71/6	Recommendations about cottages	1812
		25M84/PV1	Vestry minutes	1829-1834
		25M84/PV2	Vestry minutes	1834-1841
		25M84/PV28	Vestry minutes	1814-1827
		103M94/PO1	Overseers' accounts and rates	1786-1798
		103M94/PO2	Overseers' accounts and rates	1813-1821
Minstead		90M71/PO32	Receipts for fire insurance	1813-1827
		90M71/PV1	Vestry minutes	1740-1835
		90M71/PV2	Vestry minutes	1826-1850
Selborne		32M66/PO8	Poor rate book with vestry minutes	1829-1894
		32M66/PO10	'Abuse of the Poor Laws'	1825
		32M66/PV1	Vestry minute book	1750-1816
Yateley		67M78/PV1	Vestry minute book	1818-1839
		67M78/PV6	Copy of vestry minutes	1818-1833
		67M78/PV7	Copy of vestry minutes	1833-1852

Isle of Wight Record Office (IOWRO)

Arable	Isle of Wight	Z/HO/1	Workhouse minutes and relief books	1778-1784
		Z/HO/2	Workhouse minutes and relief books	1784-1787
		Z/HO/3	Workhouse minutes and relief books	1787-1792
		Z/HO/4	Workhouse minutes and relief books	1792-1797
		Z/HO/44	Workhouse minutes and relief books	1836-1838
		Z/HO/45	Workhouse minutes and relief books	1838-1840
		Z/HO/46	Workhouse minutes and relief books	1840-1843
		Z/HO/47	Workhouse minutes and relief books	1843-1846

Z/HO/L1	List of those admitted and discharged	1790-1803
Z/HO/L2	List of those admitted and discharged	1804-1810
Z/HO/L3	List of those admitted and discharged	1820-1826
Z/HO/L4	List of those admitted and discharged	1826-1832
Z/HO/L5	List of those admitted and discharged	1828-1839

Portsmouth History Centre (PHC)

Coastal	Portsmouth	BG/M1/1	Portsea Island union minute book	1838-1841
		BG/M1/2	Portsea Island union minute book	1841-1846
		PL6/11	Register of admissions, discharges	1781-87
		PL6/12	Workhouse muster book	1804
		PL6/13	Workhouse muster book	1805
		PL6/14	Workhouse muster book	1808
		PL6/15	Workhouse muster book	1813
		PL6/16	Workhouse muster book	1815
		PL8/1	Daily books for the workhouse	1790-1805
		PL8/2	Daily books for the workhouse	1805-1811
		PL8/3	Daily books for the workhouse	1811-1817
		PL8/4	Daily books for the workhouse	1817-1829
		PL8/5	Daily books for the workhouse	1837-1840
		PL9	Muster lists, admission, discharges	1789-1799
		PL15/1	Committee minutes	1785-1786
		PL15/2	Committee minutes	1786-1787
		PL15/3	Committee minutes	1787
		PL15/4	Committee minutes	1787-1788
		PL17	Workhouse visitor's book	1836-1840

Southampton Archives Office (SAO)

Coastal	Southampton	SC/AG/4/1	Workhouse visitors' book	1779-1793
		SC/AG/4/2	Workhouse visitors' book	1793-1818
		SC/AG/4/3	Workhouse visitors' book	1818-1833
		SC/AG/14/3	Agreements for provisions	1780-1810
		SC/AG1/1/1	Board of guardians minute book	1818-1825
		SC/AG1/1/3	Board of guardians minute book	1825-1832
		SC/AG1/1/4	Board of guardians minute book	1832-37
		SC/AG1/1/5	Board of guardians minute book	1837-42
		SC/AG1/1/6	Board of guardians minute book	1842-44
		SC/AG2/1	General letter book	1832-1841
	South	D/AGF/1	Union minute book	1840-1841
	Stoneham	PR9/15/28	List of indoor poor	1832, 1838
		PR9/15/43	Workhouse master day book	1800-1808
		PR9/15/44	List of indoor poor	1855
		PR9/4/2	Workhouse committee book	1821-48

The National Archives (TNA)

Land Tax Redemption Office	IR23/77-8	Land tax assessments	1798
Poor Law Commission	MH1/1-8	Minute books	1834-1836
	MH12/10613-5	Alresford union correspondence	1834-1846

MH12/10626-8	Alton union correspondence	1834-1846
MH12/10661	Andover union correspondence	1837-1841
MH12/10669-73	Basingstoke union correspondence	1834-1844
MH12/10701	Catherington union correspondence	1834-1845
MH12/10710-1	Christchurch union correspondence	1835-1846
MH12/10751-3	Droxford union correspondence	1835-1846
MH12/10767-9	Fareham union correspondence	1835-1846
MH12/10792-3	Fordingbridge union correspondence	1839-1847
MH12/10825-6	Hartley Wintney union correspondence	1834-1842
MH12/10845	Hursley union correspondence	1835-1845
MH12/10853-4	Kingsclere union correspondence	1838-1847
MH12/10865-7	Lymington union correspondence	1834-1847
MH12/10896-8	Petersfield union correspondence	1834-1847
MH12/10916-9	Portsea Island union correspondence	1834-1846
MH12/10971-3	Ringwood union correspondence	1834-1846
MH12/10983-4	Romsey union correspondence	1834-1849
MH12/11035-7	South Stoneham union correspondence	1834-1847
MH12/11063-4	Stockbridge union correspondence	1834-1849
MH12/11074-6	Whitchurch union correspondence	1834-1847
MH12/11168-70	New Winchester union correspondence	1838-1847
MH32/1-4	Colonel A'Court's correspondence	1834-1842
MH32/38	W. H. T. Hawley's correspondence	1834-1842
MH34/1-3	Sanctioned ledgers	1834-1883

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