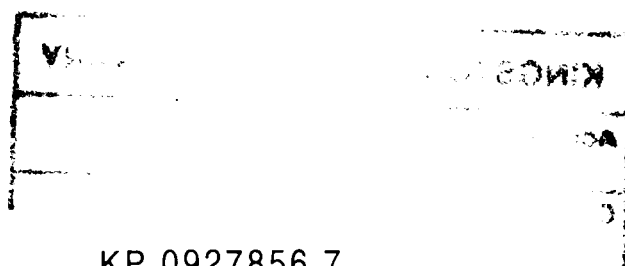


**CHILDREN OF THE POOR OF KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES,  
1834-1882**

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of the requirement of the University for the degree of  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the children of Kingston's poor during the middle decades of the nineteenth century by bringing together a number of inter-related themes which in many previous studies have been treated separately. Through applying partial reconstitution techniques to a wide range of source materials, various aspects of children's lives in poverty are analysed and given greater context and meaning. Rather than viewing the child simply as an element in workhouse history, or as a slum-dweller or in employment, this research, by studying individual childhood experiences, focuses on children as members of the wider community.

The research findings emphasise the value of a local study, as generalisations and received ideas can be tested against the practical experience of a market town during the mid- to later-nineteenth century, when the country as a whole adjusted to rapid population growth and economic progress. The Kingston-upon-Thames Poor Law Union, the administrative and geographic locality for this research, developed from being broadly rural in the opening years of the study into an increasingly suburban and retailing area, whilst the surrounding villages varied in character, whether purely rural, river-focussed, or concerned with a local industry. Research into the lives of children living in poverty within this diverse locality offers an opportunity to consider and compare strategies, both formal and informal, to deal with child poverty in use throughout the country. The range of choices and decisions open to parents, officials, administrators and children themselves, plus the effect of differing local conditions, geography and employment, remind us that there can be no typical experience which can speak for the whole of England.

Within this thesis appear individual experiences of poverty, abandonment, overcrowded dwellings, disease, ill-treatment, and much suffering. Yet also highlighted are acts of benevolence, understanding, chance opportunities, and successful futures. Above all, the thesis has set out to rescue otherwise historically absent individuals from obscurity and give them a meaningful place in the historical record.

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It was not only parish relief which was considered to be carelessly administered in the Kingston area; such criticisms could apply equally well to existing charity provisions. Even if there was no corruption, charities could be in the hands of trustees who made little effort to develop or promote them. Philanthropic legacies were simply not being used efficiently. In 1835 a report on the Hampton charities commented that "the parish of Hampton is a striking instance of the abuse of public charitable institutions".<sup>15</sup> The ineptitude of those charged with administering them was similar to that shown within parochial management and emphasises how the problems associated with the relief of the poor were not confined to one sphere. Hampton parish was on the Middlesex side of the River Thames, beyond the Royal Parks. The Hampton School of Industry received the patronage of Queen Adelaide, and the land on which it was built had been donated by George III, the Lord of the Manor. Royal patronage was valuable, but in order to function effectively continuing donations and competent trustees were necessary. The Hampton Industrial School and the Sunday School in the parish of St. Mary's both suffered from lack of funds, consequently their full potential was not achieved. The writer of the report considered that with more enthusiastic support for the School of Industry there would be

*... reason to believe that the whole of the children of the parish may, by a little exertion, be provided for. ... The School of Industry consists of female children, belonging to the industrious and poor Inhabitants of the Parish... The School consists of 97 children at present, and is capable of receiving many more.*<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, the Sunday School could have been more effective, being "on a limited scale, from the want of funds [and] consists of boys who are taught reading,"<sup>17</sup>

This lack of regulation was also reflected in the Hampton workhouse, which stood at the junction of Uxbridge & Hanworth Roads.<sup>18</sup> In 1828 there were only three adults and eight children, aged between six and seventeen, in the workhouse.<sup>19</sup> Being small, the workhouse had a relaxed atmosphere, and a far from punitive regime. Meat was served daily, supplemented with vegetables from the garden. Little work was required of the inmates, despite the overseers long retaining the Elizabethan practice of badging the paupers with 'PH' representing the Parish of Hampton.<sup>20</sup>

Incorporating into unions these separate parishes, each with their own long-established practices, was not a straightforward undertaking. When the Poor Law Amendment Act came into force in 1834 change did not happen overnight. The Kingston Union had to be established, and it took nearly two years before it was officially declared. The union comprised thirteen parishes, as described in Chapter 3. The parishes which the Commissioners incorporated into the Kingston Union did not necessarily accept their amalgamation without a murmur. Wimbledon vestry pointed out that it was more sensible for them to be allied with Wandsworth as their court business was transacted there. It also grumbled that Kingston was not as easy for either Guardians or applicants for relief to reach, being further away than Wandsworth and "frequently intercepted by floods".<sup>21</sup> Teddington, in Middlesex, although on the further side of the River Thames from Kingston, was content to be part of the Kingston Union, suggesting that

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

**"[Kingston] is altogether more distinguished for what it has not than for what it has. Its capabilities are great, but its progress has been slow... and was generally looked upon as a fine specimen of the age gone by"**

*W.D. Biden, 1852*<sup>1</sup>

**"It is ... valid to argue that the numerical presence of children in the past century is in inverse proportion to the attention devoted to it by historians"**

*James Walvin, 1982*<sup>2</sup>

#### **1.1 Reasons for undertaking the research**

The present thesis developed from research questions which arose during an earlier investigation into pauper education. The specific research question at that time concerned discovering the reasons why pauper children chargeable to the Kingston-upon-Thames Poor Law Union were boarded and educated at an Industrial School at Cowley, in Oxfordshire, at some distance from Kingston.<sup>3</sup> In answering this question, further questions arose surrounding the administrative decisions taken, the children's home circumstances, and the diversity of local responses within the intended standardisation of the national poor laws.

Having discovered the reasons for using the Cowley Schools, the question naturally arose as to the whereabouts of Kingston's pauper children from the time the New Poor Law was introduced until this solution was adopted. It was found that there was a period in Kingston's history when there were a number of pauper children who were moved from location to location, but there had been little historical focus on the effect administrative decisions had had on the children themselves, as they became separated from their families and moved from one institution to another. Consideration of such questions as their family background, whether the workhouse represented an improvement in their material existence, and how far their future employment prospects were to be altered by the effects of pauper apprenticeships, confirmed that research into these children could be made more meaningful by a greater understanding of their family lives beyond the workhouse.

Although there had been other studies on discrete themes relating to poor children, for example workhouse children, slum children, or child labour, a study following children from their homes, into the workhouse and beyond was lacking. Crompton's study of workhouse children contains an element of family circumstances for some individuals, but does not go as far as reconstituting their families over a period of time to consider the cumulative reasons for destitution.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, such studies which focussed on the Poor Law presented the perspective of the officials involved, and were less likely to reveal the experience of the children themselves. Studies of children in poor families, such as Davin's, drew attention to the

community and family support so necessary in times of hardship, and this suggested a further consideration, that of the 'mixed economy of welfare' or 'economy of makeshifts'.<sup>5</sup> It became apparent that in order to understand the experience of the child in poverty, research could not be restricted to the workhouse, the slum, or the workplace, but had to encompass a number of aspects in order to present a rounded picture. It is this breadth of information which the present study is intended to present.

## 1.2 The Locality

Although the initial investigation into Kingston's dealings with pauper children arose as a result of a specific research question applicable to that union, it became apparent in studying the area that Kingston presented an interesting location for various reasons. Neither entirely urban nor entirely rural, it offered the opportunity to study both spheres within a contained geographical area, and to test the findings of town or agricultural studies against that of a market town. This location enabled the differing strategies for economic survival employed by urban and rural families to be considered. The outlying villages themselves differed from each other in industry, agriculture and geology, providing micro-studies of these small communities. Additional social elements could also be derived from a study of Kingston. The militia barracks and the market introduced a transitory element in the population. The river situation suggested a further consideration, as families engaged in river trades migrated not from village to town, but instead had kinship networks both upstream and down.

The town itself was an area in transition. What was, at the beginning of the period of study, a market town within an agricultural region, later developed into a relatively wealthy suburban town within commuting distance of London. This enabled changing employment opportunities to be traced and national occupational trends to be viewed at the local level.

In the sphere of the Poor Law, Kingston Guardians attempted a number of responses to the problems of child paupers, and during the life of the Union utilized almost every different method available, save cottage homes. Indeed, there were some children who themselves experienced more than one type of institution. For a comparative study into the variety of strategies for pauper children, Kingston provided an exceptional opportunity. It was unfortunate that such a promising location for research should not have been endowed with a comprehensive set of surviving documents such as those which have survived for Dorking.<sup>6</sup> However, as it was the character of Kingston which provided the impetus, rather than the availability of records, this ensured that research was subject-led and not source-driven. Indeed, an anticipated weakness developed into an unexpected strength through the research strategy adopted, and this is discussed in the methodology chapter. The attitude of the Kingston Poor Law Guardians themselves seemed at variance with received poor law history. Studying poor relief at the local level could therefore only further our understanding of the relationship between local administrators and supposedly standardising national policies.



### 1.3 Aims and objectives

This research will examine the living conditions, family circumstances, school lives and occupations of the children of the poor in the Kingston-upon-Thames area. This will give a broad impression of the experience of a child living in a poor family, and the ways in which poverty particularly affected the children's lives. The thesis will examine the varied ways in which a child's family coped with financial and material hardships, which included family and community support, official and unofficial charity, petty crime, medical relief and poor relief. It is not the aim of this thesis to analyze the contribution of philanthropy in detail, but it is important to emphasise the many and varied spheres of charitable aid to which the poor of Kingston might turn. In 1843 there were sixty-seven individual charities for the benefit of the poor within the area of the Kingston Union, by 1867 there were eighty-nine endowed charities. These comprised educational charities for the education, clothing or apprenticing of poor children, distribution of articles such as bread, coals, clothing or rugs, gifts of money to the deserving poor, medical treatment, or for almshouses and pensions.<sup>7</sup> In 1871 many of the educational charities were combined by the Endowed Schools Commission and, after much discussion between the Commission, churchwardens and civic leaders of Kingston the amalgamated endowments were diverted to the benefit of the Grammar School and other educational purposes.<sup>8</sup>

The thesis will also examine in detail some of the causes of destitution and the circumstances culminating in workhouse admission. The fragility of self-sufficiency and the narrow divide between independence, poverty and destitution could depend on a number of family, social and local factors such as employment and local administration. One of the aims of the thesis is to draw attention to the fluidity with which families could pass in and out of the Poor Law system, and that admission to the workhouse need not constitute their entire experience or lead to permanent dependence on poor relief. Resorting to the workhouse did not necessarily imply life-long incarceration, although there were, indeed, those who spent the greater part of their childhoods in institutions. A particular aspect of this study will be to illustrate through the example of the Kingston Union the many variations in local responses to the problems of boarding and educating destitute and orphaned children, the reasons why certain decisions were made locally and the impact these had on the children themselves.

Examination of conditions within the workhouse will test the generally accepted view of the treatment of poor children. Views derived from the campaigning literature of Dickens, and the notoriety of certain events such as the Andover scandal, have consolidated the view of treatment under the Poor Law as being deliberately harsh and inhumane. This research aims to emphasise that the received national history of the Poor Law can only be a generalisation, based on the intentions of the central authority. In practice the Poor Law was subject to local interpretations and influences. By investigating application of the poor laws at the local level general impressions can be tested against the experience of a particular union.

Above all, this study aims to review the documentary evidence from the perspective of the child. It is, of course, acknowledged that a study of children's experiences cannot realistically reflect the child's view if all the evidence derives from officials and other adults. Difficulties in source material, described in Chapter 3, preclude an authentic view of the child emerging, and the endeavours to overcome this difficulty are described in the methodology section. However, the aim of this research is to examine as far as possible, through the use of a broad range of source material recorded by a variety of compilers, the experience of the children of the poor in Kingston-upon-Thames.

#### **1.4 Contribution to existing work**

This thesis endeavours to provide a new approach to the study of the children of the poor. The subjects of the discrete areas of research undertaken elsewhere are here considered together to reflect more comprehensively the wider experiences of childhood. For example, social histories surrounding the poor laws appear to have fallen into various categories, and few, such as Crompton, concerned themselves exclusively with children. However, Crompton, who investigated the treatment of children in the workhouses of the thirteen Worcestershire Poor Law Union in *Workhouse Children*, closes his study at 1871.<sup>9</sup> In studying children under the poor law, or elementary education, 1870/1 suggests itself as an appropriate date at which to cease or commence, reflecting as it does the introduction of the Education Act and the change in central Poor Law administration. Yet whilst childhood studies is a developing topic, histories of childhood embracing early Poor Law history and the period after 1870, and combining both home and institution are not abundant. A child's life in poverty did not begin or end at the workhouse door.

If the workhouse were to be viewed less as a consequence of poverty, but as part of a wider system of survival strategies in use by the poor, then to restrict the study of poor children to one sphere would be one-dimensional and not contextual. This revision of approach can be extended to consider children as part of family, economic and social networks, taking an active part in family survival strategies which affected the family income. This would not refer merely to depleting family finances through children's dependence, or assisting it through their employment, but by a large number of other economic and social variables which included pilfering, pawning, prizes, incurring school fees or court fines, doing odd jobs, or acquiring benefactors. This thesis will therefore emphasise the contribution of children within the community, and show that they had an important place in the economic coping strategies of the family, either consciously or as an adjunct.

The strength of this present research is that it goes beyond a single source or theme to provide a wider view. This study intends to widen understanding of the experiences of children, and this is enhanced by the use of case studies. Detailed investigation into the lives of named individuals, their family background and relationships, where they spent their childhood during

the years of destitution, the employment they found subsequently, and their later life forms an important element in this research. They illustrate the practical implications of national legislation, tempered with local policies, experienced by those individuals who were personally affected, providing a 'history from below'. This material reveals not only the difficulties in life faced by destitute children, but also how attempts to provide assistance might prove beneficial for those who took advantage of them. As shown in the Ockenden and Brickwood case studies, there were those who benefitted from the new pauper educational schemes, those for whom pauper apprenticeship ended in tragedy, and others whose fortunes depended more on family support and community assistance.

This study is not intended to be restricted to one social class. Any individual might suffer sudden illness, abandonment, bereavement or a change in economic circumstances. It is realistic, however, to accept that the majority of the children in this study will be from the lower end of the economic, and thus the social, scale. This will be supported where possible by evidence of parental occupation, area of residence and so forth. However, the assumption that all those receiving assistance were 'working class' is to be avoided. Even professional men might abandon their wives and children who, without sufficient family support, then found it necessary to appeal to the Board of Guardians. Therefore the terms 'poverty', 'needy' and 'destitute' are used to denote the circumstances, not the social background of the child; these terms will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

### **1.5 Framework of thesis**

The thesis is divided both chronologically and thematically, owing largely to the survival of sources, as described in the Methodology section. The early years of transition from the old to the new poor law are discussed in Chapter 4, and Chapters 5 and 6 are devoted to subsequent developments in Kingston's provision for child pauper inmates. The second part of the thesis moves beyond the workhouse to children on out-relief or surviving on the margins of poverty. Chapter 7 discusses their housing conditions and considers some of the causes of child destitution in Kingston, and the ways in which families strove to remain independent of the workhouse. Chapter 8 deals with the subject of child employment and apprenticeships for children at home and those leaving the workhouse, with particular focus on a small range of occupations. Chapter 9 considers a life in poverty in Kingston from the standpoint of the child, children's activities, their contribution to the family survival strategies, and the emotional effect of the difficulties they encountered. Each chapter is supported by a case study of a particular child and its family, illustrating at the micro level many of the general topics discussed in the chapters.

## 1.6 Conclusion

It is through examples of particular children and their families that the impact of administration can be related to an individual human experience, and its impact more readily assessed. To see at work the affect of national legislation, contemporary religious and philosophical trends, and the local ethos, makes a study of these subjects more meaningful. More importantly this considerable, but frequently overlooked, section of society, the children of the poor, can be rescued from history and given due scrutiny. The ubiquity of children in the nineteenth century is not yet reflected by a similar ubiquity in current historical studies.

- <sup>1</sup> W.D. Bide, *The History and Antiquities of the Ancient and Royal town of Kingston-upon-Thames*, (Kingston: William Lindsey, 1852), p.35.
- <sup>2</sup> James Walvin, *A Child's World; A Social History of English Childhood 1800-1914* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p.10.
- <sup>3</sup> H. Goepel, 'The Care of Pauper Children from the Kingston Poor Law Union 1870-1905', unpublished M.A. dissertation, Kingston University (2006).
- <sup>4</sup> Frank Crompton, *Workhouse Children* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997).
- <sup>5</sup> Anna Davin, *Growing up Poor; Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996); Alan Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999); Steven King and Alannah Tomkins (eds.), *The Poor in England, 1700-1850 : an Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Joanna Innes, 'State, Church and Voluntarism in European Welfare, 1690-1850.' in *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform, From the 1690s to 1850*, Hugh Cunningham and Joanna Innes (eds.), pp.15-65. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).
- <sup>6</sup> Dorking Poor Law Records at SHC include: Board of Guardians Minute Books, BG2/11/1-33, 1836-1930; Non resident and non settled poor ledger, BG2/13/39, 1845-1866; Abstracts of the application and report book, BG2/14/15-18, 1842-1847; Relief order books BG2/14/19-25, 1848-1874; Weekly returns of persons chargeable: BG2/16/2-6, 1845-1930; Apprenticeship Indentures, BG2/18/1-2, 1855-1865; Master of the Workhouse Register of Births, BG2/37/ 1836-1848, Deaths, BG2/38/ 1848-1879, Sickness and Mortality, BG2/39/ 1841-1843; Workhouse Log Book, BG2/44/ 1836-1840.
- <sup>7</sup> *Endowed charities. Return to an order of the Honourable the House of Commons, dated 26 July 1867, copies "of the general digest of endowed charities for the counties and cities mentioned in the fourteenth report of the Charity Commissioners:" "And, of the charities vested in the various London companies, in so far as such digests have been completed, or can be completed up to the time of publication."* PP LII Pt.1.3, LII Pt.II.1, 1868, pp. Surrey 20-1, 24-5, 32-3, 36-7, 40-1, 54-7, Middlesex 26-7, 68-9.
- <sup>8</sup> *Report of the Endowed Schools Commissioners to the Lords of the Committee of Her Majesty's Privy Council on Education*, 1872, PP C.524 XXIV.1, p.123.
- <sup>9</sup> Crompton, *Workhouse Children*.

## CHAPTER 2

### Historiography

**"For those seeking guidance, the historiography is likely to impart confusion." <sup>1</sup>**

*Hugh Cunningham, 1998*

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The scope of this study has necessitated the examination of a variety of secondary source material across a range of themes. Due to the constraints inherent in the thesis the discussion of secondary sources here has been limited to salient topics and standard texts, and to writers whose work focuses on the separate major themes. The breadth of topics covered has required a selective review of material which may not immediately reflect the body of literature available. Furthermore, as Cunningham observed, not only do the various fields of study differ, but also historians' interpretations and the questions which are asked. <sup>2</sup>

#### **2.2 Children and Childhood**

Consideration of the concept of childhood, and the development in attitudes towards children, was initiated by Phillipe Ariès in his influential book *Centuries of Childhood* published in English in 1962. <sup>3</sup> Ariès discusses attitudes across Europe, and covers an extensive time-span which gives less emphasis to the nineteenth century, therefore this work could not be related specifically to the present study. That aside, a great debt must be acknowledged to Ariès for inspiring debate on the subject and for suggesting that childhood indeed had a history. Following this, the work of Lawrence Stone, Hugh Cunningham, Harry Hendrick and Linda Pollock, among others, developed debate on the perception of childhood and introduced the arguments surrounding parent-child affection, and nurturing parenting, setting some of the perceived cruelties and authoritarianisms in context.

The work of Hugh Cunningham, as listed in the bibliography, has been valuable. However, his findings in *Children & Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* could not be tested here as they are drawn from an earlier period and based on generalisations taken from Europe as a whole. <sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the concepts and development in attitudes to children under discussion serve to heighten awareness of contemporary opinion when interpreting primary sources. Cunningham argues that the concept of childhood as distinct from adulthood had been established by the date at which this study commences; to this must be added the observation that the age at which childhood ends is one of the variables under discussion in Chapter 3, and which influence attitudes to children which are evident in this local study.

The Victorian period itself saw changes in attitudes towards children and came under such influences as Romanticism and the impact of industrialisation. Cunningham refers to a three-fold concern for children during this period: the child's soul, the future manpower needs of the state and, later, saving children for the enjoyment of childhood.<sup>5</sup> Cunningham even suggests that the Victorian romantic view of childhood happiness arose from adult nostalgia rather than the reality of childhood enjoyment, and this gave rise to the modern concept that it was a child's right to enjoy a carefree existence. This notion often impedes consideration of the themes of childhood applicable to the context of the time. In *The Children of the Poor; Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century*, Cunningham is keen to lay emphasis on the attitude of society as to how the children of the poor should be treated, notwithstanding more recent arguments concentrating on parents' relationships with their children.<sup>6</sup> This was found to be a particularly useful and accessible work, as it places the narrative of Victorian children within the framework of changes in attitudes to children which themselves were drawn from wider social concerns. These attitudes were influenced by the anti-slavery movement, Darwinism, Evangelism, and the spirit of both rescue and reform. Cunningham also discusses child employment and suggests the lack of wage-earning opportunities and varied local availability of schooling as contributory to employment figures.<sup>7</sup>

The historical study of children and childhood encompasses many facets. Hendrick states that until the 1970s children seldom featured in historical studies except as an element in research on a particular subject, such as emigration or factory labour. One of the aims of this research has been to draw together primary evidence from a number of discrete fields to provide a more comprehensive view of children in a particular local area, treated as a subject in their own right.

Hendrick acknowledges that "expressing the child's outlook will be fraught with difficulties" and research "depends on the questions we choose to ask of our material".<sup>8</sup> Contemporary testimony directly from the child is all but absent in the primary sources consulted for Kingston-upon-Thames, and such evidence as exists must be viewed objectively. Eric Hopkins also makes the point that for the history of Victorian working-class children the problem is not only the paucity of sources but that existing evidence is generally recorded by others, and for a variety of reasons. However, overtly attempting to correct any perceived 'middle-class bias' would itself be subjective. The approach adopted here, as discussed in the chapter on Methodology, is to utilize as many sources as possible to ameliorate bias.

James Walvin, in *A Child's World; A Social History of English Childhood 1800-1914*, discusses the difficulties in defining such terms as 'childhood' and 'poverty' and it is his work which has provided a valuable contribution to this aspect within the Methodology chapter.<sup>9</sup> Walvin points out the obvious, but not often emphasised, ubiquity of children, and declares: "It is ... valid to argue that the numerical presence of children in the past century is in inverse proportion to the attention devoted to it by historians".<sup>10</sup>

## 2.3 Child Rescue, Reform and Education

In addition to the concept of childhood, attitudes towards children and parent/child relations there is a further consideration, as pointed out by Harry Hendrick, that of child welfare and welfare legislation.<sup>11</sup> This aspect is covered in *Children in English Society Vol II From the Eighteenth Century to the Children Act 1948*, by Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt.<sup>12</sup> Pinchbeck and Hewitt consider the experiences of the child disadvantaged by poverty, neglect and exploitation, and how the associated problems gave rise to legislation concerning children's welfare and reform. They also argue that such legislation affected parent-child relations, the area of discussion to which Cunningham presumably referred. Hendrick points out the contradiction in how children were regarded; not only were they to be considered as victims in need of help, but they also constituted a threat to society and were in need of reform. This thesis will set children in the context of the family, sharing family economic experiences and participating in the family's responses to poverty.

Although the topics of educational standards and methods do not form part of this study, the effect on children's lives by the increasing emphasis on educational provision through the later nineteenth century is important and will be evident. This will be discussed particularly in the chapter on the employment of children in Kingston. In *Childhood Transformed: Working-Class Children in Nineteenth-Century England*, Hopkins discusses the shift in emphasis from work to school, and links the improvements in living and educational standards for poorer children to the concern of philanthropists and reformers.<sup>13</sup> Any evidence to this effect in the Kingston sources will be considered in the latter part of this thesis.

W.A.C. Stewart and W.P. McCann provided, in 1967, an unusual approach to the subject of educational development in *The Educational Innovators 1750-1880*.<sup>14</sup> They explored the philosophical as well as practical innovations in the history of education. This information shows how an educational system or practice can be the manifestation of current or progressive philosophical beliefs; this has usefully informed the understanding of decisions made locally. Stewart and McCann set the changes brought in by Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth in the context of contemporary thinking, and Kay-Shuttleworth's influence can be found in many of the actions taken by Kingston Guardians concerning their workhouse children and this provides local evidence of the application of contemporary educational theories. Kay-Shuttleworth's personal contribution to the fortunes of one particular Kingston pauper child is discussed in Chapter 4, and this particular case study is made more meaningful when considered in conjunction with the findings of Stewart and McCann.

In *Crime and Industrial Society in the 19th Century*, J.J. Tobias discusses the contemporary opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of educating poor children.<sup>15</sup> He also examines the effects of the introduction of industrial and reformatory schools. Tobias' arguments invite discussion of the value of education for the 'perishing classes' as he suggests supplementary



reasons for the success of such establishments rather than simply to raise educational standards. He argues, for example, the importance of the social side of Ragged Schools above their educational worth, an aspect which can be particularly applied in the case of Kingston, and is evident in Chapter 8 when considering the value of social connections in obtaining employment.

Slightly more recently, David Wardle provides in *English Popular Education 1780-1975* more focus on the teaching methods and curriculum.<sup>16</sup> Although not forming an essential part of this study, an understanding of the practical application of education systems in schools was necessary to the interpretation of research findings. Unfortunately, many revealing contemporary comments quoted by Wardle appear unreferenced and unattributed, and thus could not be utilized in the present work. Wardle also appears to interpret the "tendency to regard people as social statistics" as evidence of coldness and lack of humanity, furthering his utilitarian argument. However, this has been a useful standpoint from which to consider local decisions. The educational developments discussed were considered in the context of changes in social conscience, and being more focussed on teachers and schools provides a useful supplement to the foregoing works.

Influences in changes in attitudes to the plight and care of destitute and orphaned children can be considered in biographies of those such as Mary Carpenter, by Jo Manton.<sup>17</sup> Through her study, Manton introduces yet another consideration in the subject of child reform and education, that of the individuals who strove to improve the treatment provided, and their motivation and particularly their contemporary observations. The influence of individual personalities rather than official or unofficial groups is an insufficiently explored aspect of developments at the local level. This is evidenced by the effect of Kay-Shuttleworth's involvement in pauper education, and also by the philanthropic social work of women such as Ellen Ranyard, whose relatives were prominent residents of Kingston.<sup>18</sup> Even writers of contemporary tract literature should not be overlooked, and the publications of the Religious Tract Society, children's stories by such as 'Hesba Stretton', who came to live in Ham, near Kingston, illustrate the strength of religious motivation which drove the concerns of many.<sup>19</sup> This is of considerable importance when viewing the varied utilitarian and humanitarian influences at work within towns. Local administrative bodies concerned with the poor may not have thought as one, and where debate has been recorded, these conflicting pressures may be seen at work.

The above works are examples of the numerous perspectives from which the subject can be viewed, that is administrative, motivational and practical application. As attitudes moved from the threat posed to society from the problems of children of the 'perishing' classes to one of their reform and rehabilitation, it is valuable to be aware of such changes when considering primary source material.

## 2.4 Childhood Experience and Family Relationships

Viewing childhood experiences and emotional attachments within families is problematic, as it is infrequently expressed or documented by the children themselves. This was certainly the case in Kingston where there is a paucity of oral or written personal testimony in the period covered by this research. For this reason, studies which have been carried out using such material in different geographical areas, or for a slightly different time period, or even for other social groups, have been consulted. These have been especially valuable where they have described incidents or circumstances similarly reflected in primary sources for Kingston, and thus they offer some insight into the motivation and emotions behind activities.

A number of discussions on childhood and family relationships, where they have relied on written personal testimony in the form of letters and diaries, have tended to be restricted to the middle and upper classes who have generated greater quantities of surviving documents. An example of this is Fletcher's *Growing up in England* which, whilst providing a wealth of material and case studies illuminating family life and relationships, is restricted to the higher ranks of society.<sup>20</sup> Whilst many parallels can be drawn across the classes, for example in individual responses to separation, bereavement, punishment, or a child's acceptance of its circumstances, there are obvious differences in the material home surroundings between the professional and labouring classes, and that studies which deal with poorer families are more relevant. Of particular value has been the work of Davin, Burnett, Pollock and Vincent in drawing together a range of oral and written primary sources, lacking for the Kingston area, although such resources they use exist in greater quantity for more recent periods.

Anna Davin's *Growing up Poor; Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* concentrates on late nineteenth century London and, as the title suggests, is concerned with the families of the poor, giving particular attention to girls.<sup>21</sup> Evidence is drawn from oral and written material, and illustrates the practical daily problems experienced by children in poor families. The child's place in the economic unit of the family emerges from the examples, which mirror the experiences of Kingston's children. The contrast in the application of contemporary ideology with the practical experiences of struggling with poverty becomes apparent, an aspect which is evident at the local level.

Burnett's *Destiny Obscure* and Vincent's *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom*, endeavour to present a view of childhood from the child's perspective, providing valuable first-hand accounts of poverty.<sup>22</sup> In Burnett's collection are examples which counter the view that attachment, tenderness and distress at loss did not exist across social groups through the nineteenth century. Whilst neither makes complex analyses of the examples, such accounts provide a wealth of personal experiences valuable to the present research. Where these experiences reflect incidents and circumstances similar to those revealed in Kingston's primary sources, they provide an aspect of the personal and emotional impact not available in the official documents.

Specific aspects of childhood experiences are dealt with separately by several authors. An example of responses to death is explored by Pat Jalland in *Death in the Victorian Family*, and family attachment by Linda Pollock in *Forgotten Children. Parent-child relations from 1500 to 1900*.<sup>23</sup>

Personal reminiscences which have been consulted have occurred in a number of forms, in collections such as those above, briefly mentioned in autobiographies, in recollections of the aged, and are too numerous to mention in detail here. Examples of these include the autobiography of Eileen Baillie who, whilst not herself poor, grew up in a poor London community and was able to observe the lives of others and record her reminiscences from a child's standpoint.<sup>24</sup> Roberts' *The Classic Slum* and *A Ragged Schooling*, relate to the industrial north, yet provide useful comment on neighbourly support and coping strategies.<sup>25</sup> A rare insight into the nomadic life of a peddling family is found in Burn, *The Autobiography of a Beggar Boy*, and, although earlier than the present period of study, the life of Robert Blincoe reveals the practical, physical and emotional hardships endured by workhouse children involved in factory work.<sup>26</sup> The lives of such as Will Crooks and Charles Chaplin give first-hand impressions of poverty and the experience of being admitted to a workhouse which would not be discernable from official Poor Law documents.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to the above, the numerous publications by Pamela Horn have provided enlightening details on various aspects of children's lives, much of them relying on oral testimony and relating to a slightly later period, but nonetheless supplying illuminating background details. Her areas of focus include rural and urban elementary schools, elementary teaching and teachers, children's school and home lives, child welfare, reformatory and Poor Law education, and children's games and pastimes.<sup>28</sup> Her works encompass monographs concerned with the relationship between philosophical, philanthropic and reforming trends and developing child legislation, and also popular works providing less depth of academic analysis, but valuable oral primary source material not appearing in other work. These serve to illustrate the practical effects of legislation and educational practices on both children and schoolteachers, and have helped to provide contextual dimension to the present study.

## 2.5 The Poor Law and the Workhouse

Included in this section are a number of standard works which are not of recent date, but which have served to provide useful background information. In some cases, particularly, they present an approach to a topic not covered comprehensively elsewhere. It is when moving from the general area of the Poor Law into the discrete areas of study that more recent literature is discussed, and these appear in the relevant sections of this chapter.

Much work has been written on various aspects of the poor law and workhouses. This local study highlights the differences between the Poor Law *de jure* and *de facto*. The strength of a local study is that it can challenge how far national Poor Law history can reflect the local experience. Similarly, the history of one union or region cannot reflect universal experience, as Kidd points out: "there remains the great temptation to generalise from local studies, a common feature of Poor Law historiography."<sup>29</sup> In the present study of Kingston, therefore, findings can be tested against general histories of the Poor Law and compared to the finding from other geographical areas. Michael Rose, in *The Relief of Poverty 1834-1914*, aims to describe the development of the New Poor Law and changing attitudes to poverty.<sup>30</sup> It is clear, however, particularly in his description of the introduction of the 'New' Poor Law, how regional differences affected the degree of acceptance of the new law in different areas, and the consequent effects varying local circumstances had on attitudes. He comments: "the uniformity of poor relief policy which the 1834 Royal Commission wished to impose remained far from being achieved in the face of local resistance or manipulation."<sup>31</sup> This study will consider how far his remarks were true of Kingston, and how long such an attitude endured.

The aforementioned work by Rose provides an overview of the Poor Law system. In *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* Derek Fraser brings together various studies on particular aspects of the Poor Law such as the urban, the rural, education and medical services.<sup>32</sup> He, too, acknowledges the variables in union administration, yet the division in discussion between urban and rural unions leaves market towns such as Kingston uncategorised. This invites research questions relating to the geographical and economic nature of the Kingston-upon-Thames Poor Law Union, and whether this fits into either the 'urban' or 'rural' models provided.

*The Workhouse System, 1834-1929, The History of an English Social Institution*, by M.A. Crowther provides a study of the importance of indoor relief in the Poor Law system.<sup>33</sup> It includes thorough consideration of workhouse education and the training of pauper children, together with the failings of these undertakings. It will be seen how far such criticisms of pauper training were reflected in Kingston's experience. A publication focussing on the treatment, education and apprenticeship of inmate children is Frank Crompton's *Workhouse Children*.<sup>34</sup> The work gives a history of children under the 'Old' Poor Law in the geographical region under research, being the predominantly rural county of Worcestershire, and explores the 'New' Poor Law up to 1871. A study centred on pauper children might be thought to provide a potentially useful comparison with the present work on Kingston. However, his rural geographical region cannot necessarily speak for workhouse children elsewhere in the country. Crompton laudably seeks to provide a local view of the treatment of child pauper inmates, and to provide an antidote to administrative history by using as his major source Guardians' Minute Books. The aim of the current study on Kingston is to go further, that is, to consider both central administrative intentions and local objectives, and to continue the study beyond 1871.

The work of Anne Digby has been particularly valuable; her study of poor relief in Norfolk was more relevant to the present study of Kingston than Crowther's as it reflected many similar features despite the dissimilar geographical regions.<sup>35</sup> This can be attributed partly to the influence of Kay-Shuttleworth, and emphasises the impact individual personalities and enthusiasms could have at the local level. Her work on Norfolk, in conjunction with the present study of Kingston, highlight the specific effect on pauper education of Kay-Shuttleworth especially where local Guardians were amenable to his approach, and this is particularly relevant to Chapter 4.

Conditions within the workhouse are discussed by Simon Fowler in *Workhouse: The People, The Places, The Life Behind Doors*.<sup>36</sup> He questions whether every workhouse was as bad as the more notorious examples, and this discussion highlights the variability in workhouse administration across the country. He also includes a chapter on Guardians of the Poor, being another variable in local application of the poor laws. Guardians functioned as a 'buffer' between the central authority and the applicant for relief, and the personalities serving on the local boards could have considerable influence in the interpretation of the laws and treatment of the poor. The Kingston Guardians certainly exhibited these qualities and would be worthy of a study in their own right. Similarly, Longmate's *The Workhouse*, provides a study of life within the institution, and reminds us that there were "some for whom the workhouse was a real place of shelter".<sup>37</sup> The work of the Webbs should not be overlooked, for their interpretation of the practical effects of the workings of the poor laws and their campaign for reform. The policies of the three succeeding central authorities responsible for the Poor Law in the nineteenth century are discussed, with each category of pauper given particular consideration.<sup>38</sup>

David Englander in 1998 emphasised the need for local studies to increase wider knowledge of the local application of the Poor Law. He was strongly aware of the differences between unions, different regions of the country and urban and rural conditions in poor relief practices. In *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in 19th Century Britain, 1834-1914*, he discusses the development in attitudes to the poor and poor relief, and raises the point that the attitude of administrators to the eligibility and worthiness of the applicant could influence decisions in the granting of assistance.<sup>39</sup> He reiterates the local differences in acceptance, implementation and interpretation with regard to the New Poor Law, which leads to debate on out-relief. Although many studies focus on the workhouse, poor relief was not confined to that institution, and Englander's inclusion of out-relief, and local attitudes to poor relief, is very pertinent to Kingston's experience.<sup>40</sup>

## 2.6 Community Support

Out-relief is an important, but sometimes overlooked, aspect of poor relief. In *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England*, Alan Kidd emphasises the importance of not overlooking children on out-relief.<sup>41</sup> Kidd also extends the discussion by including the assistance received from charitable bodies and community assistance, in a "'mixed economy of welfare" and emphasises that the Poor Law was only a 'safety net', much of the help given to the poor being unofficial.<sup>42</sup> He suggests that "Historians ... have been far more concerned to examine state approaches to poverty than they have the welfare alternatives of charity and self-help. [...] It remains rare for histories of the post-1800 period to attempt a synthesis in which the 'mixed economy of welfare' is studied as a whole."<sup>43</sup> Whilst documentary evidence for charitable and community assistance is largely lacking for Kingston, this study has endeavoured to incorporate those children who subsisted on the margins of the Poor Law and whose families survived times of hardship through the assistance of others. Family survival strategies, incorporating both official and unofficial aid, and drawing on community support, are important aspects of the present study.

The body of work by Frank Prochaska on philanthropy draws attention to the various groups of people who were involved in voluntary activity. He discusses the extent of charitable activity in Victorian Britain and also the importance and magnitude of women's involvement.<sup>44</sup> The debate on motivation in charitable work can be applied to various aspects of the present study, as conflicting considerations combined which resulted in the approaches adopted in Kingston. Prochaska criticises those historians who 'demonised philanthropy' and also challenges the view that voluntarism was a middle-class preserve.<sup>45</sup> The subject of philanthropic activity would be worthy of a separate study for the Kingston area. The network of charitable individuals in Kingston, the official work of husbands, and the unofficial work of their wives and daughters, is an intriguing aspect of community aid which, regrettably, must fall outside the current scope of study. Prochaska draws attention to the contribution of women to the charitable sphere in the support of poor families.

Prochaska also raises the subject of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' recipients of charity. James Walvin makes the point that whilst to many people destitution was thought to be caused by moral weakness this still did not discourage attempts to alleviate hardship.<sup>46</sup> The encouragement of self-help was felt to be the solution, and a popular and influential contemporary publication was Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help*, published in 1859.<sup>47</sup> Smiles encouraged the working-classes in the virtues of hard work, thrift, and perseverance. Evidence of the value placed on some degree of self-help will be considered when investigating assistance given to the poor in Kingston.

Documentary evidence of such unofficial community help is difficult to locate, therefore the work of Davin, already referred to, provides stimulating detail.<sup>48</sup> As well as dealing with the daily

struggle for existence experienced by poor London families, Davin gathered a wealth of oral testimony to enrich understanding. Although such testimony relates to childhood at a slightly later period than the present study, these details supply valuable insights into the unrecorded aspect of social support within the community. The personal experiences recorded in the accumulated oral histories cited earlier all contribute to the aspect of community and family support so important to the survival of poor families.

## 2.7 Locality and Local History

The impact of community feeling and parish identity is emphasised by Keith Snell in *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950*.<sup>49</sup> This aspect could be true not only of those whose settlement within a parish or union offered a degree of security in times of hardship, but also for those who administered aid to the poor. Local attachment may well have been an element in resistance to central government administration, and the impact of belonging to a locality will be considered throughout this thesis. The support obtained from being part of the community, used in conjunction with any nearby family, revives the debate on the relative importance of neighbourliness and kinship as discussed by Kidd and also raised by Wrightson in regard to the parish of Terling.<sup>50</sup>

Snell's discussion of identification with a parish has suggested a number of aspects to be borne in mind when considering parish relief, social support or parish settlement. Pragmatic approaches on both sides of the relief question were exercised at the local level, influencing how the local authorities viewed a potentially expensive family, and also how families viewed the likely generosity of the parish. Yet not only might a family transfer their allegiance "for reasons of welfare generosity", Snell emphasises that "local attachment" to the parish community was strong and enduring. He also employs the term "local xenophobia" when discussing local authorities, and this attitude in particular can be related to Kingston Guardians' approach not only to official interference in their administration, but also to threats to the financial wellbeing of the town posed by certain types of miscreant or pauper. Further discussions on the theme of a sense of place appear in Snell and Ell's *Rival Jerusalems*, suggesting consideration of attachment to place for both administrators and labourers.<sup>51</sup> Employment also influenced attachment and settlement in a parish, and the changes in agricultural employment and settlement patterns are discussed in Snell's *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, and analysed on a local basis by Goose, Howkins and Verdon, emphasising the variety of local and regional variations in employment patterns.<sup>52</sup>

The value of a detailed local study illuminates many aspects, as will be shown throughout this thesis. The relationship between the parish and the people can be revealed through local source material, and this is illustrated in Robin's study of the village of Colyton, Devon, in *The Way We Lived Then*.<sup>53</sup> It is interesting to consider how far the "intense parochialism" enduring in a small village community can also be seen at work in a larger market town with a greater

transient population.<sup>54</sup> The influence of parishioners through the local implementation of national legislation can be felt in the larger community of Kingston, as Robin concluded was the case in Colyton.

The specific community at the centre of this analysis is covered by Shaan Butters in *The Book of Kingston*, which provides a detailed and referenced history of Kingston-upon-Thames.<sup>55</sup> Various aspects of the history of Kingston have also been covered by the copious output of June Sampson, both in a number of books and also in a series of articles in the *Surrey Comet*.<sup>56</sup> Books of reminiscences or of histories written in the nineteenth century provide accounts of people and incidents which may not have survived in other sources, or which allow for a contemporary view of Victorian Kingston which could almost be regarded as a primary source. These include F. Somner Merryweather, *Half a Century of Kingston History* (1887); George William Ayliffe, *Old Kingston, Recollections of an Octogenarian* (1914); W.D. Biden, *The History and Antiquities of the Ancient and Royal Town of Kingston-upon-Thames* (1852); and also Rowley W.C. Richardson, *Surbiton, Thirty-Two Years of Local Self-Government 1855-1887* (1888).<sup>57</sup> Such anecdotes and recalled events as can be verified in other sources, such as the *Surrey Comet*, have been critically assessed. Those without supporting evidence must be viewed in the same light as other reminiscences, yet they have provided as near a contemporary view of Kingston as could be obtained.

The above Kingston histories do not concern themselves with the children of the poor to any large extent, although the historical legacy provided by early charities, and subsequent educational improvements, are discussed, suggesting a desire to emphasise an active Christianity. Each of the above publications has its own area of focus, whether it is antiquarian, archaeological or administrative. Merryweather has much to say on charities and does discuss social conditions to some extent, providing an insight into the conditions for the "gutter children" in the Back Lanes, being a useful supplement to other primary sources. Richardson's work principally concerns the establishment and development of the Surbiton Improvement Commissioners, and the municipal improvements in that suburb during the second half of the nineteenth century. These descriptions provide information on the sanitary and living conditions in the area, and the work of the Commissioners and local medical officer of health to improve them.

Biden's work, being written in 1852, and that of Ayliffe, who was born in 1825 and spent his working life in the area, are valuable for the details of fairs and local customs which had largely died out during the latter half of the nineteenth century and therefore have less emphasis in the later sources. Biden gives useful information on charities for children, and his allusions to the character of Kingston's administration has resonance with subsequent findings. Ayliffe's mention of individual inhabitants gives character to the stark references in official documents, and is particularly helpful for an insight into the treatment of climbing boys employed by one particular chimney sweep.



The writings of Gwendolen Freeman, including *Children Never Tell* (1949) and *United Family Record: Some Late Victorians* (1989), illuminate life in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Surbiton.<sup>58</sup> Although hers was not a poor family, she grew up in the family shop in Victoria Road where her father, an artist, sold stationery and artists' materials. Her recollections, and those of other family members which she compiled, provide some of the few available reminiscences of the area. For the same reason Dorothy Edwards' *A Strong and Willing Girl*, has been perused.<sup>59</sup> Although this account of a Teddington servant's childhood and early working life recorded by her niece is presented in an accessible form for children, it reflects many aspects of children's employment in the locality which have been supported by primary evidence.

Valuable assistance in locating individuals mentioned in primary sources was provided by the *Kingston Lifecycles Database* created by the Centre for Local History Studies at Kingston University. The inclusion of a number of census, parish and cemetery records allowed for partial family reconstitution and the provision of data for analysis, thus enhancing the information found in primary sources to provide a more detailed picture of the poorer Kingston families and the areas in which they lived. This is discussed further in the chapter on Methodology.

## 2.8 Methodology

A great debt is owed to the work of historical demographers Wrigley, Laslett and Schofield and the work of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure. The present study of the Kingston area does not apply total reconstitution in the full sense as applied by the Cambridge Group but, rather, a partial reconstitution as it has been confined to selected families rather than the entire community. The work of the Cambridge Group includes the development of family reconstitution studies on the parish of Colyton in Devon; the compilation of a database of entries from a number of parish registers has been used for demographic studies, for example, of marriage ages, mortality and persistence.<sup>60</sup> Jean Robin's subsequent analysis of the lives of a cohort of children in Colyton in 1851 draws on a similar range of material as in the present study of Kingston.<sup>61</sup> The numbers of children involved in the Colyton study, being 633 children aged under ten years, is on a much more manageable size than for Kingston, where there were 2,854 children in the same age group in 1851. However, findings on the employment of children in Colyton can be usefully contrasted with those for the village of Claygate, which is considered in Chapter 8. Robin's study of Elmdon in Essex provides a further analysis of an agricultural village where the population was a similar size to Claygate.<sup>62</sup>

Family reconstitution studies at the micro level can reveal information not only about the local community but can be usefully applied to national arguments. Such data can be analyzed quantitatively, and the family reconstitutions can be studied for qualitative detail. As Wrigley

and Schofield argue, "One of the attractions of using family reconstitution ... is that it permits the detailed examination of idiosyncrasies of particular communities, even individual families. No other technique offers comparable range or richness of material" <sup>63</sup> Wrightson and Levine's analysis of births in Terling illustrate how such collections of data can reveal detail which the original information was never intended to provide, for example, in suggesting methods of birth control practised at the time. <sup>64</sup>

Such qualitative source analysis of family reconstitution is discussed by Reay in *Microhistories: Demography, society and culture in rural England, 1800-1930*. <sup>65</sup> Reay emphasises the importance of drawing together a wide range of historical records in the technique of 'total reconstitution'. He counters criticisms of earlier reconstitution studies by pointing out that the family relationships constructed from parish registers can be further enhanced by the inclusion of other sources. Additionally, Reay was able to include in his primary source material a quantity of oral history for a later period than is being undertaken here. However, this coordination of a breadth of source material is a major element in the study of Kingston children, with the exception of oral material.

The application of the reconstitution method is discussed in a number of useful journal articles, particularly those appearing in *Local Population Studies*. Pamela Sharpe's development of Wrigley's study of Colyton suggests one of the uses to which such databases can be put, in her case to analyze the social structure of the parish. <sup>66</sup> Although technological developments have advanced since her study, as they had since Wrigley's exercise, her recognition of the "tedious and time-consuming" nature of the work makes this type of study "not cost-effective for the single researcher to undertake". This has to be acknowledged in the restrictions of the present study of Kingston, hence the methods have been adapted as described in Chapter 3.

## 2.9 Conclusion

The study of childhood is a relatively recent field, having developed as a subject in its own right during the last thirty years or so. The present study encompasses many fields and is not restricted to a single aspect of childhood life. This has necessitated the consideration of arguments drawn from a wide range of themes. Due to the breadth of study, this has necessitated the exclusion from this historiography of a comprehensive range of secondary sources relating, for example, to aspects of education, health, diseases, children's games and toys, and other aspects pertinent to the subject. Secondary research has, however, not excluded other themes, and where relevant secondary material has been consulted these have been referenced in the bibliography.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Sources, Methodology and Location**

**" the records of local incidents are generally ephemeral" <sup>1</sup>**

*F. Somner Merryweather, 1887*

**"Histories which exclude the 'knowable community' are histories half written" <sup>2</sup>**

*Barry Reay, 1996*

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter will define the scope of the subjects under study, explain the parameters chosen and describe the methods used in both the research and assemblage of the material. Although the title of the study appears self-explanatory, it is necessary to attempt to define the terms used, or at least draw attention to the ambiguity which can arise from the concepts of children and poverty.

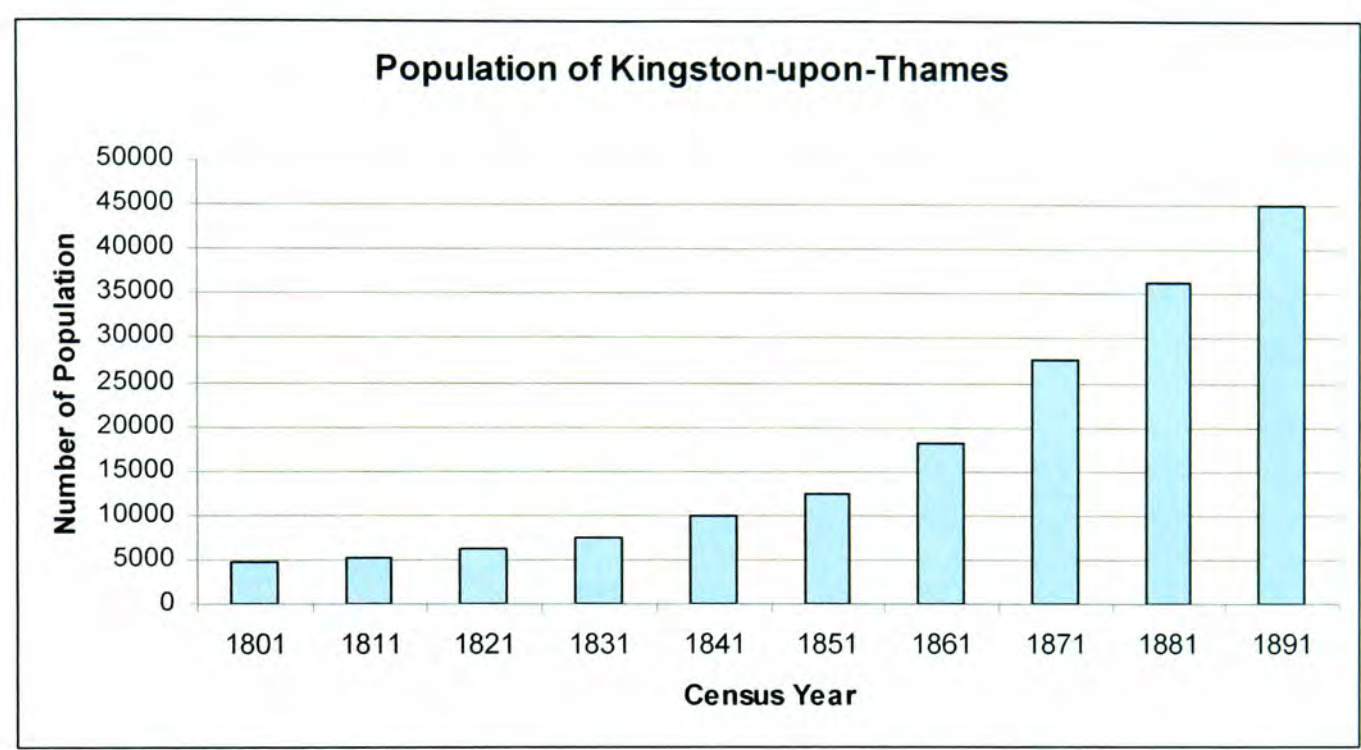
#### **3.2 Location: Kingston-upon-Thames**

Kingston is situated in north-east Surrey, twelve miles southwest of London, and on the south bank of the River Thames eighteen miles upstream from Westminster. A royal Charter of 1628 granted Kingston exclusive market rights within a seven mile radius, and the town's trading and craft interests were protected by a Guild, so that by the nineteenth century Kingston was historically protective of its autonomy. <sup>3</sup> Being a major coaching town on the London to Portsmouth Road, with a bridge over the Thames, and *en route* to royal residences, it was ideally situated for trade and traffic. By 1838 Kingston was a "small riverside market town", comprising a compact built-up area surrounded by fields. Its chief industries included malting, brewing, tanning, milling and boat-building. <sup>4</sup> The coming of the railway, general decline in agriculture and the growth in population had a noticeable effect on Kingston, where the geographical extent of the built-up area expanded and the population grew. [Figure 3.1] Retailing grew in prominence as the century progressed and as the occupational structure of the town altered, the area gradually changed from a country town to one exhibiting the features of a metropolitan suburb. [Figure 3.2]

Within this area remained contrasts; professional men began to populate Surbiton, yet slum areas persisted in Kingston. Small industries operated in the town yet the surrounding villages retained a rural aspect with smallholdings. With the growth of the suburban area, agricultural labourers gradually turned to labouring on roads and building sites, and girls moved from the outlying districts to the town to work as servants. The plethora of charities and lodging houses, and opportunities afforded by markets, fairs and festivals, drew unskilled labour to the town. Labourers' homes, both ancient and newly-built, were often overcrowded and badly drained,

Figure 3.1

Kingston-upon-Thames 19<sup>th</sup> Century Population Growth



Source of figures: John West, *Town Records* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co Ltd, 1983) pp. 320-1  
Figures for "Kingston-upon-Thames" include the districts of Kingston, Surbiton, Malden and Coombe



**Figure 3.2 Kingston-upon-Thames and surrounding area, ca 1872-4**

Showing the town of Kingston and the developing suburb of Surbiton in the vicinity of the station. Areas of agricultural land still divide the urban area from the surrounding villages.





Kingston's slum areas and tenements being prone to disease. There were many wealthier residents, a source of domestic employment and philanthropic activities, but when employment and charity had been exhausted by labouring families, the Poor Law was the only refuge.

Research has focussed on children from within the geographical area of the Kingston-upon-Thames Poor Law Union, whether in receipt of poor relief or not. This includes Kingston pauper children housed outside the boundaries of the Union, but still chargeable to it. Including the area of the Union, rather than restricting study to the parish of Kingston, encompasses outlying villages and peripheral industries, and explores the relationship between the town and the country areas closest to Kingston, and the movement of families between them.

The Poor Law Union was formed in 1836 from eight Surrey parishes and three in Middlesex [Figure 3.3], covering 25,000 acres.<sup>5</sup> As the population grew, new churches were built and these eleven parishes were divided so that by 1865 the Union comprised fifteen parishes, but the overall geographical boundary of the Union remained the same. Other administrative areas were centred on Kingston, such as court, parliamentary and ecclesiastical districts, but these were not consistent with the Union boundaries, as indicated in Figure 3.4. When discussing comparative population figures, these relate to the district of Kingston, and not the entire Union, unless otherwise stated.

### **3.3 Definition of Terms**

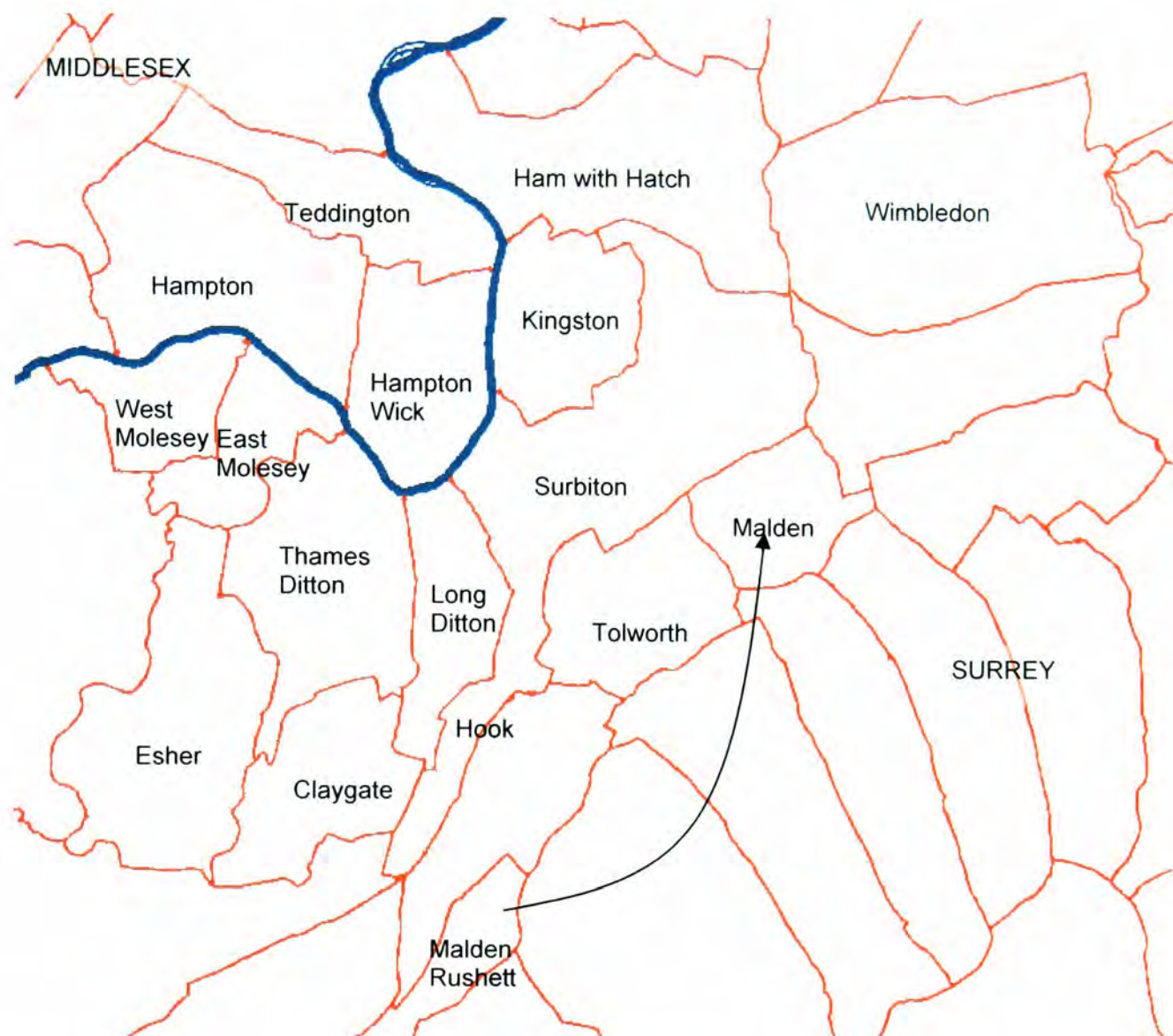
The terms for which definitions are being sought are subjective, and personal opinions can influence contemporary and historical discussion.

#### **3.3.1 Childhood**

To define the age at which childhood begins and ends is problematic. The length of childhood and how children should behave, and childhood rights and responsibilities, are all subjective. These considerations can impinge on the retrospective view of children in history, as they did contemporaneously. As Cunningham points out, "The adults who define childhood are rarely in agreement with one another. They differ across time; they differ within their own time".<sup>6</sup>

The ages of majority, criminal culpability, marriage and employment are not consistent. Walvin's study encompassed children up to the age of fourteen, being the "predominant school-leaving age and the limit of childhood criminality".<sup>7</sup> Cunningham also regarded the age of criminal responsibility as an appropriate end for childhood.<sup>8</sup> Yet the legal age of criminal responsibility did not always equate with maturity; neither can the passing from school pupil to worker imply adulthood. Within this study may appear infants and stillborn babies as well as young apprentices and youths, reflecting this ambiguity, and such examples have been used either to illustrate a general point or in furtherance of a case study.

**Figure 3.3 The Kingston-upon-Thames Poor Law Union**



Derived from SN 4348 Historic Parishes of England and Wales: Electronic Map of Boundaries before 1850, [www.data-archive.ac.uk](http://www.data-archive.ac.uk), accessed 15 Jan 2010, compiled from Tithe maps; enclosure maps; published returns of the 1851 Census; drainage maps; estate maps; Ordnance Survey 1:63,360 New Series (1895-9, and 1903-13 editions); Ordnance Survey Seventh Series (1953-74); Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 First Edition; parochial assessment maps; and county mapping by A. Bryant, and Christopher and John Greenwood.

**Figure 3.4**  
**Administrative areas for the Parishes of the Kingston Union**

Parish	County	Hundred	Polling Division	County Court District	Rural deanery	Arch-deaconry	Diocese	Population 1871	On Kingston Lifecycles Database
Claygate	Surrey	Kingston	Mid Surrey	Kingston	Emly	Surrey		576	
Coombe & New Malden	Surrey	Kingston	Mid Surrey	Kingston	Kingston	Southwark	Rochester	1641	
East Molesey	Surrey	Elmbridge	Western Surrey	Kingston	Emly	Surrey	Winchester	2409	
Esher	Surrey	Elmbridge	Western Surrey	Kingston	Emly	Surrey	Winchester	1815	
Ham with Hatch	Surrey	Kingston	Mid Surrey	Kingston	Kingston	Southwark	Rochester	1550	✓
Hampton	Middx	Spelthorne	Middx	Kingston	Hampton	Middlesex	London	3915	
Hampton Wick	Middx	Spelthorne	Middx	Kingston	Hampton	Middlesex	London	2207	
Hook	Surrey	Kingston	Mid Surrey	Kingston	North East Ewell	Southwark	Rochester	522	✓
Kingston	Surrey	Kingston	Mid Surrey	Kingston	Kingston	Southwark	Rochester	25,159 (excluding Ham with Hatch & Hook)	✓
Long Ditton	Surrey	Kingston	Mid Surrey	Kingston	North East Ewell	Southwark	Rochester	1836	
Malden	Surrey	Kingston	Mid Surrey	Kingston	North East Ewell	Southwark	Rochester	416 (including Malden Rushett, detached part)	
Surbiton	Surrey	Kingston	Mid Surrey	Kingston	Kingston	Southwark	Rochester	4889	✓
Teddington	Middx	Spelthorne	Middlesex	Kingston	Hampton	Middlesex	London	4063	
Thames Ditton	Surrey	Partly in Elmbridge partly in Kingston	Western & Mid Surrey	Kingston	Kingston	Surrey	Winchester	1084 (excluding Claygate, Imber & Weston) 885 Weston Green (Imber & Weston)	
Tolworth	Surrey	Kingston	Mid Surrey	Kingston	North East Ewell	Southwark	Rochester	469	
West Molesey	Surrey	Elmbridge	Western Surrey	Kingston	Emly	Surrey	Winchester	568	
Wimbledon	Surrey	Brixton West	Mid Surrey	Wandsworth	Barnes	Southwark	Rochester	9087	

Source: Post Office Directory of Surrey 1878 & Post Office Directory of Middlesex 1874

Hopkins showed how the concept of children being involved in some form of work was generally accepted and how the employment of children extended with the developing strength and stamina of each individual child, and was thus not a fixed or sudden transition.<sup>9</sup> As this study will show, movement from childhood to adulthood in an employment context could be a gradual process and not an abrupt change. Analysis within the employment chapter will mainly focus on the 10-14 age group, whilst acknowledging the possible involvement of younger children. Within the sphere of the Poor Law, discussion may encompass children up to the age of sixteen, as they were included in the children's section of the workhouse under the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834.

The transition from child to adult might variously be considered to have been at the assumption of some adult responsibility, criminal culpability or regular employment, yet these features can be present even while the child is still plainly a child. Even very young children were thrust, through necessity, into the rôle of housekeeper, baby-minder, wage-earner or nurse for their own family. Thus an exact definition cannot be achieved, and this is reflected in the ages of the 'children' within this study.

### **3.3.2 Orphan**

It is as well to bear in mind that the term 'orphan' included children who had lost either a mother or a father, but not necessarily both parents. Furthermore, a step-father was considered to have taken over the financial and social responsibilities of the child's deceased father and the child would cease to be considered orphaned on a parent's remarriage.

### **3.3.3 Poverty**

The terms 'poverty', 'poor' and 'needy' are relative and variable, with no standard definition. In order to distance the researcher from a modern interpretation, these terms must be set in the context of the period studied. Devoid of home, work, food or clothes a person is plainly destitute, but at what point wants give way to needs is often subjective and can vary over time and from community to community. The measure of poverty is always moving, and in an upwards direction as national prosperity develops. Even within poor communities there could be variations. There were families who found that with careful handling their income could be just adequate to cover their daily essentials, some squandered what little they had, and others could not cope financially however careful or resourceful they were. At the end of the nineteenth century Charles Booth endeavoured to deal with this question through quantitative methods, and his 'Classification Table' [Figure 3.5] set out various degrees of poverty ranging from "loafers" and "criminals" to those "decent", "respectable" working families who had "a hard struggle to make ends meet".<sup>10</sup> As discussed by Fried and Elman "Booth calculated that families belonging to the poverty-line classes would make ends meet if they lived frugal and rigorously self-disciplined lives, if their wants were simple and their 'vices' few – and if their luck held out".<sup>11</sup> As this study will show, however frugal and self-disciplined a poor family might be, they were no match for simple bad luck.

**Figure 3.5**  
**Booth Classification System**

Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London Volume 1* (London: Macmillan, 1902) p.33

Booth Classification	Description of class	
A	The lowest class which consists of some occasional labourers, street sellers, loafers, criminals and semi-criminals. Their life is the life of savages, with vicissitudes of extreme hardship and their only luxury is drink	Below the "Poverty Line"
B	Casual earnings, very poor. The labourers do not get as much as three days work a week, but it is doubtful if many could or would work full time for long together if they had the opportunity. Class B is not one in which men are born and live and die so much as a deposit of those who from mental, moral and physical reasons are incapable of better work	
C	Intermittent earning. 18s to 21s per week for a moderate family. The victims of competition and on them falls with particular severity the weight of recurrent depressions of trade. Labourers, poorer artisans and street sellers. This irregularity of employment may show itself in the week or in the year: stevedores and waterside porters may secure only one of two days' work in a week, whereas labourers in the building trades may get only eight or nine months in a year.	
D	Small regular earnings. Poor, regular earnings. Factory, dock, and warehouse labourers, carmen, messengers and porters. Of the whole section none can be said to rise above poverty, nor are many to be classed as very poor. As a general rule they have a hard struggle to make ends meet, but they are, as a body, decent steady men, paying their way and bringing up their children respectably.	
E	Regular standard earnings, 22s to 30s per week for regular work, fairly comfortable. As a rule the wives do not work, but the children do: the boys commonly following the father, the girls taking local trades or going out to service.	Above the "Poverty Line"
F	Higher class labour and the best paid of the artisans. Earnings exceed 30s per week. Foremen are included, city warehousemen of the better class and first hand lightermen; they are usually paid for responsibility and are men of good character and much intelligence.	
G	Lower middle class. Shopkeepers and small employers, clerks and subordinate professional men. A hardworking sober, energetic class.	
H	Upper middle class, servant keeping class.	

The children in this study include those who, through a variety of circumstances, destitution, orphanage or abandonment, came under the care of the Kingston Poor Law Guardians. They may have remained subject to in-relief for a considerable length of time, but many were assisted by the Poor Law only on a temporary basis. This study also encompasses children from poor families who managed to remain largely independent. However, it is not possible to divide the study strictly into two distinct categories, as there were many children whose changing family circumstances brought them periodically within the sphere of the Poor Law, either as inmates of the workhouse or in receipt of short-term or long-term out-relief or medical relief, and these form an important element in the study. The thesis will be supplemented by case studies of a number of families to illustrate the various categories described, as indicated in the 'Methodology' section to this chapter.

### **3.3.4 Period Covered**

This study encompasses the years 1834 to 1882. The commencement date was considered appropriate as being the inception of the Poor Law Amendment Act. Although the Kingston-upon-Thames Poor Law Union was not declared until 1836 and the new Union workhouse was not in use until 1839, this might have suggested later commencement dates. However, beginning at 1834 allows for discussion on the early development of the Union and local adjustment to the new laws.<sup>12</sup> This sets the 'New' Poor Law in context and in some way explains the establishment of local attitudes to central interference. It needs to be emphasised that the introduction of the 'New' Poor Law did not result in sudden change at the local level and the transition period reveals the development of local attitudes and resolves. The 1830s also mark a convenient point in the development of local government in Kingston, as the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 established an elected Borough Council.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the arrival of the railway in 1838 coincided with the release of Norbiton and Surbiton commons for development, which had considerable impact on the changing character of the area.

Many studies of poor children either start or end around 1870, as this marked a broad alteration in administration within the Poor Law and elementary education. The change in administration from Poor Law Board (PLB) to Local Government Board (LGB) in 1871 and the consequent changes in administrative approach and practice marks a convenient transition date. In educational terms 1870 saw the introduction of 'Forster's' Elementary Education Act, which made possible the creation of School Boards and the provision of compulsory school attendance. However, Kingston did not appoint a School Board, instead forming an Attendance Committee in 1877 following Sandon's Act. The years 1870 to 1872 were of great significance in Kingston-upon-Thames and require inclusion. The period saw lively debate in the town on the education question and it also coincided with a time of great change in the care of the Union's pauper children. To continue the present study beyond these years offered an opportunity to examine the local effect of central legislation and highlight the contrast between national history and local application.

The study was taken up to the year 1882 to allow for the inclusion of data from the 1881 population census which might reveal the consequences of the changes mentioned, but the remaining years of the century have, reluctantly, not been covered. The last two decades of the nineteenth century saw a considerable increase in legislation, educational changes, new administrative bodies, new child protection laws and specialist homes and charities, thus the range of sources and plethora of material would have necessitated a considerable narrowing of focus or dilution of content.

### 3.4 Sources

The principal primary sources fall broadly into two categories, Poor Law generated records and non-Poor Law records. The methodology section of this chapter will describe how the information from these sources was consolidated and analyzed. The worth, deficiencies and survival of the sources are considered below, and summarised in Figures 3.6 and 3.7.

#### 3.4.1 Poor Law Records

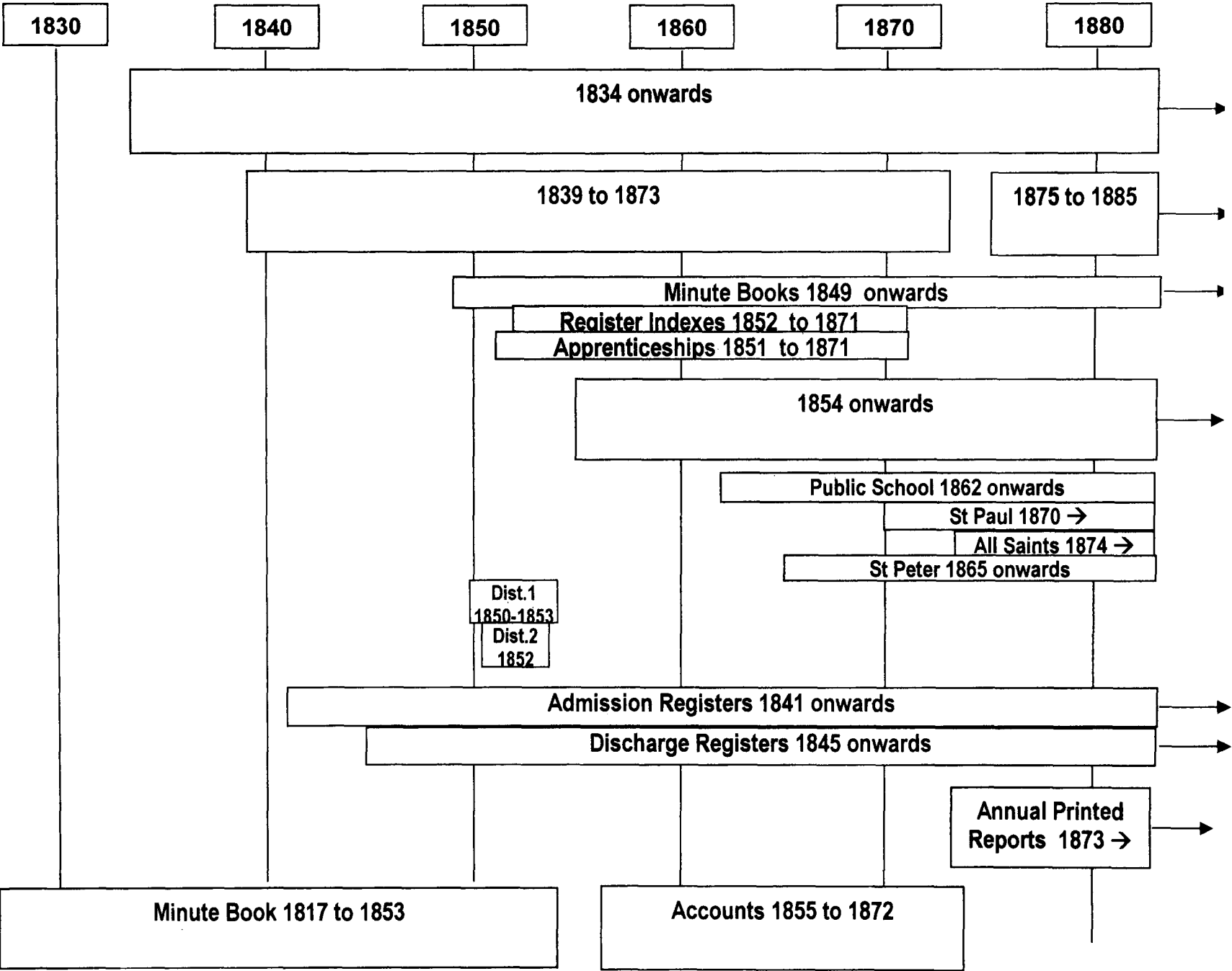
Studies concerned with poor relief have tended to utilize one main series of documentary source material, whether those of the central administration or the local boards. Crompton considered that a study based on "national Poor Law papers [...] produced [...] a somewhat clinical examination of the New Poor Law from an administrator's viewpoint."<sup>14</sup> By using Board of Guardians books as a major source he endeavoured to redress the balance by giving a local point of view, yet this would still offer a single-source view. This present study attempts to resolve both approaches, by giving equal weight to central Poor Law files and Board of Guardians books. Being able to consider both points of view in this way ameliorates the pitfall of basing a study on biased opinion and has the advantage of comparing the central, official, view with those expressed at the local level.

Survival of this material is variable and the compilers of such sources were not consistent. At the local level, availability of certain categories of documents for the Kingston Union was disappointing; workhouse and Poor Law school registers, Masters' Day Books and Visiting Committee books no longer survive. The District Relieving Officers' Application Books for the entire Kingston Union, a potential mine of information, have survived for only the year 1852. Board of Guardians' Minute Books survive for most of the period, but vary in content. The decision on what to record in the Minute Books depended on the discrimination of the current clerk, the volume of business conducted that day, and the prevailing concerns of the Board. The retention of Poor Law correspondence centrally was at the discretion of the London clerk or reflected the current *bête noir* of the central board. A considerable volume of correspondence and minutes exist for some years and whilst all available files were perused, detailed analysis was carried out principally using sampling or focussing on significant periods in the life of the Union.

Figure 3.6

- Poor Law  
Correspondence files
- Board of Guardian  
Minute Books
- North Surrey District  
School
- Surrey Comet
- School Log Books
- Relieving Officer's  
Application Books
- Philanthropic Farm  
School Registers
- National Orphan  
Home Ham Common
- Kingston Association  
for the Poor

Survival of a Selection of Primary Source Material for Kingston-upon-Thames





### Figure 3.7 Principal Primary Sources

A selection of the Principal Primary Sources used, with brief comments on their usefulness or deficiencies.

The list of sources is not exhaustive.

Source	Reference	Location	Comments & Deficiencies
Poor Law Correspondence between the Kingston Union and (1) Poor Law Commission 1834-47 (2) Poor Law Board 1847-1871 (3) Local Government Board 1871-1919	MH12	TNA	Varies in content and survival. Compiled by Central Board clerks. Provides standpoint of Central Board.
Kingston Board of Guardian's Minute Books	BG8	SHC	Varies in content and survival. Recorded by Clerk to the Board. Does not reflect debate
Indexes to Admission & Discharge Registers of North Surrey District School	NSSD/169 NSSD/170	LMA	The registers themselves have not survived. Information is brief
North Surrey District School Band Register	NSSD/188	LMA	Union of origin not specified
North Surrey District School Apprenticeship Register	NSSD/190 NSSD/191	LMA	Brief information
North Surrey District School Death Register	NSSD/195	LMA	Brief information
Philanthropic Farm School Admission and Discharge books	2271/10 2271/11	SHC	Useful personal details, but voluminous to search
School Log Books	Various - See Bibliography	SHC, NKC, CLHS, or still retained by the school	Vary in content, survival and coverage. Recorded by Schoolmaster or Schoolmistress to account for attendance figures.
<i>Surrey Comet</i>		NKC	Varies in content and coverage. Not all copies survive. Voluminous to search, so sampling necessary
<i>Times</i> (and other C19 newspapers)		<a href="http://www.galegroup.com">www.galegroup.com</a>	Generally news of national or metropolitan interest
Parliamentary Papers		<a href="http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk">http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk</a>	Voluminous
Kingston University <i>LifeCycles</i> Database		CLHS	Valuable for data analysis and locating families. Contains Census (1851-1891), baptisms, marriages, burials and cemetery records for the town of Kingston. Remainder of Union not covered. Being a transcription, reference to CEBs required.
Parish Registers	Various	SHC, CLHS	Usual drawbacks surrounding these sources, ie content, survival, location, lack of index
Census Enumerators' Books	Various	TNA	As above. Information and recording vary with census years and with enumerators

#### Key:

TNA = The National Archives, Kew

SHC = The Surrey History Centre, Woking

LMA = London Metropolitan Archives, Clerkenwell

NKC = North Kingston Centre for Local History, Richmond Road, Kingston

CLHS = Centre for Local History Studies, Kingston University

Some records for the North Surrey District School, the Poor Law School at Anerley, survive for the period during which Kingston used the school between 1850 and 1871. These comprise the indexes to the admissions, discharge and apprenticeship registers, although unfortunately, not the registers themselves. Additional Poor Law records were consulted where required, such as correspondence filed with other Unions' documents, and Board of Education files.

### **3.4.2 Non-Poor Law Records**

No unified source exists for children in poor families who survived mainly outside the workhouse. Where families were on out-relief, mention may appear in the Poor Law records, but generally only where their individual circumstances demanded particular consideration by the Guardians. As Kidd remarks, "[t]he child on outdoor relief remains obscure to us".<sup>15</sup> For the more 'obscure' child, therefore, a different approach has had to be employed. In the place of one continuous source for the whole period, a large number of sporadically surviving resources have had to be utilized, to provide a collage of information from ephemeral sources. [Figure 3.6] These might range from a solitary surviving charity year-book, to a run of Medical Officer's Reports but which commence late in the period of study. Whilst this method cannot provide the consistency required for accurate comparative changes over time, it does provide breadth and serves to overcome the difficulties of studying these elusive members of society, and has resulted in a unique approach to the subject.

### **3.4.3 School Log books**

School log books have been used to gain insight into the daily lives of children, using references to local events, illnesses, family circumstances and employment opportunities. It should be remembered that their purpose was not to act as a journal on the everyday life of the school, but to justify absences and interruptions which might be questioned by trustees or government inspectors. As with other records, much depended on the whims of the schoolmaster or schoolmistress for any additional comments they might supply.

Whilst there existed various educational charities, and an unknown number of undocumented "dame" schools, the education for the poorer classes in Kingston during the 1850s and 1860s was provided principally by three schools, the Richmond Road Public School, the Norbiton National School and the Kingston Ragged School. Although there were some other schools existing in the area at this time, and new schools built as the period progressed, this study has concentrated mainly on these particular schools for three principal reasons. They were the earliest established public schools for nineteenth century poor children in Kingston and provide the earliest available examples. They provide representation of three different types of school, Anglican, non-denominational, and 'Ragged'. Furthermore, they are situated in or near two contrasting areas of poverty in the town which reflect the particular nature of Kingston, as will be discussed. This provided a detailed micro-study of conditions and family life within these two locations.

### 3.4.4 Newspapers

Whilst no records for the Ragged School have survived, this deficiency has been partly overcome by using reports which appeared in the *Surrey Comet* and by attempting to locate any pupils mentioned within other sources. Similarly, detailed charity records are not available for Kingston, but it is possible to infer the additional support obtained through charitable efforts by references to clothing clubs, coal clubs and other societies which appear in the local press. This information has contributed to the consideration of community support, an aspect which is not officially recorded, and responds to Kidd's observation that historians were more concerned with state approaches to poverty than other welfare alternatives.

The *Surrey Comet* was first printed on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1854, although news reporting did not appear until after the repeal of Stamp Duty the following year. The press was first permitted access to the meetings of the Kingston Board of Guardians in July 1859, after which these meetings were reported in depth, until the novelty wore off or something more newsworthy occurred. A drawback to Board of Guardian Minute books is that although decisions were recorded, the preceding debate is rarely described, so that reports of board meetings in the *Surrey Comet* can often supply a flavour of the discussion. Whether an agreement was unanimous, or arrived at through bitter argument or accompanied by laughter, can be more revealing than the mere recording of the outcome.

The subjects covered within the *Surrey Comet* were not consistent, so a uniform coverage cannot be expected. Fashions in what constituted newsworthiness, local campaigns and enthusiasms of interest to the proprietor, dictated the printed word, but at least these can be considered to reflect what the newspaper-buying Kingstonian found interesting. However, domestic incidents often took second place to copious reporting of such issues as the Sewage Question, the freeing of the bridge from tolls, or the flower show. The mundane only appeared if there was column space to fill. Broadly speaking, however, the *Surrey Comet* is a valuable resource, giving background to individuals and providing an overall view of the community and its concerns. Robinson suggests that, as the only local newspaper centred on Kingston within this period, it maintained a political neutrality in order to "appeal across the community", and offers a more balanced view than it might otherwise have done.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.4.5 Census Returns, Parish Records and Kingston 'Life-Cycles' Database

Research was greatly assisted through the use of the Kingston Life-Cycles Database, which includes a number of census, parish and burial records for Kingston-upon-Thames, and was created by the Centre for Local History Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, at Kingston University.<sup>17</sup> The Database was used for analysis and supplemented by reference to primary sources wherever possible for individual cases. As this study is concerned with a wider geographical area than that covered by the Life-Cycles database, individuals from other parishes within the Kingston Union were studied through direct reference to primary sources.

An additional project of the Centre for Local History Studies which was also consulted was the Historic Patient Database for the Great Ormond Street Hospital.<sup>18</sup>

### 3.4.6 Other sources

Ephemeral material which may be available for the study of children in better-off families, children's diaries, workbooks or letters, are rarely available in the case of poorer children. Their reported words may be found in court records, newspaper items, school log books and reports of workhouse inspectors, but are second-hand. Occasionally a biography or autobiography may be written in later life, such as that of 'Punch' Sheppard, deserted as a child in Kingston, who grew up to run a market stall, but for the most part the way a child viewed his childhood in poverty at the time he was living is seldom known.<sup>19</sup>

## 3.5 Methodology

In view of the volume of some of the source material, it was not possible to read the entire range of documents, particularly for Poor Law correspondence, minute books and the *Surrey Comet*. For these, a method of sampling had to be adopted, in order to study in depth those years which would be the most rewarding in terms of identifying individuals. By concentrating on the years of the decennial census returns, plus a year either side, any individuals mentioned might be more easily identifiable in the census enumerators' books, and therefore family reconstruction undertaken with more certainty. Additionally, reference to any significant incident was pursued in years beyond the sample range.

The methodology used a partial reconstitution technique, as pioneered by Wrigley and Schofield and the Cambridge Group, but here limited to a range of selected families rather than the whole community. This was combined with qualitative source analysis, similar to that discussed in Reay, *Microhistories*, although Reay's study benefits from the inclusion of oral histories.<sup>20</sup> In the present study the compilation of source material focussed initially on the archive sources, and were linked to census and parish records only when potential case studies were identified so that reconstitution of those families was undertaken. The exception was in the instances of topic sampling, for example the study of the occupational structure of a specific hamlet, or a quantitative analysis of particular age groups or birth places, where the *Kingston Lifecycles Database* was used for its census data.

Information on individual children, extracted from the primary sources, was entered in a Database of Primary Source References, resulting in a database of around eight thousand entries, giving details on approximately four-and-a-half thousand individuals. [Figure 3.8] The data could then be sorted as the research questions demanded and it was possible to highlight individuals who featured in more than one source, or families who repeatedly appeared. Reference could then be made to the primary source material for full details, or to the abstracts made in the research notes. It was possible to detect children who passed into the workhouse

Figure 3.8

## Example of the Database of Primary Source References

Order	Child's S/name	Child's F/name	Parent's Forename	D	M	Y	Date	Source	Notes
2435	Bulbec		John	10	2	1855	10 Feb 1855	MH12/12394	Able bodied, no work, severe weather. Work at W/h. & chn Kn
2404	Bulbeck		John	7	2	1855	7 Feb 1855	MH12/12394	Able bodied, no work, severe weather. Work at W/h. & chn Kn
435	Bulbeck		Willm	23	10	1860	23 Oct 1860	BG8/11/7	Med Relief -otherwise able bodied. H Wick Child Debility
2868	Bulbeck		Willm	25	1	1861	25 Jan 1861	MH12/12397	Out-relief - Able bodied, no work, weather. Work at W/h. w & chn. Lab. Kn
823	Bulbeck		Willm	5	5	1863	5 May 1863	BG8/11/7	Med Relief -otherwise able bodied. Kn Child Pneumonia
833	Bulbeck		William	12	5	1863	12 May 1863	BG8/11/7	Med Relief -otherwise able bodied. Kn Child Bronchitis
1250	Bulbeck		William	16	1	1866	16 Jan 1866	BG8/11/8	Med Relief -otherwise able bodied. Kn Child Pertussis
1256	Bulbeck		W	23	1	1866	23 Jan 1866	BG8/11/9	Med Relief -otherwise able bodied. Kn Child Hooping Cough
5749	Bulbeck	Henry		5	8	1871	5 Aug 1871	Surrey Comet	age 11, Water lane, barefooted and ragged, stealing a quantity of flowers
5755	Bulbeck	William		19	8	1871	19 Aug 1871	Surrey Comet	age 14, stealing a pair of boots
5765	Bulbeck	William		26	8	1871	26 Aug 1871	Surrey Comet	age 11, Kn, stealing boots, reformatory
5821	Bulbeck	Henry	William	2	3	1872	2 Mar 1872	Surrey Comet	Father, coal porter, ordered to contrib to maint of son at industrial school (to be there from 24 Nov 1871 for 5 yrs)
1714	Bulbeck		William	8	10	1872	8 Oct 1872	BG8/11/12	Med Relief -otherwise able bodied. (ch) Fever
5865	Bulbeck		William	14	9	1872	14 Sep 1872	Surrey Comet	Hope ave, neglecting to pay towards support of child in reformatory/ind sch
1853	Bulbeck		James	27	1	1877	27 Jan 1877	BG8/11/14	Med Relief -otherwise able bodied. Gonorrhoea
6035	Bulbeck	"Killer"		17	7	1880	17 Jul 1880	Surrey Comet	referred to in case of stolen coal
2639	Bulbick		Willm & Elizth	10	2	1858	10 Feb 1858	MH12/12396	Able bodied, no work, weather. Work at W/h. & chn. Kn
2343	Bulen		Richard	4	1	1854	4 Jan 1854	MH12/12394	Able bodied, no work, severe weather. Work at W/h. W & 3 chn ballast heaver
5787	Bulbeck		William	18	11	1871	18 Nov 1871	Surrey Comet	a coal porter, not contributing to support of his son at Feltham Ind Sch
282	Bullen		William	5	4	1853	5 Apr 1853	BG8/11/4	Med Relief -otherwise able bodied. TD Pyrexia
2327	Bullen		William	4	1	1854	4 Jan 1854	MH12/12394	Able bodied, no work, severe weather. Work at W/h. W & 5 chn. Bricklayers lab
2377	Bullen		William	7	2	1855	7 Feb 1855	MH12/12394	Able bodied, no work, severe weather. Work at W/h. w & chn TD parish
2496	Bullen		Richard	17	2	1855	17 Feb 1855	MH12/12394	Able bodied, no work, severe weather. Work at W/h. & chn TD
2619	Bullen		William	2	2	1858	2 Feb 1858	MH12/12396	Able bodied, no work, weather. Work at W/h. w & chn. TD
67	Bullen			7	7	1860	7 Jul 1860	Surrey Comet	TD, aged 11 or 12 yrs of age, to infirmary with smallpox
228	Bullen	James		27	12	1862	27 Dec 1862	Surrey Comet	playing at buttons on the footpath at Thames Ditton
567	Bullen		Jane	21	1	1862	21 Jan 1862	BG8/11/7	Med Relief -otherwise able bodied. Esher Child Sprained Ankle
1156	Bullen		John	28	2	1865	28 Feb 1865	BG8/11/8	Med Relief -otherwise able bodied. Kn child Fever
1318	Bullen		Francis	22	2	1870	22 Feb 1870	BG8/11/10	Med Relief -otherwise able bodied. child Scalds
1367	Bullen		Frances	19	7	1870	19 July 1870	BG8/11/11	Med Relief -otherwise able bodied. Child Diarrhoea
1420	Bullen		Chas.	4	10	1870	4 Oct 1870	BG8/11/11	Med Relief -otherwise able bodied. chn Measles
5936	Bullen		Alfred	17	4	1880	17 Apr 1880	Surrey Comet	deserted wife & ch. He left family without support whilst he was on his boat between Kingston & Oxford
6014	Bullen		Alfred	19	6	1880	19 Jun 1880	Surrey Comet	stoker on steamboat between Kingston & Oxford, neglected to support wife & child [w/h]. Prison 21 days hard labour. Wife old enough to be his mother and "instead of being a blessing was a curse" [also SC 26 Jun 1880]
5737	Bullin	Thomas		1	7	1871	1 Jul 1871	Surrey Comet	damaging fruit trees at Molesey
27	Bullock		Elizabeth	23	7	1859	23 Jul 1859	Surrey Comet	Relief for wife & chn of militiaman (occpn sack-carrier in Back Lanes) while husband is on duty

Abbreviated information only in the database. Full circumstances can be located in the abstracts of the primary source material in the research files

number refers to the order in which data originally entered in database

The data can be sorted by parent's name or child's name, date, or source, for ease of interrogation

In this example the following sources appear: Poor Law Correspondence at TNA (MH12); Board of Guardian Minute Books at SHC (BG8); Extracts from the local newspaper, *Surrey Comet*, at NKC

and beyond to apprenticeships, or who featured in a broad range of sources, or several generations of families who appeared. A large number of individual children were investigated in depth and many family groups reconstituted combining the information found in the source documents and census and parish records. For more intricate families, and for those which featured in Kingston over several generations, family relationship charts were prepared in pedigree form. These assisted in identifying with more accuracy the individuals named and in clarifying family relationship networks. They also provided a visual record of the development of the family group over a number of years, their changing occupations, child deaths and family sizes. The necessity of pedigree charts reflects Laslett's desire for visual clarity: "Whenever any point of obscurity arises ... the impulse to make them into pictures has become almost irresistible."<sup>21</sup> The "slow" and "arduous" methodology described by Wrightson and Levine is made more straightforward through developments in computer techniques.<sup>22</sup> In the present research on Kingston, information was transcribed from research notes directly into an Excel database, obviating the need for register forms, or index cards as used by Sharpe in 1990, but it still remained a laborious and painstaking exercise.<sup>23</sup>

From these records more than one hundred and twenty detailed case studies were prepared, some of which appear in the following chapters. These case studies were substantiated in every way through documented evidence and compiled with critical detachment. The use of these case studies has been fundamental in providing depth and context to the research, and through building these studies many details emerged which enhanced the understanding surrounding the documented incidents and which would not otherwise have been apparent. The origins, traditional occupations and changing fortunes of families help to illuminate the circumstances in which the individual children found themselves, and place the children studied firmly in a social context. As Reay expressed it, placing a community or family "under the microscope" provides the opportunity to "explore the complexity of social interaction and social and economic processes."<sup>24</sup> These case studies provide important depth and context to many wider aspects of social history, and also enable the child to be considered not only as worthy of study in its own right, but as an important element in the complex structure of social support networks.

Family residences could be located on maps and slum areas identified, and it could be noted whether the families lived in properties of multiple occupancy, or in the vicinity of other family members. The occupations of their neighbours could also enhance the impression of the area, and occasionally descriptions of their living conditions might be found. In some cases the dwelling houses still exist and, rarely, contemporary photographs have survived. Whilst not all this material has been expressly detailed in the following chapters, it has informed the overall substance of the arguments, and there may be a meticulous body of evidence underpinning the briefest of references in the text.

To illustrate the value of this method, the example of the Bayton family can be used. Figure 3.9 shows the references to various individuals bearing this surname, extracted from the main documentary sources and entered in the research database. This draws attention to the frequency of references to an adult named James Bayton, which invites further scrutiny of his family. By reference to the census material held on the Kingston Lifecycles Database this individual can be identified, and it can be seen that the children who appear in the Database of Primary Source References are James' children. [Figure 3.10] It also invites further investigation into the remaining two adults named, as this suggests they may be James' adult children, thus carrying the case study through to another generation. The Kingston Life-Cycles Database can also be checked for any baptism, marriage or burial entries for this family [Figure 3.11] and a family relationship chart created [Figure 3.12].

For the Bayton family, incidents relating to various members have been found in four different primary source locations, that is, central and local Poor Law records, a school log book and the *Surrey Comet*. These highlight periods of unemployment, sickness and economic difficulty for the family, and give examples of the children's behaviour. Their addresses can be located, their domestic circumstances assessed, and even the identities of the children's friends emerge. A full family reconstitution can be made using a range of census returns, parish registers and burial records, to provide a history of this family over many years, a family which had been resident in Kingston since at least 1814.

Valuable as it would have been to find reference to a poor labourer out of work, a family claiming relief, or child being reprimanded, the detail disclosed by the family reconstitution enables a more extensive impression to be obtained. The knowledge that James Bayton had a family of sixteen children, had endeavoured to master a trade in demand in Kingston and moved out of a tenement into a cottage, and other qualitative detail suggested by the case study, provide more social context to the children's activities than would otherwise have been the case. To then view this in conjunction with the knowledge of conditions in Youngs Buildings where they lived, how cold it was in their school in winter and how the children behaved there, what the children might have been doing in their spare time, the places they played in, the illnesses they suffered and how they conducted themselves as adults, provides a wider contextual social history for these children.

The Bayton example is typical of the material the database can provide, although the family is not necessarily typical of the experiences. The thesis will demonstrate a variety of experiences, and each chapter will include a case study which will illustrate one or more aspects under discussion. Details pertinent to the chapter appear in the body of that chapter, and additional information relevant to the family as a whole is provided more fully in an appendix. These will be accompanied by charts to depict the family relationships visually, and to indicate the provenance of the information. As the case studies encompass a broad range of experiences, these families may be referred to in more than one chapter.

Figure 3.9

## Database of Primary Source References for BAYTON

Order	Child's Surname	Child's Forename	Parent's Forename	Day	Mth	Year	Date	Source	Notes
2616	Bayton		James	2	2	1858	2 Feb 1858	MH12/12396	Able bodied, no work, weather. Work at W/h. wife & 9 chn.
2823	Bayton		James	16	1	1861	16 Jan 1861	MH12/12397	Out-relief - Able bodied, no work, weather. Work at W/h. wife & chn. Bricklayer. Kingston
473	Bayton		James	29	1	1861	29 Jan 1861	BG8/11/7	Med Relief –otherwise able bodied. Kingston parish. Wife childbirth
730	Bayton		James	25	11	1862	25 Nov 1862	BG8/11/7	Med Relief –otherwise able bodied. Kingston parish. Wife childbirth
920	Bayton		J	8	9	1863	8 Sep 1863	BG8/11/8	Med Relief –otherwise able bodied. Kingston parish. Child small pox
925	Bayton		Jas	22	9	1863	22 Sep 1863	BG8/11/8	Med Relief –otherwise able bodied. Kingston parish. Child small pox
1163	Bayton		Jas	14	3	1865	14 Mar 1865	BG8/11/8	Med Relief –otherwise able bodied. Kingston parish. Bad foot
1164	Bayton		Jas	14	3	1865	14 Mar 1865	BG8/11/8	Med Relief –otherwise able bodied. Kingston parish. Child abscess
5439	Bayton	Emma		15	1	1866	15 Jan 1866	CES/36/1	Richmond Rd Sch - refused to knit and was very insolent
5481	Bayton	Emma		21	12	1868	21 Dec 1868	CES/36/1	Richmond Rd Sch – quarrelsome
5801	Bayton	Alfred		3	2	1872	3 Feb 1872	Surrey Comet	Assault on a lad, John Prest, a member of the church choir. Reprimanded
5802	Bayton	Thomas		3	2	1872	3 Feb 1872	Surrey Comet	Assault on a lad, John Prest, a member of the church choir. Reprimanded
1658	Bayton		James	5	3	1872	5 Mar 1872	BG8/11/11	Med Relief –otherwise able bodied. Child Fever
5869	Bayton		Edward	21	9	1872	21 Sep 1872	Surrey Comet	Bath passage, assaulting wife, Eliza [later had children]
1740	Bayton		Henry	25	2	1873	25 Feb 1873	BG8/11/12	Med Relief –otherwise able bodied. (child)

Linking the information to the *Kingston Lifecycles Database* (Census & Parish records) enables the family relationships of these individuals to be established

Once all references to this surname have been extracted, the data can be sorted chronologically, revealing references to this family during a period of 15 years

References have been found for this family in two types of Poor Law Record, in the *Surrey Comet* and in School Log Books (CES/36)



Figure 3.10

Census entries from Kingston Life Cycles Database for JAMES BAYTON

1861 Census: Victoria Road, Norbiton

Forename	Surname	Age	Year of Birth	Sex	Relationship	Marital Status	Occupation	TownBorn	CountyBorn
James	Bayton	47	1814	M	Head	Mar	Bricklayer	Kingston	Surrey
Jane C.	Bayton	41	1820	F	Wife	Mar		Kingston	Surrey
James H	Bayton	18	1843	M	Son	Un	General labourer	Kingston	Surrey
Henry	Bayton	16	1845	M	Son	Un	General labourer	Kingston	Surrey
Jane C	Bayton	14	1847	F	Daur		Nurse Maid ?	Kingston	Surrey
Thomas F	Bayton	13	1848	M	Son		Scholar	Kingston	Surrey
Edward	Bayton	11	1850	M	Son		Scholar	Kingston	Surrey
Caroline E	Bayton	9	1852	F	Daur		Scholar	Kingston	Surrey
Mary A	Bayton	8	1853	F	Daur		Scholar	Kingston	Surrey
Richard	Bayton	6	1855	M	Son		Scholar	Kingston	Surrey
Emma	Bayton	4	1857	F	Daur			Kingston	Surrey
Alfred	Bayton	2	1859	M	Son			Kingston	Surrey
Thomas H	Bayton	1	1860	M	Son			Kingston	Surrey
George E	Bayton	2 mths	1861	M	Son			Kingston	Surrey

Adult children appearing in the database as parents themselves

The children appearing in the database

1871 Census: 51 Mill Place, Kingston

Forename	Surname	Age	Year of Birth	Sex	Relationship	Marital Status	Occupation	TownBorn	CountyBorn
James	Bayton	59	1812	M	Head	Mar	Bricklayer	Kingston	Surrey
Jane	Bayton	52	1819	F	Wife	Mar		Kingston	Surrey
Richard	Bayton	19	1852	M	Son		Bricklayer	Kingston	Surrey
Emma	Bayton	14	1857	F	Daur			Kingston	Surrey
Alfred	Bayton	12	1859	M	Son		Bricklayer	Kingston	Surrey
Thomas	Bayton	10	1861	M	Son			Kingston	Surrey
George	Bayton	9	1862	M	Son		Bricklayer	Kingston	Surrey
Charles	Bayton	9	1862	M	Son		Bricklayer	Kingston	Surrey

The family can also be sought in earlier and later census returns to extend the information

Figure 3.11 Baptisms, Marriages & Burial entries on the Kingston Lifecycles Database for the family of JAMES BAYTON

Kingston Baptisms: children of James & Jane Bayton

DD Bap	MM Bap	YY Bap	Surname	Child Name	Sex	Abode	DD born	MM Born	YY Born	Father Name	Mother Name	Trade	Ch ID
25	12	1836	Bayton	Mary Ann	F	Kingston	20	11	36	James	Jane	Labourer	AS
25	02	1838	Bayton	Sarah Jane	F	Kingston	27	01	1838	James	Jane	Labourer	AS
13	10	1839	Bayton	William	M	Kingston	17	08	1839	James	Jane	Labourer	
09	04	1843	Bayton	Henry	M	Kingston	11	03	1843	James	Jane	Labourer	AS
11	4	1847	Bayton	John Frederick	m	Kingston	1	2	1847	James	Jane Charlotte	Labourer	AS
17	12	1848	Bayton	Edward George	m	Kingston	2	11	1848	James	Jane	Labourer	AS
6	10	1850	Bayton	Caroline Elizabeth	f	Kingston	12	9	1850	James	Jane	Labourer	AS
17	10	1852	Bayton	Mary Ann	F	Kingston	2	9	1852	James	Jane	Bricklayer	AS
04	08	1861	Bayton	Richard	M	Victoria Road	06	03	1854	James	Jane	Bricklayer	Pn
04	08	1861	Bayton	Emma	F	Victoria Road	14	01	1856	James	Jane	Bricklayer	Pn
04	08	1861	Bayton	Thomas Henry	M	Victoria Road	29	05	1859	James	Jane	Bricklayer	Pn
04	08	1861	Bayton	Alfred	M	Victoria Road	27	01	1858	James	Jane	Bricklayer	Pn
04	08	1861	Bayton	George Edwin	M	Victoria Road	NK	NK	NK	James	Jane	Bricklayer	Pn
09	02	1868	Bayton	Charles Edwin	M	Kingston	20	11	1862	James	Jane	Bricklayer	AS

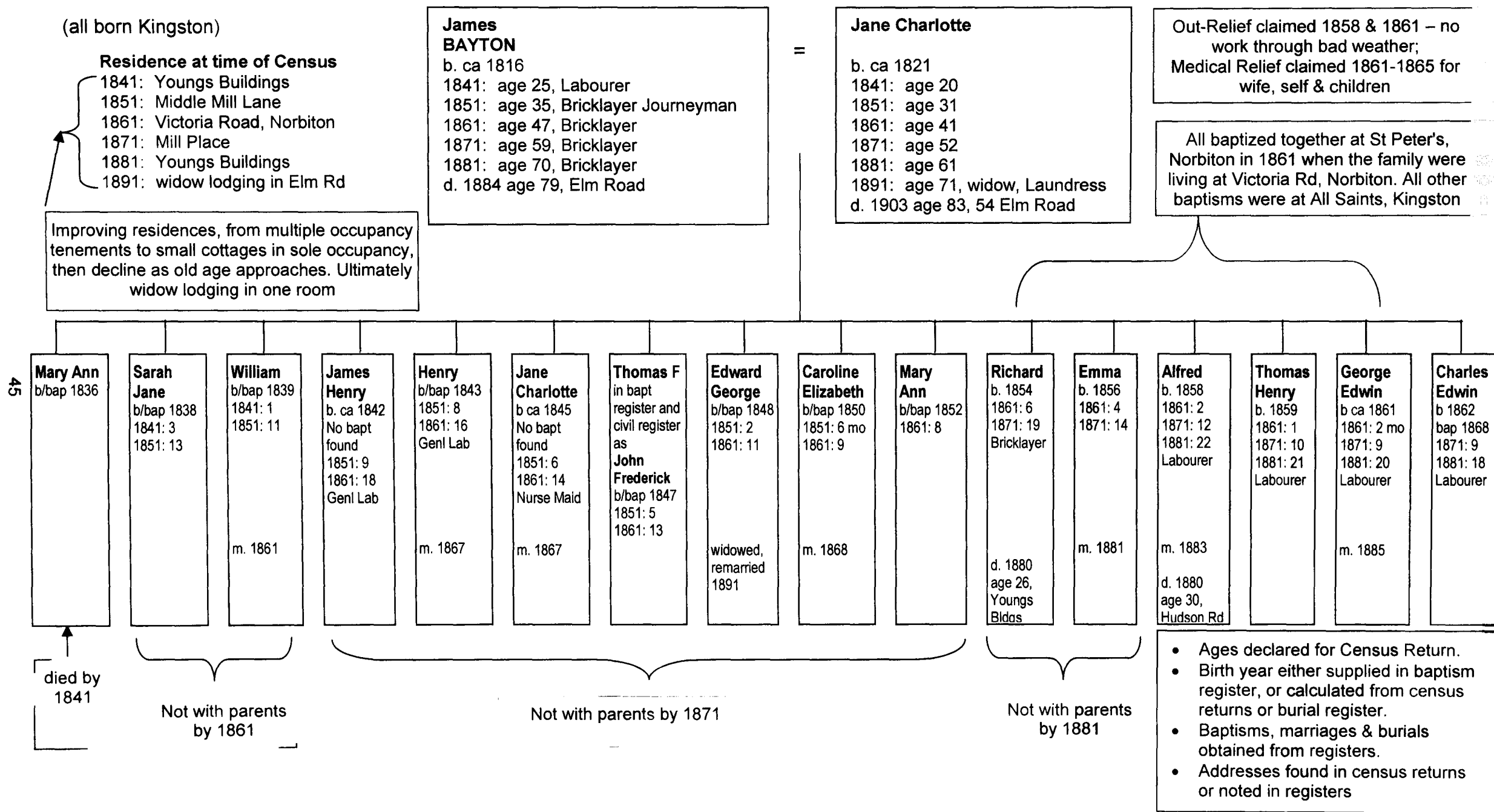
Kingston (Bonner Hill) Burials for this family:

DDDeath	MMDeath	YYDeath	Surname	Forename	Abode	Age	Parish	C/UC	DDBurial	MMBurial	YYBurial	Comments	ie b.ca
25	October	1884	Bayton	James	Elm Road	79	Kingston	C	30	October	1884		1805
24	March	1903	Bayton	Jane Charlotte	54 Elm Road	83	Kingston	C	28	March	1903		1820
12	October	1880	Bayton	Richard	Youngs Buildings	26	Kingston	C	16	October	1880		1854
11	April	1888	Bayton	Alfred	Hudson Rd	30	Kingston	C	16	April	1888		1858

Kingston Marriages for the children of this family:

M yr	M Date	Gr sn	Gr fn	Br fn	Br sn	Gr age	Gr cond	Gr prof	Gr res	Gr ffn	Gr fsn	Gr prof	Br age	Br cond	Br res	Br ffn	Br fsn	Br prof	Ch ID
1861	12 May 1861	Bayton	William	Lucy	Gormson	21	Bach	Plasterer	Victoria Rd	James	Bayton	Bricklayer	20	Spin	Victoria Rd	Thomas	Gormson	Carpenter	PN
1867	9 Nov 1867	Bayton	Henry	Mary Ann	Westbrook	25	Bach	Bricklayer	Ham	James	Bayton	Bricklayer	31	Spin	Ham	Geo Rich	Westbrook	Whitesmith	AH
1883	14 Oct 1883	Bayton	Alfred	Alice	Field	25	Bach	Labourer	Kingston	James	Bayton	Bricklayer	21?	Spin	Kingston	Charles	Field	Labourer	AS
1885	22 May 1885	Bayton	George Edwin	Mary Ann	Culver	24	Bach	Plasterer	Elm Road	James	Bayton Dec'd	Bricklayer	19	Spin	Elm Road	George	Culver	Bricklayer	PK
1891	22 Feb 1891	Bayton	Edward	Mary Jane	Fifield	43	Widr	Bricklayer	Kingston	James	Bayton	Bricklayer	45	Wid	Kingston	Thomas	Webb	Saddler	AS
1881	6 Jun 1881	Taylor	John	Emma	Bayton	25	Bach	Stoker	Ham	Charles	Taylor	Carpenter	25	Spin	Ham	James	Bayton	Bricklayer	AH
1867	26 May 1867	Redknap	Charles	Jane	Bayton	20	Bach	Waterman	Cowleaze	John	Redknap	Waterman	21	Spin	Cowleaze	James	Bayton	Bricklayer	PN
1868	24 Dec 1868	Harper	William	Caroline Elith	Bayton	20	Bach	Lab.	Ham	Joseph	Harper	Coachman	19	Spin	Ham	James	Bayton	Bricklayer	AH

Figure 3.12 BAYTON family



Analysis of child employment in Kingston was made possible initially through the use of the *Kingston Life-Cycles Database*. For a broad analysis the Booth-Armstrong classification was used; this system breaks down occupations into nine occupational groupings [Figure 3.13].<sup>25</sup> Through the *Life-Cycles Database* the declared occupational descriptions could be examined in more detail. From this, subdivisions could be made to the official sub-categories for the purposes of this study, for example, differentiating between errand boys in shops and telegraph boys, otherwise classified together. It was also possible to determine the nature of occupation for 'servant'; ascertaining the profession of the head of household or address often inferred the nature of the work. It was helpful to differentiate between those serving in a large domestic household, or a one-servant family, or indeed in that of a shopkeeper, where not only domestic but also retailing duties were likely. For the outlying villages, not included in the *Life-Cycles Database*, it was possible to extract the required information through an examination of each enumerator's book as the areas were of manageable size.

### 3.6 Conclusion

The approach involved here is not a single-source-based analysis, but a broader investigation. The paucity of documentary evidence created by the subjects of this study, the children, might have proved a considerable drawback, yet it has induced the revised and more rewarding approach which has provided a broader qualitative view. Through the necessity of having to cast wider for information to fill the gaps in the sources, a much more rounded approach has been possible; patchy in places, certainly, but more multi-faceted. In a similar way, extending the study to include children both within and outside the workhouse system emphasises that the workhouse did not comprise the entire experience of the lives of poor children. As Cunningham remarked, "The majority of children .... were born into and grew up in families. Families were part of larger communities."<sup>26</sup> An important element in the present research is to place the child, even the workhouse child, within the community and consider its rôle, whether actively or passively, as part of family coping strategies and social support network.

It should always be borne in mind that events were recorded or reported for a purpose, whether administrative, political or for publicity. The vast number of commonplace events escaped posterity. Despite the use of reported speech in some sources these are unlikely to provide the authentic voice of the child. One of the benefits of the compilation of a broad range of source material, combined with family reconstitution, is that interpretation need not always rely on a single opinion.

Cunningham observed, "Flesh-and-blood children emerge more clearly in the sources when they step outside the privacy of the home into the community and school."<sup>27</sup> It is one of aims of this research that 'flesh-and-blood' children will emerge from the documents for Kingston. The unique approach of constructing a body of evidence from a variety of sources, together with family reconstitution, provides a greater opportunity of rescuing this considerable, but otherwise obscure, section of the community.

**Figure 3.13 Booth Armstrong Classification Table**

<b>01</b>	<b>AGRICULTURAL SECTOR</b>
	Includes: Farming, Agricultural labourers, Gardeners, Workers with horses, Fishing
<b>02</b>	<b>MINING SECTOR</b>
	Includes: Mining, Quarrying, Brickmaking, Waterworks
<b>03</b>	<b>BUILDING SECTOR</b>
	Includes: Architects, Civil engineers, Builders, Bricklayers, Plumbers, Road labourers, Railway labourers
<b>04</b>	<b>MANUFACTURING SECTOR</b>
	Includes: Machine makers, Tool makers, Millwrights, Shipbuilding, Blacksmiths, Wire workers, Jewellers, Glass manufactures, Tanners, Sawyers, Coopers, Cabinet makers, Coach makers, Wheelwrights, Woollen cloth manufacture, Cotton goods manufacture, Tailors, Milliners, Shoe makers, Corn millers, Bakers, Confectioners, Maltsters, Brewers, Tobacco manufacture, Watch makers, Printers, Machinists, Factory labourers
<b>05</b>	<b>TRANSPORT SECTOR</b>
	Includes: Warehouses and Docks, Messengers, porters, Seamen, Bargemen, lightermen, watermen, Railway officials, Railway engine drivers, Livery stable keepers, Cabmen, Carmen
<b>06</b>	<b>DEALING SECTOR</b>
	Includes: Coal merchants, dealers, heavers and labourers, Timber merchants, Corn merchants, Cloth dealers, Hosiers, haberdashers, Butchers, Poulterers, Fishmongers, Milksellers, Cheesemongers, Grocers, Greengrocers, Tobacconists, Wine and spirit merchants, Inn and hotel keepers, publicans, Lodging house keepers, Pawnbrokers, Newsagents, Ironmongers, General shopkeepers, Hawkers
<b>07</b>	<b>INDUSTRIAL SERVICE SECTOR</b>
	Includes: Bankers, Commercial clerks
<b>08</b>	<b>PUBLIC SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL SECTOR</b>
	Includes: Civil Service clerks, Post Office, Telegraph, Army, Navy, Police, Law, Physicians, Artists, Actors, Musicians, Authors, Schoolteachers, Clergymen
<b>09</b>	<b>DOMESTIC SERVICE SECTOR</b>
	Includes: Indoor servants, Inn servants, Coachmen, Gardeners, Gamekeepers, Domestic Cooks, Charwomen, Hairdressers, Chimney sweeps
<b>10</b>	<b>RESIDUAL POPULATION</b>
	Includes: Independent, Landowners, Vagrants, paupers
<b>11</b>	<b>SCHOLARS</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>SUNDRY</b>

A more detailed description of the Booth Armstrong Classification Codes appears in Appendix 3

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- 1 Merryweather, *Half a Century of Kingston History*, p.18.
- 2 Reay, *Microhistories*, p.262.
- 3 J Sampson, *The Story of Kingston*. (Esher: Lancet, 1986).
- 4 Butters, *The Book of Kingston*, p.89.
- 5 Acreage from <http://vision.edina.ac.uk/>
- 6 Hugh Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*, (London: BBC Books, 2006), pp.13-4.
- 7 Walvin, *A Child's World*, p.13.
- 8 Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*.
- 9 Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*.
- 10 Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London Volume 1* (London: Macmillan, 1902), Classification Table section D, p.33.
- 11 Albert Fried and Richard M. Elman (eds.), *Charles Booth's London: A Portrait of the Poor at the turn of the Century Drawn from His 'Life and Labour of the People in London'* (London: Penguin, 1969), p.25.
- 12 Herbert Broome, *Kingston Union. the Beginning and the End 1836-1930*, (Kingston: Philpott, 1930), p.5; Poor Law Commission Questionnaire concerning the opening of the Kingston Union workhouse filed under correspondence for 1843, MH12/12391.
- 13 Anne McCormack, *Kingston upon Thames: A Pictorial History* (Guildford: Phillimore, 1989) preceding figure 10.
- 14 Crompton, *Workhouse Children*, pp.xv-xvi.
- 15 Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor*, p.44.
- 16 David Robinson, 'Local newspapers and the local historian: the Surrey Comet and Victorian Kingston', *Archives: The Journal of The British Records Association*, 31(114), 2006, p.35.
- 17 Kingston Life Cycles Databases comprises Kingston Upon Thames Census Area Records, 1851 to 1891; Bonner Hill Cemetery Burial Registers, 1855 to 1911; Kingston Parish Burial Registers, 1850 to 1901; Kingston Parish Marriage Registers, 1850 to 1901. For the way the database was developed and the use to which it has been put, see Peter Tilley and Christopher French, ' "From local history towards total history": recreating local communities in the 19th century', *Family & Community History*, vol. 4 (2), 2001, pp.139-149. The database has been used to prepare studies on occupational structure, infant mortality, servants, persistence and others. A list of publications can be accessed on Kingston University website:  
<http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/research/local-history/projects/klhp/>
- 18 The database produced by The Historic Patient Database Project, Centre for Local History Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Kingston University, can be accessed at: <http://hharp.org/>
- 19 June Sampson, *Characters of Kingston* (Kingston: Knapp, Drewett, Reprinted from the Surrey Comet May and June 1974), pp.3-6.
- 20 Wrigley, Davies, (et al), *English Population History*; Reay, *Microhistories*.
- 21 Peter Laslett (ed.), *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974, First published 1972), p.43.
- 22 Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, 1979), p.43.
- 23 Sharpe, 'The total reconstitution method'.
- 24 Reay, *Microhistories*, p.258.

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- <sup>25</sup> For a full discussion on occupational descriptions in the Census returns see Edward Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census Revisited* (London: University of London & The National Archives, 2005), especially Chapter 8.
- <sup>26</sup> Cunningham, *Children & Childhood*, p.79.
- <sup>27</sup> Cunningham, *Children & Childhood*, pp.80-1.

## CHAPTER 4

### Transition from the 'Old' to the 'New' Poor Law: 1834-1842

**"In a position of embarrassing novelty" <sup>1</sup>**

**'Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto,'  
(I am myself a man, and therefore whatever affects humanity, cannot be a subject  
of indifference to me.)' <sup>2</sup>**

*William Sells, Kingston Guardian of the Poor, 1841*

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines the transition period from the 'Old' to the 'New' Poor Law and how this was experienced in the Kingston-upon-Thames Poor Law Union. The way in which the Kingston Guardians of the Poor approached and adjusted to the new system will be explored. This will demonstrate how central policy was implemented or challenged at the local level, and will be illustrated by local examples especially where they relate to children. Contemporary concerns with the 'Bastardy Laws' will be discussed, as these were among the more prominent of the unforeseen problems associated with the introduction of the new laws. Particular consideration will be given to the efforts of the Guardians to establish pauper education in the workhouse, and supplemented by a case study of Thomas Ockenden.

Under the existing laws, poor relief was administered locally, at the parish level, and the system had developed in this way since the dissolution of the monasteries deprived the poor of monastic alms. An Act of 1601 established the principle of parish relief, with the collection of poor rates and distribution of relief being the responsibility of parish overseers. The 'impotent' poor were given assistance, work was provided for the able-bodied poor, and children put into apprenticeships. These principles remained intact, with periodic variations in matters such as parish settlement rights, paternal affiliation for bastard children, and the provision and use of workhouses, from the Poor Relief Act of 1601 until the system was reviewed in 1832-4. This culminated in the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, colloquially referred to as the 'New' Poor Law.

The varied and haphazard approaches to local poor relief, and the growing expense of the system, especially where it was poorly managed, contributed to this need for review. Additionally, the practice of supplementing low agricultural wages with poor relief led to a belief that the able-bodied worker viewed parish relief as a regular entitlement rather than a necessity against destitution. The Poor Law Commissioners' report of 1834 recommended a standardised, national approach to the problem of poverty and poor relief, with administrative efficiency promoted through the combining of groups of parishes into unions under elected Boards of Guardians. Unions were to provide workhouses to accommodate the poor, with relief to certain classes of pauper only available within the workhouse. This was to ensure that, in the case of



the able-bodied pauper, application to the workhouse was taken as a last resort, thus proving destitution, as those genuinely desirous of work would surely find some rather than submit to the workhouse. This was referred to as the 'workhouse test'. Furthermore, it was felt that those eligible to enter the workhouse affected the level of wages and conditions of those labourers endeavouring to remain independent, thus increasing desire to obtain poor relief.<sup>3</sup> To avoid this, the new Act was to introduce the principle of "less eligibility", meaning that conditions within the workhouse should be no better than for those outside. This "self-acting test" was intended to tackle the "root of pauperism".<sup>4</sup>

It is important to evaluate the transition years in Kingston as these highlight the impact and interpretation of central legislation at the local level. Although the Poor Law Amendment Act came into effect on a specific day, 14 August 1834, in practical terms the clauses could not be implemented instantaneously and there was a gradual adaptation and familiarisation. Transition took longer and was more localist than is apparent from the historiography. The development of the early years of the 'New' Poor Law in Kingston established a foundation of local attitudes and administration which persisted for more than forty years.

It is also worth emphasising the difference between national intentions and local application. The *de jure* purpose, aim and clauses of a national Act may not, in fact, reflect the *de facto* effect at the local level. As Digby clearly showed in her study of Norfolk unions, "although poor law administration was in theory centralized in London, yet in practice it was controlled in Norfolk. Old, local ideas about the relief of the poor could then be reasserted in the new era."<sup>5</sup> Evidence for similar attitudes will be considered for the Kingston Union. A sense of autonomy in local administrators, the inadequacies of a national law in providing for the varying local circumstances, and the practical difficulties of central supervision during a period of major change, all contributed to this trend.

It is argued that the estimation of an ancient charter town of its own unique historic status left a legacy of autonomy which persisted even in the face of standardising central legislation. This sense of autonomy underpinned much of the resistance to central interference exhibited in Kingston, and this attitude of independence persisted for many years. It could be said that the existing municipal self-importance inclined the leading members of the community to administrative nonconformity which formed their distinctive approach to the Poor Law authorities. What Digby referred to as the "policy of quietly subverting the 1834 act" which she discerned in the Norfolk unions was also apparent in Kingston.<sup>6</sup>

Resistance to the Poor Law Amendment Act was not universal; a number of studies have shown how conditions and needs which existed in different regions of England during the 1830s produced regional responses to the new laws.<sup>7</sup> For example, in *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century*, Ashforth showed how many northern industrial districts were actively opposed to the introduction of new laws. Conversely, Digby emphasised the general

acceptance of the southern agricultural areas, thus giving a broad general picture of how the new laws were viewed.<sup>8</sup> However, even within one county unions could differ; Digby showed that this was true of Norfolk, and within Surrey not all unions responded in the same way as Kingston. In Crompton's study of Worcestershire he found that it was "highly urban Dudley" which was "noticeably the least enthusiastic" of the predominantly rural county in their acceptance of the New Poor Law.<sup>9</sup> Study of Kingston's experience will contribute to this body of work, and will also suggest a diversity of reactions to the new laws which cannot be divided neatly into northern industrial antipathy and southern agricultural acceptance. Kingston may not have had the scale of manufacturing of the north, and it may have been situated in an agricultural region, but it did have its own problems and attitudes arising from a distinctive setting which helped to form the development of poor relief in the area. It is also emphasised here that the approach of a newly-established union to the challenges of implementing the new laws in the vital years of transition could set the tone for their future actions. The differing attitudes which existed at the local level demonstrate that a general history of the 'New' Poor Law cannot be viewed as universally applicable.

The particular experience of a market town such as Kingston, although in an area classified as agricultural, is complex, as discussed elsewhere in this work. The hypothesis that Kingston conforms to Digby's view of the acceptance exhibited by southern counties might well be questioned, although her qualification that acceptance was followed by subversion could be said to apply to Kingston. It is significant that although Crompton observed that the agricultural unions of Worcestershire implemented the new laws without resistance, he acknowledged that they continued to "hold attitudes implicit in the old poor law".<sup>10</sup> The acknowledgement by Kingston Guardians of the Commission's observations on the fragmented parochial administration of relief certainly gives an impression of acceptance. So might the Union's readiness to build a new workhouse, which is generally taken by historians as a measure of local enthusiasm. Yet acknowledgement of the failings of the existing system, and willingness to adopt suggested official solutions, do not confirm outright compliance. There was no suggestion of subservience; local interpretation of orders and adherence to preferred local methods suggest that Kingston complied with the laws only insofar as they agreed with them. A certain amount of stubborn resistance persisted for years, particularly in the matter of out-relief which was a contention into the 1870s. This attitude is also apparent during Kingston's revision of policy towards its pauper children in the early 1870s, when circumstances forced Kingston to look closely at their arrangements; this will be discussed more fully in a later chapter.

#### **4.2 Problems in administration**

Contemporary critics from the Kingston area acknowledged that problems certainly existed in the provision of parish relief. In his 1841 retrospective of the introduction of the new laws in Kingston, William Sells, one of their earliest Guardians, remarked on their necessity:

*... we find that men of all parties, and nearly all shades of political opinion agreed in the main, that it was only in some such gigantic measure that an efficient remedy could be found for the enormous and long accumulating evils arising out of the gross abuses, jobbery, malversation, a progressive state of demoralization, threatening the most alarming results to the country, which had developed themselves very extensively under the working of the former system.* <sup>11</sup>

Such remarks certainly do not provide any evidence that the men of Kingston who took on the administration of the new system were nostalgically and inflexibly devoted to the old ways. This is despite such reverential comments on "the sound principle first propounded and laid down in the original Poor Law by the statute of Elizabeth". <sup>12</sup> Rather, it was the corrupt and haphazard administration of relief, not the principle of relief itself, which the new Kingston Guardians agreed required revision. This was perhaps at the kernel of their position; not that they desired to impose a punitive régime on the poor in general, but rather that they wished to ensure relief was efficiently provided and was directed towards those in genuine need. To this end, the relief lists were given a long-overdue revision and "among those struck off were one or two who could assign no reason for having their half-crown a week beyond that of its being the good pleasure of the parish to bestow it." <sup>13</sup>

Under the old system, it was apparent that the distribution of relief differed considerably from parish to parish. Administration was variable, and the geographical location, industry or function of each parish brought its own unique problems such as the additional burden of travellers or tramps, of seasonal work, or temporary visitors. In Thames Ditton, a village upstream from Kingston and on the main Portsmouth to London road, the problem had consistently been with the travelling poor, and relief was overseen by a lax vestry; it epitomised the kind of parish in need of reform. In Thames Ditton the work of the Poor Law Commissioners was welcomed by one prominent local ratepayer, Lt Col De Ros. William Lennox Lascelles FitzGerald de Ros lived in the mansion of Boyle Farm, Thames Ditton. He later became Baron de Ros and had a distinguished career in the Life Guards, being ultimately promoted to General. In 1835 de Ros considered the Thames Ditton parish officials to be idle, handing out relief without question in order to save themselves the trouble of investigation, treating the accounts with the same laxity, and of various other petty malpractices:

*The Management has been in the hands of about 6 or 7 farmers & a dozen Village Tradesmen – there have been no serious fraud, but a great deal of petty jobbing, & the usual evils of these Parishes near London, where the inhabitants are so constantly changing, of money payments & allowances to Paupers, [...] of Cottages for lodging Paupers, want of work & restrictions in the Workhouse, & above all payment of rent to a large extent – all to avoid individual trouble, & promote general petty jobbing.* <sup>14</sup>

Thus whilst not overtly corrupt, such casual negligence was plainly not the behaviour of an economical, efficient or professional body of men such as de Ros wished to see managing the ratepayers' money.

It was not only parish relief which was considered to be carelessly administered in the Kingston area; such criticisms could apply equally well to existing charity provisions. Even if there was no corruption, charities could be in the hands of trustees who made little effort to develop or promote them. Philanthropic legacies were simply not being used efficiently. In 1835 a report on the Hampton charities commented that "the parish of Hampton is a striking instance of the abuse of public charitable institutions".<sup>15</sup> The ineptitude of those charged with administering them was similar to that shown within parochial management and emphasises how the problems associated with the relief of the poor were not confined to one sphere. Hampton parish was on the Middlesex side of the River Thames, beyond the Royal Parks. The Hampton School of Industry received the patronage of Queen Adelaide, and the land on which it was built had been donated by George III, the Lord of the Manor. Royal patronage was valuable, but in order to function effectively continuing donations and competent trustees were necessary. The Hampton Industrial School and the Sunday School in the parish of St. Mary's both suffered from lack of funds, consequently their full potential was not achieved. The writer of the report considered that with more enthusiastic support for the School of Industry there would be

*... reason to believe that the whole of the children of the parish may, by a little exertion, be provided for. ... The School of Industry consists of female children, belonging to the industrious and poor inhabitants of the Parish... The School consists of 97 children at present, and is capable of receiving many more.*<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, the Sunday School could have been more effective, being "on a limited scale, from the want of funds [and] consists of boys who are taught reading,"<sup>17</sup>

This lack of regulation was also reflected in the Hampton workhouse, which stood at the junction of Uxbridge & Hanworth Roads.<sup>18</sup> In 1828 there were only three adults and eight children, aged between six and seventeen, in the workhouse.<sup>19</sup> Being small, the workhouse had a relaxed atmosphere, and a far from punitive regime. Meat was served daily, supplemented with vegetables from the garden. Little work was required of the inmates, despite the overseers long retaining the Elizabethan practice of badging the paupers with 'PH' representing the Parish of Hampton.<sup>20</sup>

Incorporating into unions these separate parishes, each with their own long-established practices, was not a straightforward undertaking. When the Poor Law Amendment Act came into force in 1834 change did not happen overnight. The Kingston Union had to be established, and it took nearly two years before it was officially declared. The union comprised thirteen parishes, as described in Chapter 3. The parishes which the Commissioners incorporated into the Kingston Union did not necessarily accept their amalgamation without a murmur. Wimbledon vestry pointed out that it was more sensible for them to be allied with Wandsworth as their court business was transacted there. It also grumbled that Kingston was not as easy for either Guardians or applicants for relief to reach, being further away than Wandsworth and "frequently intercepted by floods".<sup>21</sup> Teddington, in Middlesex, although on the further side of the River Thames from Kingston, was content to be part of the Kingston Union, suggesting that

the inhabitants were already accustomed to regarding Kingston as its focus.<sup>22</sup> Two other parishes on the Middlesex side felt differently. Hampton Wick asked to be united with Staines instead. Hampton parish was concerned that their poor might be deprived of the opportunity to apply to the Guardians for relief as, in order to reach Kingston, they had to pay the toll at Kingston bridge.<sup>23</sup> It is surprising that the Middlesex parishes did not make more of this obstacle to obtaining relief. Indeed, even the parishioners of East and West Mo[u]lsey would also have had to consider the bridge tolls before deciding on their route to Kingston. Although on the Surrey side, the direct route from these two parishes would have involved either crossing two toll bridges, Hampton Court and Kingston, or a longer walk around the bend in the river Thames. However, despite all these shortcomings, the Guardians from Kingston parish viewed the geographical arrangement of their Union as ideal, "the greatest distance from the Union Workhouse to the most distant points in any of the parishes not exceeding five miles".<sup>24</sup> It was considered a reasonable distance for a man to walk from home to the workhouse in the morning, do a day's work, and return home to his family in the evening. It was on this foundation of differing parochial views that the new Guardians had to form some cohesion.

Prior to reform, most of the parishes in the Kingston Union had their own, small, workhouses, very often in buildings which were not much larger than cottages. Pauper inmates had to be transferred to the existing Kingston workhouse, which was itself not very large. The transfer of paupers from parishes to union was gradual, with parish workhouses closing over the following two years. After the declaration of the Union in 1836 only three parish workhouses were in use, and the last parishes to transfer their paupers to Kingston were Esher in the third quarter of 1836 and finally Hampton on 26 December 1836. Ham, however, had already been 'farming out' their poor to the Kingston workhouse before the Union was declared. The 1834 review of provision for the poor in the area had the opposite impact on the Ham overseers; they took the opportunity of putting forward a case for the erection of their own workhouse in Ham, that is, to bring their own paupers back to the parish, a suggestion which, needless to say, did not meet with an enthusiastic response from the Commissioners. Even with the implementation of a law which was intended to standardise the system, the example of Ham illustrates that even at the parish level there might be varied interpretations of the Commissioners' report. It was such attitudes which the Poor Law Amendment Act sought to tackle, but which were slow to disappear.

### **4.3 Adjustment**

Moving from the small administrative units of the parish to the larger and more regulated administration of the union took some adjustment. In many ways, the early years of the Kingston Union saw administration at the parish level continuing in the same fashion as it did prior to 1834. Local vestries continued to make decisions without reference to the Union Relieving Officer and parishes continued to make appointments at their own workhouses. Existing local officials were allowed to grow old in their situations without any reassessment, as

the example of the doctor, William Baker, will later show. Appointments made in the years of transition, or ones which continued from the days of the 'old' Poor Law, required review as the pressure of the new Union regulations and administrative implications became apparent. Everyone involved in the establishment of the new Union had new laws and administrative methods to learn, very often without any guidance from the Commissioners. The first Master and Matron to the Kingston Union workhouse who had been appointed, and had been considered satisfactory, when the capacity there was small, were not up to the task of running a larger establishment and did not have the skills for the additional book-keeping which was required.<sup>25</sup> It would also appear from the early years that the Kingston Guardians were able to apply considerations of humanity and common sense while they were handling a workhouse of manageable size, yet had been unable to envisage how the introduction of new legislation would effect the capacity and accommodation requirements of a workhouse serving an entire Union. Within six weeks of the closure of the last parish workhouse it became apparent to the Guardians that the existing Kingston workhouse was inadequate, and that a new, purpose-built, Union workhouse would be required to accommodate the pauper inmates of the entire Union. The Guardians excused the workhouse overcrowding by saying:

*the Work House arrangements ... were professedly experimental. It being impossible to judge beforehand for what number of In door paupers accommodation would be required under the Union System.*<sup>26</sup>

During the years 1834 to 1850 local officials had to feel their way through the new system. The newly appointed Kingston Poor Law Guardians sought to apply a law they as yet imperfectly understood. Whilst these men were experienced in parish administration and probably felt themselves capable of managing affairs, despite the ambiguities, they struggled to interpret the new law's requirements, receiving very little official guidance, and found themselves, as one Guardian described it, 'frequently in a position of embarrassing novelty'.<sup>27</sup> As the Guardians were left to their own devices in the opening years this would have allowed for the consolidation of their independent attitude, which then permeated the Union's administration in future years. They were aware from the outset of the responsibility and difficulties of the post of Guardian, and it was expressed by one Guardian, Sells, that it was "extremely desirable, that one or more of the guardians thus qualified [should] have that personal knowledge of the poor which is best acquired by having previously discharged the duties of a parish officer."<sup>28</sup> This personal knowledge had been one of the positive aspects of the old system and it allowed for that flexibility in relief which Kingston's Guardians wished to maintain. Snell also found in his analysis of agricultural relief administration under the old Poor Law that such personal knowledge "allowed much scope for face to face relief between ratepayers and recipients" and created a system of relief which could be "generous, flexible, and humane".<sup>29</sup>

William Sells, one of the first of the Kingston Union Guardians, reflected on various aspects of the opening years of the union and the calibre of the Board of Guardians, as quoted above. He brought with him to the Board twenty years' experience as a surgeon in the West Indies, and he

had settled in Kingston-upon-Thames as a man of independent means. He had, in 1823, taken issue with the remarks of William Wilberforce and others on the condition of the negro slaves in Jamaica, pointing out that there measures had been taken to improve their circumstances. Such measures included the introduction of medical provision, holidays, religious worship, education and their own smallholdings. Sells compared their condition favourably to that of the English labourer and his family. He had argued that the Jamaican negroes "enjoy a portion of comfort which, as far as physical wants are concerned, is decidedly superior to that of a great portion of the labouring classes in this country", that is, in England.<sup>30</sup> His remark is offered in this context, not as a contribution to the debate on slavery, but to support an argument that the Kingston Guardians benefited from a wider experience than might be initially expected. It also provides some perspective on the condition of the labouring classes in Kingston, whose interests he represented as Guardian, that Sells could compare their lot with that of the slaves which some English philanthropists had, in the recent past, been enthusiastically campaigning to ameliorate.

#### 4.4 Bastardy

The 'new' Poor Law sought to deal with the problem of the unemployed able-bodied, and was not primarily concerned with children, yet its impact affected the children of the poor in Kingston in a number of ways. One of these concerned the adjustment in the law concerning relief to unmarried mothers. This was the so-called 'Bastardy Clause' in the Poor Law Amendment Act, "the new act of parliament on this subject being deficient of interpretation" as far as Kingston could see.<sup>31</sup> Through this clause, the burden of financial responsibility was transferred from the fathers to the mothers, who were to be responsible for their illegitimate children until the age of sixteen.<sup>32</sup> Where such mothers were unable to support themselves and their children the financial burden ultimately fell to the union. Under the new clause, unmarried mothers were obliged to enter the workhouse to obtain poor relief, instead of remaining in their own homes with the parish pursuing paternal support, as had been the previous practice. This was not a problem confined to Kingston, but examples from the area highlight the practical operation of the Poor Law Amendment Act at the local level, particularly where it relates to children. Whilst local boards of Guardians may have taken some time to become familiar with the intricacies of the new laws, putative fathers seem to have been remarkably quick to spot the loopholes. There were many local cases involving the avoidance of maintenance payments once fathers of illegitimate children realised the Union would support mother and child. Wimbledon vestry had a case where

*a young singlewoman has been delivered of a Child, and on her application for relief for herself and Child she has been placed in the poor house [...] – the putative father resides in the Village, he is a single man and a butcher, but the Child has not been yet affiliated, and he peremptorily refuses to afford any aid for the subsistence of the Child, on the sole ground that he is not liable under the poor law amendment Act*<sup>33</sup>

Wimbledon's concern was how it could be possible to make an example of such a father if he refused to pay maintenance, without going to the expense of £12 to take him to the Quarter Sessions. The Poor Law Commission (PLC) responded that this was, indeed, the only method in law, and that such expense should be avoided if possible. They felt that the solution to the problem of illegitimacy lay in "a strict and economical mode of relief to the Mother" in order to discourage "loose & immoral conduct in females".<sup>34</sup> In the Commissioners' view, a punitive attitude towards the mother would plainly prevent such burdens to the parish and they left it to the unions to deal with the practical consequences of a law enacted at a distance. Certainly it was the fathers who benefited from the clause. There may have been many a mother who, when confronted with the new 'Bastardy Clause', echoed the sentiments of two ladies who complained at the "rascally act of Parliament; at least nine months' notice ought to have been given of it".<sup>35</sup>

Opinion was divided throughout the country as to the effectiveness of the clause as far as claims on the union were concerned. Those, such as the unions of Lewes and Taunton, were against the clause, being sympathetic towards the mothers or concerned that an increase in infanticide would result.<sup>36</sup> Other unions felt that it had achieved its purpose; Woburn union considered that the clause successfully checked "open licentiousness which formerly prevailed among the lower classes", and the view in Cumberland was that it had "materially stopped immorality in the country districts".<sup>37</sup> The Kingston Union was of the former opinion, being against the clause. Mr. Stevens, the Guardian for Hampton Wick pointed out that a reduction in applicants was not the same as a reduction in bastardy, the clause having merely deterred mothers from applying for relief: "the real fact was that very few became chargeable, well knowing that an order to the workhouse (perhaps for years) would be the final result of an application". Mr. Kent, Guardian for Hampton, said it was "particularly hard on the poor unfortunate females, while the seducer, generally the person to blame, escapes; and the unfortunate female is obliged to submit to further degradation and confinement in the union workhouse, and not unfrequently is crime added to the long list of misfortune and destitution".<sup>38</sup> These examples emphasise the varying local responses to the new laws, and demonstrates that Guardians did not always support the economic argument without any consideration of the effect on the feelings of their poorer parishioners.

One Kingston mother's attempt to force the father to pay led to her imprisonment. Mary Maloney, who declared she had been seduced by her employer, a market gardener, was unable to obtain any financial support for her illegitimate child due to the difficulties presented by the new Act. She therefore left her three-month-old baby on the father's doorstep; this action led to her committal to Kingston Bridewell prison for a month for the crime of abandonment.<sup>39</sup> Although there were both local and central officials who felt that unmarried mothers should suffer for their immorality, the new laws appeared to absolve the fathers from any liability. The Kingston Guardian, Sells, was not alone in adopting a sympathetic line towards the mother and recognised the culpability of the father:



*The present state of the law actually operates as a bounty upon indulging the vicious inclinations of the one sex, at the cost of destroying the virtue, character, and welfare of the other [and] thus the insidious arts of a wily and profligate seducer, become practically allowed to triumph with impunity*<sup>40</sup>

The significance for Kingston was not only that these laws tested their own attitudes to poverty and illegitimacy, but brought to official attention a number of incidents of bastardy and infanticide which occurred within the union. By 1841 there were twenty-nine illegitimate children in Kingston workhouse, where the average total number of all inmates was 200. There was also a small number of suspicious infant deaths outside the workhouse. During the period 1836-41 the Surrey coroner, William Carter, who lived in Kingston, reported that there had been seventy-five suspected cases of child murder throughout Surrey, five of them in Kingston.<sup>41</sup> However, in a large majority of inquests the verdict was "found dead"; there were some cases of still birth or accidental death, a few with insufficient proof, and only in five cases altogether was it inescapable but to declare "murder by person or persons unknown".<sup>42</sup> The large number of "found dead" verdicts may indicate the reluctance of juries to convict a mother under these circumstances, and the caution of the doctors involved in giving a cause of death or stating definitely that a baby had been born alive.

An anonymous Kingston doctor of long experience spoke out against the clause, citing it as the reason for the increased number of cases of bastardy, infanticide and concealment of births.<sup>43</sup> His remarks came to the ears of the Poor Law Commissioners who turned their attention to investigating illegitimacy and murder in this apparent hotbed of crime which was the Kingston district, and requested a full report from the Union. The resulting investigation and *Report on Bastards &C* of 2 Nov 1841, contributed to the debate on the clause, which was ultimately but not immediately ameliorated. Despite the apparent compassionate consideration of the feelings of mothers, the conclusion arrived at by the Commissioners upheld the clause; it was felt that the root of the problem lay in curbing illegitimacy in the first place and that the clause did nothing to contribute to the increase of infanticide.

The doctors in the Kingston Union were not all in agreement on the effects of the clause. William Baker, the Thames Ditton Medical Officer of Health, declared that "I have not had one case of infanticide or suspected infanticide or attempt to conceal the birth of a child".<sup>44</sup> However, whilst undoubtedly benefiting from many years' experience, his abilities were questioned locally since he was by this time in his eighties. Four years later both Thames Ditton and Esher parishes complained about him because, although still officially considered competent to do his job, he was not exactly in his prime, being

*nearly ninety years of age!!... Is it proper? is it decent? that those who are legally and morally the Guardians of the Poor, should appoint this poor decrepid [sic] old man to attend the Poor!*<sup>45</sup>

One of the Kingston cases of infant death which provides an example of maternal motivation as discussed by the Commissioners concerned Elizabeth Jales (or Jalis). The body of her child had been found in Marsh Lane, Kingston, with a stocking forcibly thrust into its mouth. The parish doctor said "it was impossible to say whether the child was born alive or not". This observation thus allowed for a more lenient interpretation of the cause of death, and the crime therefore became one of concealing the birth of an infant rather than the capital crime of murder.<sup>46</sup> The compiler of the commission's report felt that the overriding concern of this mother, who was a domestic servant to a Kingston builder, was to save her own reputation and employability rather than to simply rid herself of a child. He felt that where there was anxiety for concealment, through fear of loss of reputation or employment, any change in the laws on affiliation would have little effect. Affiliation cases legally pursued attracted publicity, precisely what he felt the mother was anxious to avoid. He thus felt that in the matter of infanticide such cases could not be attributable to the Bastardy clause. However, he did acknowledge,

*... that wherever a large number of children are born out of wedlock there we shall necessarily find isolated cases of infanticide or of intentional neglect and abandonment which are often equivalent to that crime.*<sup>47</sup>

His further comments also illustrate how the stigma of illegitimacy impinged on the social acceptance of both mother and child, whilst having no effect on the father:

*The position of illegitimate children is such that results of this kind must always be apprehended. In ordinary cases their birth destroys the character and blasts the prospects of the mother, although even under these circumstances the instinct of maternal love would generally resist any direct attempts to injure the child when once born. To the father, if their relationship to him can be in any way established, they appear only as an inconvenient result of the gratification of some momentary passion...*<sup>48</sup>

The PLC felt that "the best means to diminish infanticide and abortion, is to diminish the temptation to commit the crimes – that is to diminish bastardy itself".<sup>49</sup> The report therefore was intended to ascertain "whether bastardy had or had not increased under the operation of the Poor Law Amendment Act in the neighbourhood of Kingston on Thames", as a measure of the clause's effect.<sup>50</sup> This was difficult to establish, and the report utilized this ambiguity to promote the Commissioner's official perspective. It placed those critics of the clause in the domain of bias and inexperience, rather than fact. The report was critical of Guardians who, it was felt, allowed their prejudice against the bastardy clauses to dominate.

One general consequence of taking unmarried mothers into the workhouse was that "Guardians not infrequently complain that the workhouse is now made a lying in hospital".<sup>51</sup> The irony of this remark is that a century later this is precisely how the Kingston workhouse building would be used. A further consequence was the exposure of the workhouse children to immorality. The inescapable presence of prostitutes and bastard children was considered detrimental to the

moral welfare of other young inmates and the more 'respectable' pauper, as expressed by E. Carleton Tufnell, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner:

*Conversation, sometimes of the obscenest description, is carried on over walls and through windows. In going to dinner or chapel there are ready means of communication; doors accidentally left open; and the adults are employed in carrying or removing furniture or other articles from one part to another. [...] The conversation engendered in such an establishment is anything but moral. Perhaps a woman comes into the house to lie in of a bastard child, and every circumstance relating to it becomes the talk of the house; another dies of a foul and loathsome disease, which gives rise to a multitude of curious inquiries.*<sup>52</sup>

Such women wandered through the Kingston workhouse schoolroom disturbing the children, were disrespectful and used foul language.<sup>53</sup> It was subsequently recommended to the Guardians "that no persons should go through the Schoolroom except those going with the meals to the separate women and aged women."<sup>54</sup> Unmarried mothers, being resident at Kingston workhouse through legal requirement rather than illness, often wanted to leave for short periods, and this was found to be very disruptive for the whole workhouse, not to mention providing additional work for the matron.<sup>55</sup> The women had every right to leave the workhouse if they wished, but when they returned they had to be treated as new applicants with the necessary attendant administrative process.<sup>56</sup>

#### 4.5 Education

There had long been an awareness in Kingston of the benefits of education for the poor. In 1817 the Kingston Association for the Bettering the Condition and Morals of the Poor was established, one of its aims being to "remove the mischiefs" arising from the bad condition and morals of "the younger Part of the Poor". This was to be dealt with by setting up a school in Kingston

*in which ... the Children of the Poor should be employed in qualifying them for receiving instruction suitable to their condition, especially those precepts of religion & morals calculated to guard them against the pernicious influence of bad conduct in others.*<sup>57</sup>

However, education for children in the parish workhouses prior to formation of the union had not been organised or structured; any instruction they received was provided by the adult pauper inmates and was of variable quality. The opportunity afforded by the foundation of the new union, together with the sense of responsibility expressed by the first Guardians, combined to provide the Kingston Guardians with the readiness to adopt improvements in workhouse education, and carry the principles expressed by the Kingston Association into the workhouse.

Until the erection of the new purpose-built union workhouse, pauper children remained in the old Kingston parish workhouse in the London Road, a building which was inadequate to provide

for an entire union. The Guardians acknowledged that provision for the children in the workhouse was less than ideal; they were accommodated with the adult paupers "the evils of which need not be pointed out", and any space they did have to themselves was appropriated from the bedrooms of the adult paupers. As for education, the workhouse children were at first sent to the local schools, "a very objectionable practice but without remedy at present".<sup>58</sup> These unsatisfactory arrangements contributed to the necessity of the erection of Kingston's first purpose-built workhouse in Norbiton, but this was not open for use until August or September 1839.<sup>59</sup>

The difficulties encountered by the Guardians in assessing needs and workhouse capacity for the pauper population of the Union impinged on their provision for children. The increased use of the workhouse which the New Poor Law encouraged soon rendered union workhouse accommodation inadequate. During the second quarter of 1840 a total of 124 children had been received into the new Kingston workhouse; at the time of the 1841 census there was a total of 89 children aged fifteen and under, eighty of these being of an age to receive education.

The process of canvassing opinion and collecting information which the Guardians undertook suggests that they wished to establish an organised approach to assessing pauper children's needs. More simply it might imply that they were at a loss to know how to begin, and wished to ascertain how other unions were coping. Enquiries were made into "the mode of conducting Schools of the poorer classes now in progress in this country" and the workhouse committee collected information from a variety of sources.<sup>60</sup> One early change was Kingston Guardians' decision to cease the practice of oakum picking for children, and only retain this as a punishment. Kingston Guardians also undertook to investigate how a pauper residential school could be administered and organised. To do this it was necessary to inspect the only locally available examples. These schools were privately run establishments, commercial 'pauper farms' of the kind lambasted in popular literature. It is not surprising that early workhouse schools or orphanages are tainted by the image of Dickens' 'Dotheboys Hall' or Brontë's 'Lowood' when privately managed schools such as these, beyond the reach of legislation, provided the foundation of a Poor Law Guardian's knowledge.<sup>61</sup>

Two private schools used for 'farming out' pauper children were within reach of Kingston. One was at Norwood, owned by Mr. Aubin, and another was at Tooting, owned by Mr. Drouet. These were schools which had existed in the days of the Old Poor Law and which persisted well into the New Poor Law years. Kingston had no intention at this stage of 'farming out' their own children, they were merely gathering information on how a pauper school could be organised and provided within their own workhouse on a scale larger than they had so far experienced. It is significant to note that despite retrospective opinion on such establishments, at that time Mr. Aubin's school was considered an excellent example of its kind, described by Dr. Kay and Mr. Carleton Tufnell as "The establishment which conveys the most complete example of what has been sought to be obtained" in pauper education. Subsidised and closely

monitored, Norwood was the experimental ground for Dr. Kay's vision of workhouse schools, and from which he drew promising boys for his Battersea teacher training school to become workhouse teachers.<sup>62</sup> Drouet's school, however, was quite a different matter, and this will be explored in the following chapter.

The Kingston workhouse committee sought the advice of the Vicar of Battersea in the operation of his parochial schools which were closely connected with Dr. Kay's new teacher training school. The committee was also open to advice from Dr. Kay himself and implemented many of his suggestions. It was Kingston's connection with Dr. Kay (later Kay-Shuttleworth), who had been the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner for Surrey, which was to lead to a significant innovation in the Guardians' initial approach towards pauper education. Their actions support the argument that the Guardians in Kingston recognised their responsibility to provide adequately for the poor and were willing to establish the best methods available at the time. The workhouse committee resolved

*that endeavours be made to place our schools upon the most efficient footing in regard to the things to be taught and the mode of teaching – the moral and religious direction of the system being a paramount consideration.*<sup>63</sup>

They adopted Dr. Kay's new methods with alacrity, and arranged for one of their own workhouse boys to be sent to Dr. Kay's new school, the Battersea Normal School, which had been established to train teachers for the workhouse schools. The personal influence of Dr. Kay can be detected in the enthusiasm with which the Guardians embraced his suggestions, another parallel with the Norfolk Unions which also came under his control. The teaching methods Kay used were innovative and had been based on continental teaching practices. Dr. Kay had been impressed with, and was influenced by, the educational reformers Pestalozzi and Fellenberg, and his methods incorporated elements of their ideas. These were the Pestalozzi learning process of proceeding in a logical way from the simple to the complex, the introduction of object lessons, and the value of physical exercise, together with Fellenberg's belief in the importance of agricultural labour for destitute children.<sup>64</sup> The training school day was run on frugal lines, in order to prepare the new teachers for the régime of a workhouse school, and is described in more detail in the case study of Thomas Ockenden.

The Kingston Board of Guardians took a former workhouse inmate, Thomas Ockenden, and sent him to the Battersea training school a few months after it opened in 1840. This was an innovative and enlightened step for the Guardians; up to at least 1845 Kingston remained the only Poor Law union to have sponsored a workhouse teacher at the Battersea school.<sup>65</sup> As the "existence [of the school] was disclosed only to the immediate circles of our acquaintance" Dr. Kay's familiarity with the Kingston Guardians can be inferred, and this can be strengthened when investigating the origins and patrons of Ockenden's friends from Battersea.<sup>66</sup> Although the initial cost of training Thomas Ockenden was met by the Union, upon qualification and appointment to the position the teacher would receive a reduced income for an initial period in

recognition of the training he had received. The experience afforded to Ockenden by his attendance at the school not only provided him with a teaching career, but also with social connections that gave him opportunities for advancement, advantages not usually associated with the fate of workhouse inmates or staff. These are more fully described in the Ockenden case study. The use of the Battersea Training School provided Kingston with advantages and disadvantages; the workhouse children benefitted from a trained and trusted teacher, but of a calibre which made him more employable outside the workhouse system than workhouse teachers generally found themselves to be. Yet Kingston Guardians still considered a properly trained teacher to be the ideal.

#### 4.6 Difficulties in implementation

Although the Guardians made a conscious effort to review and revise their provision for workhouse children, their efforts were often thwarted by outside circumstances. One of these concerned the Poor Law Commissioners' desire to discourage outdoor relief for able-bodied men and this had a detrimental effect on the children in the Kingston workhouse. When considering the size of their new union workhouse, the Guardians had no method of calculating future capacity and needs, consequently the Kingston workhouse arrangements had to be adapted on an *ad hoc* basis as circumstances required. The assumptions the Guardians did make were based on their current practice of relieving able-bodied men with families in their own homes, and the workhouse provision was considerably affected by the Commissioners' insistence that able-bodied men should be brought into the workhouse.

The gradual realisation of the inadequacy of the existing workhouse resulted in some initial delay in the new workhouse provision, but this had one benefit to the union inasmuch as it enabled the Guardians to learn from the mistakes of other unions in some respects. As each idea for improvement was adopted, the specification for the new workhouse had to be modified. The rising building costs of the workhouse were attributed to improving the design in a manner "essential to the health and proper comfort of the inmates"; plans were changed as experience increased.<sup>67</sup> Attention indeed appeared to have been given to the requirements of the paupers, with particular reference to the children, rather than to impose the deterrent effect which the Commissioners envisaged, so much so that the new workhouse was considered by some ratepayers to be rather too comfortable, being referred to as the "grand palace".<sup>68</sup> The children were, in 1841, provided with a "flying horse or swing" in the play-yard, at a cost of £9, which Longmate seems to suggest was an unusually sentimental provision.<sup>69</sup>

The difficulties of estimating workhouse capacity were to cause problems and were compounded by the combination of seasonal unemployment in Kingston and the desire of the Commissioners that the 'workhouse test' be applied to able-bodied men. Some unions, for example Epsom and Chertsey, were keen to adopt this deterrent principle, but in this regard Kingston resolutely held fast to the old Elizabethan statutes, and provided semi-out-relief, that is,

work at the workhouse during severe winter weather for able-bodied men, in return for food, without the stipulation of the whole family becoming inmates.<sup>70</sup> Even at other times they tended to provide work such as granite-breaking or woodcutting for men with families rather than apply the workhouse test.<sup>71</sup> Whilst experience had shown the Guardians that at other times of the year it was generally only "men of bad or doubtful character" who applied for relief, single men, and young men with small families might be offered work for a time, and only offered the house if, after a reasonable time, they had not found employment for themselves. The Kingston Guardians were well aware that their leniency might lead them to act as the liberal parishes had done under the 'old' Poor Law, and they had no wish to perpetuate the old mistakes, the 'old' poor rate being described by Sells as

*not only a tax raised for the benefit of the aged, the imbecile, the fatherless, and the unfortunate, - classes who justly engage our best sympathies; but that it is also practically, in some instances, a tax upon virtue to support vice; upon the industrious to maintain the idle; upon the sober in favour of the drunkard; upon prudence in aid of folly, and upon the moral and religious, for the advantage of the profligate and profane.*<sup>72</sup>

However, they still felt it was better to err on the side of humane treatment, especially where the more vulnerable persons were involved, and took pride in this attitude, as Sells expressed it in 1841:

*The present number on the out-relief list, and corresponding amount of expenditure, speak plainly for the humane character which distinguishes the administration of relief in this Union, particularly to the aged, infirm, and widows having families.*<sup>73</sup>

This liberal method of administration merely appeared to distinguish Kingston as intractable to the Poor Law Commissioners. The Kingston Union was viewed by other unions as gullible and an easy target for the idle. From conversations with representatives of surrounding unions, it became apparent to Kingston Guardians that their attempts to continue to apply relief in accordance with their own ethos, rather than that of the Poor Law Commissioners', meant that their actions were benefitting not only the idle but neighbouring unions as well. Epsom implied that Kingston would do well to invest in the deterrents used elsewhere, such as stringent application of the workhouse test, rigorous labour at the workhouse, or investing in heavy bone-grinding machinery as was in use at Chertsey. Kingston's Relieving Officer described how, by Kingston's efforts to "avoid carrying out the strict letter of the law, our more determined neighbours have acted up to it and benefited by our leniency".<sup>74</sup> As a direct result, Kingston responded, in December 1841, by resorting for a time to greater use of the workhouse test, the remedy advocated by the Commissioners. This was a significant turning point in Kingston's relinquishment of its 'old' Poor Law liberality and its reluctant acquiescence to the new ways, and in 1842 it was the children who suffered from this shift in administration. However, Kingston Guardians did not entirely abandon their preference for out-relief, and subsequently were to apply it where they felt it to be appropriate, especially during the winters. Even by the winter of 1861/2, the Kingston Union still maintained a lower proportion of its paupers within the

workhouse, compared to most of its neighbouring unions [Figure 4.1].<sup>75</sup> Later events concerning their pauper children provided them with justification to revert to their preferred methods, and this will be evaluated later.

**Figure 4.1**

**Paupers Relieved on 1 Jan 1862 in those Poor Law Unions neighbouring Kingston Union**

The national figure for the percentage of paupers to population in England and Wales on this date was 4.8, showing that whilst Kingston had a higher than average percentage of paupers, proportionally fewer were relieved in the workhouse.

Union	Population 1861	Indoor Paupers	Outdoor Paupers	% of Paupers to Population	% of Paupers being Indoor Paupers	% of Indoor Paupers to Population
Croydon	46457	309	1839	4.6	14.4	0.7
<b>Kingston</b>	<b>36474</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>1581</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>0.8</b>
Brentford	50496	403	2124	5.0	15.9	0.8
Epsom	22402	185	734	4.1	20.1	0.8
Wandsworth & Clapham	70381	693	2435	4.4	22.2	1.0
Chertsey	18546	260	860	6.0	23.2	1.4
Staines	15988	199	538	4.6	27.0	1.2
Richmond	18782	201	453	3.5	30.7	1.1

Source: *Poor Rates and Pauperism: Return (B) Paupers Relieved on 1st Jan 1862*, PP LIII.183, pp. 24-5, 28-9.

Employment for labourers during the winter of 1842-3 promised to be equally hard to obtain as in previous years, and as early as October 1842 applications for relief began to increase.<sup>76</sup> All single able-bodied men were offered the House.<sup>77</sup> The numbers of inmates grew. The workhouse Medical Officer, George Taylor, was concerned about the overcrowding generally, but particularly in the winter months. Although the workhouse was built to accommodate about 300 paupers, seasonal unemployment resulted in the number of inmates exceeding this figure. The impact was felt by the children who were having to sleep three or four to a bed. By January 1842 there were 137 children in the workhouse, around eighty being of school age; Mr. Taylor remarked that the dormitories and schoolrooms were overcrowded and recognised the health risks. He considered it was too cold in the workhouse in the winter, women and children were suffering from coughs and colds, and contagious diseases spread unchecked due to lack of isolation areas.<sup>78</sup>

In order to increase capacity for the able-bodied, the Guardians' solution was to temporarily remove the children from the workhouse. This established a precedent for Kingston which was soon to have disastrous consequences for the children. In December 1842 Kingston decided to use the privately operated establishment at Tooting, run by Bartholomew Drouet, which, with the addition of the Kingston children, contained eight hundred children. Forty boys were sent



from Kingston and, because the women's portion of the workhouse also became overcrowded, twelve girls were sent as well.<sup>79</sup> The Poor Law Commissioners sanctioned this action. Kingston Guardians and the PLC envisaged the removal of the children as a temporary solution to the seasonal overcrowding, but by using the children in their search for a solution, a pattern for the future was established. Although the aim of the New Poor Law was to tackle the problems of the idle poor through cessation of out-relief for the able-bodied, this had a consequent effect on the pauper children for whom these stricter rules were not intended. Kingston's response to the additional burden placed on the union in providing more in-relief was to 'farm-out' what was one of the most vulnerable groups in the workhouse, the children. This decision was ultimately to affect not only the children in the short-term, but also Kingston's policy regarding pauper children for future years. Further consequences of this action will be discussed in the following chapter.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

The endeavours of Kingston's Guardians show how men with ideals but no experience of dealing with more than a few pauper children formed their strategy concerning residential pauper children. The improvements carried out at their own workhouse school were creditable, and incorporated the suggestions of Dr. Kay, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner. The personal influence of Dr. Kay (Kay-Shuttleworth) should be emphasised. He was commissioner for both Norfolk and London and it is significant that Digby's findings in respect of poor law education should also be reflected in those for Kingston. Where Digby found that the Norfolk Unions were willing to accept Dr. Kay's suggestions, Crompton considered this to have been a most enlightened attitude, being entirely absent in Worcestershire.<sup>80</sup> The most advanced aspect in Kingston at this date was that the boys in the workhouse were to have the benefit of a professional teacher, trained in the most advanced methods of the time. Kingston was the only Union during the early development in workhouse education to take the initiative and invest in training their own pupil-teacher. This was an unusual step for a workhouse school at that time and the innovation is worth emphasising. However, when collecting information on pauper schools, Kingston Guardians were restricted to the only available local examples. Although one of these was a model of its kind, the other, as will be seen in the next chapter, was hardly an ideal worth emulating.

In spite of the eventual outcomes, the Kingston Guardians appeared to have grasped the challenge of implementing union provision and showed an awareness of their responsibilities. The assertion by Lawson and Silver that "Poor-law guardians were frequently hostile to the idea of educating pauper children" cannot be applied to Kingston.<sup>81</sup> The Guardians exhibited a determination to provide the most appropriate relief and prided themselves on their compassion. It was this open-minded and independent stance which, it is argued, at first threatened to compromise their effectiveness, and in general influenced their future dealings with the Poor

Law authority. Yet in spite of this, the initial good intentions of the Guardians were gradually eroded by later circumstances.

The transition years established an outlook which lay at the foundation of Kingston Union's approach for the next thirty years. As time passed, and the 'old' Guardians died off, they were replaced by Guardians with different experiences, yet the sense of autonomy remained, and the attitudes which developed in these early years persisted. This is particularly apparent in Kingston's disinclination to abandon out-relief, which had established roots at the inception of the Union. The guidance given by the Commissioners at the outset of the new régime was limited, thus allowing for local interpretation of the laws. In localities where strong opinions prevailed, and administrative confidence existed, such interpretation allowed for distinctive approaches. Some unions followed the 'letter of the law', others endeavoured to make the law fit their views. If unchecked, the approaches adopted at the outset became entrenched. Thus it was in Kingston regarding applicants with children. Although children were not supposed to be subject to 'less eligibility', when the orders of the Poor Law Commissioners on other matters were implemented this had a subsidiary effect on the children, who suffered as a consequence. Despite assertions that the "principle of 'less-eligibility' did not apply to pauper children", as mentioned by Crowther, in practical terms it frequently had that effect.<sup>82</sup> Although Kidd stated that "Historians are by no means in agreement about the impact of the New Poor law, especially over the first thirty years or so of its operation", the experience of Kingston shows that, whatever the outcome for the able-bodied male, the children certainly felt the effects.<sup>83</sup>

Although relief of the poor was dealt with in two spheres, parochial and charitable, the problems of inefficiency and laxity were the same. The difficulty also remained that although children were considered to be the innocent victims of circumstance, yet by distinguishing between 'deserving' and 'non-deserving' adults this differentiation determined the help given to their children. The local examples given confirm that aid for the poor at the local level certainly required review, and that the concerns of the Poor Law Commissioners in 1834 were in many ways justified. Although the shortfalls and need for reform were acknowledged locally, it did not follow that the loss of autonomy consequent on the introduction of the new legislation was in any way welcomed. The attitude of the new Kingston Union was one which combined an initial enthusiasm for the opportunity of reform with a resolute sense of independence, which still showed itself during the 1850s and well into the 1870s. The dual nature of poor relief is illustrated in the example of Kingston, where charitable giving continued to encompass those in the workhouse.

The comments made by the Guardians during this period suggested that they entered into the new system of administration with every intention of making a success of it. Some of the arrangements the Guardians made for the children in the new workhouse were advanced and considered their needs, despite the fact that their efforts may have been ultimately ineffective, or compromised by outside circumstances. These relate principally to the training of teachers,

and can also be inferred from the construction of a playground swing. In *Childhood Transformed* Hopkins acknowledged that in spite of notorious cases "there was considerable variation in conditions from one workhouse to another, and that in some areas there were positive attempts to provide a good environment for the children."<sup>84</sup> Fowler, too, points out that English Poor Law assistance was highly regarded on the continent and that many Poor Law Guardians could be enlightened and dedicated.<sup>85</sup> In the context of the time, and within the limitations of contemporary opinion on what constituted appropriate provision for pauper children, the Kingston Guardians appear in a positive light. The effect prevailing circumstances, central policy and sudden emergencies were to have on the Guardians' intentions will emerge in the following chapter.

- <sup>1</sup> William Sells, *A Report upon the Operation of The New Poor Law in the Kingston Union* (Kingston: Benton Seeley, 1841), p.9, NKC bound in Pamphlets, vol. 19.
- <sup>2</sup> Sells, *A Report upon the Operation of The New Poor Law*, p.16.
- <sup>3</sup> *Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of The Poor Laws* (London: House of Commons, 1834), p.131.
- <sup>4</sup> *Report on the Administration and Practical Operation of The Poor Laws*, Report of Mr. Thomas Langley, Appendix A, p. 209A.
- <sup>5</sup> Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p.54.
- <sup>6</sup> Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p.112.
- <sup>7</sup> Fraser, *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century*; Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform*; Rose, *The Relief of Poverty*.
- <sup>8</sup> Anne Digby, 'The Rural Poor Law' (Chapter 7, pp.149-170) and David Ashforth, 'The Urban Poor Law' (Chapter 6, pp.128-148) in Fraser, *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century*.
- <sup>9</sup> Crompton, *Workhouse Children*, p.xiv.
- <sup>10</sup> Crompton, *Workhouse Children*, pp.1-2.
- <sup>11</sup> Sells, *A Report upon the Operation of The New Poor Law*, pp.4-5.
- <sup>12</sup> Sells, *A Report upon the Operation of The New Poor Law*, p.11.
- <sup>13</sup> Sells, *A Report upon the Operation of The New Poor Law*, p.10.
- <sup>14</sup> Letter from Lt Col De Ros to the PLC, 30 March 1835, TNA MH12/12389.
- <sup>15</sup> *Hampton (Middlesex) Charitable Institutions Part I* (Kingston: Benton Seeley: 1835) p.8, copy filed under TNA MH12/12389.
- <sup>16</sup> TNA MH12/12389, *Hampton (Middlesex) Charitable Institutions Parts I & II* (Kingston: Benton Seeley: 1835), pp.31-3.
- <sup>17</sup> *Hampton Charitable Institutions Parts I & II*, p.33.
- <sup>18</sup> HC, 282 L362.5 T4 24 Dec.1836, Hampton Parish Poor Relief Records, Richmond Local History Studies.
- <sup>19</sup> Hampton Parish Poor Relief Records, 15 July 1828.
- <sup>20</sup> F.M. Eden, *The State of the Poor*, 1797, abr edn 1928 quoted in Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, p.166.
- <sup>21</sup> TNA MH12/1238910, Letter from Wimbledon Vestry to the PLC, March 1836.
- <sup>22</sup> TNA MH12/12389, 29 April 1836 and 12 March 1836.
- <sup>23</sup> TNA MH12/12389, 7 March 1836.
- <sup>24</sup> Sells, *A Report upon the Operation of The New Poor Law*, p.5.
- <sup>25</sup> TNA MH12/12389 KU to PLC 30 Dec.1836.
- <sup>26</sup> Kingston Union, *Report of the Workhouse Committee to the Board of Guardians*, Feb.1837, TNA MH12/12389.
- <sup>27</sup> Sells, *A Report upon the Operation of The New Poor Law*, pp.9-10.
- <sup>28</sup> Sells, *A Report upon the Operation of The New Poor Law*, p.9.
- <sup>29</sup> Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, pp.107-8.
- <sup>30</sup> William Sells, *Remarks on the Condition of the Slaves in the Island of Jamaica*, (London: Richardson, Cornhill & Ridgways, 1823), p.v.
- <sup>31</sup> SHC BG8/11/1, Kingston Board of Guardians Minute Book, 16th Oct.1839.
- <sup>32</sup> U.R.Q. Henriques, 'Bastardy and the New Poor Law' in *Past and Present*, (37) 1967, pp. 103-129; T. Nutt, 'The paradox and problems of illegitimate paternity in Old Poor Law Essex' in Levene, A., et al (eds.), *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700-1920* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

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- <sup>33</sup> TNA MH12/12389 Wimbledon to PLC 2 Feb.1835.
- <sup>34</sup> TNA MH12/12389 PLC letter to Mr. S Humphreys, Overseer of Wimbledon, 7 Feb.1835.
- <sup>35</sup> *The Times* 14 April 1837.
- <sup>36</sup> Lewes: *Brighton Patriot and South of England Free Press*, 21 Feb.1837; Taunton: *The Champion and Weekly Herald*, 30 April 1837.
- <sup>37</sup> Woburn: Reports of the Woburn Union to the PLC, *The Champion and Weekly Herald*, 15 Jan.1837; Cumberland: *The Champion and Weekly Herald*, 16 April 1837, quoting from the *Cumberland Packet*.
- <sup>38</sup> *New Poor Law - Kingston Union, Surrey, The Times*, 12 July 1837.
- <sup>39</sup> *The Times* 16 Sept.1836.
- <sup>40</sup> Sells, *A Report upon the Operation of The New Poor Law*, pp.12-13.
- <sup>41</sup> *A Return of Cases of Child Murder or Suspected Murder during the years 1836-41* from Willm. Carter, Coroner for Surrey, to PLC (received PLC 3 Oct.1841), filed under MH12/12390 doc 9189a.
- <sup>42</sup> *A Return of Cases of Child Murder*.
- <sup>43</sup> Letter to PLC from H Marnus Sutton, Whitehall, dated 22 Sept.1841, PLC correspondence with KU, TNA MH12/12390, doc 286D.
- <sup>44</sup> Letter from W Baker, Thames Ditton to PLC 8 Oct.1841, PLC correspondence with KU, TNA MH12/12390, doc 9357a.
- <sup>45</sup> TNA MH12/12391 2403a/45 Thomas Davis to PLC 27 Feb.1845.
- <sup>46</sup> *The Times* 21 Sept.1841.
- <sup>47</sup> Mr. Hind's *Report on Bastards &C*, 2 Nov.1841, filed under TNA MH12/12390 doc 9985a.
- <sup>48</sup> Mr. Hind's *Report on Bastards*.
- <sup>49</sup> Mr. Hind's *Report on Bastards*.
- <sup>50</sup> Mr. Hind's *Report on Bastards*.
- <sup>51</sup> Mr. Hind's *Report on Bastards*.
- <sup>52</sup> E. Carleton Tufnell, *On The Training of Pauper Children*; Report to Secretary of State for Home Dept., from Poor Law Commissioners., 1841, pp.349-50.
- <sup>53</sup> *Report from Schoolmistress of Kingston Union* 16 April 1844, doc 2541/44, TNA MH12/12391.
- <sup>54</sup> *Report to Kingston Union by Mr. Hall, Assistant Commissioner*, 30 April 1844, SHC BG8/11/2.
- <sup>55</sup> SHC BG8/11/2, 5 March, 12 March, 19 March 1844.
- <sup>56</sup> TNA MH12/12391, Kingston Union to PLC 5 March 1844, doc 2541a/44.
- <sup>57</sup> SHC, P33/5/2, *Minute Book: Kingston Association for bettering the Conditions and Morals of the Poor*, Meeting 9 Dec.1817, Resolution 2, p.4.
- <sup>58</sup> TNA MH12/12389, *Kingston Union Report of the Workhouse Committee*, 13 Feb.1837.
- <sup>59</sup> TNA MH12/12391, Kingston's response in 1843 to a questionnaire from the PLC dated 19 Aug.1839; Sept. is given in Hampton Poor Relief 1794-1829, Richmond LHS, L362.5 T4.
- <sup>60</sup> TNA MH12/12390 6444a *Report of Workhouse Committee* 13 May 1840.
- <sup>61</sup> Charles Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, originally published in parts 1838-9, and as a single work as *The life and adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1839); Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, originally published as *Jane Eyre: an autobiography, edited by Currer Bell* (London: Smith, Elder, 1847).
- <sup>62</sup> J.P. Kay, Esq., M.D., and E. Carleton Tufnell, Esq., *Assistant Poor Law Commissioners' Reports on the Training of Pauper Children* (London: W. Clowes & Sons, 1839), Document no. BP 185067 (London School of Economics pamphlet collection).
- <sup>63</sup> TNA MH12/12390, *Report of [Kingston] Workhouse Committee to the Kingston Guardians*, 13 May 1840, doc. 6444a.
- <sup>64</sup> Stewart and McCann, *The Educational Innovators*, pp.148-153.

- <sup>65</sup> *List of Teachers that have been Trained at the Battersea Training School, with their Present Localities*, Appendix B, *Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education: with appendices, 1845* (London: W. Clowes & Sons, 1846), p.262.
- <sup>66</sup> *Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education 1842-3*, p.213.
- <sup>67</sup> Sells, *A Report upon the Operation of The New Poor Law*, pp.13-15.
- <sup>68</sup> Merryweather, *Half a Century of Kingston History*, p.25.
- <sup>69</sup> SHC BG8/11/1, Flying Horse or Swing for the exercise of the Children, Mr. Masons's Tender, 28 April 1841; Longmate, *The Workhouse*, caption to illustration 3, between pp.158-9.
- <sup>70</sup> Epsom Union and Chertsey Union referred to in *The Relieving Officers Report on the means of employing able bodied paupers*, 20 Oct.1841, SHC BG8/11/1; Clapham, Epsom, Guildford and Chertsey Unions referred to in SHC BG8/11/1 19 Oct.1842.
- <sup>71</sup> Trenching, weeding and granite breaking referred to in *The Master's Report on the means of employing able bodied paupers*, 20 Oct.1841, SHC BG8/11/1.
- <sup>72</sup> Sells, *A Report upon the Operation of The New Poor Law*, fn p.10.
- <sup>73</sup> Sells, *A Report upon the Operation of The New Poor Law*, p.11.
- <sup>74</sup> SHC BG8/11/1 *The Relieving Officers Report to Kingston Board of Guardians* 20 Oct.1841.
- <sup>75</sup> *Poor Rates and Pauperism: Return (B) Paupers Relieved on 1st Jan 1862*, PP LIII.183, pp. 24-5, 28-9.
- <sup>76</sup> SHC BG8/11/1 5 Oct.1842.
- <sup>77</sup> SHC BG8/11/1 7 Dec.1842 and MH12/12390 15 Dec.1842, doc 14525a/42.
- <sup>78</sup> George Taylor, Medical Officer, *Report as to the State of the Workhouse*, TNA MH12/12390 1624a, 25 Jan.1842.
- <sup>79</sup> SHC BG8/11/1 14 Dec.1842.
- <sup>80</sup> Crompton, *Workhouse Children*, p.192; Digby, *Pauper Palaces*.
- <sup>81</sup> John Lawson and Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England*, (London: Methuen, 1973), p.283.
- <sup>82</sup> Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.201.
- <sup>83</sup> Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor*, p.31.
- <sup>84</sup> Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, p.174.
- <sup>85</sup> Fowler, *Workhouse*, pp.13-14.

## **Appendix 4.1**

### **Case Study: Thomas Ockenden**

Thomas Ockenden was born in Leatherhead in 1822.<sup>1</sup> His family moved first to Epsom where two further sons were born; they subsequently moved to Kingston by 1829 where his father worked as a plumber.<sup>2</sup> His father died in 1831 at the age of thirty-five, and his mother was left a widow with four young children, earning money mangling.<sup>3</sup> Evidence suggests that Thomas obtained a parish apprenticeship in 1834 as his name is included in the list of testimonials presented to the annual meeting of the 'Kingston Association for Bettering the Conditions and Morals of the Poor' as deserving of reward.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently the Kingston Guardians considered him a suitable candidate for a trainee workhouse teacher and Thomas was very fortunate to be chosen for an apprenticeship as a pupil-teacher in Dr. Kay's experimental teacher-training school.

The Battersea Normal School opened in February 1840 and Thomas Ockenden was sent there in September 1840.<sup>5</sup> He was thus one of the earliest trainee teachers at this newly opened, newly equipped, innovative school. Although many of the boys taken by the Battersea training school came from the Norwood School of Industry, particularly in its first few months, it might be inferred that Thomas was sent to Battersea straight from Kingston, as Kingston Union did not send their pauper children to Norwood. Dr. Kay had visited the Kingston workhouse school in January 1840 and as he only took apprentices through personal contacts rather than outside application it would be reasonable to suppose that Thomas' apprenticeship arose specifically through Dr. Kay's involvement with the Kingston Guardians.<sup>6</sup> Dr. Kay selected pupils for his Battersea school not on their attainments, but on their character and potential, so Thomas might be presumed to have shown both these qualities. His subsequent career certainly shows that he had ambition. By 1841 the Guardians reported that they were "most highly gratified by the satisfactory report of the master as to our student's progress in his studies, and especially as to his good temper, general propriety of demeanour, and excellent moral and religious principles."<sup>7</sup>

The régime at Battersea was designed to reflect the restrictive life of a workhouse. The boys "should be prepared for a life of self-denial".<sup>8</sup> The food was frugal and the boys learnt to undertake their own housework, as it was anticipated that in making their home in the uncongenial surroundings of a workhouse school they would be unlikely to marry. They also learned to grow vegetables and milk cows; such training would fit them for the possibility of work in a country workhouse. They also took physical exercise and went out for long walks to improve their stamina and health. The school day started at half-past-five in the morning and ended at nine at night, but the day was varied, being divided between periods of gardening, housework, class work, gymnastics, prayers and meals. On Sundays the boys attended the local parish church in Battersea, and formed their own choir to sing at the services.<sup>9</sup> Dr. Kay intended the school to have a family atmosphere, and for the boys to become friends to one

another, which certainly proved the case for Thomas. The advantages Thomas gained in attending this school, and the 'family feeling' which Dr. Kay hoped to encourage, were discernable in Thomas' later life.

Thomas Ockenden commenced teaching at the Kingston workhouse school on 24 June 1842.<sup>10</sup> The interest in singing encouraged at Battersea remained with him as two years later he applied to be allowed to leave the workhouse two evenings a week to open a singing class in Kingston. The Guardians granted him permission, provided that he "return punctually at half past 9, so as not to interfere with the locking up of the Gate and House above half an hour."<sup>11</sup> By the end of 1844, however, he had been offered a position elsewhere, and he applied to leave the workhouse school. This necessitated his reimbursing Kingston Union for the financial loss incurred by his leaving his employment before the contracted time. The quality of training he received at Battersea, and the intentionally poor salary of a workhouse teacher, combined to raise his aspirations and to look elsewhere. It might also have been a case of no longer fitting in; E. Carleton Tufnell, Inspector of Poor Law Schools, had become aware that a well-educated workhouse schoolmaster was in a difficult social position in a workhouse. He was subordinate to the Master, yet educationally superior to him, and "in nine cases out of ten we have constant disputes and bickerings ... which usually end in the resignation of one or other".<sup>12</sup> It might have been this social difficulty which contributed to Thomas' resignation. Two of the acquaintances Thomas made at Battersea also left the sphere of poor law schools for the higher status of charity schools which had influential connections, and these friendships were to serve Thomas in good stead in the future.

By 1850 Thomas was the schoolmaster at the Holland Farm School, in Kensington. This was a school for "the education of children of the labouring, manufacturing and other poorer classes of Kensington", established in 1842 by the sister of Lord Holland.<sup>13</sup> It was a charity day school, which Thomas was at pains to point out in his 1851 census return. Thomas had therefore risen in status from that of a workhouse schoolmaster, and had also married as by 1851 he was enumerated with his wife and young child, and his widowed mother was living with them.

Thomas remained in close contact with two other 'Battersea boys', William Hammond and John Goodall. Hammond was born in Norfolk, the son of a gardener, and his county of origin suggests that Kay-Shuttleworth again was instrumental in his admission to Battersea. Hammond was one of several boys sponsored by the Directors of the Great Western Railway, and by 1845 was teaching at a school in Swindon.<sup>14</sup> By 1850 he was Head-Master of the Commercial Travellers' Schools, Wanstead, a charity school for "the children of deceased or necessitous commercial travellers".<sup>15</sup> Goodall had been placed in Battersea at the expense of Kay-Shuttleworth himself, and had gone on to teach at a school at Gawthorpe. He subsequently became Master of The Blue Coat School, Northampton. Together Hammond and Goodall published, in 1850, a book for schoolmasters entitled *To The Questions Of The First*



*General Examination Of Schoolmasters*, and this was sold from Holland Farm School by Thomas Ockenden.<sup>16</sup>

Connections between Thomas Ockenden and William Hammond were maintained and strengthened in subsequent years, Ockenden sending his own son, also called Thomas, to Hammond's school, where the boy grew up with, and later married, one of Hammond's daughters. William Hammond married into the Lawrence family, who, between 1800 and 1910, were proprietors of "The Old Grange", a private school in Church Street, Hampton. Hammond became the master of the boys' school, and most of the female members of the Lawrence family, and Hammond's four daughters, all in their turn attended, and taught at, the girls' school. Some worked for a time as private governesses, one of them being a music teacher who became a 'professor of music'.<sup>17</sup> In 1881 Thomas Ockenden's son was visiting at the Hampton address, just prior to his marriage to Mary Jane Hammond at Hampton Church.<sup>18</sup>

Study of the network of marriages between these several teaching families suggest that, for the girls, teaching was the means of social advancement. The male members of the Lawrence family remained in their traditional family occupations, publican, butcher and carpenter, remaining geographically close to their sisters, with various members of the family living with others as circumstances arose. The daughters of these men were sent to their aunts to be educated. The younger Thomas Ockenden did not go into teaching, or take up a trade; he worked as a clerk in an accounts office in the City, and later became a Counting House Manager, employing a servant.

The senior Thomas, the Battersea-trained teacher, continued to benefit from the influence of Kay-Shuttleworth in his subsequent teaching career. In 1854 he was appointed Head Master and Schools Inspector in the Turks and Caicos Islands in the West Indies, with his testimonials supplied by Kay-Shuttleworth.<sup>19</sup> Ockenden's wife and son sailed out to join them in Grand Turk, via New York, the following year, 1855, although his wife did return to England to visit a relative between 1856 and 1861.<sup>20</sup> At that time their son, Thomas, was left in the care of William Hammond at the age of thirteen, living with him and attending his school.<sup>21</sup>

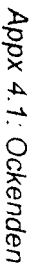
Thomas Ockenden senior continued teaching in the Turks and Caicos Islands for many years, living in Cockburn Town, the capital. During his time there the islands experienced a severe hurricane in 1866 which caused over £75,000 damage to property, and caused much suffering.<sup>22</sup> It also entirely destroyed the school, but Ockenden's own dwelling suffered a mere £6 worth of damage. He was Head Master at the school in Grand Turk, and Inspector for the schools on the other islands, a social position which he frequently and vigorously defended. He was certainly aspirational, taking a position in the Island's Volunteer Rifle Corps and being made a Commissioner of the Peace.<sup>23</sup> There were probably more opportunities to attain such social standing in a small community than it would have been had he remained in London. It is possible that his own perceived status encouraged ambitions greater than his background

allowed him to achieve, as he applied, and was rejected from, various governmental posts, including that of Colonial Secretary. He was not considered as being "fitted for the discharge of the onerous and often delicate duties" of a diplomatic rôle, and his numerous complaints on a variety of perceived slights did not present the Colonial Office with "a favourable impression respecting his probable efficiency as a public servant".<sup>24</sup> His teaching style, too, came into question and attendance at the schools was not high. Probably after so many years in the same profession his interest lapsed for something as mundane as teaching whilst his ambitions grew. He was ultimately offered the position of Police Magistrate, as being a solution favourable to all parties.<sup>25</sup> He served in this capacity from 1867, but had achieved the post of Assistant Commissioner of Turks Islands by the time of his death at Salt Cay in November 1876, aged fifty-three.<sup>26</sup>

The example of Thomas Ockenden illustrates that it was possible to raise oneself from the sphere of the workhouse into respectable society through a fortunate apprenticeship and personal attributes, combined with personal ambition. The opportunity afforded by the Battersea Training School was, however, an exceptional one. Thomas benefitted from the enthusiasm associated with new ventures; both through the influence of Kay-Shuttleworth and his vision of ideal workhouse education, and that of the Kingston Guardians' desire to implement his recommendations. Hammond and Goodall's training was also as a result of Kay-Shuttleworth's involvement. The experience of Thomas and his two friends epitomises the difficulties of providing good quality workhouse education, as those who were trained to the ideal standard envisaged by Kay-Shuttleworth no longer wished to remain in the workhouse system.

- 1 Parish Registers, St Mary and St Nicholas, Leatherhead, SHC LE/4/1.
- 2 Parish Registers, St Martin, Epsom, SHC 3013/2; Kingston Baptism Database, Centre for Local History Studies, Kingston University.
- 3 Kingston All Saints Burial Register, SHC P33/1/31; 1841 Census, TNA HO107/1075; Book 1, ED3, f. 50.
- 4 "Dec 1836 Thos Ockenden 2 ½ yrs Mr Acton & Mr Dale", Kingston Association for Bettering the Conditions and Morals of the Poor, Minute Book SHC P33/5/2.
- 5 Sells, W., *A Report upon the Operation of The New Poor Law*, pp.6-7.
- 6 Copy of *Report of Workhouse Committee* of 13 May 1840, TNA MH12/12390, document 6444a.
- 7 Sells, *A Report upon the Operation of The New Poor Law*, pp.6-7.
- 8 *Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education* 1842-3, p.214.
- 9 *Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education* 1842-3, p.223.
- 10 SHC BG8/11/1, 15 June 1842.
- 11 SHC BG8/11/1, 30 Jan.1844.
- 12 *Tufnell on the Training of Pauper Children*, p.350.
- 13 'The Holland estate: Since 1874', *Survey of London: volume 37: Northern Kensington* (1973), pp.126-150. [www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk) Date accessed: 17 Sept.2008.
- 14 *Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education* 1845, p.262.
- 15 From: 'Wanstead: Introduction', *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 6* (1973), pp.317-322. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk> Date accessed: 22 Sept.2008.
- 16 W. Hammond and J. Goodall, *To The Questions Of The First General Examination Of Schoolmasters, Conducted By Her Majesty's Inspectors Of Schools For Awarding Certificates*, (London: Hammond & Goodall, 1850) in Sale Catalogue of Mark Godding, bookseller, Potterne, Wilts. [www.biblio.com](http://www.biblio.com) Date accessed 5 Aug.2009.
- 17 1881 Census TNA RG11/841 f. 22; p.37.
- 18 1881 Census, RG11/841, f. 22, p.37; Banns St Mary Lambeth, 1881; Marriage Registers, St Mary, Hampton, Middlesex p.50.
- 19 Letter from Thomas Ockenden, Grand Turk to The Right Hon E Cardwell M P, Her Majesty's Principal Sec of State for the Colonies, 5 Feb.1866, TNA CO 301/43.
- 20 New York Passenger List, Ship 'Palestine', 1855, LDS M237 155, List 752, Line 9; 1861 Census, Huntingdonshire, RG9/973, f. 34, p.6.
- 21 1861 Census RG9/192, f. 24, p.10.
- 22 *Summary of Returns of Property Damaged on the Islands*, 14 June 1867, TNA CO 301/47.
- 23 Application from Thomas Ockenden to A W Moir, President Turks and Caicos Islands, 9 Oct.1867, TNA Colonial Office papers CO 301/47.
- 24 Letter from A. W. Moir, President Turks and Caicos Islands, to His Excellency the Capt General and Governor-in-Chief, Jamaica, 7 Feb.1866, TNA CO 301/43; Letter from the Colonial Office to Turks Island, 11 July 1867, TNA CO 301/47.
- 25 TNA CO 301/36/47, October 1867.
- 26 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 24 Feb.1876.

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## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Workhouse Children to 1870**

**"not ... the cheerfulness and the pluck of boys" <sup>1</sup>**

*Mr. Merryweather, Kingston Guardian, 1870*

#### **5.1 Introduction**

From the outset of the new Union the Kingston Poor Law Guardians were anxious to provide adequate care for their pauper inmates, but the conflict between how they and the Poor Law Commission (PLC) envisaged relief would be provided necessitated their plans coming under continual revision. The object of the New Poor Law being to eradicate pauperism through legislation mainly for the able-bodied pauper created a basis where children were considered as an afterthought. The physical arrangements of the new Union workhouse suggest that the Kingston Guardians did not appear to have made any special provision for the accommodation of the children, although the desire to provide a properly trained workhouse schoolmaster, as described in Chapter 4, provides evidence of concern for their education. This chapter will investigate the development of Kingston's policy towards its pauper children, and explore why such changes became necessary. It will be shown that, in spite of good intentions at the outset, Kingston's provisions for these children were mostly driven by pressing necessity. Time and again decisions regarding the children were made in response to some immediate need. By chance some of these responses turned out to be innovative and successful, but many of them were to the detriment of the children.

#### **5.2 Education and Industrial Training**

Education for children in the parish workhouses prior to formation of the Union had not been organised or structured, and any instruction they did receive was provided by adult paupers. As already shown in Chapter 4, the Kingston Guardians wished to establish the most modern teaching system available for workhouse boys, and arranged for a teacher to be trained in the latest methods. As this training would plainly take time, at least two years, an interim solution was necessary until Thomas Ockenden could take up his post, which he did in 1842.

Until that time, the education in the Kingston workhouse was simple and rudimentary, and of minimum utility; the girls, for example, were taught merely needlework and reading. Dr. Kay's criticism that there was an inadequate supply of schoolbooks and slates in the classrooms was acknowledged by the Guardians, and provision slowly improved so that by the middle of 1840 the children were receiving some form of education within the workhouse rather than at the local schools. The education gradually developed and encompassed not just the 'Three Rs', of reading, writing and arithmetic, rather the 'Four Rs', for religious education was an important moral component of the education of all poor children, whether within the workhouse or without.

The Kingston Society had already set the tone of moral improvement necessary for the children of the poor in the town and charitable concern did not stop at the workhouse door. Books for child and adult paupers were provided by an anonymous donor and by the Tract Society, so that by 1841 the workhouse had around two hundred books of an improving nature.<sup>2</sup> This provides an example of the blending of workhouse provision and philanthropic efforts.

The children received some training in various crafts, with a view to giving them basic skills with which to earn their own future living. During the period 1840-2 the girls learnt straw plaiting, they knitted stockings and made hats and bonnets. Some of the boys were taught shoemaking, others tailoring; they were also provided with tools to learn "practical gardening on little allotments".<sup>3</sup> The academic education left a little to be desired; their reading was considered adequate but writing and arithmetic poor.

*The Boys ... are at present deficient in writing and arithmetic partly from no regular master having been appointed. Little or nothing has been done in teaching [the girls] arithmetic beyond simple addition sums to a few of the Girls.*<sup>4</sup>

### 5.3 Schoolmasters and Schoolmistresses

Finding a suitable interim schoolmaster proved difficult; the temporary schoolmaster who was appointed was considered "of humble pretensions in respect to his attainments", but it was the best that could be done.<sup>5</sup> This was a Mr. Lewis, who had been a schoolmaster for twenty-five years. He was no 'Wackford Squeers', rather, he appears to have been the reverse; he did not approve of corporal punishment and was anxious to keep his job almost to the point of sycophancy:

*My Kyle [the porter] would almost daily find fault with me about the Boys, strongly enforcing on me the absolute necessity of severity to the children. "Always have a piece of Rope in your pocket like this", pulling out a hard piece of Tar rope 8 or 9 inches long. I replied No, No my Nerves won't do for inflicting Punishment. I have been a Schoolmaster more than 25 years but was never a Flogging [sic] one, and if children will not do without Negro driving they will never have it from me.*<sup>6</sup>

Mr. Lewis felt himself to be bullied by the porter on account of these views, although they may have been offered more in the nature of a warning than a criticism, as Mr. Kyle considered the Master and Matron as having "violent and passionate tempers." Mr. Lewis reported Mr. Kyle as saying to him,

*"I tell you but you will not be here long – you are not the sort of man that will please either the Guardians or the Master & Matron..." it made me truly unhappy...*<sup>7</sup>

In fact, after the Battersea-trained schoolmaster, Ockenden, arrived to take up his post, the rather ineffectual Mr. Lewis was retained in the workhouse but in the more humble position of porter, with his wife as assistant matron. It was Mr. Kyle and the Master and Matron who left.

Once the trained schoolmaster had commenced teaching at Kingston workhouse, the Guardians faced the difficulty of retaining him, a problem which was not unique to Kingston, and which Digby found was also the case in the Norfolk unions.<sup>8</sup> Digby's findings for Norfolk have parallels with Kingston in this regard; the influence of Kay-Shuttleworth in providing good quality teaching resulted in the better qualified workhouse teachers preferring work elsewhere. Thomas Ockenden's qualifications appear to have made him more employable and widened his horizons beyond the workhouse, as shown in the case study material in Appendix 4.1 to Chapter 1, and at the end of 1844 he had handed in his notice. His replacement left after five months. The Guardians at this point reviewed the "condition and character" of the school and also increased the schoolmaster's salary, which indicates two contributory reasons for his not remaining longer.<sup>9</sup>

Economic practicalities, and the realities of workhouse schools, compromised the ideals of providing good quality education for paupers, a situation which was to be echoed later in the larger establishments which developed, even those in which Dr. Kay took particular interest. Workhouse teachers were not considered the élite of their profession. As Kingston discovered, those who were effective aspired to leave the system; if brought up in the workhouse themselves they were especially keen to break all association with the Poor Law. Such institutions also attracted those who could not find work elsewhere, or whose inclinations and nature were inhibited in the more open community of a village school. These were nationally recognised difficulties, acknowledged by Dr. Kay, which no amount of good intentions could reasonably be expected to overcome. It was also to prove the experience of Kingston's workhouse.

Although a professionally-trained teacher had been the aspiration for the boys' school, this was not the case for the girls'. Furthermore, the schoolmistresses in the girls' portion of the Kingston Workhouse did not appear to have had the best of teaching conditions. When added to deficiencies in qualifications and some personal friction between the staff, this could not have produced the most effective of educations. Mrs. Hogg, the wife of the new porter, had been on hand to help in the schoolroom and the Guardians found it convenient to appoint her as Schoolmistress in early 1844, with an assistant, Sarah Lack.<sup>10</sup> The physical arrangements of the workhouse meant that other female inmates were passing through the schoolroom, which was not only disruptive in itself, but as Mrs. Hogg, as Schoolmistress, considered them disrespectful this affected discipline. There was also the constant exposure of the children to the sight of women with illegitimate children passing through to the infirmary. The consequent questions this provoked in children afforded precisely the moral danger which the emerging idea of separate workhouse schools was intended to avoid. It had been a concern of Dr. Kay in 1839 that "the atmosphere of a workhouse that contains adult paupers is tainted with vice".<sup>11</sup>

The complaints of the schoolmistress, Mrs. Hogg, were naturally supported by the porter, her husband. Mr. and Mrs. Hogg were to serve the union in one capacity or another for many years,

each appointment presenting itself as a consequence of some temporary crisis. They also had ambitions to be a Master and Matron, which were ultimately achieved at Kingston. Although the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner upheld Mrs. Hogg's complaints concerning the disruptions to the schoolroom, and instructed the Master and Matron to treat her with civility, he appeared to be alive to her own social aspirations. He commented in 1844 that "the School Mistress should be reminded that she is in a situation subordinate to that of the Master and Matron and that she must not be punctilious or unreasonable in regard to the footing on which she may conceive she ought to be placed".<sup>12</sup> In her study of Norfolk unions, Digby found that "friction between the master and matron of the workhouse and the teachers was endemic" and this has been borne out by the various complaints by the teachers at Kingston.<sup>13</sup>

The assistant schoolmistress, Mrs. Lack, was regarded by the *Guardians* as "a most useful woman" and had been with them since the formation of the union.<sup>14</sup> She was a widow in her fifties and had at one time "kept a small Day School", which might have been one of the so-called 'dame schools' of which little documentary evidence exists, but which were "scattered over the parish" of Kingston at the time of the formation of the Union.<sup>15</sup> By 1846 she had been replaced by a younger but less experienced assistant.

By the close of 1846 the girls' department of the Kingston Workhouse School was "not proceeding satisfactorily", and the system and management was investigated. The rather "indifferent" education experienced in the girls' school arose partly from the fact that in 1846 the girls still did not have the benefit of full-time trained schoolteachers.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, there was a certain amount of discord between Mrs. Hogg, schoolmistress in charge of the older girls, and Mary Chamney, who by then had the care of the younger girls and infants. Mary Chamney was keen, but inexperienced, and often called the older girls from their lessons in order to help her with the younger ones, standard practice in day schools. Additionally, Mrs. Hogg had a family of her own to attend to and if any of her own children were ill she stayed away to look after them. Eventually, the *Guardians* felt that the best solution was to have a regular and properly trained full-time schoolmistress. In the meantime they took the practical step of sending Mary Chamney to the local infant school for three days a week to receive some training in teaching methods from Mrs. Young who taught there. They also drew up strict rules for the two teachers to follow.<sup>17</sup>

This action provides a further example of Kingston's policy of reactive solutions to difficulties which arose regarding their pauper children. The boys had been deemed to require the benefit of a trained teacher from the outset, but whilst the girls' section had functioned on a less professional system this had been allowed to continue without revision as long as no major problems arose. Only when the inadequacies of the girls' school had been brought to the *Guardians'* attention was any attempt made to improve the provision, yet they did take steps to be more exacting in the attributes of the schoolmistress once they had been made aware of deficiencies.



Despite the best efforts of the board, the school did not improve and Mrs. Hogg resigned at the end of March 1847. When Kingston advertised for a replacement, they had plainly learned a lesson and the position was only open to single women or widows without families. The prospective schoolmistress' attainments were also of importance as trained and experienced candidates were preferred, and out of eight applicants Mary Jane Beck was appointed in May 1847. Mary had had ten years teaching experience and immediately established her authority by complaining that mothers interfered if she had occasion to correct the children in the workhouse school.<sup>18</sup> Gradually, therefore, during the first twelve years of the union, education for the girls had progressed from negligible to an attempt at some professionalism.

It does not appear that the Guardians actively chose to have teachers with inadequate qualifications for their workhouse children once they had accepted the advantages of training, qualifications and experience. With the exception of the Battersea-trained teacher Kingston had, up until 1847, appointed masters and mistresses who were not professional teachers, were not necessarily full-time, and were occasionally chosen simply because of convenience. The fact that they gradually attempted to bring into the workhouse the same level of teaching as was used in the local school may have had a practical purpose, but it was not solely the practical instruction of the children which was of concern. Their moral welfare was also considered of great importance, supported by comments such as "the Superintendent of [the School] should be a person of the highest character and principle whose first object should be the moral training of the Children".<sup>19</sup> The irony of this remark will become apparent when considering the boys' school. Unfortunately, events in the management and education of Kingston's pauper children often took an unexpected turn, and the Guardians were frequently placed in the position of having to find remedial solutions at short notice. Hasty decisions did not always lead to the best solutions. However, as will be seen, it could sometimes be the case that innovative alternatives came to be employed by Kingston for the very reason that they were sometimes forced to take drastic measures. By such responses they occasionally found themselves in the vanguard of national change.

After the resignation of Thomas Ockenden, and the departure of his short-lived replacement, the Guardians filled the position of schoolmaster in the boys' school with a young teacher who had both workhouse and parish school experience. Louis Feist arrived in 1845 having been Schoolmaster at the Horsham Union Workhouse for some years. The Guardians were initially satisfied with him, awarding him an increase in salary the following year. It came as a great shock to the Guardians to discover that he had been involved in "unnatural crimes" with some of the pauper boys at Kingston, one of them being Thomas Herbert Batchelor who had been in the workhouse with his two sisters since at least 1841. Feist was arrested and tried in 1848. He was found guilty and for this "abominable act" was sentenced to death, although this was subsequently commuted to transportation for life.<sup>20</sup> In consequence of the revelations at the trial, the Magistrate recommended that "the practice of washing the Boys once or twice a week naked together in a Bath be discontinued".<sup>21</sup>

With the departure of Feist, Kingston workhouse school suddenly found itself once more without a teacher, and the Guardians were obliged to find a rapid solution. The Guardians were willing to take their time in finding a suitable candidate and advertised for a replacement teacher, but in the meantime decided to subcontract once more. Their anxiety not to repeat mistakes by making a hasty appointment was significant for Kingston in that it laid the foundations for another error of judgement, with tragic consequences.

Being without a schoolmaster, the Guardians decided to 'farm out' boys entering the workhouse who were over three years old. Later they extended this to all the boys and some of the girls. Kingston considered both Mr. Aubin's School at Norwood, which had been subject to Dr. Kay's improvements, and also Mr. Drouet's school at Tooting, which Kingston had used during an earlier crisis. Both establishments were inspected by a committee comprising members of Kingston's Guardians and, without reference to the Poor Law Board (PLB), Kingston decided on Drouet's; not only was it nearer to Kingston, but it was also 6d. per head per week cheaper.<sup>22</sup> Kingston's preoccupation with the disclosures surrounding Louis Feist resulted in two hastily made decisions, concerning both the replacement schoolmaster at Kingston and also the choice of Drouet's, both of which were to prove unfortunate.

#### **5.4 Pauper Farming**

Bartholomew Peter Drouet was previously Master of the Lambeth Workhouse, and had worked with an erstwhile pauper farmer turned Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, Charles Mott. Mott had built a comfortable life for himself prior to 1834 on the proceeds of providing contracted pauper accommodation for a number of parishes, including Lambeth where he had also been a Guardian. Mott's ethos had been that of extreme economy when providing for the poor to save money for the ratepayers and, no doubt, for himself. This is not an attitude which has been discerned in Kingston-upon-Thames, yet the Guardians there were due to relinquish the care of their most vulnerable paupers to those who had this approach. This mercenary attitude had been the experience of pauper management which Drouet took with him when he left the supervision of the Poor Laws and went into the unregulated business of pauper farming for himself, in company with his brother, Richard Drouet and other members of the Drouet family.

Drouet's Establishment at Tooting was thus a relic of the 'Old' Poor Law methods, and was beyond the supervision of the Poor Law authorities. Despite Dr. Kay's improvements being implemented at Mr. Aubin's school in Norwood, no such improvements had been carried out at Drouet's. Recommendations from the Poor Law Commissioners, Mr. Hall and Mr. Tufnell, to improve overcrowding were treated with indifference.<sup>23</sup> Drouet's School was situated in fifty-two acres of agricultural land in Tooting Graveney, in what was generally considered a healthy district. The girls were accommodated in what had been the main dwelling house, and the boys in the attics and in a range of outbuildings, some of which were close to the pigsties and cowsheds. By the end of 1848 the school contained nearly 1,400 children, aged between two

and fifteen, originating from fifteen different unions, and it was severely overcrowded.<sup>24</sup> A stagnant ditch passed through the grounds, and nearby were other open ditches containing the refuse of the Surrey Lunatic Asylum and the sewage of Tooting. Eighty-four Kingston children were sent to this school, and unfortunately they had not been there many months when a serious outbreak of cholera occurred.

The events of December 1848 and January 1849 are worth exploring in detail for two reasons. First, the incident had consequences for the treatment of pauper children nationally, and altered the Kingston Guardians' provision in particular. Secondly, it provides an extreme example of Kingston's repeating theme of delegation and consequent detachment interspersed with meticulous concern when situations arose which brought the children to prominence. Such attention could result in inadvertent innovation on the part of the Guardians, and such was one outcome of this incident.

The first indication of illness at Drouet's emerged as early as 15 December 1848; however the warning signs were overlooked. The resident medical officer, William James Kite, was young and inexperienced, having qualified two years before.<sup>25</sup> He had been at Drouet's only two months and was expected to attend to 1,372 children. Poor diet and insufficient clothing weakened the children's ability to resist the attack, and overcrowding promoted its spread. There was a delay between the onset of the disease, realisation of its severity, disclosure, and the unions taking action. It was not recognised as cholera, nor was its severity realised, until Friday January 5<sup>th</sup>, and only came to light when the grandfather of two of the children there, a pauper from the Holborn Union, reported the fact to his Guardians, who sent a surgeon, Mr. Grainger to investigate.<sup>26</sup> Mr. Popham, the parochial surgeon of St. Pancras, also visited and "was surprised to find that, after the continuance of the epidemic for eight days, so few [children] had been removed."<sup>27</sup> By the time nearly three hundred children had fallen ill, fifty-two of whom had died, unions began to send omnibuses to collect those children who had still not succumbed to illness to bring them back to their own unions. Some of the children fell ill on the journey home, or on arrival at their own union, and many died at their own union workhouse infirmaries.<sup>28</sup> Holborn Union removed around two hundred of their children to the Royal Free Hospital, and there were forty-five children who were sent to the Invalid Pauper Establishment at Margate, which in turn was rendered overcrowded. Cholera made its appearance there and the Greenwich Union, who did not use Drouet's, was affected by the consequences as it was suggested they remove forty of their children from Margate to lessen the overcrowding.<sup>29</sup>

The Board of Health sent letters by special messengers to the Guardians of various unions, including Kingston, on 6 and 7 January, notifying them of the risks and stressing that their children should be removed.<sup>30</sup> Despite the urgency, Kingston waited until the next weekly Board meeting, the 9<sup>th</sup>, before considering the matter and only then did they decide to remove the children. Mr. Wakley, a medical officer at the Royal Free Hospital, expressed his concern

for children, such as Kingston's, left behind at Drouet's yet having to watch those from other unions being taken away:

*What must be their feelings when they saw van loads and coaches full of other children removed from the abode of disease, while they were still left exposed to its fiercest ravages! To leave them in such a position, so calculated to excite their fears, was but too likely to predispose them to receive the epidemic.*<sup>31</sup>

By 15 January the outbreak in Drouet's was over. Around three hundred children had succumbed to the illness.<sup>32</sup> One hundred and fifty died at Tooting between 29 December and 13 January, with additional deaths in hospital or workhouse, bringing the total to around a hundred and eighty. Eighty of the dead children were buried in Tooting churchyard within the space of a fortnight.<sup>33</sup> Twelve children from the Kingston Union died at Tooting, but there do not appear to have been further fatalities in those brought back to Kingston.<sup>34</sup> On their return to the workhouse the Kingston children were given a special diet and attended by Dr. Cox, the workhouse medical officer, who was later congratulated by the Guardians on his successful treatment, but whether their recovery was through skill or chance is not possible to say.<sup>35</sup>

From the medical witnesses at the inquests, the outbreak was made worse by the overcrowding, poor ventilation and the inadequate number of nursing staff. The children were "lying four to a bed for want of room" and in vomit and diarrhoea sodden beds.<sup>36</sup> The nurses were exhausted; additional nurses brought in from St. Pancras union were nursing for days and nights without a rest, running from one soaking bed to the other to attend the vomiting children. On a return visit Mr. Popham, the St Pancras surgeon, found that the older boys, free from illness or recovering, had been required to assist in nursing the sick, thus placing them at further risk.

*I found that the children were continually vomiting in the beds and on the floor, and that consequently the sheets, bedding, and floor were covered with the discharges; that no efficient aid was in a single case afforded to those suffering children.*<sup>37</sup>

One of the pauper-nurses, Mrs. Kezia Dimond of Holborn parish, had three of her own children at Drouet's, but all recovered.<sup>38</sup> She was later employed by Kingston Union where she served for some years, first as Nurse, later as Matron, so that Kingston was to acquire someone of experience and practice.

Despite the combination of faults, the only possible individual who might be made legally culpable appeared to be Mr. Drouet for not upholding his part of the contract to 'maintain' the children, yet no written contracts were ever made. He was put on trial for manslaughter at the Central Criminal Court and was found 'Not Guilty' on 14 April 1849.<sup>39</sup> He died a few months later of "disease of the heart and dropsy".<sup>40</sup>

The evidence presented at the various inquests provides a basis for understanding the experience of the Kingston children whilst they were farmed out at Drouet's prior to the cholera

outbreak. On arrival, their own clothes, or the clothes supplied by the Kingston workhouse, would have been taken away, and were substituted with clothes supplied by Drouet. These clothes were thin and did not adequately keep out the cold, but on Sundays they wore corduroy clothes which were thicker. It was usual to sleep the children two or three to a bed. After school hours there was not enough room indoors for everyone so the boys had to stay outside in the yard until supper-time at 6 o'clock. Meals were taken standing up. Breakfast was half a slice of bread and gruel. The children were continually hungry as they did not have sufficient to eat, and some were driven to taking food from the pigs. They exhibited signs of malnutrition, being under-weight but with distended bellies.<sup>41</sup> Parents were permitted to visit, but were unable to see their children in private. The children were not allowed out for walks in case they ran away; any who did run away were birched, the boys sometimes suffering the humiliating punishment of having their heads shaved or being made to wear girls' clothes. If representatives from the Union visited and enquired how they were being treated the children were too frightened to say anything for fear of being beaten, the girls as well as the boys. Mr. Drouet had a temper and anyone who spoke up would be beaten, either by him or the schoolmaster, Mr. Brown.<sup>42</sup> Mr. Drouet hired out the children locally, but whether this practice had begun to involve Kingston's children the records do not reveal. Children within the establishment had work tasks to do, such as needlework, and with the pennies they earned would buy food from each other.

The girls could also have been at risk from the attentions of Drouet's son. In November 1848 allegations came to light of indecent conduct and one of rape from some of the girls from the Kensington parish who were at Drouet's, and although there was insufficient evidence Kensington ceased to send girls to the school.<sup>43</sup> In summary, life for the children at Drouet's pauper farm was far from congenial, and whatever inadequacies Kingston workhouse may have had, it may well have seemed a safe haven after their experiences at Tooting. Conditions there emphasise the vulnerability of children placed in such institutions, especially when at a distance from any surviving family and also from those officials acting in *loco parentis*.

The cholera incident brought to light the inadequacies of every aspect of 'pauper farming'. The negligence of the unions in their inadequate supervision, the dangers of preoccupation with economy when providing for vulnerable children, the uselessness of the law in regulating such schools, the powerlessness of the medical officer, the failings of the Poor Law Commissioners in overlooking to legislate in this area, all contributed to the disaster. Indeed, even the Window Tax was cited as contributing to the poor ventilation in such establishments; this tax was repealed in 1851.<sup>44</sup> *The Times* was outspoken in its criticism of pauper farming, and extended the blame to the general public who "sanction the continuance of such a system."<sup>45</sup> *The Times* also pointed out that the amount of ratepayers' money expended in maintaining pauper children at Drouet's would have been better paid to the parents; even half the sum paid to Drouet would have adequately supplemented a labouring man's wage, and spared the "barbarous" separation of a child from its mother.<sup>46</sup> This, incidentally, had long remained the argument of many

Kingston Guardians; whatever the aims of 'less eligibility', it was simply more economical to continue to maintain a family on out-relief in their own home than to incur the expense of bringing them all into the workhouse, and more humane not to break up the family.

There were significant consequences as a result of the prominence of the incident. The concept of 'pauper farms' came under scrutiny and the inadequacy of the law exposed. The jury in one of the inquests observed: "We regret that the Poor Law Act is quite insufficient for the purposes for which it was intended; and we hope that the time is not far distant when the necessity for such establishments as Mr. Drouet's will entirely cease."<sup>47</sup> The dangers of individual financial gain from farming pauper children were highlighted; this fear was to emerge as an argument against fostering and baby minding in years to come. The coroner in the inquest of the Chelsea children observed "that the system of farming children was an abomination. By that system they held out to persons a very strong inducement and temptation to do wrong, and to make the greatest possible profit".<sup>48</sup> Specifically for Kingston, the Guardians were made aware of the importance of placing the children in the care of officially appointed professionals under an officially sanctioned scheme.

The Medical Officer of the Board of Health, R.C. Grainger, was "to a very great extent, condemnatory of Mr. Drouet's establishment".<sup>49</sup> Despite his high opinion of Mr. Aubin's school at Norwood all such establishments came under review. The General Board of Health were compelled to investigate the sanitary condition of similar schools. Although Mr. Grainger had visited Mr. Aubin's school and was surprised to find an absence of the usual skin diseases among the 1,114 children there, Aubin's had an advantage over similar schools in that it had been benefiting from subsidies from public funds to support the positions of chaplain and schoolteachers.<sup>50</sup> Mr. Drouet had not received such benefits. However, Aubin's was not to last and closed soon after.<sup>51</sup>

This incident propelled the Kingston Guardians into taking two steps they had been previously reluctant to contemplate. The first was to appoint a workhouse schoolmaster who fell short of their standards, and who had previously been rejected. They had commenced interviews in June 1848, but were dissatisfied with the candidates, as they would have preferred to appoint a qualified teacher from a training school. The unexpected return of the children from Drouet's necessitated a rapid appointment, and one of the original candidates, a James Howarth, "believed well qualified", was appointed in February 1849.<sup>52</sup> Haste proved unfortunate; in November 1849 Mr. Howarth stole £50 from the Master's office and was arrested. Once again, a schoolmaster had to be found at short notice. The replacement, Thomas Pallett, was twenty-two, was found to be an imperfect teacher, and was obliged to resign in October 1850 following accusations of "improperly punishing boys in the School and other misconduct".<sup>53</sup> However, his offences were only considered minor, and the Guardians gave him good testimonials when he applied to work at the Staines workhouse school.

Whilst the quality of workhouse schoolmasters could be dubious, this should not necessarily be taken as evidence that Guardians deliberately chose such staff. The evidence of the first five years of the Kingston Union shows that the Guardians there appreciated the worth of professionally trained teachers, and were keen to make such appointments in their school. It cannot even be said that at this stage it was the concerns of economy which compromised their choices, although the choice of Drouet's was partly on account of the cost. More particularly, it was the pressure of outside circumstances, the effect of Poor Law policy relating to able-bodied men, and the dearth of suitable teachers which resulted in Kingston's reduction in standards. Francis Duke, writing on pauper education, observed that: "Some [unions] were suspected of appointing very undistinguished teachers at very low salaries merely to keep them from pauperism, thus effecting a double saving to the ratepayers."<sup>54</sup> This had not been the aim in Kingston, but in effect that is what transpired.

### 5.5 District Schools

The second and more far-reaching consequence of the cholera epidemic concerned the establishment of District Schools. It had been possible since an Act of 1848 for unions to combine to form large residential pauper schools in order to benefit from the consolidation of resources.<sup>55</sup> Despite official support, particularly from the Poor Law Inspector E.C. Tufnell, the idea of district schools had not been universally welcomed. Kidd attributed this partly to cost, but "also to political fears about ceding too much power to the central body".<sup>56</sup> District schools had only found favour with large towns and by 1849 only six district schools had been created, and these were for Manchester, Sheffield, Liverpool and three for London.<sup>57</sup> The concept of removing metropolitan pauper children into the fresh air of the countryside was not new but there was not the same grounds for the less-industrialised counties to follow suit; Crompton points out that Worcestershire did not have district schools as being "inappropriate in an essentially rural county".<sup>58</sup> Kingston had not previously considered the idea, but the tragedy at Drouet's school accelerated debate in Kingston and the Guardians were driven to look more favourably on using a district school.

Kingston was one of several unions forming the country's first non-metropolitan School District. It comprised five Surrey unions, Croydon, Kingston, Lewisham, Richmond, Wandsworth & Clapham, and one Middlesex parish, that of St Luke, Chelsea. The school opened on 20 Nov 1850, bringing together 470 pauper children from 43 parishes.<sup>59</sup> The arrangement had multiple benefits for Kingston. Firstly, it enabled Kingston to pool resources with other unions to provide their pauper children with the breadth of education and qualified teaching which smaller establishments could not offer, but which they had hoped to provide. Secondly, it ensured that although the children would be accommodated in premises at a distance from the workhouse they would be subject to official supervision and their care would not be delegated to an unsupervised and mercenary enterprise. The third benefit was the knowledge that, in the care

of children at least, they were complying with the preferences of the PLB and would not have to be continually justifying their actions.

Although the establishment of the North Surrey School District (NSSD) involved a great deal of expense, this was an enterprise which the PLB was keen to support with suitable loans and administrative assistance. Originally, the school was to be sited within the area of Kingston's Union, on Wimbledon Common, but ultimately fifty acres of agricultural land was purchased on Penge Common, Surrey, the agricultural potential being an important consideration at this date, 1849.<sup>60</sup> The moral welfare of the children continued to be a priority; there was horrified outrage when the Crystal Palace was re-erected near the school with the consequent exposure of the children to the "open desecration of the Sabbath" afforded by the proposed Sunday opening of the attraction.<sup>61</sup> This Sabbatarianism provides evidence of the influence of Evangelicals in the welfare of children in what might otherwise be considered a purely utilitarian concept, the 'barrack school.' How aware such institutionalised children were of the goings-on in the outside world is debatable; had they been exposed to the constant spectacle of public enjoyment how much more miserable their incarceration might have seemed. However, looked at in a positive light, it could be said that at least those on the Board of the school took their duties as moral Guardians of the poor very seriously.

The school building itself was of an impressive size and built to accommodate more than 600 children. The facilities offered by a purpose built school, staffed with professional staff, was certainly an improvement on anything the Kingston workhouse could have provided. From the teaching staff through to the laundry workers, all were paid employees rather than seconded from workhouse inmates.

There were problems of adjustment for children moved from workhouses into the large district school when it first opened. Subsequent criticism that the school was sparsely furnished was explained by reason of the vandalism that occurred during the first week when the children "broke out into a riot, and committed £100 worth of damage".<sup>62</sup> Their behaviour reflected what Shaftesbury had referred to in 1846 as 'city arabs' of London, who exhibited "barbarian freedom from all superintendence and restraint".<sup>63</sup> E.C. Tufnell reported in 1853 that the children entering the newly-opened school were "in a most demoralised state" and "a very great majority of them [...] were ready to commit every sort of juvenile crime".<sup>64</sup> Destroying the furniture and challenging the authority of the teachers were the only ways the children could protest at their incarceration. The school chaplain referred to this as "a trait peculiarly workhouse".<sup>65</sup> It is significant that within two years Tufnell could say that "I should as soon expect a riot among a flock of sheep", which speaks much for the soul-destroying tedium of institutional life as it does from the morally improving qualities of the care provided.<sup>66</sup> The mix of children from both rural Surrey and overcrowded London slums, and the large numbers of children provided for, must have been a considerable shock to many of the young inmates originating from country parishes.



The Kingston Guardians were enormously pleased with the school from the outset, as it proved its worth to them in many respects. The system of apprenticing from the school was beneficial to the Union, as children who were old enough to earn their own living were found work and, furthermore, often at a distance from their home union. By 1856, the master of the Kingston workhouse could report that the amount of female prostitution in the union had reduced, as he saw fewer of the girls returning to the workhouse in this capacity. It had long been an accepted problem that girls brought up in the workhouse went on to "live abandoned lives" and ultimately return to the workhouse, and in this the district school was deemed to have had a good effect.<sup>67</sup> Mr. Nassau Senior found, when he visited the Kingston union in 1862, that this success continued:

*[N]early all the children under the old plan [of residing in the workhouse] ... returned to the workhouse, and this was more especially the case with the girls, who usually returned pregnant. ... At the present time, the children being all brought up in the North Surrey district school, never returned to pauperism when they had been once supplied with places.*<sup>68</sup>

In December 1857 an incident occurred which could have been used against the school, had not the prevailing attitude been one of support for district schools. An iron hot-water boiler on the school premises required maintenance and the engineers sent a four-gallon tin can of cleaning solution to the school by train. This solution was thought by the school staff to be harmless and they dutifully put it into the boiler to remove the corrosion. It actually contained a mixture of arsenic and soda. It was the practice of the school to use the heat from the boiler to warm the children's breakfast milk but because, as they said, they were behind-hand that day they drew some water directly from the boiler to mix in with the milk.

*Three hundred and sixty of the Children partook of this Milk and Water, and in five minutes after their breakfasts, all of them became very sick and vomited, and then the terrible truth struck the Superintendent that all these poor children had swallowed poison.*<sup>69</sup>

Prompt medical attention was sought and fortunately no child died, and the incident was not formally reported by the Managers of the School. However, it did come to the attention of the PLB "that the lives of a large number of children in the North Surrey District School at Anerley have recently been endangered", but the subsequent report was marked "confidential" and was not to be made public.<sup>70</sup> The suggestion in the report was that a sequence of unfortunate chance events had led to this accident. It might now be questioned whether the school was in the regular habit of watering down the children's milk in this way, but this consideration was not pursued at the time. Had this incident occurred ten years later, when Kingston was becoming disillusioned with the school, it could have provided a convenient cause of complaint and withdrawal.

Whilst the Kingston Guardians were more than content with the operation of the NSDS for the first ten years or so, it was not without its problems and ultimately Kingston's growing disquiet turned into dissatisfaction.<sup>71</sup> In essence, the school became a victim of its own success; metropolitan parishes could see the advantages it offered and gradually the school district was enlarged by the PLB to include London parishes and unions. Matters came to a head by 1870 when the numbers at the school resulted in a greater vulnerability of the children to contagious diseases, such as ophthalmia. Kingston began to receive complaints from parents that their children were returning from the district school in a worse state of health than they entered it. This had financial implications for the union as well as welfare ones; sick children proved to be expensive children and in some cases medical out-relief might be sought for some time afterwards. The effects of ophthalmia caused social difficulties even after the child had left poor law care:

*Andrew McNelby, a lad, was charged by P.C. Beckworth with begging in the Grove road on March 29 [1871]. The lad was suffering from ophthalmia, and it was stated that he had contracted the disease at the North Surrey School, where he had been sent by the Guardians.*<sup>72</sup>

As incidents of disease increased, complaints were lodged by the Guardians to the board of the school, but in view of the considerable financial commitment in the district school it was some time before the possibility of withdrawal from the district became a serious consideration for Kingston, and was not secured until the end of 1871. In the meantime, debate continued at board meetings as more evidence came to light.

The Eldridge children caused the Guardians particular concern, the financial implications of disease increasing the financial cost this family already caused the union. The Eldridge family first entered the workhouse with nine children in 1868 and their mother gave birth to another whilst in the workhouse. All but the two youngest children were sent to the District School, and in August 1869 there were six of them in the school infirmary.<sup>73</sup> This was one of the cases which provided the Guardians with justification for their ultimate decision to withdraw from the School District. They felt they had evidence to show that the overcrowding, poor nursing and inefficient management promoted contagious diseases in the children. This family is described in detail in the Eldridge case study; their circumstances and abode suggest a family in chronic financial difficulties and not in the best of health. The father, Eldridge, had died and the mother had remarried and had further children as Fifield, and the family had been receiving poor law assistance of one kind or another between at least 1863 and 1879. The Kingston Guardian, Mr. Williams, cited them in his economic and social arguments against district schools and also as a consequence of having to provide in-relief for families:

*A Mrs. F put this union to an expense of £175 a year for several years, during which her children were at the school. Why they might have hired a cottage, and kept her and her children for a much smaller sum. Common sense told them they ought not to throw together a thousand children on an acre of ground. And what were they fit for? The girls were on the streets; and they were not brought up for domestic services. They neither knew how to cook nor to wash, or to perform other domestic duties.*<sup>74</sup>

The children of this family had been suffering from disease and lice when they entered the workhouse in 1869, but the Guardians disputed that they had been sent on to the District School already diseased and affirmed they had been in good health and that it was the school which was at fault. Establishing fault with the school added weight to Kingston's case, even though the children were hardly the picture of robust good health beforehand which the Guardians endeavoured to convey.

There were those among the Kingston Guardians who did not wish to withdraw from the School District, and who felt that in spite of its size and the amount of sickness it would be worthwhile to continue with the connection. The arguments used focussed more on the practical advantages to the Union; furthermore, in spite of its shortcomings, the school was acceptable when compared to other contemporary establishments and to those from the days of the 'old' poor law. This resulted in judgement being based on attitudes which were, by then, thirty-five years out of date.

The Guardians in favour of the district school system maintained that the school answered to the original purpose in that it provided for pauper children at an economical rate. It also endeavoured to break the cycle of pauperism by apprenticing children so that they were less likely to enter the adult workhouse once they left the school. There were those on the Board who felt that, having established the school at large expense for the benefit of Surrey unions, they were not going to have the London parishes take over. If the school were to be improved by a reduction in numbers, then it was for the metropolitan parishes to withdraw, not the rural ones. A certain stubbornness prevailed: "A Surrey union had no right to leave that school so long as a Middlesex parish remained in it" declared one Kingston Guardian.<sup>75</sup> In all the arguments for continuation little consideration was given to the personal suffering and difficulties experienced by the children in their care. In fact, the group of children remaining at the school increasingly became used as a political tool by both the Kingston and District School boards until the matter was resolved. The argument that detachment from the problem led to reduced awareness can be applied here, for many of the Guardians holding the view that Kingston should remain in the school district paid few, if any, visits to the children.

Where care for the health and welfare of the children was given as much, if not more, weight than strict economy, separation was the view. The union's medical officer, Mr. Kent, was a frequent critic. Mr. Merryweather, the Guardian representing New Malden, had strong opinions

on the conditions at the District School which had been formed during his personal visits there. Not only did he feel the overcrowding was a cause for concern, he also commented on the nature and abilities of children brought up in this large institution:

*The day-room, in which the children were flocked like droves of sheep, he visited, and as he pushed his way up the room the air was almost suffocating. The bulk was so great, that the children appeared to have lost their individuality. His opinion was that children lose their energies and individual feeling by being huddled together; while in a smaller school their efforts and energies would be brought to a better effect. ... [He] never saw a more miserable, more depressed class of boys. There was the stamp of imbecility on their faces; and neither in school nor out of school had they the cheerfulness and the pluck of boys. If they remained at Penge, he was quite sure they would have a large expenditure to meet in a few years. They must go on increasing the school accommodation; and if they continued there, it was useless to talk of economy.*<sup>76</sup>

In likening the children to a flock of sheep. Mr. Merryweather utilized the same simile as had Mr. Carleton Tufnell seventeen years before, yet in this case it decried their lack of individuality compared to boys elsewhere. Tufnell had used this demoralising effect on institutionalised children to argue for the reforming success of the district school. The boisterousness of street children of the 1840s and 1850s was something to be deplored, but by 1870 was recognised as normal boyish behaviour. As Cunningham expresses it, there was "a sense that these street children lacked all of what had become the accepted characteristics of children".<sup>77</sup> Merryweather's comments on the "cheerfulness and pluck of boys" suggest some knowledge of children and also reflects the changing social attitudes towards children from that of fear of unrestrained youth to a more understanding tolerance. This recognition of the lack of individuality in barrack school children, as expressed in Kingston was, as Lydia Murdoch expressed it, "quite radical".<sup>78</sup> Yet despite this humanitarian observation, the utilitarian argument which focussed on the expense of dejected or unhealthy pauper children was necessary to persuade the board.

## 5.6 Consequences of Detachment

The general concept of a detached workhouse school had been a practical response to the problems of children associating with undesirable adults and was intended to remove children from the 'workhouse taint'. Specifically, a large District School was intended to overcome the difficulties in providing an adequate, professional staff and a broader range of teaching skills than a workhouse school could afford. In seeking to obtain employment or further training for the young inmates from the District School it was hoped that the children would become independent and less likely to return to the workhouse in poverty. All these were laudable and understandable aims, but the disadvantages of this physical removal of the children had a number of consequences for both the children and the Union.

Separation from family and friends had an emotional consequence which affected the children, and was likely to have been exacerbated at a distant school. Charles Chaplin described his feelings on being transferred to the Hanwell pauper school from the Lambeth workhouse. Although separated from his mother whilst at the workhouse, the alienation was intensified at the district school: "The first few days I was lost and miserable, for at the workhouse I always felt that Mother was near, which was comforting, but at Hanwell we seemed miles apart".<sup>79</sup> The desire for family, or at least the instinct for the familiar surroundings of the home parish, remained strong; at the North Surrey School in 1851 the chaplain remarked that "Scarcely a day passed without two or more absconding, either returning to their respective workhouses or prowling about the country."<sup>80</sup> Even if placed in trade apprenticeships, many Kingston children soon relinquished these in favour of labouring work closer to home.

Family separation was very often compounded by apprenticeship in the area of the school rather than the home Union. The practical advantages to the Union were various; the arrangements of finding a placement and making the follow-up visits were undertaken by the school, the child had the opportunity to establish independence away from any corrupting influences to which they might have returned at home, and they became less likely to be the responsibility of the Kingston Union in the future if they settled elsewhere. Out of 276 placements for Kingston Union children listed in the apprenticeship registers for the North Surrey School between 1851 and 1871, for whom destination addresses were given, 255 were apprenticed outside the area of the Kingston Union and only 21 within the Union.<sup>81</sup> In addition to these, there were boys sent into the army or to naval training ships. Whilst there are examples of children who later gravitated back to their home parish, there would have remained many children for whom new lives were established far from home. The emigration of pauper children to Canada is not being included in this study, but these schemes were extreme examples of the distance which could be put between a child and its friends and relations.

This issue of delegating supervision to the school might have been convenient for the Guardians but did not ultimately benefit the children for it made them more vulnerable. This had been a criticism made during one of the inquests on the Drouet children, that partial responsibility for that disaster lay with those unions who delegated responsibility to a third party. Of course, it was understandable that more confidence should be placed in an officially instigated establishment such as the District School, and the various unions in the district were able to send representatives to sit on the board of the district school so they were not entirely detached. Yet, and this is of significance, the mere fact of the children not being under the constant eye of the Kingston Guardians meant that problems were able to build up unnoticed and unchecked. It was not until public incidents on the scale of the cholera epidemic, or the arrest of a schoolmaster, or diseased children returning to Kingston's streets, did shortcomings become manifest. Misunderstandings or poor communication between the boards could have tragic consequences, one of which is described in the next chapter. It was not only frustrating

to entrust decisions to others, but it could have tragic human consequences and be financially damaging as well.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

During the first twenty years of the union, Kingston had been obliged to attempt a number of different strategies for the education and maintenance of their pauper children, most of which had been undertaken through pressing necessity rather than planned policy. They had tried professionally trained teachers, less qualified and less satisfactory teachers, farming-out to a private contractor and the modern, professional solution of the district school. Each of these solutions had had their drawbacks. Despite their best endeavours to start out with a suitable workhouse school of their own and provide a good standard of education, their intentions had been compromised by outside circumstances, whether accidental or official. The 'tragedy at Tooting' emphasised the worst that could occur when a decision went wrong.

The rather makeshift accommodation and education which the Kingston Guardians provided for the children at the formation of the Union appeared to be consistent with their uncertain foray into the new territory of the Poor Law Amendment Act and their attempts to effect the new régime. Once they turned their attention to workhouse children, they did attempt to make adequate arrangements, but did not continue their active approach which dwindled into apathy, roused periodically by emergencies. It was not deliberate policy which shaped Kingston's course of action, but chance circumstances and the Guardians' responses to them which caused the erosion of ideals. The wider implications of Poor Law administration also combined to compromise Kingston's attempts to maintain the benevolent paternalism which they envisaged at the outset. Kingston's policy towards workhouse children appears to have been responsive, rather than planned, and affected greatly by outside circumstances. The experiences of Kingston show how vulnerable workhouse children were, especially when responsibility for their care was delegated to others. Kingston Guardians were certainly made aware of this whenever a tragedy occurred and attempted to improve matters, but gradually the pressures of cost and necessity acquired greater prominence in their decisions.

Despite the standardising aims of the poor law authorities, Kingston's experience emphasises how at the local level policy might develop in response to events. This aspect is vital to the interpretation of national poor law history as local circumstances, personalities and influences contributed to development. The political relationship between Boards of Guardians and the PLB is a further element in local decision-making. The continued divergence of views concerning the use of out-relief in Kingston embodies local resistance to central authority, and serves to show how the children could suffer as the result of legislation not intended to affect them at all. The geographical location of the Kingston Union also contributed; not being a metropolitan union Kingston did not have to use the metropolitan solutions, but neither was the

Kingston Union an entirely country district. It encompassed the two areas; both the suburban and the agricultural were served by this market town, with varying character and problems.

It was also the sequence of events which shaped the actions of the Guardians. Each incident directly affecting the children required a response, which, in turn, led to unforeseen outcomes which themselves had to be resolved. This emphasises that when studying decisions at the local level elements should not be viewed in isolation if the context is to be fully understood. It also highlights that a history of workhouse children must take into account the wide range of local responses to the question of the care and education of pauper children. This is particularly visible in the study of the Kingston-upon-Thames Union, where five different arrangements were attempted within a period of fifteen years. Kingston Guardians' increasing dissatisfaction with the district school was to lead to their consideration of three further solutions, and these will be described in the following chapter.

These findings emphasise the vulnerability of workhouse children, whether subject to direct cruelty or as a result of ineffective administration. The more notorious incidents in history, and the effects of campaigning literature, have left an unfavourable impression. There were Kingston children who experienced a range of misfortunes, from the severe to the inconvenient. These encompassed sexual abuse of both boys and girls, physical punishment by sadistic officers, overcrowding, disease, cold and hunger, to the emotional distress of separation from family, friends and siblings and overwhelmingly mind-numbing tedium. Hopkins says: "That children were treated cruelly in the Victorian workhouse from time to time cannot be denied", but reflects that it would be surprising if they had not been, as cruelties also occurred outside the workhouse.<sup>82</sup>

Kingston's experience with Louis Feist provides local evidence of cruelties existing in the workhouse school, which emphasised to E.C. Tufnell, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, the vulnerability of workhouse children when compared to those still at home. This was expressed by the Rev. D.L. Cousins, a workhouse chaplain:

*The persons who were guilty of these cruelties had been village schoolmasters, where they could not have practised such conduct, as a child so treated would immediately have complained to its parents, and would have been taken away from the school ... But where is a poor friendless orphan or foundling [...] to turn for assistance, when it knows no one on whom it can place confidence, or to whom it can utter complaints?*<sup>83</sup>

Yet it would be misleading to suggest that all workhouse schoolteachers were the same or that these incidents were commonplace within the Kingston Union. Indeed, the fact that they were recorded, and the tone in which they were discussed, suggest that they were unusual and gave rise to shocked reaction. The workhouse certainly provided the opportunity for the ineffectual teacher to find employment, as well as those more sadistically inclined, but it was not Kingston's objective to employ such people. Teachers could be ineffective, or downright corrupt, or they

might offer an opportunity to learn basic skills which had not been available to the children at home. There were those, such as Mr. Lewis, who abhorred physical punishment and refused to beat the boys. It was the restrictions of the poor law, financial considerations, and outside circumstances, rather than the Guardians' deliberate disinterest in the children which contributed to the children's misfortunes, not that that would have been any comfort to the young inmates.



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- 3 Sells, *A Report upon the Operation of The New Poor Law*, p.7; *Report of Workhouse Committee*, 13 May 1840, MH12/12390, doc 6444a.
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- 9 SHC BG8/11/2, 20 May 1845.
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- 24 *The Times* 8 Jan.1849, p.5.
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- 29 *The Times* 12 Jan.1849.
- 30 *The Times* 27 Jan.1849 Inquest.
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- 32 *The Times* 11 Jan.1849.
- 33 *The Times* 13 Jan.1849.
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**Appendix 5.1**  
**Case Study: Eldridge family**

Thomas and Ann Eldridge, the grandparents of the children in this case study, were originally from Wiltshire, where they were born at the end of the eighteenth century. This couple had moved to Hampton Wick, via Newbury in Berkshire, by 1835, where Thomas Eldridge worked as a labourer. Between 1841 and 1844 they and their children moved to Kingston. The family move to Kingston initially suggested an improvement in family circumstances, for whilst the senior Thomas Eldridge was a labourer, his children found work in various retail and artisan trades, benefitting from employment opportunities afforded in a growing market town. In 1851 they were living in Canbury Field, Kingston, with eight children. Thomas was working as a labourer, and the two oldest boys were employed as sawyers. The next oldest was an errand boy. By 1861 Thomas had moved the family to the Apple Market and worked as a carman. He and his wife died during the 1860s and were buried at Bonner Hill cemetery.

It is their son, also Thomas, whose children feature in this study. He worked as a sawyer and also lived in the Apple Market. He and his wife had a child every year or every other year between 1853 and 1866. It would not appear that Thomas' employment as sawyer was seasonally affected as they do not appear in the out-relief lists which have survived, although there were occasions when he resorted to labouring work. However, during the 1860s they experienced a period of illness for which they claimed medical out-relief. In 1863 there were claims for medical assistance for phthisis (tuberculosis) and fever in the children, and in that year their oldest child died aged nine.<sup>1</sup> They claimed again for fever in 1865 for the children, and then Thomas himself died at the age of thirty.<sup>2</sup> This marked a change in fortunes for the family, as he left a widow, Sarah Ann, and a large family of young children, with one still to be born.

Two years later, in 1867, Sarah Ann remarried, to William Fifield, a labourer, a good deal younger than herself. The marriage was followed within a few months by the birth of their daughter, and they later had a son. These children may well have been fragile at birth because they were baptised twice. The first baptism was given at birth in a 'private baptism', which was often undertaken by a midwife if the child was not expected to live. A second baptism was performed for both infants in April 1870 when their mother was in the workhouse.

Marriage into the Fifield family suggested a further decline in the family circumstances. Whilst the Eldridge family had arrived in Kingston as labourers, the boys found artisan and retailing employment and the daughters were in domestic service. The Fifield men were all labourers and the grandfather had been a dustman and night-soil-man, their wives charwomen and laundresses, one of whom was "in the habit of drinking to excess" and found dead in bed.<sup>3</sup> Sarah Ann was not improving her prospects by her connection with this family, neither did she appear to benefit from their social support.

It was in 1868, the year following the marriage and shortly after the birth of her first child with her second husband, that Sarah Ann's other children were taken into the workhouse for the first time, and were sent on to the NSDS in May 1868. By this date William and Sarah were surviving on a labourer's wage, not the sawyer's earnings of Sarah's first husband. Furthermore, they had moved from central Kingston to the poor 'Wanderings' area on the eastern edge of the town, home to labourers and laundrywomen. They had also moved away from any of the social support which Sarah might have received from her first husband's family who lived in the centre of Kingston, and the Fifield family, themselves poor, would not have welcomed eight children who were not theirs. Sarah's oldest surviving child would have been thirteen, so any contributions from the earnings of her children would have been limited. Her children would, at this stage, have been an economic burden rather than an economic asset, a burden which was transferred to the rate-payers for the next twelve years.

Once in the workhouse the seven oldest children were sent to the NSDS, but they remained only one month on the first occasion, so it possible that once Sarah had recovered from the birth she and her children returned home. However, by the following year either William was unable or unwilling to support this large family, or Sarah was unable to care for them, for her nine children entered the workhouse in June 1869. The children were examined on entry by the workhouse medical officer and at least five of them were sent to the infirmary with weak eyes and lice-bitten scalps. By the following month they were deemed sufficiently healthy to leave the infirmary, and all but the baby were sent to the District School.

The children did not continue to enjoy good health; at one time there were six of them in the infirmary at the District School. It was the prevalence of diseases such as ophthalmia in the children at the district school which contributed to Kingston's concern over the health of children at that institution, although the Eldridge children do not appear to have been in entirely good health beforehand. Despite the evidence of both Kingston's medical officer and the workhouse master as to the health of children sent to the school, the district school maintained that children arrived there from Kingston already in a diseased state. Kingston Guardians were at pains to offer evidence that the diseases were contracted at the school. Whatever the cause, the Eldridge children exhibited the symptoms of diseases typically seen in pauper children.

In 1870 Sarah had her second child with William, and by this date the whole family was in the workhouse, where the latest baby was born and the two youngest baptised. When Sarah and William and the two infants left the workhouse, Sarah's older children remained at the district school. At the time of the 1871 census, Sarah was on her own in the same 'Wanderings' area of Kingston, working as a laundress, whilst her husband, William, and their two young children were with William's parents in Acre Road. It is reasonable to suppose that whilst William and his family could support his two infant children, they drew the line at his wife and her eight other children. William did have to resort to medical relief on at least one occasion, when one of his own children was ill with typhoid.

It is likely that Sarah did not earn sufficient to support the children herself for her children were long-term residents in poor-law institutions. She may also have had a short period in prison. In 1872 she was brought before the magistrates for using abusive language towards the five-year-old child of a recent employer, another laundress living nearby. The punishment, a fine plus costs, was either beyond her means or she had little regard for the alternative of imprisonment in the absence of a fine, because she immediately informed the magistrate "Well, I'll do the 14 days then".<sup>4</sup>

Sarah's children were at the District School at the time Kingston Guardians were seeking alternative arrangements for their workhouse children, and efforts were made to place the older ones in employment. Those who were apprenticed from the District School were apprenticed away from their home union. The oldest boy, Thomas Henry, was fifteen when he was apprenticed to a household near the District School, but he absconded from his employment. The oldest girl was sent into service aged fourteen to a household in Sydenham. Another boy, Charles William, was twelve when he was apprenticed to a cowkeeper in Greenwich. The younger children were returned to the Kingston workhouse; one was boarded out with a family in Molesey and the remainder were sent to a workhouse school at Brentwood, which Kingston were then using on a temporary basis after withdrawing from the NSSD. The boarding-out of one of the children suggests that the Guardians considered the children to have been deserted by their parents. At some stage their mother moved to Bermondsey, and Kingston endeavoured to remove the family from the financial responsibility of the Kingston Union, but the process of establishing their settlement and chargeability was "beset with technical difficulties" and not pursued.<sup>5</sup> The Guardians did arrange to return three of the children to their mother when she applied for custody in 1876.

This application for custody again emphasises the economic aspect of children within poor families. For their mother and stepfather, with fewer children to care for, the financial burden on the family would have been lessened. Indeed, the older children for whom employment had been found would represent an economic benefit to the family, no longer a drain. This would not have been the case for the youngest Eldridge, Mary Ann, still only ten years old. She continued to be an inmate, and when Kingston ceased to use the Brentwood Schools, she was transferred with other children to the workhouse school at Cowley, outside Oxford. From there she was sent into service in Oxford but was returned to the Cowley school by her employer after 15 months. She was later found another position in service in Oxfordshire. This child would have been in various workhouse institutions for most of her childhood, from the age of three until the age of thirteen or fourteen, between 1868 and 1880. She would have experienced the workhouse, the district school at Penge, the workhouse again, then the Brentwood schools in Essex, before being returned once more to the workhouse prior to being sent on to Cowley.

By 1878 William Fifield had set up home with a younger woman and had a child with her. By 1880, the younger of the two Fifield children he had with Sarah Ann had been sent to the Byfleet Industrial School. William was

*summoned for arrears due from him for the maintenance of his son in an industrial School, and was sentenced to 14 days imprisonment. Whilst the prisoner was being taken to the police station he wanted to get some beer in the Coach and Horses in the Market place, and because P.C. Harrington would not allow him to do so, he struck the officer a violent blow in the eye. He was at once taken back to the Town Hall, and the facts of the assault having been stated, the Bench ordered him to be imprisoned for a further term of 14 days.*<sup>6</sup>

The following year he was summoned again for non-payment; he pleaded inability to pay and was given a fortnight to find the money, but he dropped dead in the Grey Horse public house the following week from an aneurism.

Here is a family which showed evidence of being affected by the economic factors of their domestic circumstances, and were a considerable expense for the ratepayers over a period of many years. The death of the father, Eldridge, initiated the descent of this already over-stretched family into social and economic decline, culminating in the workhouse, alcohol and the courts. The family also suffered geographical dispersal through a number of contributory factors. Although pauperism and workhouse classification meant the initial break-up of the family, it was possible for some to re-establish the family unit in future years, and many children left their pauper apprenticeships and gravitated back to the home parish. In this case, the death of the father, remarriage and second family of the mother, reduced the family support which may have been obtained through the father's family in Kingston. Once the mother herself had moved away, this again lessened the ties of the children to the parish. The number of poor-law establishments used by Kingston Union during the period extended the geographical spread of the children, as they were apprenticed first from one establishment and then another. The behaviour of the mother suggested obliquely in various sources indicates that perhaps they were not the 'respectable poor' who attracted additional community support. This was probably the family the Guardians had in mind when lamenting the expense of supporting large families through in-door relief, when the practical, if illegal, solution seemed so much more economically attractive. The Guardians certainly used this family to promote their case for withdrawal from the District School, on the grounds of the illnesses contracted by the children, but they were a heavy burden to the Union on their own account.

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<sup>1</sup> SHC SHC BG8/11/8 14 July 1863, 28 July 1863; parish registers on Kingston Lifecycle's Database.

<sup>2</sup> SHC SHC BG8/11/8, 21 Feb.1865; parish registers on Kingston Lifecycle's Database.

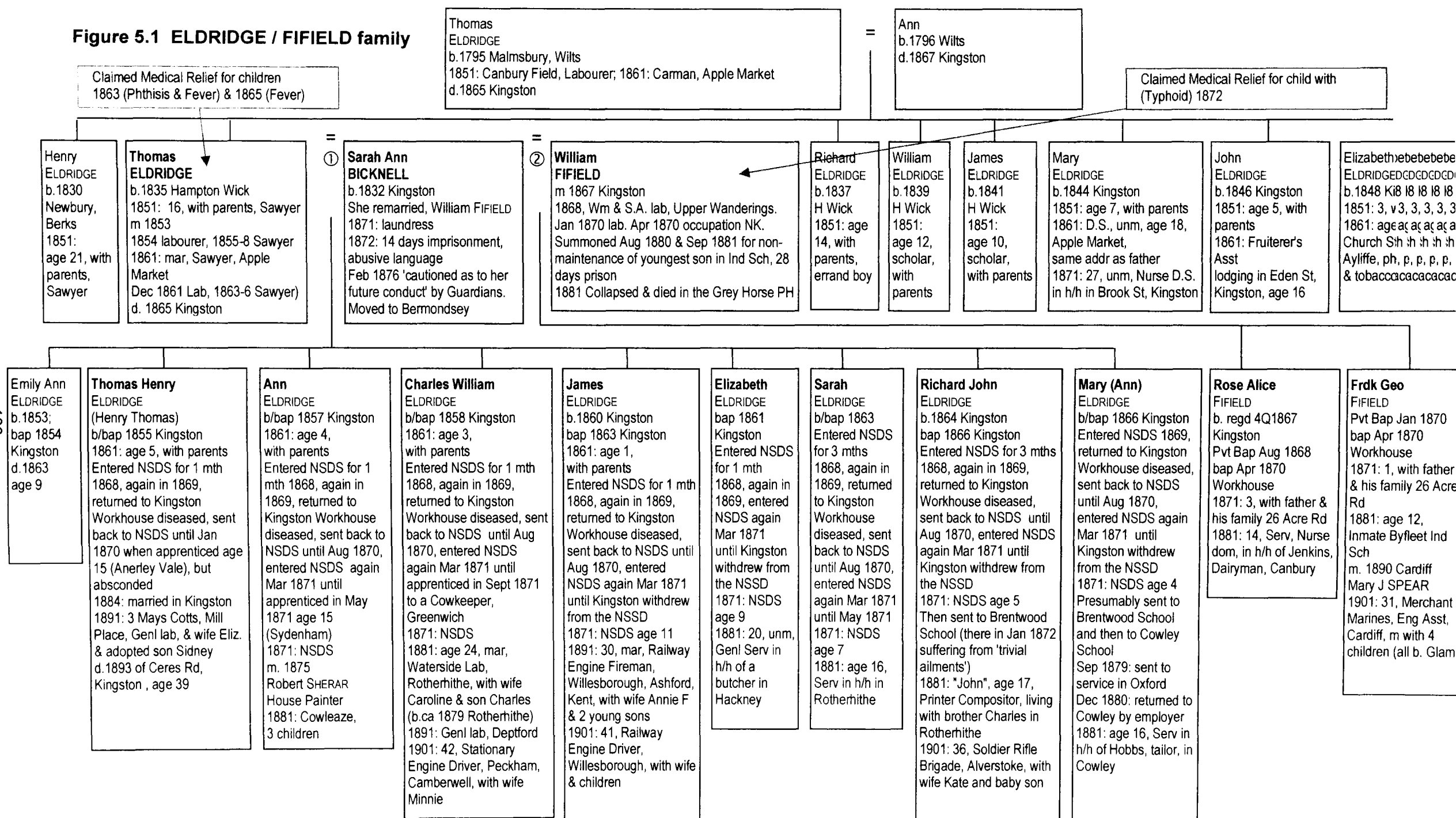
<sup>3</sup> *Surrey Comet*, 9 Oct.1880, p.4 col. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Surrey Comet*, 20 July 1872 p.3 col. 3.

<sup>5</sup> SHC BG8/11/13, 23 May 1876.

<sup>6</sup> *A Violent Fellow*, *Surrey Comet*, Borough Bench, 21 Aug.1880, p.3 col. 4.

**Figure 5.1 ELDRIDGE / FIFIELD family**





## CHAPTER 6

### Workhouse Children from 1870: Boarding Out and Sub-Contracting

**"Is there not a champion to be found for our poor children?" <sup>1</sup>**

**"Strangers to the meaning of a kiss" <sup>2</sup>**

*'Surrey Comet' Editorial*

#### **6.1 Introduction**

Having employed a number of different schemes for pauper children during the first thirty years of the Union, in 1870 the Kingston Guardians were obliged to consider further alternatives. This chapter will discuss the options considered by the Kingston Guardians from 1870, the solutions adopted, and how these affected the children concerned.

The debates of the Board of Guardians at this time encapsulate the contemporary dilemma of what constituted suitable provision for pauper children. They also highlight the conflict for local administrators between economic and humanitarian considerations, responsible as these men were to both the poor and to the ratepayers. As far as facilities for children were concerned, the question remained whether the priority should be one of keeping children out of an institutional environment so they ceased to regard pauperism as their natural destiny, or whether they should be in purpose built 'barrack school' accommodation, designed with a utilitarian regard to education, but which could be damaging to their health and independence of mind. The barrack school had much to be said in its favour, especially considering the context in which the Kingston Guardians adopted the scheme originally, but it ultimately proved detrimental to the emotional and physical well-being of the children and thus costly to the Union. An alternative to the North Surrey District School (NSDS) had to be found.

As has been shown in previous chapters, pressing necessity proved the impetus for the Kingston Guardians' policy towards their pauper children, and not planned initiative. Yet, once debate had arisen, the Guardians were not staid in their approach and often considered radical alternatives. The District School had not been the popular option nationally for non-metropolitan unions when Kingston decided to build one in 1850. Once again, in 1870, they were to consider another innovative solution.

#### **6.2 Discontent with the District School**

Pinchbeck and Hewitt give the reasons for the growing disillusionment with district schools as those which appeared in two reports published in 1874. <sup>3</sup> The first concerned the physical health of the children. An ophthalmic surgeon, Mr. Nettleship, criticised the overcrowding and unhealthy conditions in the district schools citing this as contributing to the amount of disease. <sup>4</sup>

In the second, Mrs Nassau Senior, the first woman Poor Law Inspector, pointed out the inadequacies of the training and education of pauper girls, which did not properly prepare them for domestic work.<sup>5</sup> Critics of the system felt that institutionalised children were dispirited and lacked initiative, and were often sullen in their work and undersized. These observations had been voiced by some on the Board of Guardians of the Kingston Union four years previously. Thomas Guilford, an ironmonger in Victoria Road, Surbiton and Guardian for the Kingston parish, had been taken aback at the conditions experienced by children at the NSDS. Alexander Brice, a farmer and the Guardian for Hampton, also spoke strongly in humanitarian terms, commenting on the suffering of the "poor creatures" left at the district school.<sup>6</sup> Mr. Guilford declared:

*There was no doubt that the congregation of so many children together in one place was opposed to all reason and justice. They were isolated from the world [...] and nobody knew anything about them. In his opinion there was no comparison of these children to the children to whom they gave a shilling [and] a loaf. At the annual revision, the latter appeared superior in education, manners, and intelligence, to the children whom it had cost them £23 a year to educate.*<sup>7</sup>

By his comments Mr. Guilford comprehensively covered all social, economic and political arguments involved. Reference to the children's isolation not only suggested an emotive sympathy with their situation but also expressed the Guardians' frustration at their own administrative isolation and impotency. Utilitarian considerations were included. The knowledge that the health and welfare of the children in the district school affected the cost of their maintenance confirmed to Mr. Guilford the sense in supplying relief in the home rather than in an institution. Simple economy might also have been a contributory factor, for out-relief was, as the Guardians themselves once admitted, likely to be inadequate.<sup>8</sup> However, for social reasons it was probably the lesser of two evils for both the pauper and the Guardian. The question of education was also of concern.

One major preoccupation for the Kingston Guardians was their large financial investment in the district school which rendered any decision to withdraw from the school district a major undertaking. During 1871 discussions were not only concerned with the accommodation and health of the children, but with recouping as much of the financial investment as possible for the Union. As the Guardians began to withdraw their children from the district school, the ones who remained seem to have been unfortunate pawns in the battle between the District School Board and the Guardians, as Kingston wished to ensure that they received what they considered a fair proportion of the value of the school and the interest on the sums invested in it. Local debate revolved around whether their hand would be stronger if they still had children remaining at the school, or if they removed them, and whether in accepting the school's terms unconditionally they would weaken their position. These discussions highlight the fact that political considerations, not only utilitarian and humanitarian, played a major part in the Guardians' actions. The fact that there was no consensus of opinion on the board, and that voting was

evenly divided, emphasises that the ultimate decisions made locally may not have been indicative of the opinion of all parties.

The amount of personal knowledge of the conditions experienced by the children undoubtedly influenced opinion. The Guardian for Hampton Wick, Thomas Barker, had only once visited the children at the district school and consequently had not had his good opinions of the system ameliorated by familiarity. He continued to firmly state his opinion: "He did not believe in small schools, but he did believe in large ones".<sup>9</sup> His views were founded principally on hearsay and cost, thus he was able to restrict his contribution to a more detached argument. It was certainly true to say that, in comparison with many other institutions, and in the light of past experience, the District School was, theoretically, answering its original purpose. This was echoed by the Guardian, James Page, a farmer at Coombe, who felt that they were doing the best they could by the children in teaching them a trade and keeping them healthy and strong, and that the results spoke for themselves: "One could hardly think it possible that the poor distorted objects of humanity brought in there could be transformed into the healthy-looking children at the other end of the building".<sup>10</sup> Other unions were still at this date, 1870, regarding the NSDS as a fine example of a large pauper school, and were seeking to apply the methods used there in their own establishments. In voicing their dissatisfaction with the system, Kingston Guardians were expressing a dissenting view.

Concern that the young inmates had needs other than the strictly practical was broadening the range of requirements which had to be considered by the Guardians. It is, of course, possible to attribute welfare concerns solely to economic utility. It was acknowledged that the emotional needs of the children did have a practical and financial impact, yet there was an element of concern among the Guardians which was not restricted to the economic. Such views came to be more generally accepted as the century progressed, and by the 1880s concern for the welfare of children came to be regarded in an holistic manner, rather than in terms of basic physical needs.

General arguments against large 'barrack schools' concerned the lack of initiative and individuality shown by children who had to live in the unremitting regime of an institution, unbroken by any school holidays as enjoyed by those in elementary schools. Englander comments that children in barrack schools "were often wanting in self-confidence and initiative and social skills. [...] The results were disastrous for the personal development of the child who rapidly became institutionalised and unable to cope with the unwalled world beyond the workhouse."<sup>11</sup> Mrs Senior argued that workhouse girls made sullen servants who ultimately returned to the workhouse.<sup>12</sup> Crompton offers the evidence which Elizabeth Twining, sister of Louisa Twining, provided to the Newcastle Royal Commission "in which she asserted that such children were 'unfit for any kind of service', at an age when children outside the workhouse were fit for such work. Thus, such children were often returned to the workhouse as unsuitable, because of 'a want of life and action, [...] a want of family life and care'."<sup>13</sup> This institutional lack

of stimulation had a noticeable effect on the physical and emotional bearing of the Kingston children at the NSDS. Mr. Guilford considered that "children lose their energies and individual feeling by being huddled together; while in a smaller school their efforts and energies would be brought to a better effect". Mr. Merryweather concurred, he "never saw a more miserable, more depressed class of boys. There was the stamp of imbecility on their faces".<sup>14</sup>

In the discussions amongst the Kingston Guardians, whilst the arguments of humanity and economy featured, a third consideration emerged. There was the sense that the Kingston board was not at ease with aspects of the administration being taken out of their hands and they wished to regain control. They were particularly aggrieved when the Poor Law Board (PLB) admitted a London parish to the school district without consulting them, the Guardian Mr. Merryweather observing that:

*it certainly did seem a most reprehensible fact that an order of this character, involving interests as regarded the property of this Union, should come before them in such a sudden and unexpected way. ... It seemed almost too late to do more than protest.*<sup>15</sup>

Not only did Kingston have to defer to the interference of the PLB, but the administration of the school itself fell to another body, the managers of the school district. Despite having representation on the board of the North Surrey School, they felt they had insufficient influence in the every-day running of the school and that the decisions made within it were beyond their control. A tragic case occurred when a Kingston boy, Arthur Brickwood, was sent to join a fishing smack apparently "against his will" and was drowned.<sup>16</sup> The family circumstances and apprenticeships of the Brickwood children are detailed in the case study to this chapter. The instructions concerning his mother's refusal for him to go to sea were passed on by Kingston but not acted upon by the School, the chain of delegation rendering the boy remote from those initially responsible for him.<sup>17</sup> Kingston felt the administration of the school was not sufficiently within their command. As frequently occurred with the Kingston Guardians, while a project was operating smoothly it could be delegated and disregarded, but once difficulties became apparent, serious intervention was called for. Interference in local decisions was one which Kingston Guardians seldom seemed to have welcomed. Such protection of local interests exemplifies the arguments used by Snell, expressed by him as 'local xenophobia'.<sup>18</sup> The culmination of repeated complaints by the Kingston Guardians to the PLB concerning the enlargement of the school district drew this outspoken comment from Mr. Williams, a Kingston Guardian, which epitomised the relationship between the administrators of Kingston and the PLB:

*This was not the first time this matter had been brought up, and there was a deputation appointed to wait on the Poor Law Board, but they declined to receive them, and he should not like this board to be snubbed again. It was quite clear to his mind that, whatever they might wish in the matter, the Poor Law Board were their masters. ... It was monstrous.*<sup>19</sup>

A salutary reminder of their responsibilities to the poor rather than the rate-payer came from Guardian Alexander Brice, a farmer at Hampton, who

*thought that they ought speedily to withdraw on the score of humanity, rather than allow these poor creatures to remain at that school. They, as a board, were responsible for all the sufferings of the children sent from this union, and they could not tell what hindrances might be caused to their future prospects.*<sup>20</sup>

These 'future prospects' no doubt included their employability and a fear that in adulthood these children might become, once again, a burden to the union. As concern for the children at the school grew, the *Surrey Comet* stoked the argument by highlighting the miseries of the children as revealed by the difficulties of serving hot meals to such large numbers, and challenged: "Is there not a champion to be found for our poor children?"<sup>21</sup> The Guardians were not impervious to their rôle in this regard. Although the principal concern of the Kingston Poor Law Guardians was one of economy, they were often made aware of their responsibilities as guardians of the poor by the Guardian for Hampton, Mr. Kent. On more than one occasion he reminded them "that they were not there in the interests of the ratepayers; they were guardians of the poor" and "They did not meet ... to study the ratepayers; they were Poor Law guardians and not ratepayer-protectors".<sup>22</sup> As noted elsewhere, the Poor Law Inspector in 1871 had cause to comment on this very attitude, citing it as a specific obstacle to Kingston's stringent application of the workhouse test:

*These Guardians are it seems to me, unduly impressed, in anticipation, by the responsibility incurred by the subsequent destitution, or it may be starvation, of a person who has refused an order for the Work House. They are inclined to assume that every such person is in imminent risk of starvation...*<sup>23</sup>

Children educated in barrack-school conditions became accustomed to routine and obedience to authority through the discipline practised there. Indeed, their compliance was often taken as proof of the morally improving effects of the system. It was certainly good preparation for a career in the army or navy, but was of little help to them elsewhere. The idea of acquiring a maidservant who did what she was told might have been initially appealing, but the reality was that these girls lacked resourcefulness and had no experience of how a family home was run and needed retraining in nearly every domestic task. This lack of domestic knowledge was of particular concern to those who could anticipate the future problems of poor mothering and housekeeping which would ensue, and that in perpetuating bad parenting further public burdens might result. Historians such as Hopkins and Longmate cite Mrs Senior's *Report on the Education of Girls in Pauper Schools* of 1874 as the significant official expression of criticism against barrack schools. In it she criticized such schools and favoured a more domestic environment. Menella Smedley, one of Mrs Senior's staff, expressed the objection that "the artificial mode of life, the complete seclusion from outward influences, the absence of variety, the impossibility of supplying individual care and tenderness, and of favouring the development of individual character, all tend to produce an unhealthy, incapable, and languid human

being".<sup>24</sup> The importance of children being brought up in a domestic setting began to evolve, and this was implemented nationally in different ways.

### 6.3 Boarding Out

One method of housing orphaned or abandoned children in a non-institutional setting, which had been practiced on a minor scale in England and Wales, was 'boarding-out'. Boarding-out was a system of fostering pauper children with labouring families for a weekly sum to provide food and clothing. Although in general use in Scotland for many years, where ninety per cent of pauper children were fostered, the system had not found favour in England.<sup>25</sup> A handful of English parishes had used the system from the 1850s, but it had been the 'barrack schools' which had been promoted as the most advanced solution. With their emphasis on professionalism and supervision, and as a way of eliminating pauperism by inculcating a work ethic and obtaining approved employment for young people, it had advantages over a system still regarded by many as 'baby farming'. The legacy of the tragedy at 'Drouet's School' in 1849 was, understandably, the fear of mercenary child-farming, and the dangers of relinquishing the care of children to unregulated individuals whose prime motive might be financial rather than benevolent. Englander suggests that it was the difficulties and cost of supervision which made the central board reluctant to allow boarding-out.<sup>26</sup> Duke goes further, and asserts that "The PLB, and its successor the Local Government Board (LGB), viewed the idea with some suspicion. [...] [T]hey feared that boarding-out could degenerate into unregulated outdoor relief", an understandable apprehension where Kingston was concerned.<sup>27</sup> Both these difficulties Kingston Guardians were to overcome through strict regulation. An additional contemporary argument against boarding-out was, in effect, one of less eligibility. The pauper child would be housed, clothed and educated all at the ratepayers expense in, quite probably, a more congenial home than their own, thus placing them in a better position than other children of labouring families. To set this argument in context, there were some at the time who considered all forms of pauper education in the light of 'less eligibility', for a pauper child could remain at a workhouse school until the age of sixteen, whereas the independent labouring man's child had generally ceased his schooling some years before.

It was the Guardian Mr. Guilford who first suggested to the Kingston Board that they consider boarding-out, a radical initiative according to Cunningham.<sup>28</sup> Guilford was at pains to emphasise the economic utility of his suggestion, but his concerns did not arise from economy alone, as the character of the workhouse children he encountered had made an impression on him, and led him to question the worth of large institutions. The idea was not unanimously welcomed. One Kingston Guardian, Mr. Merryweather, was opposed to any form of boarding out.<sup>29</sup> One of his concerns was held by many critics, that of 'less eligibility'. A fostered child would be provided with a home, care and education, all at the ratepayer's expense:

*He maintained that the whole system encouraged pauperism, for it would place pauper children in a much better position than the children of poor persons. It would encourage illegitimacy, and the desertion of children.*<sup>30</sup>

Another gentleman Guardian, Mr. Barker, the Guardian for Hampton Wick, was also against the system but for different reasons. He felt it "dissolved society into its original elements" and could only improve the condition of the children if there were to be "a higher class of cottage life". He felt the "select few among the class would be the last to think of taking children, while among the others it would be taken as an occasion to increase their income". Whichever side of the argument they supported, there were almost as many opinions as there were Guardians. It is this variety of views which emphasises the value of a local study. Without this awareness, a comprehensive history of the Poor Law cannot be seen in context, or the breadth of contemporary opinion appreciated. Legislative history cannot adequately reflect the debate within, or impact on, local communities.

The concept of boarding-out did have advantages. Placing an orphaned child with a respectable family of similar social standing provided the family environment which a barrack school lacked. This was particularly valuable for the girls, as they could learn domestic duties and witness the skills of mothering and home-making. The boarded-out child could attend the local school, rather than a residential institution, and grow up with social skills, education, leisure time and household tasks which were the life of any other labouring man's child. The foster parents would be given an allowance which paid for the child's food, clothing and schooling, and this was calculated by Kingston as being more economical per head than the costs of the district school, whilst at the same time providing the child with a more natural home life. The financial contribution to the foster parents might also help to keep them from poverty and was thus doubly utilitarian. For some of Kingston's Guardians, this option presented the ideal solution; research commenced and debate was vigorous.

Investigations into the operation of boarding-out were undertaken by a committee of Kingston Guardians in a comprehensive manner, as they sought the experience and opinions of a large number of unions.<sup>31</sup> The majority of the unions to respond to Kingston's enquiries had either not tried boarding-out or did not approve of it. It appeared that, in common with many new concepts, where supporters were committed to the idea, measures were put in place to ensure its success, and so it was to prove in Kingston's case. Attempts by unenthusiastic unions to board out children were not successful, but Kingston's Board of Guardians were encouraged by the evidence of those few unions, only six in number, who advocated its use.<sup>32</sup> Those unions were Swindon, Eton, Leominster, Charlton, Horncastle and Dartford. The fact that only six unions out of the eighty-four who replied were enthusiastic exponents suggests that Kingston undertook their venture into boarding out predisposed to its success.

It is significant that the idea of boarding-out was supported particularly by the local clergy. They were an important element in Kingston's boarding-out procedure as they were active in obtaining suitable homes for the children within their respective parishes. Such personal knowledge of the foster families, and the close supervision incumbent upon the Guardians on introducing such a controversial scheme, were undoubtedly elements in its success in the Kingston Union. The Vicars of Hampton, Thames Ditton and Hook, and the Rector of Wimbledon, many of whom served on the Board of Guardians, all suggested numbers of suitable homes in their parishes.

By 1871 the need for Kingston to come to a decision became more pressing as the deadline set for removing the Kingston children from the NSDS approached. The board were by this time considering three solutions: using a 'barrack school' managed by another union or, indeed, remaining with the NSDS, building their own school, or boarding-out. As the central board would only countenance boarding-out for orphans there would still be the problem of where to house the remaining children, therefore the other two alternatives still needed to be considered. Kingston investigated all three possibilities simultaneously during 1871 and set in motion plans for each. Their discussions on pauper education coincided with national and local debate surrounding elementary education for the poorer classes. The inhabitants of Kingston were considering the implications of School Boards under the terms of Forster's Education Act of 1870, consequently during the years 1870 and 1871 education was a prominent topic. Kingston Guardians' resistance to central interference in Poor Law matters had echoes elsewhere in the town. During the public debates on the School Board question, a similar resistance was shown by members of the Established Church and the voluntary schools to any suggestion of interference in town matters imposed by external legislation.

The Guardians decided to test the system by boarding out twenty children from August 1871, and this experiment ran concurrently with their preparations for anticipated alternative solutions. The reserved response of the LGB, who took over from the PLB in August 1871, was overcome by initially restricting boarding-out to "healthy girls", for whom the scheme had the additional benefits already referred to.<sup>33</sup> This also may have contributed to the acceptance of the scheme and gave Kingston the confidence to increase the numbers boarded and extend the scheme to boys, although throughout the remainder of the century there were consistently more girls than boys boarded-out, and more boys than girls in their workhouse schools. By 1877 thirty children were boarded-out, and during the 1880s the average number was forty; around the same number were retained in the workhouse schools. As shown in a separate study, it is suggested that local practice can affect official attitudes for, despite reservations, the LGB came to endorse boarding out as an acceptable solution for orphaned children, albeit rather grudgingly.<sup>34</sup> The criticisms of the District School system, voiced so strongly by the Kingston Guardians in 1870, and which led them to experiment with boarding-out, were to be expressed officially by the LGB, but not for another ten years.<sup>35</sup>



The Kingston committee appointed to monitor the first six weeks of boarding-out felt that the system was "of immense importance to the children themselves, as well as to the board and ratepayers... as the amount of money saved on the rates, being the difference between 5s per head per week and 7s 9d now being paid to the managers of the Penge School [will] be sufficient to recommend the change to the favourable opinion of the board."<sup>36</sup> The committee paid regular and unannounced visits to the children. They visited their foster homes to check on the standard of accommodation and to ensure they were being properly cared for.<sup>37</sup> They also visited the children's schools, and spoke to their teachers to monitor progress and ensure regular attendance. Through the involvement of the vicar in his National School, additional monitoring of any fostered children was gained through the vicar's normal school duties. One of the stipulations of fostering was to ensure that the fostered child attended school regularly, and this alone would have undoubtedly contributed to any educational progress made. Within a year, by February 1872, the committee could confidently state that:

*... in every case great affection was expressed for the foster-parents who were always spoken of as "Father" & "Mother" and there were sincere signs of sorrow whenever any mention was made of returning to School. Your Committee would therefore recommend that the Boarding-out system should be continued and further extended, believing that where it is carried on under proper supervision it is for the interests of the children, the Board, and the ratepayers.*<sup>38</sup>

The equal emphasis on the humanitarian, administrative and financial advantages combined to strengthen Kingston's commitment to the scheme. The significance of the phrase "under proper supervision" was undoubtedly a strong factor in the scheme's success in the Kingston Union. Having undertaken to promote a system in the face of official discouragement, it was incumbent upon the Guardians to ensure no problems arose. In those unions where supervision was lax, boarding-out was not a success.

Educationally, the opportunity to attend local schools rather than a workhouse school certainly placed the fostered child in an advantageous situation, particularly as regular school attendance was obligatory to receiving relief. Not all parents welcomed the inclusion of pauper children into the community; "Mrs Limpson took her children from school on account of the Union children being allowed to attend".<sup>39</sup> Although not entirely on the same footing as other children, boarding-out would have done much to distance a child from the 'pauper taint' and provide them with opportunities beyond the reach of a child resident in the workhouse. One child, Emily Gaynor, fostered by an elderly lady in Paragon Road, Long Ditton, proved to be a good scholar and was recommended for a pupil-teacher apprenticeship. Attending the local school would have done much to distance the child from the workhouse, but unfortunately any benefit was probably undone by the Board of Guardians continuing to require the child to attend the relieving officer's "paying place" to receive the boarding-out allowance. At the LGB's suggestion, this was changed so that the foster parents received the money through an authorised third

party, such as the Vicar, thus severing all visible connection the child had with the workhouse, but this was not effected until 1881.<sup>40</sup>

In their *Minority Report* of 1909, the Webbs were rather crushing in their opinion of foster parents, and of labouring parents generally. They doubted whether children boarded-out were particularly well cared-for, but acknowledged that this was a problem universal to poor children, whether fostered or in their own homes: "it ought frankly to be recognised that the standard of efficiency of the average mother in the rearing of children is a low one".<sup>41</sup> The Kingston committee, however, were encouraged that

*there is an abundance of respectable, trustworthy people, who are by no means of the lowest class [...] [T]here is reason to believe that any number of children could be placed out in the houses of kind and respectable foster parents.*<sup>42</sup>

One of the earliest couples to act as foster parents was Robert and Emma Spoll, a carpenter and his dressmaker wife, who lived in a cottage in Thames Ditton. Other families who took boarded-out children in 1880/1 included a gardener, a plumber, a waterman, a nurse and an aged couple who fostered three union children. Preference was given to the rural districts, reflecting long-standing official policy of locating pauper children in the fresh air of the countryside. The children were fostered with labouring families, middle aged or elderly, with or without other young people in their home. The committee noted that many children became very attached to their foster parents. It must then have been an additional misfortune to the child if they were 'orphaned' a second time. Henrietta Wheeler and Jessie Gardener were boarded out together in Kingston and attended the local school, but their foster parents both died within a few weeks of each other and they were returned to the workhouse.<sup>43</sup>

There were occasions when foster parents were no longer considered suitable, or there were shortfalls in the accommodation, or other problems such as the child being used as unpaid labour. A "case at Molesey, where two children were boarded out with a woman whose husband was addicted to drink, and [who] quarrelled with his wife" necessitated the removal of the children.<sup>44</sup> Where children slept two or three to a bed, the committee might object although Mr. Guilford did point out that "[t]here were a great many respectable poor people's children who slept three in a bed."<sup>45</sup> Neither were boarded out children immune to the diseases experienced by those at the district school or in the workhouse. There were occasional instances of abuse; John Spratley, of East Molesey, was sent to prison for six months for indecently assaulting 10-year-old Caroline Potter who was boarded out with his family.<sup>46</sup> As one of the *Guardians* pointed out, "it might occur to any child. It was very unfortunate that it had taken place" and should "not be taken to be against the boarding-out system".<sup>47</sup>

John Littlejohn and Matthew Mallet, who had been at the NSDS, were boarded out together in 1871 with a family in Kingston, but were found to be "too difficult to manage" and were returned to the workhouse after six months.<sup>48</sup> Yet there were instances when foster parents undertook

to care for challenging children. Mrs Gould, of East Molesey, took a child who was described as "being scarcely right in her mind.... the child was a lunatic" but Mrs Gould "said that she could bring the child round in twelve months if she had the care of her." <sup>49</sup> Even when denied an increase in payment for this child and another, Mrs Gould "did not want them to go". <sup>50</sup>

In 1873 there were fewer than 1,000 children boarded out in England and Wales, of which 45 belonged to the Kingston Union. Birmingham, Bath, Clutton in Somerset, Liverpool, Manchester, Uxbridge and Wrexham unions boarded in similar numbers to Kingston, whilst two unions boarded considerably more. These were Swansea, who boarded out 66 children, and Dartford boarded out 77. Southampton preferred to "send their orphans to Canada" rather than board them out. <sup>51</sup>

After five years' experience of boarding-out Kingston Guardians continued to be enthusiastic:

*The fond feeling found to exist in most cases between the Foster parents and children was very gratifying. Your Committee also visited most of the Schools which the children attend and found their conduct was considered very good, many of the children had received prizes and had made very excellent progress. They were also as well clothed as the other children.*

*The system of Boarding out now adopted by your Board for nearly 5 years appears to your Committee to be worthy of the fullest extension being both more economical and satisfactory than any other method.* <sup>52</sup>

Kingston was heartened by the success of boarding out and continued its use. It would appear that the Thames Ditton Committee for Boarding-Out developed a reputation for success as, by 1880, it was being approached by the Epsom Union to find foster homes for some of their pauper children. By this date boarding-out had been officially accepted, and the LGB authorised the Thames Ditton Committee to assist other unions in this way. <sup>53</sup> The vicar, Rev E.H. Rogers, remained chairman of the committee ten years after the introduction of the boarding-out system and would have, by then, developed great experience of the scheme and acquired a thorough knowledge of the families in his parish. In 1882, the *Surrey Comet* praised Rev. Rogers' efforts, stating "There are not many Guardians more careful and painstaking than the vicar of Thames Ditton" and remarking that he "looked radiantly happy among the little folks" boarded-out. <sup>54</sup> At the same date, Guardians from the Richmond Board accompanied Kingston's Boarding-Out Committee on their home and school visits to view the system in operation. <sup>55</sup> In 1881, the ladies of Surbiton also instituted a committee to find homes in Surbiton for children from the London workhouses, and were sanctioned to do so by the LGB. <sup>56</sup>

Boarding-out enterprises gave ladies the opportunity of being involved in local administration, and their rôle was beginning to be appreciated in their work with children. In 1880, the *Surrey Comet* called for a greater involvement by the ladies in visiting the boarded-out children, and in particularly keeping in contact with girls leaving their foster families to go out to service:

*Just when a young girl is going out to service is the time when she requires good advice, and a little practical assistance in the choice of an outfit, and many matters will naturally suggest themselves to the mind, in which the supervision of a lady member of the committee would be of incalculable value to poor, friendless girls, first entering into the busy scenes of life.*<sup>57</sup>

Such 'busy scenes of life' would no doubt bring temptations and influences which might result in the young girl returning to the lying-in ward of the workhouse.

It was possible that a child might form a bond with the foster family which was maintained even after the child had gone out into service or apprenticeship. In the Mundella Committee Report of 1896 several ladies from boarding-out committees gave evidence that children often returned to their foster parents on afternoon visits, or for longer stays between situations, or in times of illness. By boarding-out in small communities the children "have made friends in the village, and they have made friends with the committees, and these things together give the child the same position in life as the child who has been brought up in its own father and mother's home". The existence of boarding-out committees provided children "with several friends instead of one".<sup>58</sup>

A child boarded-out within the Kingston Union would certainly have found life a considerable contrast from close institutional confinement with London children in the district school. Those children successfully boarded-out were, as a further consequence, spared the dubious fate in 1872 of being sent to Canada, as the *Guardians* found them settled in their foster homes and saw no reason to take advantage of the emigration schemes:

*Mr Guilford reported that he could not find any child boarded out, who, he should be justified in saying, could be sent out by Miss Rye. All the children boarded out were thoroughly happy and comfortable, and were moved to tears at the suggestion of being taken away.*<sup>59</sup>

Maria Rye had established a scheme in the 1860s to emigrate poor children to Canada and, according to Walvin, was responsible for the emigration of some 4,000 children.<sup>60</sup> A similar scheme was organized by Annie Macpherson, and although there is evidence that Kingston children certainly found their way to Canada through the influence of these two ladies, there did not appear to be any large-scale policy to remove Kingston children in this way.

As well as boarding-out and emigration schemes, there was another possible alternative to the barrack school. Influenced by Mrs Senior's *Report* of 1874, a small number of unions experimented with the idea of 'cottage homes', that is, workhouse children being housed not in one vast building, but in a number of small houses on the same site, often centred around a 'village green', and including a workhouse school. In this way, it was hoped to replicate more of a family setting than a barrack school could provide. When the parishes of Kensington and Chelsea withdrew from the North Surrey School District after Kingston, in 1876, their local board

chose to erect their new workhouse school on a 'cottage homes' design in Banstead, Surrey. Murdoch states that "in 1878 only eight parishes, union or school districts in England and Wales had built or planned to build cottage homes for children."<sup>61</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, twenty-five unions or districts operated their workhouse school on these lines. However, in 1870, when Kingston Guardians were debating withdrawal from the school district, the idea had not gained prominence, and Kingston did not consider building 'cottage homes'.

#### 6.4 Tangle Park

Not all workhouse children were suitable for boarding-out, particularly if they had a parent still living to whose care they might one day be returned. It was considered that to board-out a child with another family, with whom the child might develop an affectionate bond, would reduce family ties, therefore boarding-out was restricted to orphans, foundlings or to abandoned children if the parents could not be traced. For the remainder of the children, if Kingston were no longer to use the NSDS then some other solution had to be found. At the same time as the experiment in boarding-out was being undertaken, Kingston Guardians were discussing the possibility of building their own separate workhouse school within the Union. The idea appealed to them as it would allow them to regain control of their own administration. The cost of building would be financed by the refund of their portion of the investment in the district school, supplemented by a government loan.

The Board of Guardians were involved in extensive plans and discussions. They viewed and considered a number of sites, from nearby Norbiton Park to more distant sites in Horsell and Woking. Considerations included the price, the quality of the agricultural land, the distance from Kingston, and also the distance from the nearest station. The ease of the journey was important, for if the Guardians found visiting an "inconvenience" with a "large railway fare" then the "school would scarcely be visited at all", giving rise to the same problems as before.<sup>62</sup> In an unclerical manner the vicar of Ham "would not have his church filled with children" so was against building at Ham, whilst the Rev. J. Burrow said "he would rather the school was not erected at Hampton, as it would depreciate the value of some land which belonged to him, and thus he would suffer in pocket."<sup>63</sup> Eventually, they settled on the land at Tangle Park, Hampton, which was purchased with a loan. The Guardians organised an architectural competition for school designs which drew around two hundred entries, and by October 1871 had decided on the winning design and appointed a builder.<sup>64</sup>

From first mooted the idea of building their own workhouse school in August 1870 it had taken over fourteen months, until October 1871, to reach a point where building might commence, even though they had still not agreed on the final details.<sup>65</sup> By this time, however, not only had the urgency worn off, but Mr. Guilford had discovered that a sewage works was to be built nearby, and "he for one certainly should not think of putting up a handsome building for a large number of children in such an undesirable situation".<sup>66</sup> The success of their interim solution, as

described below, removed the necessity of having their own school at all, and the motion to sell the recently acquired land was "carried with a large majority" although it was not finally disposed of until 1913, it being rented out in the meantime.<sup>67</sup>

It might seem contradictory, given the Kingston Guardians' concerns with barrack schools and their enthusiasm for boarding out, that when they were considering building their own workhouse school in 1871 the specification was for the barrack school design, rather than the cottage homes model such as the Kensington and Chelsea parishes developed at Banstead from 1878.<sup>68</sup> However, the idea of 'cottage homes' was still in its infancy in England; although the first such scheme in Surrey did appear in Addlestone in 1871 it was not until later in the 1870s and the 1880s that the idea found wider support. It is also worth noting that the Guardians' fiercely held principles concerning accommodation, adequacy of education, distance and ease of travel, and delegation of supervision were to be set aside when urgency or convenience arose.

### **6.5 Subcontracting – Brentwood**

Withdrawal from the NSSD had necessitated finding a solution to the accommodation of those Kingston Union children who could not be boarded-out. The Guardians considered that the simplest and most practical solution would be to return the children to the Kingston workhouse, where there was sufficient room to accommodate them, until such time as they had built their own workhouse school. The central board were strongly opposed to this as it would reduce the space available for the able-bodied pauper and the Kingston Guardians would then be unable to apply the 'workhouse test'. This concerned the central board more than it did the Kingston Guardians, who had for many years differed with them in their views on out-relief.

The central board, committed as they were to 'barrack schools', pressed for Kingston to use spare space in detached workhouse schools belonging to another union. They suggested a number of union schools, all at some distance from Kingston, but these did not all meet with favour. The Kingston Guardian, Mr. Pyne, "hoped they would not think of placing their children amongst the dregs of the London population", but after inspecting several and comparing costs, the Kingston Guardians settled on the workhouse school of the parish of St. Leonard's, Shoreditch, which was situated in Brentwood in Essex.<sup>69</sup> Despite these schools containing London metropolitan children, economics played their part in the decision, as the cost per head per week of 7s was cheaper than elsewhere.<sup>70</sup> Yet welfare was not entirely overlooked; as the school had ample room for the Kingston children there was no question of its being overcrowded.<sup>71</sup> Arguments of distance also evaporated, even though the children had to be sent by train to Waterloo, and then on by road at an additional cost of between 1s 6d and 2s 6d per head.<sup>72</sup> Despite their arguments against the district school being both its remoteness from their home union and the size, by following the central board's suggestion Kingston Guardians were advocating precisely the same conditions.

Kingston only intended this to be a temporary measure; they were, in the meantime pressing on with their plans to build their own workhouse school, with the view to returning the children to the Kingston Union on completion. However, as with earlier plans, inertia won the day. With the experiment in boarding-out proving successful, a small number of children in the workhouse, and the remainder at Brentwood, there was no longer a pressing need to find a solution and the children were left where they were.

The size and distinct atmosphere of these large schools must have been a daunting prospect for the children sent there. It was certainly too much for one Brentwood schoolmaster, who was completely overwhelmed and ran away in 1871:

*on account of my extreme nervousness and incompetence to perform some of the duties required of me as assistant schoolmaster at Brentwood. The large number of boys and the novelty of the system at Brentwood completely non-plussed me...*<sup>73</sup>

The usual Poor Law industrial training was given to the children at Brentwood School, which comprised baking, tailoring, shoemaking, sewing, military drilling, gardening and music.<sup>74</sup> Apprenticeships continued to be arranged from Brentwood but Kingston Guardians were, however, kept informed of such appointments and, in the case of enlistment to the army, parental permission was sought. John Reynolds was "selected for enlistment into the 67<sup>th</sup> Regiment" in 1876 and the school wrote to Kingston to ensure there was no objection from his parents.<sup>75</sup> The boy's mother, however, refused to give her permission.<sup>76</sup> She was eventually persuaded, and John enlisted, but after a period of probation he was discharged as being "unfit for service" and he remained at school.<sup>77</sup>

Although Kingston Guardians were consulted in decisions which related to their own children specifically, this only occurred when the Shoreditch Guardians sought their opinion on individual cases. There were some decisions relating to the children at Brentwood as a whole which seemed to have been taken solely by the Shoreditch Guardians. One such related to the question of religious worship. The school did not have its own chapel, and the children attended divine service at the local Church, less than a quarter of a mile away. The Shoreditch Guardians, however, applied to the LGB to build a school chapel as they did not approve of the nature of the services:

*[The Shoreditch Guardians] wish the children to attend chapel in the school instead of Brentwood Church in consequence of the extreme Ritualistic Character of the Services held therein. The proceedings at the Church have for some time past been a scandal to the neighbourhood ... Rival services of an Evangelical Character have been held by Clergymen in Brentwood Town Hall and the Parish is in a very excited state with regard to Church matters... The Guardians most strongly and unanimously condemn Ritualism...*<sup>78</sup>

There was still an element of remoteness and of delegation. Their committee visited the children at Brentwood only once every three months, and left their care in the hands of the Brentwood Superintendent, Mr. Denning, in whom they came to have great confidence.<sup>79</sup> In 1876, after five years of using the Brentwood Schools, the Schools Committee of the Kingston Guardians expressed their satisfaction:

*The Children chargeable to this Union have now been maintained for some four or five years at Brentwood under the supervision of Mr Denning and that the same interest is taken in your children as in those chargeable to Shoreditch - Under these circumstances Your Committee suggest that some recognition of Mr Dennings supervision should be made by the Kingston Board of Guardians.*<sup>80</sup>

The Guardians voted to send Mr. Denning a gratuity of ten guineas, reflecting the measure of relief the Guardians had in the satisfactory resolution to the question of their workhouse children.

Inertia might have kept the children at Brentwood indefinitely, but a change in administration at Shoreditch ultimately resulted in termination of the contract with Kingston. Whilst the Kingston Guardians might have given themselves more time to consider their response had they acted sooner, their failure to appreciate the situation immediately left them only days in which to find an alternative. The importance of individual influence assisted Kingston at this point, much as Dr. Kay's impact had had on their workhouse school in 1840. The LGB Inspector for the Kingston Union was Joseph Henley, who also covered the Oxford area, and through his suggestions and administrative assistance a solution was hastily arranged. The Kingston Guardians contracted to send their workhouse children to the workhouse schools of the Oxford Incorporation, situated in an agricultural area three miles south-east of Oxford, at Cowley.<sup>81</sup>

## 6.6 Subcontracting – Cowley

Whilst being condemnatory of the barrack school system, Kingston had been content to send their children to the workhouse school at Brentwood, and were amenable to a similar arrangement with the Oxford Incorporation. However, these workhouse schools were not the huge size the NSDS had been. The NSDS had contained nearly a thousand children in 1871, whereas Brentwood had been half that size. The Oxford Incorporation schools at Cowley, referred to in the plural to reflect the separate boys' and girls' sections, was geographically even further away from Kingston than Brentwood had been, but it was a much smaller school. Even with the addition of the Kingston children, and later those from nearby Headington Union, it had fewer than two hundred inmates.<sup>82</sup> The Oxford Incorporation had previously accommodated another union's children, those from St George's, Westminster, who had proved to be "a great trouble to them", after which they debated "not to take any foreign children into the school".<sup>83</sup> Yet the financial advantages to Oxford of accepting Kingston's children could not be overlooked, and they were probably more inclined to look favourably on children from the Kingston union as being not entirely made up of "town boys" and included those "from country districts".<sup>84</sup> The



use of the Cowley Schools, was therefore of financial benefit to both unions, thus countering any previous opposition either might have had. The schools were described in 1880 thus:

*There is no smartness about the establishment but for the class of children maintained in the school it is perhaps as well.*<sup>85</sup>

The workhouse schools of the Oxford Incorporation were named the 'Cowley Industrial Schools' to reflect the education there. Children over the age of ten were taught the basic school subjects for half the time, with the other days being given over to 'industrial training'. This might range from gardening or shoemaking, military drill and musical training, to tasks more industrial than educational. Working in the laundry might contribute towards the school's self-sufficiency, but did not adequately train a girl in delicate domestic laundry. Similarly, the boys were required to turn the capstan which supplied the school with water; useful, but hardly educational. This latter task required, in 1881, thirty boys to walk the equivalent of eight miles a day to turn the capstan for their bathwater.<sup>86</sup> This may have provided good exercise, but hardly improved their intellect, and the practice was dispensed with by 1882 on the grounds of efficiency.<sup>87</sup> The boys were also employed in quarrying, but after the death of a 12-year-old Kingston boy, James Barnes, in 1879, this task ceased.<sup>88</sup>

This 'half-time' education affected the children's schoolwork, and was exacerbated by the school's reluctance to employ additional teaching staff following the increase in the numbers of children. The LGB Inspector, Mr. Henley, had felt from the outset, in 1877, that "the teaching power will [...] be found insufficient".<sup>89</sup> The LGB did not press for more teachers as "the Schoolmaster does not think any increase of the teaching staff requisite. He says that 'the additional children would not swell the School to an unwieldy number'." <sup>90</sup> Yet on a number of occasions during the following five years both the Kingston School Committee and the Government School Inspector drew attention to the poor standard of education.<sup>91</sup> In 1881 and 1882 the Government School Inspector declared that the School was in "a deplorable condition" [which was] "a good deal accounted for by the fact of children being put to work instead of being in the School"; the older children "scarcely ever receive the necessary 18 hours [the legal minimum] in School every week" <sup>92</sup>

Health problems also caused concern at Cowley on occasions, but not to the extent they had done at the NSDS. The number of cases of "sore heads" in the Cowley school in 1879 was attributed to the general condition of newly arrived Kingston children, but was "speedily cured", and the Kingston committee felt that the treatment received at Cowley was beneficial.<sup>93</sup> In July 1880 there was a serious outbreak of ophthalmia in the school and better hygiene measures were put in place, such as separate jets of water for the children to wash in, and individual towels, and the outbreak had been contained within three months.<sup>94</sup> Yet the shortfalls at Cowley were not sufficient to deter Kingston from continuing to use the schools. In the light of the difficulties the Guardians had experienced over many years in trying to find adequate accommodation for their children, it is probable that the Kingston Guardians were reluctant to

find serious fault with Cowley once the decision had been made to send their children there. Kingston's use of the Cowley Schools is discussed in more detail in a separate study.<sup>95</sup>

A committee of the Kingston Guardians visited the schools on a more frequent basis than they had Brentwood. The Guardians were also consulted in the case of proposed apprenticeship or enlistment, which were arranged from Cowley by the school. Children could be enlisted in the army as young as thirteen; the Cowley Depot was conveniently near the school. Some children were enlisted on training ships, and boys at these establishments also received visits from Kingston Guardians. In 1878 the Revd. J. Burrow and Mr. Miles visited George Marshall on the 'Chichester' at Greenhythe who

*has passed through the whole course of instruction and is declared "fit for sea". He is reported as one of the most trustworthy Boys aboard. The other Boy, George Gill, is looking well and expresses himself very happy on board the "Arethusa" but he has not yet made much progress in nautical matters.*<sup>96</sup>

Gill persevered, however, and in 1879 was ready to go to sea, being in good health and of "good character".<sup>97</sup> By 1881 he was serving as an Ordinary Seaman on the H.M.S. 'Inconstant'.<sup>98</sup>

John Reynolds, who had enlisted whilst at Brentwood school but subsequently discharged as unsuitable, was sent to Cowley with the other children, and from there was apprenticed to a bootmaker in Oxford.<sup>99</sup> The Committee visited him three months later, in February 1878, and found him "in good health and happy and Mr. Allum [his master] reported favourably as to the behaviour of the Lad".<sup>100</sup> He was still there in December 1879 "well and giving satisfaction to his Master".<sup>101</sup>

For girls, domestic service was the most usual employment, despite the shortcomings of industrial training. A girl might be fortunate to enter the service of a philanthropic lady who took pains to educate her in domestic ways. Miss Button of Clyde House, Reading took Harriet Stacey into her service, and after training her obtained for her "an excellent situation at Bournemouth", and took a further Kingston girl, Rose Little, in her place.<sup>102</sup>

A boy, too, might be fortunate in finding domestic employment with a charitable lady. George Surbiton was a foundling who spent his whole childhood in workhouse institutions and hardly came to know anything of ordinary family life. He grew up in four Poor Law institutions: Kingston workhouse, the NSDS from the age of five, the Brentwood School when he was seven and the Cowley School at the age of twelve.<sup>103</sup> He was apprenticed from Cowley, as a pageboy in the household of Miss Mary Marshall who lived at Iffley Mill, Oxfordshire. George was fortunate to obtain this employment; Miss Marshall was the daughter of the former Rector of Iffley and was involved in charitable works throughout her life. Her home would have provided a considerable contrast to the institutions in which George grew up and for the first time in his life he would have experienced carpets, ornaments and elegant surroundings.

Unfortunately, Miss Marshall found him to be untruthful and complained of him to the Superintendent of the Cowley School, saying she wished to part with him.<sup>104</sup> She did not actually dismiss him, however, and he remained in her employ for a while longer.<sup>105</sup> Eventually he gravitated to London and worked as a barman in a public house in Kensington.<sup>106</sup> He died, unmarried, in 1894 at the age of thirty-three.<sup>107</sup>

These two examples again emphasise the contribution of the charitable sphere in supplementing the work of the poor law. Whilst there were those who wished to employ workhouse children as cheap labour, there were many who acted as mentor to deprived children and assist them in life. Those children for whom Cowley could not find positions were brought back to the Kingston workhouse and further efforts were made from there to find them situations. Sometimes advertisements were placed in the local press but occasionally enquires were received from prospective employers for labour. Frank Marshall was found work in this way, after a farmer in Effingham wrote to the board asking for farm labourers.<sup>108</sup>

Considering the Guardians' objectives at the beginning of the Union, and the ideals to which they aspired and debated enthusiastically over the years, it might seem contradictory that they should continue to use a workhouse school at some distance from their Union, managed by a body not under their control. Similarly, from wanting to provide their children with efficient teachers, and being critical of Poor Law education delegated to others, Kingston allowed their pauper children to continue at a school where the schooling was variously described as "deplorable" and "defective". However, as the Guardians' established practice had for many years been one of leaving matters until an emergency occurred, and with their history of such emergencies being frequent, it was unlikely that they would have chosen to alter the arrangements once more unless absolutely necessary. Despite occasional problems, Kingston Guardians were generally content to continue to send children to Cowley. Although the agreement with Oxford had been hastily organized, it proved to be an enduring arrangement which continued until the end of the century and beyond.

## 6.7 Conclusion

In promoting boarding-out, and in their outspoken criticism of the health problems at the District School, the Kingston Board of Guardians was acting contrary to official LGB policy and general established opinion. Although a reactive decision, their enthusiasm for boarding-out was an innovation not in general favour in England at that date and not in widespread use. After ten years' experience of the scheme, Kingston was in a position to feel vindicated, especially in the light of the 1880 reports to the LGB concerning the level of contagious disease at District Schools, and the emotional dullness of the inmates.<sup>109</sup> In 1880, the *Surrey Comet* complacently drew attention to the decisions made in the early 1870s by the Kingston Board which had, they felt, been a triumph for Kingston over the LGB. In their view, the Guardians, through their "energetic and successful exposure of the evils and mismanagement of the North

Surrey District School" had "set an example which displeased the Local Government Board", and which had not become the official view until Dr. Mouat's report of 1880. Lapsing into the sentimental, the *Surrey Comet* went on to describe these children as "vast automata ... Strangers to the meaning of a kiss".<sup>110</sup>

Personal exposure of officials to the conditions experienced by the institutionalised children undoubtedly influenced opinion. Conversely, physical and administrative detachment compounded the effects of isolation for the children and reduced the opportunities for humanitarian and emotive argument to develop. The Guardians' involvement might be shown to have arisen from their concern to inspect how their finances were being used, or from resentment at having their authority usurped. Nonetheless, the effect of witnessing at close quarters the conditions of the children both in the NSDS, and their health after leaving it, added humanitarian considerations to the utilitarian. It is strongly contended here that once those in a position of influence had been repeatedly exposed to the individual sufferings of those for whom they acted, detached and unemotional argument became less easy to sustain. This could be seen at work amongst the Kingston Guardians, particularly during the years 1870-72 when various matters concerning children were being publicly debated in the parishes of the Union.

Having been thus affected by the plight of these children, and having formed a strong argument against large, remote schools in the administration of other bodies, it seems contradictory that Kingston should have been content to continue to use them during the remainder of the century, and overlook their various arguments against placing their workhouse children beyond the boundaries of the Union. Their own workhouse school was not planned on a 'cottage homes' design, which might have been expected from a Board so vociferous about the importance of family, rather on the 'barrack school' model which they had strongly opposed. The temporary solution of sending children to the school at Brentwood, despite having been taken to avoid illegal overcrowding at their own workhouse, continued as apathy overcame policy. Similarly, when necessity drove the Board to find a replacement solution when the arrangement with Brentwood ceased, the use of a workhouse school even further away, in Oxfordshire, was allowed to continue without revision.

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- 1 *Surrey Comet*, 10 Dec.1870, p.2 col. 2.
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- 3 Pinchbeck and Hewitt, *Children in English Society*, pp.520-1.
- 4 *Fourth Annual Report of the Local Government Board*, PP, 1875, XXXI, p. 114.
- 5 *Third Annual Report of the Local Government Board*, PP, 1874, XXV.
- 6 *Surrey Comet*, 12 Nov 1870 p.3 col. 1.
- 7 Board of Guardians Meeting 8 Nov 1870, reported in *Surrey Comet* 12 Nov.1870.
- 8 TNA MH12/12402 7 Dec.1870. doc. 53599/70.
- 9 Thomas Barker, Guardian for Hampton Wick, Gentleman, of Cambridge House, Lower Teddington Rd., Board of Guardians Meeting 11 Jan.1870, reported in *Surrey Comet* 15 Jan.1870.
- 10 James Page, Guardian for Kingston parish, Farmer, of Coombe. Board of Guardians Meeting 11 Jan.1870, reported in *Surrey Comet* 15 Jan.1870.
- 11 Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform*, pp.25-6, 40.
- 12 Conference of Managers of Reformatory and Industrial Institutions 1869, 106 & 3rd Report LGB, PP 1874 (19017) xxv, 311 ff quoted in Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.220.
- 13 Crompton, *Workhouse Children*, pp.160-1.
- 14 Frederick Somner Merryweather, Guardian for Kingston parish, Gentleman, of New Malden, Board of Guardians Meeting 11 Jan.1870, reported in *Surrey Comet* 15 Jan.1870.
- 15 *A Protest – Poor Law Board Proceedings*, Board of Guardians Meeting 20 Sept.1870, *Surrey Comet*, 24 Sept.1870, p.2 cols. 6-7.
- 16 Board of Guardians Meeting 25 April 1871, *Surrey Comet* 29 April 1871, p.2 cols. 3-4; Board of Guardians Meeting 30 May 1871, *Surrey Comet* 3 June 1871, p.3 col. 4.
- 17 *Drowning of a Pauper Boy*, Board of Guardians Meeting 20 June 1871, *Surrey Comet* 24 June 1871, p.2 cols. 5-6; Board of Guardians Meeting 4 July 1871, Apprenticing Children, *Surrey Comet*, 8 July 1871, p.2 cols. 5-6.
- 18 Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp.29-30.
- 19 John Williams, Guardian for Kingston parish, Gentleman, of St James' Rd., Kingston. Board of Guardians Meeting 20 Sept.1879, reported in *Surrey Comet* 24 Sept.1870.
- 20 Board of Guardians Meeting 8 Nov.1870, *Surrey Comet* 12 Nov.1870, p.3 col. 1.
- 21 *Surrey Comet* Editorials 10 Dec.1870 and 17 Dec.1870.
- 22 Board of Guardians Meeting 31 May 1870, *Surrey Comet* 4 June 1870, p.2 col. 2; Board of Guardians Meeting 12 Dec.1871, *Surrey Comet* 16 Dec.1871 p.3 col. 1.
- 23 *Report of Mr. Longley, Poor Law Inspector, to the President of the LGB*, 7 Dec.1871 doc 55956/71, TNA MH 12/12403.
- 24 *Boarding-Out and Pauper Schools Especially for Girls, Being a Reprint of the Principal Reports on Pauper Education in the Blue Book for 1873-4*, Introduction and Notes by Menella B. Smedley one of Mrs Senior's staff (London: Henry S King & Co, 1875), item viii.
- 25 Fowler, *Workhouse*, p.161.
- 26 Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform*, p.26.
- 27 Duke, 'Pauper Education', in Fraser, *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century*, p.81. The Poor Law Board was replaced by the Local Government Board in August 1871, and in this chapter is occasionally referred to as the 'central board' to avoid confusion.
- 28 Cunningham, *Children & Childhood in Western Society*, p.149.
- 29 Board of Guardians Meeting 21 Feb.1871, reported in *Surrey Comet* 25 Feb.1871.

- 30 *Report of Boarding Out Committee on The Separation from Penge School*, Board of Guardians meeting 7 March 1871, *Surrey Comet*, 11 March 1871, p.2 col. 3.
- 31 *Report of Boarding-Out Committee*, Board of Guardians Meeting 7 March 1871, *Surrey Comet*, 11 March 1871, p.2 col. 3.
- 32 *Report of Boarding-Out Committee*, Board of Guardians Meeting 7 March 1871, *Surrey Comet*, 11 March 1871, p.2 col. 3.
- 33 *Report of Boarding-Out Committee*, Mr. Guilford and the Rev E. H. Rogers, Board of Guardians Meeting 20 June 1871, *Surrey Comet*, 24 June 1871, p.2 col. 6.
- 34 Goepel, 'Pauper Children from the Kingston Poor Law Union'.
- 35 Dr. Frederic J. Mouat, *On the Education and Training of the Children of the Poor*, paper presented to the Royal Statistical Society 20 April 1889, published in *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, vol. 43 (2), 1880, pp.183-250; reported in *The Hull Packet*, 22 April 1880, p.3 and *Daily News*, 23 April 1880, pp.4-5; subsequent *Reports of Dr. Bridges, Dr. Mouatt, and Dr. Nettleship to the Local Government Board on the Education and Training of the Children of the Poor*, April 1880.
- 36 Board of Guardians Meeting 20 June 1871, *Surrey Comet*, 24 June 1871, p.2 col. 6.
- 37 *Report of Boarding-Out Committee*, Mr. Guilford and the Rev. E.H. Rogers, Board of Guardians Meeting 20 June 1871, *Surrey Comet*, 24 June 1871, p.2 col. 6.
- 38 *Report of Boarding-Out Committee*, 6 Feb.1872, SHC BG8/11/11.
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- 45 Board of Guardians Meeting 13 Feb.1872, *Surrey Comet* 17 Feb.1872 p.3 col. 3.
- 46 County Bench Report, *Well Deserved Punishment*, *Surrey Comet*, 3 June 1871, p.5 col. 5.
- 47 Board of Guardians Meeting, 13 June 1871, *Surrey Comet*, 17 June 1871, p.2 col. 6.
- 48 St Paul's, Norbiton, School Log Book 6 Nov.1871, 22 April 1872.
- 49 Board of Guardians Meeting 27 Aug.1872, *Surrey Comet*, 31 Aug.1872, p.2 col. 6.
- 50 Board of Guardians Meeting 17 Dec.1872 *Surrey Comet*, 21 Dec.1872, p.3 col. 1.
- 51 *Report of Mr. Peek's Committee for Promoting the Boarding-out of Pauper Orphans in Separate Cottage Homes*, Leeds Mercury 27 March 1873.
- 52 *Report of Boarding-Out Committee*, 4 April 1876 SHC BG8/11/13.
- 53 TNA MH12/12415 10 Dec.1880, doc 109001/80.
- 54 *Surrey Comet*, 13 May 1882, p.4 col. 6.
- 55 Board of Guardians' Meeting 16 May 1882, *Surrey Comet*, 20 May 1882, p.3 col. 3.
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- 61 *Report on the Home and Cottage System*, PP 1878 ix cited in Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p.56.
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- 63 Board of Guardians Meeting 30 May 1871, *Surrey Comet* 3 June 1871 p.3 cols. 1-4.
- 64 Board of Guardians Meeting 27 June 1871, *Surrey Comet*, 1 July 1871 p.3 col. 4.
- 65 Board of Guardians Meeting 31 Oct.1871, *Surrey Comet*, 4 Nov.1871 p.3 cols. 1-2.
- 66 Board of Guardians Meeting 21 Nov.1871, *Surrey Comet*, 25 Nov.1871 p.2 col. 5.
- 67 Board of Guardians Meeting 21 Nov.1871, *Surrey Comet*, 5 Nov.1871 p.3 col.1; SHC BG8/30/32; BG8/11/15 Board of Guardians Meeting 6 May 1879.
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- 78 *Poor Law correspondence with Shoreditch Union*, 6 April 1872, 19337/72 TNA MH12/7732, and letter from the vicar of Brentwood to LGB 6 March 1872, 13551/72 TNA MH12/7732.
- 79 SHC BG8/11/14, 5 Dec.1876.
- 80 SHC BG8/11/13, Report of School Committee, Board of Guardians Meeting 15 Aug.1876.
- 81 Goepel, 'Pauper Children from the Kingston Poor Law Union'.
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- 83 *Jackson's Oxford Journal* 10 June 1871; *Jackson's Oxford Journal* 30 Dec.1871; Mr. Wheeler, Oxford Board of Guardians *Jackson's Oxford Journal* , 6 April 1872.
- 84 *Jackson's Oxford Journal* 10 June 1871.
- 85 *Report of J.J. Henley LGB Inspector on the School at Cowley after a Visit on 14 Jan.1880*, TNA MH 12/9718 Oxford Board of Guardians Local Government Board Correspondence, doc 6515/80.
- 86 TNA MH 12/9718 Oxford Board of Guardians Local Government Board Correspondence; Letter from Oxford Poor Law Incorporation to LGB 20 Aug.1881 doc 76753/81; Notice to Guardians of Oxford Incorporation from LGB ca Oct.1881 doc 75396/81.

- 87 TNA MH 12/9718 Oxford Board of Guardians Local Government Board Correspondence; Letter from Oxford Incorporation to LGB 13 Feb.1882 enclosing extract from Report of the School Committee of the Oxford Board of Guardians read and adopted at a meeting of the Board 9 Feb.1882, doc. 15658/82.
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- 89 TNA MH 12/12411 note signed J.J.H. 23 March 1877 annotated on reverse of doc. 21183/77.
- 90 TNA MH 12/12411 note signed H.G.B. [Mr. Bowyer] 29 March 77 annotated on reverse of doc. 21183/77.
- 91 In 1878: TNA MH12/12414, doc 67440/79, committee reports 12 July 1878 and 29 Oct.1878; SHC BG8/11/15 Board of Guardians 5 Nov.1878, *Report of School Committee*, James Burrow, E.H. Rogers, E.E. Blake dated 5 Nov 1878; In 1879: SHC BG8/11/15 Board of Guardians 25 Feb.1879, Bowyer's entry in school Visitors' Book 27 Sep.1878; In 1880: *Report of Wyndham Holgate*, on behalf of H.G. Bowyer, Inspector of Workhouse Schools Report of Examination 9 Dec.1880 held at the Oxford City (separate) School at Cowley, TNA MH 12/9718 Oxford Board of Guardians Local Government Board Correspondence, doc. 111434/80.
- 92 In 1881: *Report of Mr. Bryan Davies*, school inspector, TNA MH12/9718, Oxford Board of Guardians Local Government Board Correspondence, doc. 58420/81 18 June 1881; In 1882: TNA MH12/9718 76239/82 Report by Bryan Davies inspector of PL workhouse schools - visit to Cowley 25 June 1882, Oxford Board of Guardians Local Government Board Correspondence, doc. 63584/82 Inspector's Report of Examination 20 June 1882 on schoolmaster and schoolmistresses.
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- 96 Report of Revd. J. Burrow and Mr. Miles dated 30 July 1878, BG8/11/15 Board of Guardians 30 July 1878.
- 97 SHC BG8/11/15 Board of Guardians Meeting 26 Aug.1879.
- 98 RG11/5636 f. 71 p.20.
- 99 SHC BG8/11/15 Board of Guardians Meeting 20 Nov.1877.
- 100 *Report of F S Merryweather and William Ward*, School Committee, dated 26 Jan.1878 BG8/11/15, Board of Guardians Meeting 26 Feb.1878.
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- 102 SHC BG8/11/15 Board of Guardians Meeting 17 Dec.1878.
- 103 LMA NSSD/170 Index to Admission Register.
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- 105 1881 Census RG11/1497 f. 9 p.9.
- 106 1891 Census RG12/24 f. 147.
- 107 TNA Death indexes 1894.
- 108 SHC BG8/11/15 Board of Guardians Meeting 26 Aug.1879.
- 109 *Reports of Dr. Mouat and Dr. Nettleship to the LGB*, referred to in the *Surrey Comet*, 1 May 1800, p.4 col. 5.
- 110 Editorial, *Surrey Comet*, 1 May 1800, p.4 col. 5.



## Appendix 6.1

### Case Study: Brickwood family

The Brickwood family lived in the Long Ditton area from at least the end of the eighteenth century and were a family of agricultural labourers. In the 1830s they occupied a cottage in an area of Thames Ditton known as 'Collar Makers Bridge' (later 'Windows Bridge', later still 'Winters Bridge') on the main Portsmouth road leading out of Kingston to the south-west. <sup>1</sup> [Figure 6.1]

This study concerns two Brickwood family groups, those of two brothers, Henry and William, both of whom had periods when they depended on poor relief. Within this family can be seen examples of a range of types of relief afforded to families with children, both inside and outside the workhouse. Surviving on the margins of poverty, the men took various labouring jobs as the opportunities for agricultural work diminished, the women taking cleaning or laundry work, but despite their hardships they appear to have been respectable and to have lived within the law. There were children born before marriage, but they were later legitimised by marriage to the father. <sup>2</sup>

#### Henry & Mary Ann

**Henry Brickwood** was a labourer who was given out-relief on a number of occasions during the 1850s; he suffered from rheumatism and was prone to fits. During the winter of 1853-4 the severe weather limited work opportunities and he was given work at the workhouse in return for relief. He also claimed medical relief for his wife, who was suffering from "hysteria" which, considering the lack of income, the recent death of a baby and the birth of another would have been quite understandable. <sup>3</sup> The family struggled on until 1855 when they entered the workhouse. They were not there for more than a year and had returned home by the winter of 1857-8 when, once again, the bad weather caused Henry to apply for out-relief. He was given twelve days work at the workhouse in return for 1/- and a loaf a day for his wife and five children at home.

Henry took various labouring jobs, including bricklayer's labourer, and occasionally found general labouring work at the Chelsea Water Works a short walk along the Portsmouth Road towards Kingston, close enough for him to walk home for his mid-day 'dinner'. He was of "temperate" habits. On the afternoon of 19 July 1860, while working at the water works he suffered a fit and collapsed and died. He was only thirty-four and left a widow with seven children, expecting an eighth. The jury at the inquest "humanely made the widow a present of their fee of 12 shillings, and for which she returned her grateful thanks". <sup>4</sup> Such a gesture would reflect not only the community's compassion for her difficulties, but also the fact that the Brickwoods were 'industrious poor' who were worthy recipients of such charity, although this donation would only have assisted Mary Ann temporarily.

Her husband's death was followed two months later by that of her oldest son, also Henry, aged ten. With her remaining children all being of school age or younger, she would have had no income. Her three-year-old son, Thomas, was sent to live with relatives and Mary Ann continued to support the five others by working as a laundress and claiming out-relief. Her baby was born in March 1861 and was named Henrietta, recalling her late husband and child.

Within two years she had formed a relationship with an agricultural labourer living near her Ditton home, **William Jones**, and had a son by him in 1863. This would have severely affected her ability to apply for out-relief; having had a child outside marriage she would cease to be regarded as one of the respectable poor. By 1864 she and her children had entered the workhouse. Although Mary would have kept her youngest children with her in the workhouse, the older children were sent to the North Surrey District School.

**Ellen**, the oldest child, had been sent to the District School in 1856 when her family first entered the workhouse, but on the second occasion, 1864, she would have been aged fifteen. She may have been with her mother in the adult section of the Kingston Workhouse, or she may have obtained work and remained outside. By 1871, when she was aged twenty-two, she was working as a domestic servant, and was in the Margate Infirmary as an inmate. She subsequently took up nursing, and between 1878 and 1881 worked at various hospitals including the Surbiton Cottage Hospital, and the Margate Infirmary, and in Fulham, although she was a patient herself at the Fever Hospital at Stockwell in 1881 when she contracted scarlet fever. She married in Hampton Wick in 1884.

**George** had been in the District School on the earlier occasion, in 1856, and this second time, 1864, he was aged 11. He was apprenticed from the District School to Dorking in 1865 when he was twelve. He later returned to live with his mother and stepfather and worked as a labourer. He remained in the Thames Ditton and Surbiton area into adulthood, married, and continued to undertake labouring work, sometimes at the waterworks as his late father had done.

**Emma** was aged ten when she went to the District School in 1864. In 1869 aged fifteen, she was apprenticed at Croydon, but returned to the District School. By 1871 she had found work as a servant in the home of a broker who lived at Giggs Hill, Thames Ditton, near to her family.

**Jane** was sent to the District School in 1864 aged eight and was apprenticed in April 1871, aged fourteen, in Upper Holloway. She returned to the Kingston area where she later married, and she and her husband moved to Yorkshire.

**Thomas Albert** was sent to live with an uncle and aunt when he was three, but was later taken into the District School with his brothers and sisters. He was apprenticed from the District School in January 1870 when he was aged twelve, to a Smack owner in Hull. He went to sea

on the fishing vessel, 'Truelove' in 1871 after which he spent much of his life travelling, spending time in New Zealand, then the army, returning to Long Ditton where he married, and he subsequently went to America.

Their mother, Mary Ann, left the workhouse around 1865 leaving her children in the District School. This would have enabled her to work for herself without the additional burden of providing for the children. She bore another son to William Jones, and married him in 1866. They later had a daughter, and by 1871 they had one of Mary Ann's older sons, George Brickwood, living with them at Winters Bridge. They subsequently moved into a four-roomed cottage nearby, and William carried on labouring to support the family until he was at least seventy.

Mary Ann's children by Henry Brickwood were geographically dispersed but many returned to their home area. Their oldest child, **Ellen**, was a domestic servant who became ill in her early twenties and in 1871 was a patient at the Royal Sea Bathing Infirmary at Margate, a hospital instituted for the poor, particularly for tuberculosis cases. **Emma** and **Jane** were sent into domestic service from the District School and lived at a distance from their home and from each other, but eventually returned to their parish of origin. Although **George** was sent from the District School into service in Dorking, he relinquished this in favour of labouring work in order to return to his family. **Thomas Albert** went the furthest from home, sent to Hull to join the fishing fleet at the young age of twelve and spent much of his life abroad.

Mary Ann and William Jones' oldest son, **William James Jones** (formerly Brickwood, that being his mother's name at the time of his birth) was "Said to be a very bad boy, gives much trouble to parents & police. Leaves home & will not go to school".<sup>5</sup> For one of his misdemeanours, stealing milk from outside a gate, he was sent to Wandsworth prison for a month in 1878, after which he was sent for five years to a reformatory. This was the Philanthropic Farm School at Redhill, Surrey, where he would have been trained in a basic trade and taught to work the land. He emigrated from the school to Canada in 1883, but returned to England and by 1890 was tramping around in Sussex looking for work. He then went to Wales, but by 1904 was looking for work in Surrey.

The two younger **Jones** children were Frederick John (baptised Brickwood, his mother's name, as his parents did not marry until the year after his birth) and Florence. Fred was working as a labourer by the time he was aged sixteen, and Florence remained with her parents and worked as a laundress.

**William and Mary Anne**

The experiences of this couple are similar in many ways to those of Henry and Mary Ann. Mary Anne was either a widow or unmarried mother with two young children and was working as a charwoman when she had a child by William Brickwood, whom she subsequently married. During the 1850s they lived in Surbiton, before moving from 9 Cleveland Road to Winter's Bridge, Long Ditton around the end of 1861.

During a period of twenty years William had frequent recourse to medical out-relief for various members of his family. In 1852 he suffered from "disease of bladder", in 1862 he claimed for his wife in childbirth and also when one of his children was run over.<sup>6</sup> In 1863 his family suffered from fever, one of his children had a severe cough, and his son, William, received medical relief for a period of six months.<sup>7</sup> The Board of Guardians were concerned by the overcrowded conditions in which this family lived. In order to afford the rent, the Brickwoods sublet some of the rooms to another family which meant that there were sixteen people living in one cottage.<sup>8</sup> Although the medical officer considered their living conditions far from satisfactory, he did not feel that the state of affairs was at all unusual for the area:

*I visited the cottage in the occupation of Brickwood at Winter's Bridge and find nothing there to call for a special report. This residence was formerly the Police Station and consists of 4 large rooms and a Scullery – Two are in the occupation of the Brickwoods and two in that of a family named Ridyers [sic] – the former pay 5/6 a week for the whole place and sublet for 3/6 to Ridgers. ... I might wish to see fewer occupants in this place but I can only say that more than half the paupers have less cubical space to live in, but as I can see no remedy I have never reported upon the subject. The cause of all this is the high rent of the cottages – seldom under 5/- a week – this is more than can be paid out of the earnings of one poor family, consequently they are obliged to sublet.<sup>9</sup>*

The continued medical assistance required by the family for their son, William, may have contributed to his removal to the workhouse in 1863, but as the remainder of the children were taken in to the workhouse the following year this suggests that the family continued to have financial difficulties. William had formerly been an agricultural labourer, but he spent most of his married life working as a gardener, and his wife as a laundress. His work would have been seasonally affected, and he took on general labouring work in the 1850s indicating that he was less able to undertake his usual employment, either through poor health or lack of employment opportunities. Difficulties drove the family to the workhouse in 1864 and seven of their children were sent to the District School. From here, the children were apprenticed to a variety of trades.

**Edward Stephen** was apprenticed to a baker in South Norwood, **Sarah Rebecca** was sent to be a servant in Lower Norwood, **William John** to a Licensed Victualler in Chelsea, but all three gradually returned to their home area to work, the two boys undertaking labouring work and Sarah finding work as a servant in a house in St James' Road, Surbiton.

**Alfred James** was apprenticed to a plumber when he was fourteen and lived with that family in Bow. **Henry George** was only twelve when he was apprenticed to Upper Norwood, but he returned to live with his parents and worked first as a servant, then a bricklayer's labourer. **Charles Frederick**, the youngest of the children to be sent to the District School, remained there until Kingston withdrew from the school district and, presumably, was sent on to the Brentwood Schools after Kingston subcontracted to the parish of St. Leonard's, Shoreditch. The youngest boy, **Albert Richard**, remained with his mother in the workhouse, but evidence suggests that it is likely he was later sent to the Cowley Schools, as he was later employed as a footman in Oxfordshire, in a household of eleven servants.

**Arthur Elisha** was apprenticed in 1871 at the age of thirteen to a fishmonger in Billingsgate; he was looking forward to being an errand boy in a shop, or a pageboy. Unfortunately he was passed on by the fishmonger to a fishing smack owner in Hull. This seems to have been common practice by the fishmongers who received pauper apprentices, although it was not officially sanctioned. In this way Arthur was sent to sea, quite against his mother's wishes and his own. His mother had written to the superintendent of the school the previous October saying that she did not wish her son to go to sea. By that date she would have been well acquainted with the conditions on the fishing fleet as Henry Brickwood's son, Thomas, had been transferred to a fishing smack from a fishmonger in a similar manner early in 1870. Her request was unheeded and Arthur was sent to sea in the 'Flying Cloud' and was drowned on his first voyage.

When Arthur's mother heard about his death she set out to find out the details directly from the smack owner, and travelled to London in order to trace him when they next docked there. The cost of the train fare she obtained from one of the Guardians. Once in London she heard the smack was at Gravesend, and she pawned her shawl to raise the additional fare, but on arrival in Gravesend she discovered that the vessel was at Southend, "to which place a man took her down in a boat for nothing". She learned from the mate of the 'Flying Cloud' that "the boy had told him over 100 times he never wished to come to sea ... he also told the same tale to everybody he came across". Despite the opinion of the District School that the boy had been willingly sent on trial to the fishing fleet, enquiries by the mother and by the Kingston Board of Guardians suggest that Arthur was under the impression he was "going away as errand boy or page boy".<sup>10</sup>

Despite the disbursement of her children into various apprenticeships and pauper schools, they maintained their family ties and the children undertook labouring work in order to return home, rather than continue in apprenticeships at a distance from the family. Despite her financial hardship, Mary Anne was determined to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the death of her son, Arthur, travelling some distance and pawning her shawl *en route*. This would appear to contradict any suggestion that the children of the poor might not be valued by their parents as objects of affection. "There is no reason to suppose that most parents did not have a natural

love for their children, and grieved over them when they died." <sup>11</sup> Cunningham felt the danger in some studies was that "children are more likely to be seen as assets or liabilities than as individuals who might or might not be loved." <sup>12</sup> Incidents such as this remind historians that these were 'flesh and blood children'.

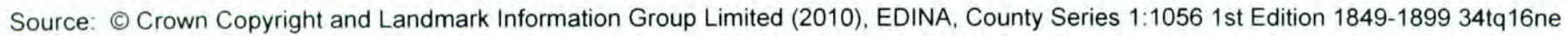
After leaving the workhouse, William and Mary Anne lived in Weston Green, at the western end of the village of Thames Ditton. During the 1870s they continued to claim medical relief for a variety of ailments. Three of their sons who had been in the District School had returned to live with them; Sarah was in nearby Surbiton as a live-in servant. Mary Anne may have had as many as fourteen children and had to relinquish the care of many of them for as much as five years, yet it did not follow that she was no longer concerned for them. As Pollock argued, "parents have always tried to do what is best for their children, within the context of their society". <sup>13</sup> In 1881, by which time Mary Ann was widowed, she had the support of three unmarried children living with her. She died in 1885, aged sixty-two.

The Brickwoods provide an example of a family dependent on the additional support available through the Poor Law. During certain periods of their lives they received medical relief, out-relief and in-relief. The adults were, on occasions, able to maintain themselves in their own homes when some of their dependent children were accommodated in the workhouse. They benefited from community support through the help of relations, donations and employment.

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- <sup>1</sup> PCC Will of Christopher Bythewood, TNA PROB11/1842, 1835.
  - <sup>2</sup> Kingston Baptisms 1850 Brickwood/Close and 1861 Kingston Census; Kingston Baptisms 1864 Brickwood and 1871 Thames Ditton Census RG10/863.
  - <sup>3</sup> Kingston Board of Guardians Minute Book SHC BG8/11/4, 17 Jan.1854.
  - <sup>4</sup> Inquest held at Masons' Arms, Long Ditton, before W. Carter, Esq., Coroner, *Surrey Comet*, 28 July 1860, p.4 col. 5.
  - <sup>5</sup> SHC 2271/10/17 Philanthropic Farm School Admissions, p.527.
  - <sup>6</sup> SHC BG8/11/4, 26 Oct.1852; SHC BG8/11/7, 25 Mar.1862, 8 July 1862.
  - <sup>7</sup> SHC BG8/11/8, 29 Sept.1863.
  - <sup>8</sup> SHC BG8/11/7, 10 Feb.1863.
  - <sup>9</sup> M.P. Coleman, Medical Officer, letter 16 Feb 1863 to the Board of Guardians. SHC BG8/11/7, 17 Feb.1863.
  - <sup>10</sup> *Enquiry into the Drowning of a Pauper Boy*, Board of Guardians' meeting 20 June 1871, *Surrey Comet*, 24 June 1871, p.2 cols. 5-6.
  - <sup>11</sup> F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain 1830-1900* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), pp.123-4; Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*), p.116.
  - <sup>12</sup> Cunningham, *Children & Childhood in Western Society*, p.80.
  - <sup>13</sup> Linda A. Pollock, 'The Forgotten Children', PhD thesis University of St. Andrews 1982, published as *Forgotten Children. Parent-child relations from 1500 to 1900*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.136 quoted in Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, p.6.



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**Figure 6.2 Brickwood family – Henry & Mary Ann**

1841 Census suggests that Henry is the brother of William. They were sons of John & Mary Brickwood, Agricultural Labourer, Collar Makers Bridge, Thames Ditton

**1853:** Medical Relief, Rheumatism  
**Jan 1854:** Medical Relief, Wife Hysteria  
**Jan 1854:** No work, severe weather  
**1855-56:** Parents & children in workhouse given 12 days work @ 1/- & a loaf per day out-relief wife and 5 children. Out of work – bad weather  
**Feb 1858:** Out-relief  
**1861:** Out-relief

**Henry BRICKWOOD**  
b.1823 Long Ditton  
1841: age 15, with parents, Collar Makers Bridge, Thames Ditton  
1851: Bricklayer's lab, High St, TD  
1851-4: Bricklayer's Labourer, Kingston  
1856: In workhouse  
1858: Long Ditton, receiving out-relief  
d. 19 July 1860, collapsed at work at Chelsea Water Works

**Mary (Ann) GLAZIER**  
b 1827 Fernhurst, Sussex  
1851: With husb; her brother & sister with them  
1861: Widow, Laundress, Ditton Street, Winters Bridge, Thames Ditton  
1864: Charwoman, Thames Ditton, then in workhouse  
1866: Married William JONES  
1871: Married to Wm Jones, living at Winters Bridge, Thames Ditton, Charwoman  
1878: Washing  
1881-1893: living at South Bank Cottages, Long Ditton (4 rooms)  
d. Jan 1893

**William JONES**  
b. ca 1821 Long Ditton  
1861: Agricultural Labourer, Portsmouth Rd, Long Ditton  
1866: Married Mary Ann  
1871: Lab, Winters Bridge  
1878: 'Labourer at Waterworks since 1856'  
1878-1894: Living at 15 South Bank, Long Ditton (4 roomed cottage), General Labourer

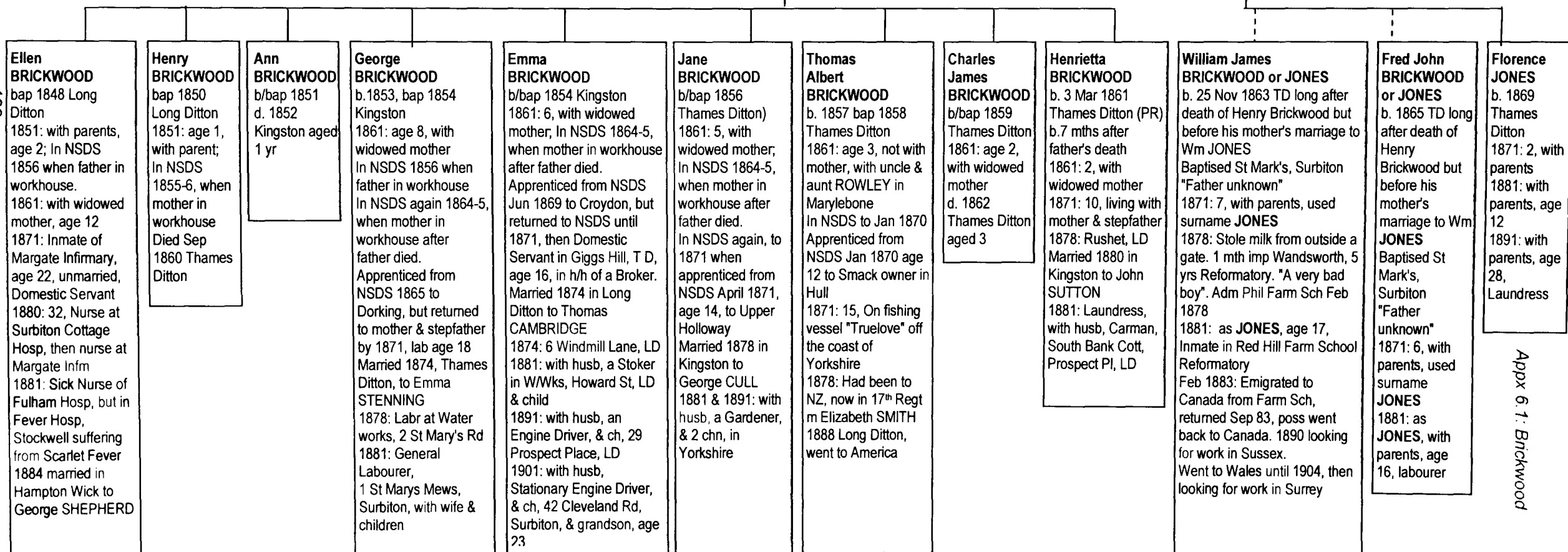
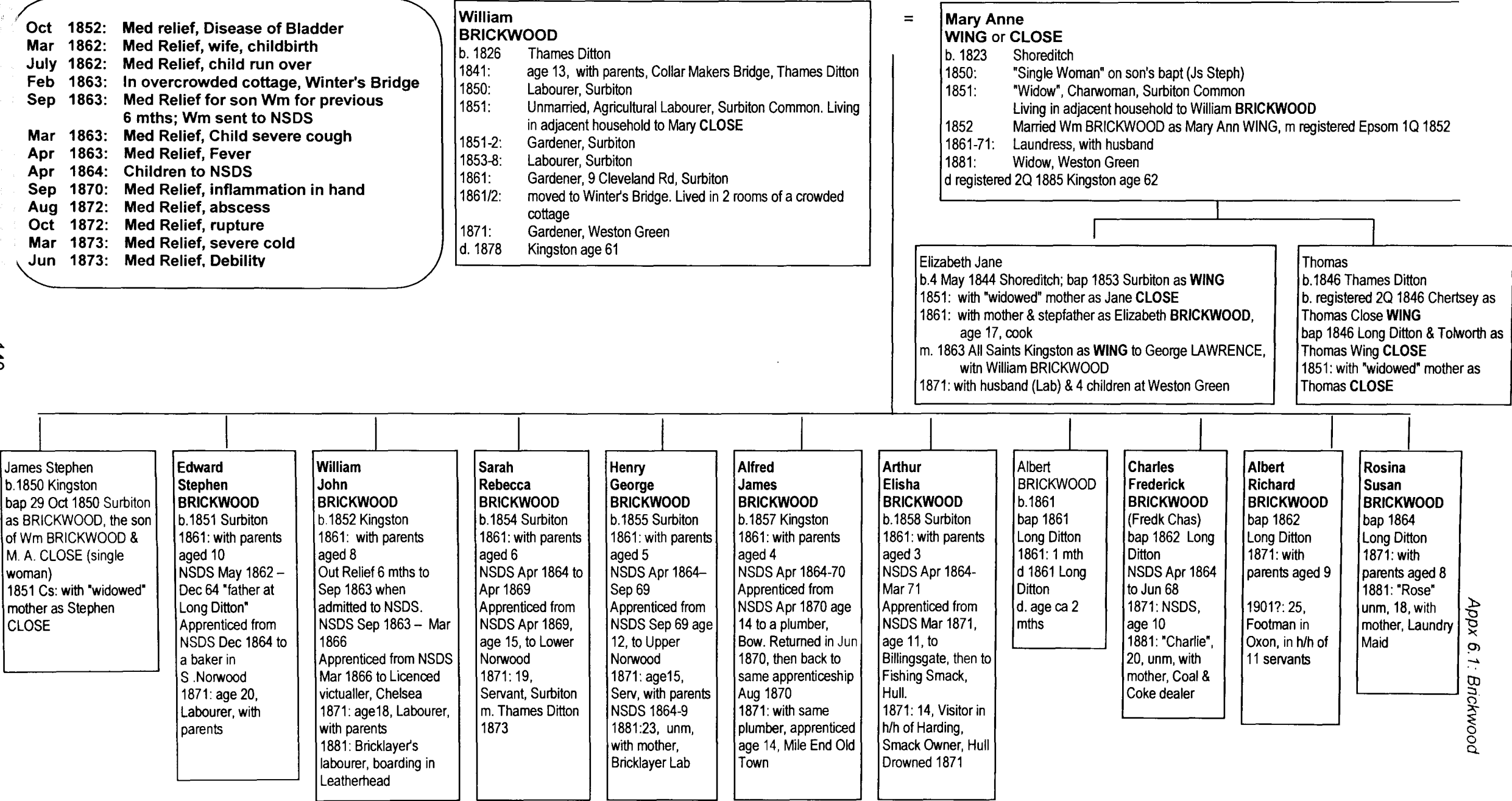


Figure 6.3 Brickwood family – William & Mary Anne

1841 Census suggests that William is the brother of Henry. They were sons of John & Mary Brickwood, Agricultural Labourer, Collar Makers Bridge, Thames Ditton



## **CHAPTER 7**

### **On the Verge of Destitution**

**"the state of the poor in their fetid courts" <sup>1</sup>**

*Chairman of the Anniversary Meeting of the  
Kingston Ragged School, Dec 1860*

#### **7.1 Introduction**

The earlier chapters have dealt largely with orphaned and destitute children who were inmates of the workhouse school. Although many children, such as George Surbiton, spent their entire childhoods in these Poor Law institutions, there were many who entered the system for a short time only, and others who repeatedly entered and left as their family circumstances changed. Any study of destitution which focuses solely on in-relief overlooks the many families who struggled, with varying degrees of success, to survive independently. It is therefore important to include families living on the edge of destitution, as well as those in the workhouse, in order to appreciate more fully the experience of poor children. As Snell emphasises, the workhouse did not dominate the system of the new Poor Law and many people received assistance at home. <sup>2</sup> This study endeavours to broaden understanding of the experience of children living in poverty by considering their world beyond the workhouse, within their family and community, both before succumbing to destitution and attempting to regain independence.

Various important factors contributed to the poverty of many labouring families in Kingston. Firstly, there were economic difficulties, relating to employment within the town and family income, and secondly, those associated with the growth of Kingston and its increasing population. Both these aspects generated opportunities, but they also produced problems. A third aspect was universal and related to family structure and the shifting economic needs of a family at different points in the life cycle. This chapter will deal with employment for labouring families in Kingston, the Guardians' response to unemployment, and the effect of poverty on living conditions. A number of other contributory causes of financial hardship will be explored, together with the efforts of the poor to overcome them.

One of the consequences of strains in the family economy resulted in accommodation difficulties, and this chapter will examine some of the poorer areas of Kingston and the home environment. The impact family poverty had on children will be explored through individual examples, and will feature in the Bulbeck case study. The previous three chapters illustrated occasions in which the spheres of Poor Law and philanthropy merged, and this aspect of dual relief will be further apparent when considering families endeavouring to survive poverty. There were a number of coping strategies taken by labouring families in their attempts to keep the workhouse at bay, and this enabled some to survive on the fringes of destitution, yet for other families these were insufficient, unexplored, or thoroughly exhausted, and they entered the

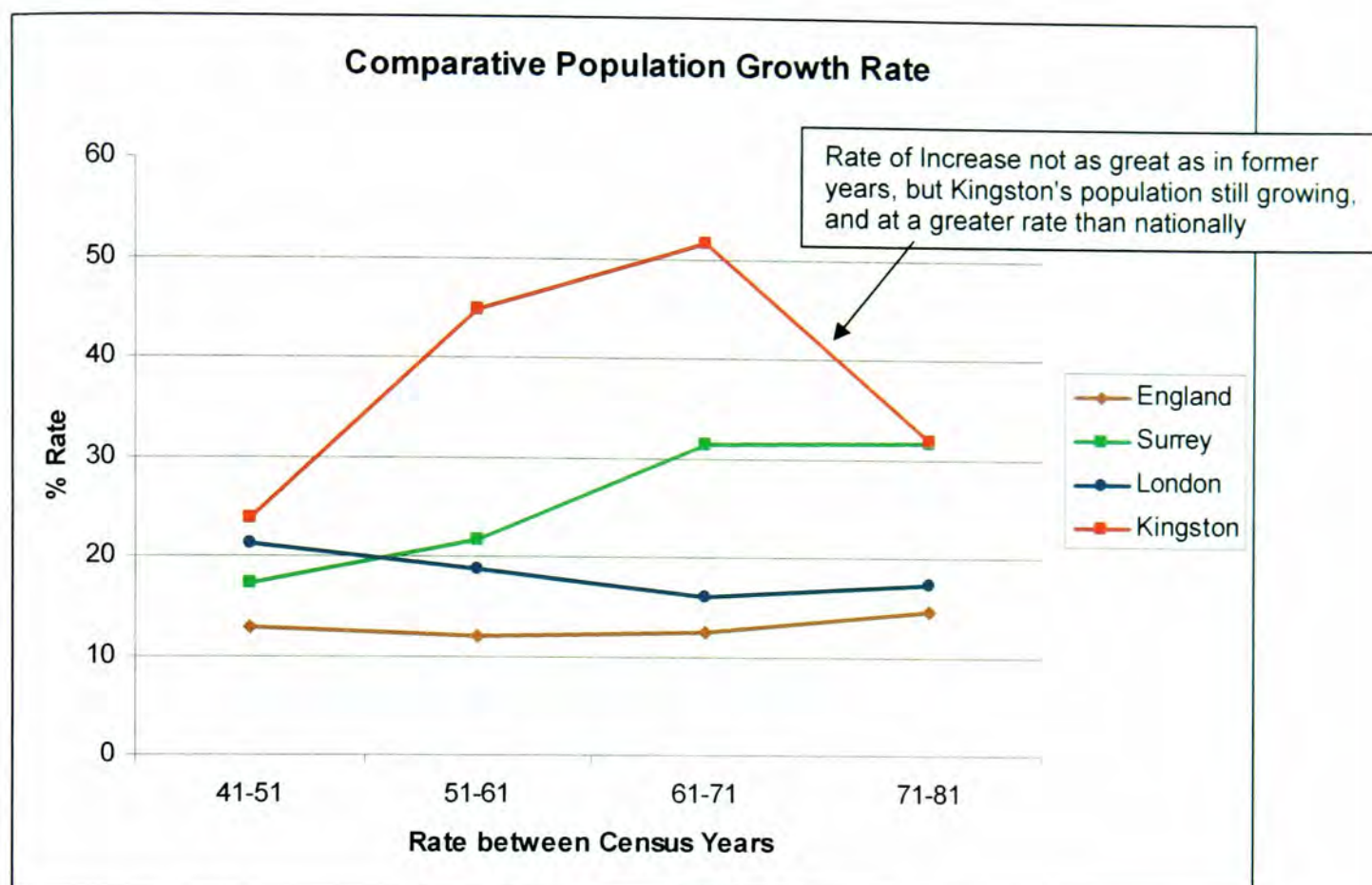
workhouse. A variety of situations led to the necessity of applying for relief; similarly changes in the family circumstances could restore independence. Kingston Guardians' attitude towards out-relief and temporary unemployment will be explored in some depth, as this refutes the assumption that local officials sought to bring destitute children into the workhouse without regard to family unity.

Kingston was a traditional market town within which industries derived from agricultural products, such as milling, brewing and tanning, were extremely important. As the century progressed, the character and economic structure of the area altered. The arrival of the railway first at Surbiton in 1838, later at Kingston in 1863, encouraged suburban growth and London commuting. "The local economic structure altered as agriculture became less important [...] at the same time Kingston developed as the economic focus of Surrey."<sup>3</sup> This rapid suburban growth generated labouring opportunities in the building trades, on the railway and at the new water treatment works and reservoirs. Such occupations, whilst providing labouring work for much of the year, were also highly dependent on weather conditions, and resulted in periods of seasonal unemployment in the winter when the ground was too hard to work, or during extended periods of wet weather.

At the same time, Kingston was undergoing a considerable increase in population, being "twice the national rate for much of the century and thrice the national rate in the decades of 1860s and 1870s".<sup>4</sup> [Figure 7.1] The rapid growth following the arrival of the railway could not be maintained, but although Kingston's population growth rate slowed during the 1870s, it still exceeded the national average. It also remained greater than many other Surrey towns, with two significant exceptions. Guildford's population growth rate was less marked, and in fact had begun to decline until after 1861, but steadily continued into the 1880s, reflecting improved transport links. Croydon, where the population growth rate had matched that of Kingston until 1861, was a much larger town and maintained a high rate until 1871.<sup>5</sup> This very rapid growth "caused serious problems of public health, public order, poor relief and social well-being".<sup>6</sup> The growth of the town certainly provided employment opportunities for labourers and also for domestic servants, but with much outdoor labouring work being seasonal and with so many families dependant on the wages from such work, these labouring families were financially very vulnerable. A number of historians including Fowler, Hopkins, Kidd and Walvin point out that many families could barely make ends meet on a daily basis and were consequently unable to save or contribute to a Friendly Society to see them through times of hardship.<sup>7</sup>

This vulnerability is evident in the third factor contributing to family poverty, the varying economic demands on a family during the life-cycle, which made people more vulnerable at certain stages of life.<sup>8</sup> Rowntree described how the "life of a labourer is marked by five alternating periods of want and comparative plenty".<sup>9</sup> When children were young they were an economic burden, requiring care and the availability of an adult, usually the mother or an older

**Figure 7.1**



**Figure 7.2 Population Figures on which the above growth rates were based**

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
England	15,002,443	16,921,888	18,954,444	21,291,923	24,396,546
Surrey	582,678	683,082	831,093	1,091,635	1,436,899
London	1,948,417	2,362,236	2,803,989	3,254,260	3,816,483
Kingston	10,218	12,656	18,331	27,769	36,597

Source: Population Tables, Census of England and Wales, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881 <sup>10</sup>

sibling. Not only would the child be too young to contribute to the family income, and require food and clothing, but the adult caring for the children would be restricted in employment. As children grew old enough to require less daily care and take some paid work, the strains on the family economy would ease. With a number of children in regular employment, the family would be in a relatively easier economic situation, until the restrictions of old age brought a return of the combined care needs and reduced earning capabilities. Rowntree also identified a number of causes of poverty in York, encompassing death or incapacity of the chief wage-earner, unemployment or irregularity of employment, and family size, and which are mirrored within the Kingston area.<sup>11</sup>

## **7.2 Unemployment and Out-Relief**

The development of Kingston offered a number of employment opportunities for labouring men, which helped to ameliorate the effect of the decline in demand for agricultural labour. Speculative building required labourers in house-building and road-making. Labourers were needed in the construction and maintenance of the railway. The requirements of a growing professional population in Surbiton, combined with the stipulations of the Metropolis Water Act of 1852, prompted water supply and sewage drainage schemes, which all provided work for unskilled labourers. Yet these were areas of irregular employment and were also affected by adverse weather conditions; when the ground was too hard to work, these men, many with families to support, had no income. Ashworth refers to the seasonality of some fields of urban employment and uses as his example the impact of temporary unemployment in manufacturing districts.<sup>12</sup> "Localised poverty", states Walvin, "was to plague Britain".<sup>13</sup> The examples he gives of towns dependent on one specialist trade or area of manufacturing was not the case in Kingston, but the general opportunities for labourers for various new enterprises in the area attracted a workforce which was left destitute if bad weather caused a cessation of activities. For families with no savings, even short periods of unemployment could result in rapid destitution, but in the Kingston Union at least this did not necessarily result in the family entering the workhouse.

Prior to 1834, temporary unemployment due to severe winter weather had been dealt with in Kingston by the provision of some form of outdoor relief supplemented by charity, and the able-bodied poor had not necessarily been obliged to enter the workhouse.<sup>14</sup> The Kingston Guardians were aware of the seasonal feature of outdoor labouring, and even after the introduction of the New Poor Law they maintained the practice of providing out-relief where possible as being the most economic and least disruptive option. This was in opposition to the policy of the successive central boards; unions in England and Wales accepted what MacKinnon describes as the "crusade against out-relief" with varying degrees of compliance.<sup>15</sup> Fowler states that "In most of the cases that came before the relieving officers or the Guardians, the granting of a few shillings out-relief would have proved considerably cheaper for ratepayers and better for applicants. However, this was not how the Guardians saw it. Those seeking

relief were to be offered the workhouse and nothing else." <sup>16</sup> Yet this cannot be said to have applied in Kingston, where the Guardians continued to favour out-relief for families with children even into the 1880s.

However, Kingston's reputation for liberality attracted the attention not only of the central board, but the Guardians and paupers of other unions. From conversations with representatives of surrounding unions in 1841, the Kingston Guardians gradually became aware that their attempts to continue to apply relief in accordance with their own ethos, rather than that of the Poor Law Commissioners', meant that they were being taken advantage of, not only by the idle but by neighbouring unions as well. The Relieving Officer for Epsom implied that Kingston's policy was to Epsom's benefit, as their able-bodied who were denied out-relief

*pushed themselves into work either at home or in such Unions as [Kingston] where a less stringent system was adopted and where the native laborers were encouraged in indolence by having relief to a very large amount for minimal labor.* <sup>17</sup>

The Master of the Chertsey Union extolled the success of their own newly-installed bone mill, recommending it to Kingston as an efficient workhouse test as, since it had been installed, they had had very few applicants for relief. Kingston Union's Relieving Officer acknowledged the problems of differentiating between the deserving and idle poor: "This subject has occupied the thoughts of the most enlightened and humane men of this country for the last quarter of a century without removing or hardly lessening the difficulties described". <sup>18</sup> Kingston Guardians' solution was to have two classes of able-bodied pauper and treat them differently, that is, with a stricter application of the workhouse test to habitual paupers, and continue their more lenient attitude towards families with more than one child. This was a significant turning point in Kingston's relinquishment of its 'old' Poor Law liberality and its reluctant acquiescence of the new ways, albeit in a very small degree. Yet it also stresses Kingston's continued belief in local solutions through local knowledge. The Guardians were reluctant to take the step of breaking-up a family. In some cases they were hesitant about taking a man into the workhouse if it left his wife unprotected at home, a problem which particularly concerned the Wimbledon parish:

*Taking the man into the House and providing for families is subject to objections, for instance there are many women particularly at Wimbledon who take more money home to their families than the man – it is likewise leaving a woman without protection and the man known to be for a week safe in a workhouse, there are numbers of men who would avail themselves of such opportunity to take advantage of her.* <sup>19</sup>

Kingston Guardians displayed a pragmatic attitude, for example in 1852 they were not only "reluctant" to bring Thomas Berkshire, "a steady, well conducted man" into the workhouse with his wife and children, but also argued against "the rigid observance of the [Prohibitory] order [of 17th August 1852]". They saw little point in Berkshire walking four-and-a-half miles from Wimbledon to the workhouse every morning to undertake task-work and then home again every



evening, especially as the poor weather limited the work they could hope to offer the temporarily unemployed.<sup>20</sup>

Thus whilst neighbouring unions were able to find a variety of ways of applying the workhouse test, Kingston found a number of reasons for not resorting to it and for continuing to grant out-relief for families instead. Such out-relief might have been inadequate, but at least these families, like many others in Kingston during the worst winters, were not obliged to enter the workhouse. The general awareness of Kingston Guardians' policy on relief might indeed have encouraged opportunists to apply, and swell the relief lists, as the Poor Law Inspectors feared. Yet the knowledge that the Guardians were unlikely to demand admission to the workhouse in such cases may have given those families in temporary difficulties the confidence to ask for help. It could also be argued that through its reputation for liberality which attracted the unskilled and low-paid labourer, Kingston's town economy benefitted.

Hopkins states that "Outside the workhouse, children were affected by the determination to restrict outdoor relief...".<sup>21</sup> It was certainly the case, as shown in previous chapters, that official measures regarding the able-bodied adversely affected the treatment of children who were supposed to be beyond the more stringent clauses of the Poor Laws. Yet Kingston's policy regarding out-relief for families did ameliorate the effect on children. During the winter of 1859-60, for example, more than 400 children were spared the workhouse during these months due to Kingston providing temporary out-relief to able-bodied men with families. A decade later the Kingston Guardians argued with the Local Government Board (LGB) in defence of their policy:

*We must temper the administration of justice with a little mercy. It seems a hard-hearted and unkind thing to drive men, women, and children from their homes where they have been brought up, because they shall be tested [in the workhouse]. ...Some men would sooner die in a ditch than come here.*<sup>22</sup>

Previously, the Guardians had submitted an economic foundation for this argument to the Poor Law Board (PLB), as it then was, but concluded with a sharp remark

*... had the workhouse test been applied, it would have been refused, and semi-starvation preferred as a lesser evil than the breaking up of their homes, emaciation and physical deterioration would ensue, and the starved children would be brought under medical treatment, involving greater evils and far heavier loss than have been incurred by the considerate and merciful course which the guardians adopted. The enlargement of the workhouse was not however made with any intention harshly to violate the natural feelings of a poor man in favour of a home of his own, merely to fill it...*<sup>23</sup>

The sense of community suggested by the phrase "where they have been brought up" may go some way to explaining the comparative tolerance of the administrators of Kingston towards the settled community when compared with attitudes towards outsiders. Vagrants, beggars and gypsy children might be dealt with by imprisonment, the workhouse, an industrial school or simply by moving them on to another area. George Page, aged 12, was found wandering in



**Figure 7.3**

George Page, age 12



Source: Wandsworth Gaol. Prisoners: photograph album<sup>24</sup>

Molesey with no visible means of subsistence, and was sent to a Reformatory for five years, none of the leniency being shown to this vagrant which was often afforded to the local children.<sup>25</sup> [Figure 7.3] James Farmer, described as a "waif and stray" was found in the cabin of a barge at Kingston, having committed damage to the barge to the amount of 3d. He was sent to a reformatory for four years, with the likelihood of being placed on a training ship.<sup>26</sup>

Mary MacKinnon contends that the 'crusade' against out-relief was driven from below, by the desire of unions to reduce their expenditure.<sup>27</sup> There is, in Kingston, evidence to the contrary. Whilst the ultimate deterrent for Kingston was, indeed, financial, the desire to curb out-relief came not from below but from above. Whilst Kingston had been able to exploit any available loopholes in the system to provide out-relief they had done so, and would probably have continued to do so more frequently after 1871 had the LGB not imposed their more stringent measures. Although Kingston had been served with a 'Prohibitory Order' restricting out-relief for the able-bodied, the Guardians had managed to avoid its application to a large extent for many years. This they did by providing outrelief, and subsequently applying to the PLB for retrospective sanction for their *faits accomplis*. The PLB Inspector, Mr. Longley, visited the Kingston Board in 1870 and found that "The Guardians almost unanimously expressed their preference for temporary relief in kind in aid of wages unaccompanied by any test, over either an outdoor Labour, or the Workhouse test", and tried "in vain" to change their views.<sup>28</sup> From 1871 the newly instigated LGB took a much tougher line in their determination to curb out-relief. They refused to reimburse any future payments which Kingston might make, and Kingston were at last obliged to cease providing out-relief to the able-bodied and their families, but even then they continued to hold to their views. There were still occasions when the Guardians attempted to obtain sanction for other forms of unorthodox assistance, and this would appear to illustrate their pragmatic defence of assisting the poor in their homes, rather than a desire to deter applicants by applying the 'workhouse test'. Even in 1882, ten years after the LGB had imposed stricter sanctions against out-relief, opinion in Kingston was challenging. The editorial in the *Surrey Comet* spoke against the LGBs harsh attitude and stated "in the name of our common humanity, let us temper the administration of the poor law with some degree of mercy and sympathy for the wretched and unfortunate."<sup>29</sup>

The PLB and, from 1871 the LGB, felt that the way to eradicate poverty was by discouraging the poor from applying for relief, but eradicating pauperism did not remove poverty. The *Surrey Comet* viewed it in 1882 as an attempt to "stamp out a large proportion of pauperism by starvation".<sup>30</sup> The LGBs arguments were much broader than those considered by the Kingston Guardians. The wider view concerned national economics, unemployment and wage levels; Kingston's considerations did not extend beyond the boundaries of the Union. The Poor Law Inspector, Mr. Wodehouse, endeavoured to prove to Kingston that pauperism had decreased considerably in the more stringent unions, and that Kingston, by its liberality, was merely encouraging low wages and dependency, but his argument was to no avail. Only an outright refusal by the LGB to meet the costs of Kingston's policy produced the desired result.

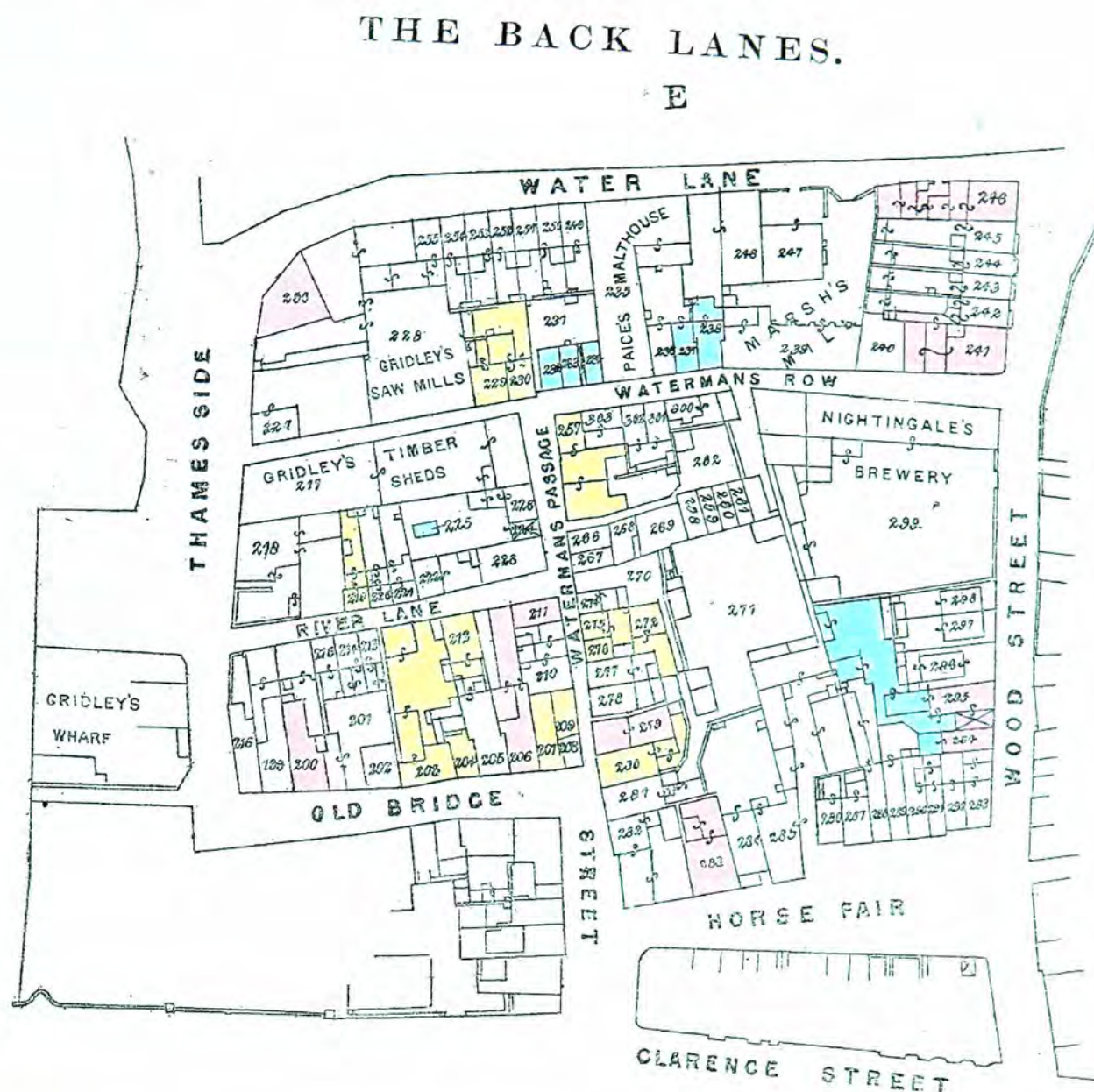
### 7.3 Housing Conditions and Slum Areas

Mr. Wodehouse's observations on low wages did reflect the experiences of Kingston's labouring workforce. For a family earning low wages, it was important to have affordable accommodation, but rents were high as cottage building in Kingston failed to keep pace with the influx of labourers and rent accounted for around a third of a labouring family's budget.<sup>31</sup> Rowntree showed how the lower the family income, the greater the proportion of that income was allocated to rent.<sup>32</sup> Cottage rents in the village of Thames Ditton in 1863 were "seldom under 5/- a week", more than a poor family could afford without subletting.<sup>33</sup> In 1870 rents in the Kingston tenements of Young's Buildings varied from 6s 9d to 8s per week according to their condition, which was mostly poor, and at a time when a labourer might earn around 20s per week.<sup>34</sup> This would necessitate 34% of his earnings being spent on a "damp, dirty and disagreeable" basement room 11 ft by 10 ft, with a scullery. Allocating 40% of his earnings to rent might obtain him a room marginally larger. Not surprisingly, these rooms contained more than one family.<sup>35</sup> In the Back Lanes, a coal porter could earn an average of 18s a week, but this was casual labour and could not be relied upon. A carpenter living in the same area could earn more, 25/- a week.<sup>36</sup> By 1890 it was possible to acquire a room in a tenement in the Back Lanes for 4/- per week, or alternatively a shed, or an old gypsy van in a yard.<sup>37</sup>

The size of the rents compared to earnings forced the poorest families into multiple occupancy dwellings, evidence of which can be seen in Kingston.<sup>38</sup> In his study of social conditions in Kingston, French identified two survival strategies used by the inhabitants of the small, five-roomed cottages in Fairfield Place, that of sub-letting part of the cottage to another family to reduce the rent, and also of taking in lodgers. This resulted in overcrowding of these small dwellings, with the average number of people per cottage in 1871 being 7.7, which increased later in the century.<sup>39</sup> Rodger suggests an additional strategy, that of renting the level of accommodation which might be affordable during the slackest employment periods.<sup>40</sup> This may go some way to explaining the persistence of families, such as the Bulbecks, in the Back Lanes area, which suited their irregular employment and unpredictability of earnings.

The 'Back Lanes', one of Kingston's worst slum areas, was a collection of narrow streets near Kingston Bridge comprising just over three acres. [Figure 7.4] In 1851 these were home to labourers, watermen, coal heavers, tanners and chimney sweeps. Merryweather, writing in 1887, described them as "the shanties, the frail tenements, the huts ... in the stifling alleys of old Kingston".<sup>41</sup> The area also contained a number of lodging houses and public houses; it was estimated that during 1880 the lodging-houses of Kingston had housed a total of nearly 50,000 people.<sup>42</sup> As pointed out by Crook, "precise numbers are elusive" and the details of lodging house occupation cannot be clearly reflected in such figures.<sup>43</sup> The figure given would have represented not only single-night visitors, but also repeated visits and long-term residents over the period of one year. However, as the total population of Kingston at the time was approximately 36,000, this figure certainly suggests a considerable movement of people, with

**Figure 7.4 Map of the Back Lanes, Kingston, ca 1890**  
 Showing the location of Lodging Houses, Tenements & Public Houses



- Lodging Houses
- Tenements
- Pubs with lodgings

**Lodging Houses:** 203, 204, 207, 209, 212, 219, 229, 230, 257, 272, 275, 276 and 280  
**Tenements:** 232, 233, 234, 237, 238, 294 and 295  
**Public Houses:** Old Bridge Street: 200 Lord Nelson, 206 Black Lion  
 Waterman's Passage: 211 New Three Tuns, 279 Barley Mow  
 Wood Street: 241 Royal Oak, 246 The Two Brewers, 294 & 295 The Running Horse  
 Horsefair: 283 The Old Ship  
 Waterside: 256 The Outrigger

Source: *Surrey Comet*, 15 Feb 1890 p.3 cols.4-6



temporary visitors, travellers, and families changing lodgings. The long-established coaching function of the town with its abundance of inns, the popular markets and fairs, the courts, and the presence of the militia, gave rise to a transient element of the population. For many families there was also the continual search for somewhere cheaper to live, or their attempts to avoid the landlord.

One family which spent most of their lives in the Back Lanes were the Bulbeck family, the subject of the case study to this chapter. They lived in the Back Lanes from the 1850s to the 1890s, principally in Watermans Passage. William Bulbeck was a labourer, his wife a laundress; his sons also became labourers and his daughters later worked as hawkers. William took various labouring jobs, and during times when he was employed in ground labouring rather than heaving coal his work was more vulnerable to the severe frosts of winter. On these occasions he was obliged to apply for relief for himself, his wife and children. The Guardians preferred not to bring families into the workhouse on these occasions, as it was felt to be a costly undertaking to provide in-relief for a large family, and as a change in the weather was likely to rectify matters it was not considered worthwhile breaking up the family. William was one of many to be offered employment at the workhouse in return for out-relief. Bad weather and temporary loss of employment were not the only strains on family income; medical care was beyond the means of many, and throughout a period of twelve years William obtained medical out-relief for his children for the respiratory diseases pneumonia, bronchitis and whooping cough, as well as general fever.

In the poor quality 'Young's Buildings' in Heathen (Eden) Street lived many labourers in the building trades. Both the Back Lanes and Young's Buildings contained hawkers and laundresses. The conditions in Young's Buildings embodied the type of multiple occupancy tenements usually associated with the overcrowded metropolis. The property was entered through a narrow passage and was surrounded by buildings, consequently ventilation was poor, and was made worse by heaps of horse dung and the smell from a nearby slaughterhouse. Considering the usual smells of Kingston created by industries such as brewing and tanning, the stench must have been particularly bad to have aroused comment. The houses were damp and dirty and each contained two or three families who appeared poorly nourished and in bad health. One family slept in a corner of a room, with father, mother and children all sleeping together on a heap of shavings. Far from effecting their own repairs, which they were supposed to do, the broken doors and missing banisters probably reflected the occupants' need to obtain some kind of fuel for warmth and cooking. The Medical Officer described it in 1870 thus:

*Young's Buildings is approached from Eden street by a narrow entrance, under an archway, through a serpentine passage ... badly paved and ill drained. [...] the place stinks, not from its own impurities alone, but from the emanations of the surrounding yards and buildings. [...] The ground floor, or basement [is] unfit for habitation.[...] [T]he majority of [tenements] are dirty and ill kept [...] The houses generally are damp, dirty and disagreeable, and badly ventilated, except where the doors and sashes are broken ...*

*which is more frequently the rule than the exception... The majority of the inhabitants, especially those occupying the top floors, are dirty, ill class, and badly nourished, and therefore unhealthy, and susceptible of disease. All the houses require thoroughly cleansing and disinfecting...*<sup>44</sup>

This report has echoes in an 1832 description of Liverpool slums referred to by Walvin:

*... each single room from eight to eleven feet square ... is inhabited by one, sometimes two, families, in which they both eat, drink, cook, wash and sleep. These houses are in general in a dilapidated state, with broken doors, mouldering walls tumbling to ruin, broken windows, in some cases no windows at all, and some without fireplaces...*<sup>45</sup>

Reading's study of Kingston's Town Council attributes such conditions to the general reluctance of the Town Council to spend money effecting improvements, and to the property interests of those on the Council, thus many of the recommendations of the medical officer were not acted upon with any enthusiasm, if at all.<sup>46</sup> The desirability of environmental and housing improvements "foundered", stated Rodger, on the disinclination of local councils "sensitive to electors' parsimony" to expend the necessary sums.<sup>47</sup>

Even newly erected cottages could be little better than the established slums. Such houses were described by Warwick Deeping as "built by a man without vision, for people who had not been taught to see".<sup>48</sup> His novel, *Smith*, set in early twentieth-century Kingston, evokes the experience of living in these Victorian workers' cottages, for the thinness of walls and nearness of neighbours removed privacy. The misery of having neighbours with troublesome children, or the inability to avoid the noise of drunken arguments and the cries of pain of mothers in labour, created an additional obstacle for those who wished to improve the morals, language and education of poor children.<sup>49</sup> The rapid building of cottages in which to house the incoming labourers, and the level of rents, resulted in poor quality dwellings in multiple occupancy. The building boom which followed the arrival of the railway resulted in hastily erected homes for labourers "inadequate in sanitation and water supply, and poorly constructed, with leaking roofs, and floors and walls that let in the damp."<sup>50</sup>

The sanitary arrangement of dwellings for the poor was described as being, in 1837, "deplorable".

*Laystalls and dunghills polluted even the busy streets of the borough. Garbage bestrewed about, festered in the closer lanes and alleys, and was only removed at long intervals. ... Open ditches ran along some of the most important thoroughfares, and for the convenience of sewerage, cottages were often built on their very banks in defiance of all the laws of health.*<sup>51</sup>

By 1871 there had been little change, as indicated by the medical officer, Mr. Kent, who visited a row of newly erected cottages and drew the attention of the Town Council to:

*the state of Legg's Row, which, he said, ought more properly to be denominated Legg's bog, an uncompleted thoroughfare leading from Cambridge-road into Washington-road. On one side there were 12 cottages, and on the other side four... The roadway was not made, and [...] it was a perfect bog. The entrance to the houses was below the level of the road, and on going down there in wet weather he got over his ankles in water. The houses were newly built, and the lower part of them, when any rain has fallen, are almost under water. If a person went upstairs he would see daylight through the ceilings of most of the bedrooms. Of course the water came through, and the occupants were obliged to move their bedding. The houses were totally unfit to habitation. The roadway was not drained, the sickness there was unprecedented in Kingston, and the people were in a most wretched condition.*<sup>52</sup>

Even after sanitary developments and improved water supplies, the very poorest homes did not benefit. As Butters points out: "The tenants could not afford it, and often landlords avoided the expense."<sup>53</sup> Many homes drew water direct from the Thames, and used communal privies which were prone to overflowing and polluting the domestic water supply. Despite their best efforts, even the most conscientious of housewives had an impossible job, although many did their best. As Hopkins points out,

*It is wrong to suppose that the wretched home conditions in the worst slums were typical of all working-class homes, and indeed it is insulting to the millions of working-class mothers who toiled ceaselessly to keep their homes clean and decent, often in the very adverse conditions of smoky industrial towns with their muddy roadways, filthy communal privies, and water for cleaning in short supply.*<sup>54</sup>

This is supported by the comments in the *Surrey Comet* editorial in 1860 on the efforts of many housewives coping with such conditions:

*In some of the dwellings in our back lanes it is impossible that the poor inmates can enjoy good health. They possess no outlet whatever at the back, not even a window, so that the air cannot pass freely through them, and the ceilings of the rooms are so low that a man of ordinary height cannot stand upright in them. They are destitute of the most common necessities for decency, one water-closet being made to serve for several dwellings. Some are without a sink ... and the dirty water is brought out and emptied into the uneven gutters in the centre of the lane and may be seen standing in fetid pools. Many possess no water supply at all, and it is much to the credit of the industrious poor that they keep their homes as clean as they do. [M]any fetch the water they use for drinking and all other purposes, direct from the Thames.*<sup>55</sup>

Not all mothers managed to keep their children clean under these circumstances. Children living in the 'Back Lanes' were variously described as 'urchins' or 'gutter children', poorly clothed and poorly washed. "John Dandy's mother sent a very impudent message relating to her boy being found fault with on account of his dirty habits", recorded the schoolmaster of one of the

'back lane' labourer's children in 1865.<sup>56</sup> "Elizabeth Duffell came to School this morning so dirty that no child could sit by her. I sent her home", bemoaned the schoolmistress.<sup>57</sup>

As well as prone to dirt and disease, the homes of these children were poorly heated; in wet weather it was impossible for the children to dry their clothes at home, and they would come into school in the morning in clothes still damp from the day before. "Nearly the whole morning taken up in lighting the Stove fire and drying the children's clothing", and "a great deal of trouble with the clothes in consequence of the heavy rain all day Sunday" were frequent laments of the Richmond Road School mistress.<sup>58</sup> Such conditions led to illnesses and absence. Home and school were both cold in winter; February 1865 found many of the children from this area suffering from extreme cold:

*Feb 13 Numbers crying with cold and chilblains. I lighted the stove Sunday Evening and kept it in all night but no writing could be done in the morning*

*Feb 16 Many very late ... and even then crying with the pain of their feet*<sup>59</sup>

Attendance, health and the ability to undertake school work or handicrafts was severely affected. Even by March that year "the fingers were so cold and stiff that those who were working all day did not do one hour's work".<sup>60</sup>

Away from the centre of the town to the east was an area known as the Wanderings, mainly rural with some brickfields. Farming interests in the area were generally smallholdings, but the farmland was beginning to be developed for housing. Living conditions here were also poor, and support Hopkins' remarks concerning dwellings in agricultural areas: "Whatever may be said about the horrors of urban housing, many working-class children grew up in cramped, damp, insanitary rural hovels...Professor Burnett has suggested that the agricultural worker was almost certainly the worst-housed among fully employed workers".<sup>61</sup>

Mr. Kent, the district Medical Officer, visited the Lower Wanderings in September 1859 to investigate a number of cases of diarrhoea and declared the houses there unhealthy. The conditions he found replicated the contamination which had been recently proved by Dr John Snow to be contributory to the spread of diseases such as cholera. There was a

*large uncovered well full of green stagnant water.... the houses were badly drained, many of the inmates were covered with parasitical insects, the cesspools were mere holes, and so overfilled that the ground becoming charged with faecal matter [contaminating] the well.... which contained the only water the inhabitants had to drink.*<sup>62</sup>

The well presented an added danger inasmuch as it was uncovered and Mr. Kent had nearly fallen into it. Where conditions like this existed, the Poor Law Guardians had no power; the only action they could take was to draw Kingston Corporation's attention to it and hope that landlords effected some improvements. The situation changed little over the next few years; Mr. Kent had to investigate the causes of disease in the Wanderings in February 1861, and once more a complaint was made to the Mayor of Kingston.<sup>63</sup> 1863 again saw a noticeable increase in the



number of cases of out-relief given due to sickness in the Wanderings area, the Guardians' only remedy being another stiff letter to the Town Council. The living conditions in the poorer areas of Kingston contributed to the increase of smallpox, scarlatina, typhoid and typhus fever, and the medical officers of the Union were overworked. Their additional burden was recognised by the Guardians but not, however, to the point of their being additionally remunerated. Conditions were still giving cause for concern into the 1890s, with high levels of infant deaths in the slums of Kingston.<sup>64</sup>

Even in homes elsewhere in the area of the Kingston Union decent accommodation was hard to find. The Brickwood family lived, in 1863, in a cottage at Winter's Bridge, Thames Ditton, for which they paid 5s 6d per week. In order to economise, they sublet to another family, the Ridgers, who paid them 3s 6d per week, and the two families, totalling sixteen people, shared the four rooms of the cottage. Dr Coleman, the Medical Officer for Thames Ditton, whilst deploring the overcrowding and living conditions, acknowledged that

*more than half the paupers have less cubical space to live in, but as I can see no remedy I have never reported upon the subject. The cause of all this is the high rent of the cottages – seldom under 5/- a week – this is more than can be paid out of the earnings of one poor family, consequently they are obliged to sublet.*<sup>65</sup>

It is significant that Dr Coleman had not previously made an issue of the living conditions of poor families in the area, as he felt that there was little which could be done to ameliorate them.

The Brickwood family, the case study in the previous chapter, were at one time agricultural labourers and had, by the 1850s, turned to gardening and general labouring, the wives supplementing the family income by washing laundry. For a period of twenty years during the 1850s to the 1870s they had repeated recourse to relief, arising from the illnesses of adults and children, accidents, or lack of winter employment. There were many occasions when the family was assisted through out-relief, and times when they came into the workhouse, the children receiving workhouse education, and finding employment through parish apprenticeships. The Ridgers family also had occasion to apply for medical relief, although one Ridgers family group was given assisted passage to the Cape of Good Hope in 1851, financially assisted also by the Guardians, £10 being a reasonable price to pay for the Guardians' release from any future burden.

In the growing commuter suburb of Surbiton there were also particular roads inhabited by the labouring families, such as George Street, later called Cottage Grove, but here conditions were somewhat better. In these cottages lived artisans and the labourers associated with the railway and the water works; here, too, many women earned money by washing. Although the George Street cottages were overcrowded by today's standards, they were certainly an improvement on the examples above. As observed by Booth, the relative predictability of income experienced by railway workers compared to building labourers enabled them to commit to slightly better quality, less crowded accommodation.<sup>66</sup> In George Street the average number of inhabitants

per cottage was 6.8 between 1851 and 1871, and each pair of cottages had a shared privy at the far end of the yard, with shared cesspools beneath. During particularly poor winters, unemployment began to affect even those labourers at the railway and waterworks who lived here, and also the more skilled labourers who had not previously had recourse to the Poor Law. In 1855 William Woolger, a ballast heaver with three young children applied for relief. His neighbour, William Novell, a waterworks excavator's labourer, was also out of work; he had a wife and nine children to support during this time.<sup>67</sup> William Fenn applied for relief, being unable to work due to the severe weather. He had a wife and two young children and was also an excavator at the water works.<sup>68</sup> Over the next thirty years Fenn undertook a variety of labouring jobs, garden labourer, ground labourer, house painter, always remaining resident in George Street. In 1873 he stole a quantity of oats, valued at 6d, for which he served fourteen days hard labour in Wandsworth Gaol.<sup>69</sup> His wife, like so many other labourers' wives, took in washing to make ends meet.

#### 7.4 Family and Community

In addition to seasonal unemployment as discussed above, there were a variety of additional causes affecting a family's finances. There was also a considerable range of coping strategies and support networks utilized by families to assist them through difficult times. As discussed, poor housing was one consequence of poverty, and the coping strategies associated with the cost of rent included multiple occupancy, taking in lodgers, or moving to a cheaper location. Yet there were other economic and social factors determining their existence, and consequences were not only practical, but moral and emotional as well. It was often the case that crises could be weathered to some extent through the use of various coping strategies, but accumulative difficulties could wear down these resources.

If the father of a family became ill, disabled, died, or deserted, the main source of family income could be lost without warning. Hopkins refers to the father's occupation and earnings as "the most significant" economic variable and "determinant of the family's life-style".<sup>70</sup> Without savings the loss of father's income could plunge a family into immediate poverty or destitution. As seen in the Brickwood case study in the previous chapter, the death of the father might leave a family destitute. The sudden death of Henry Brickwood at the age of thirty-six obliged his widow and young children to resort ultimately to accepting in-relief, and even though their mother found work and left the workhouse, the children remained as inmates. Disablement of the father could have a similar effect. John Shinn, born 1837 in Clerkenwell, the son of a cabinet-maker for whom trade was slack, remembered: "About this time (1845) my father had a very serious illness (a nervous breakdown) which lasted about three years, and was quite unable to do any work ... We were terribly short of both food and clothing."<sup>71</sup>

There were causes of temporary destitution which related to particular Kingston occupations. Wives of men employed in river trades might be left without support for long periods whilst their

husbands were travelling on the River Thames. Alfred Bullen was imprisoned for twenty-one days for neglecting to support his wife and child whilst he was upstream on his boat.<sup>72</sup> More frequently, claims for relief arose from the presence of the Militia. Troops would arrive at regular periods, bringing in tow a collection of wives, children, prostitutes and general hangers-on. Townsmen who joined the Militia then departed on manoeuvres leaving behind them wives and children without financial support. The *Surrey Comet* voiced the view "Thus it is the poor unfortunate ratepayers pay double for the defences of the country." It was also reported:

*Elizabeth Bullock applied for relief for herself and 3 children while her husband who is a militiaman is on duty. This man is a sack-carrier, (a good business generally in Kingston, formerly a very lucrative one,) and lives in the Back Lanes. When out of work, he entered the militia, in the hopes of improving his fortune; but now his wife and babies find,*

*He is a most unlucky wight,*

*For glory only he must fight.*

*Allowed 3s and three loaves per week.*<sup>73</sup>

It often fell to the mother to support the family in times of crisis and, even where the father was working but his wages insubstantial, her earnings could supplement the family income. In his study of cottage industries in Hertfordshire, Goose emphasises the complexity and regional variation in the importance of women's earnings in family economics.<sup>74</sup> Their contribution might or might not have been economically significant, but they could be vital in avoiding destitution. In the absence of a man's wage, a woman's earnings was one element in the 'economy of makeshifts'.<sup>75</sup> In Kingston, earning opportunities for poor women with a family tended to be in certain occupations. Apart from the possibility of prostitution, inevitable in a barracks town but difficult to quantify, the most usual occupations for poor women with small children were dressmaking, washing or mangling which could be carried on at home, or in charring. Davin maintains that such work "was done only by those with little choice, who were also the poorest, in the worst housing, and had children."<sup>76</sup> If they lived in unsanitary conditions, they might be less employable as washer-women during outbreaks of disease. Mr. Kent's laudable attempts to publicise conditions in Young's Buildings had the unfortunate effect of deterring housewives from sending their washing to the washerwomen lodging there, who consequently lost their source of income and were unable to pay the rent.<sup>77</sup> One laundress, Emma Brandon, resorted to theft, and was committed to Wandsworth for two months' hard labour in 1873.<sup>78</sup> Her situation did not improve as, by the winter of 1877, her two young children were in the workhouse.

The loss to the family of the mother had practical as well as financial consequences, for there would be no-one to look after the home or the children. A widower might remarry and thus obtain a carer for his home and children, although he might acquire step-children as a consequence. Sometimes the father could cope for short periods with the assistance of older children, and take over the household chores, but there were men for whom women's work was anathema: "Ranyard nurses on their rounds in the early 1870s [in London] met a husband who

starved himself rather than do his own cooking while his wife was disabled with badly burned and infected arms." <sup>79</sup>

With low-paid families, there was often insufficient income to allow for emergencies, the incapacity of a wife, or an extra mouth to feed. Cornelius Parfett, a farm labourer from the Wanderings, applied for relief in 1862 when his wife gave birth to their eighth child. His three older children, aged sixteen, fourteen and twelve, were all working as farm labourers. Sometimes the pressure became too much. William Lulham, a blacksmith, lost his job and turned to drink, although which came first is debatable. He was supporting his wife, teenage daughter and her illegitimate baby. He hung himself in April 1861. The coroner remarked that, "he was sorry to mention that this was the fourth case of the kind, and from a like cause" occurring within five days. <sup>80</sup>

The value of the mother to the family was not just a matter of housework, child-rearing and taking in washing. There was her financial and social resourcefulness, which could be vital elements in a family's survival. Her relationship with shopkeepers and landlord, her bargaining powers, her ability to obtain credit, her neighbourliness, her family relationships, and her ability to contribute to mutual community support, all helped to make the Poor Law a last resort rather than the only option. This is frequently referred to in reminiscences and is supported by examples from the Kingston area. Where families had relatives nearby, or were well established in the area and on good terms with their neighbours, they were able to help each other in times of need. This included taking in each other's children, nursing the sick, and making collections of money. Without this community support, a bereaved parent was more likely to slip into destitution. <sup>81</sup> In an attempt to find cheaper lodgings, an established family might have to move to a new area where such support was lacking. Alice Foley, born in Lancashire in 1891, was aware of the value of such connections: "cautious shop-keepers [were] reluctant to extend credit to strangers. [M]other's plea was to get back to the home town ... where they might find temporary aid from friends or neighbours..." <sup>82</sup>

Certain possessions could be valuable for their contribution to the family economy, such as a sewing machine, or a respectable suit. If necessity required ready cash, there was the dilemma of having to sell these articles to pay for food or rent, but thereby lose the use of them. This often precipitated a downward spiral. Charles Chaplin described the relinquishing of his mother's sewing machine by which she had earned money, her selling and pawning of goods, and "from three comfortable rooms we moved into two, then into one, our belongings dwindling and the neighbourhoods into which we moved growing progressively drabber." <sup>83</sup>

The strategy of disposing of possessions to survive was also employed by the poor in Kingston. <sup>84</sup> The pawnshop was frequently utilized; Fowler suggests that the pawnbroker was regarded as a regular money-lending facility. <sup>85</sup> Eileen Baillie, a clergyman's daughter who grew up in the East End of London, remarked

*They ... lived terrifyingly close to the edge of destitution [...] and almost everything portable in the home paid periodic visits to the pawnbroker's. It was said that you could judge exactly how close to poverty a family had come by what they hung out on the line each washing-day. The better off would still have bed-linen – one of the first things to find its way to 'uncle's'; the poorest had but a few rags of clothing, not easily identifiable*<sup>86</sup>

Other resources were the blanket, shoe and clothing clubs, into which the poor might pay a regular small amount but which were largely funded by charity. They ensured that during the winter months there was a supply of such articles for the most needy. How much of this was regarded simply in terms of their value at the pawnbrokers is a matter of speculation. The theft of articles, not to use but to pawn, was another way of raising money, for adults and children alike. The case study of the Bulbeck family who lived in the Back Lanes contains such examples and, as described in Chapter 9, it was not unknown for parents to pawn their children's clothes.<sup>87</sup>

Although families such as Bulbeck and Hallett, both the subjects of case studies, had the support of a close-knit, supportive family, there were those for whom such family assistance was lacking, leading to a greater dependency on charities and the Poor Law. As described in Chapter 5, the Eldridge family experienced declining fortunes and, with the wife's second marriage taking her into a poorer area of Kingston and removing her from any assistance her first husband's family might have provided, this exacerbated their economic and social decline. Yet, even in the absence of community support for the mother, young children were viewed as a community responsibility. When the neighbours of Frances Field noticed she was neglecting her four-month-old baby, of not feeding her properly and going out all day, they did their best to care for the child in her absence without her request.<sup>88</sup>

Kidd remarks that "in the 'economy of makeshifts', it is best to possess as many attachments as possible".<sup>89</sup> A recently arrived family would not have built up a social resource on which to draw, and had fewer options available before succumbing to poor relief. Yet some families had adapted to a more nomadic lifestyle and had other strategies for survival. The Rist family was one such, earning money hawking and chair caning, having lived in a number of different locations in East Anglia and south-east England before settling in Kingston's Back Lanes. They lived on the margins of poverty throughout their lives and for this family earning money by any means had greater importance than education. The oldest two girls did not go to school at all until they were aged thirteen and eleven, when the schoolmistress found they "knew nothing".<sup>90</sup> The sons did not go to school regularly, but began work by the age of thirteen and otherwise acquired money begging and pilfering.<sup>91</sup>

The subject of philanthropy and charity in Kingston is worthy of a separate study, but it should be pointed out that the assistance given by this type of aid was, in combination with the support of family and neighbours, wherever possible the initial resource in times of need. There was a

range of charities in the Kingston area, many of long standing, and whilst some were devoted to church purposes, the upkeep of memorials or the repair of Kingston bridge and other public uses, around eighty percent of funds was devoted to the use of poor persons. These might be distributed among the poor in times of hardship, especially the winter months, and comprise gifts of money, bread, fuel or clothing. Other charities provided payments to particular individuals, for example pensioners or widows, on a regular basis. However, the largest proportion of the endowed charities was devoted to educational purposes. [Figures 7.5 and 7.6] Among the educational endowments in Kingston itself were the charities of Tiffin, Brown, Belitha, Harding and the Grammar School which together provided education and clothing for both boys and girls. In 1874 these charities were combined and administered by the endowed Schools Commission principally for the benefit of the Grammar School.<sup>92</sup>

The proliferation of charitable aid may well have contributed to the attitude of the Board of Guardians that those families who came to them for assistance were genuinely at risk of starvation, as they had probably exhausted all other forms of aid. The Guardian, Mr. Merryweather, used this argument in discussions with the newly-formed LGB in 1871, that

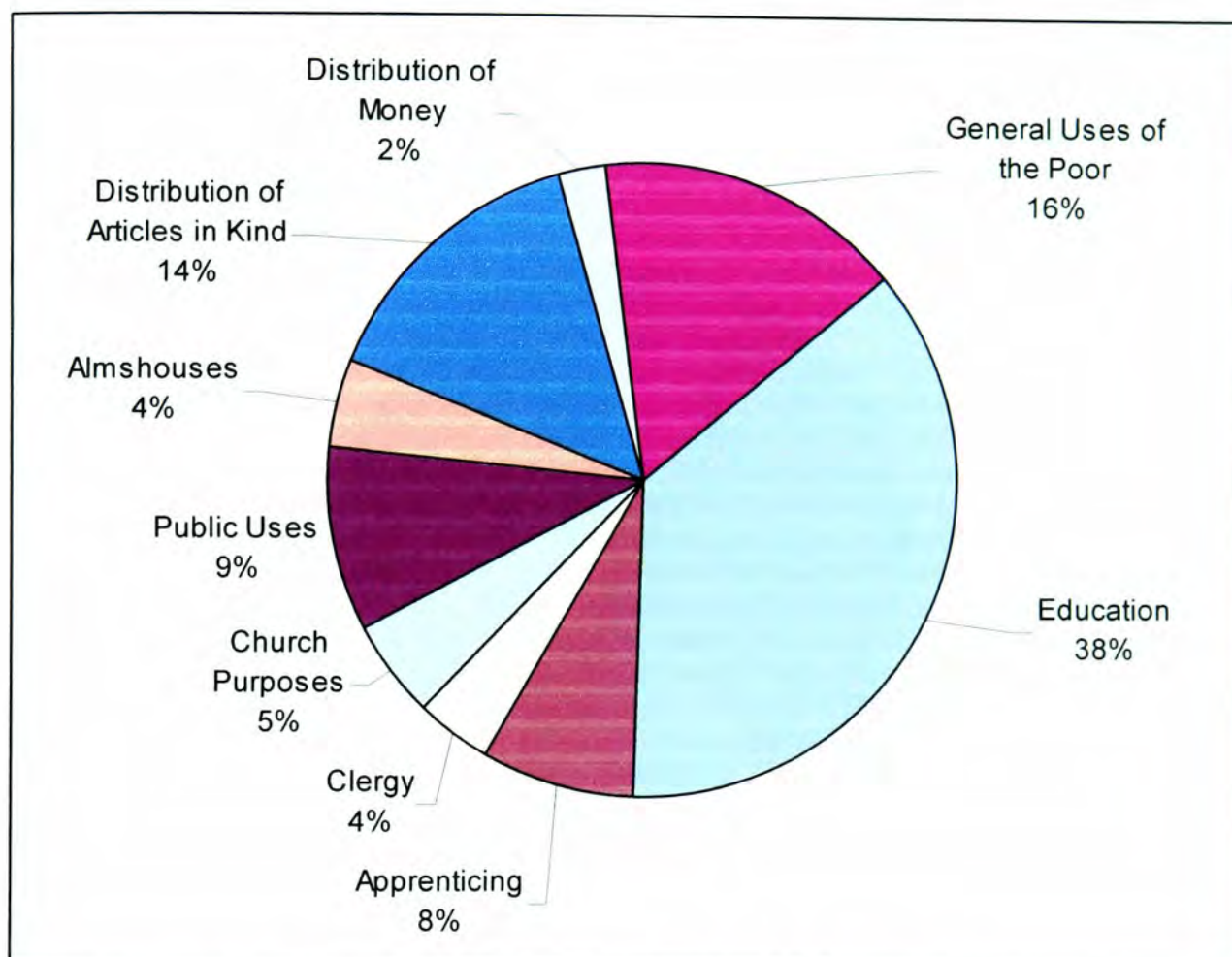
*when a poor family came up there, or the father of a family of six or seven children who had been out of employment some few weeks, and had exhausted all his own resources, and perhaps the resources of local charity in the place to which he belonged, it seemed a cruel thing to compel that man to break up his home, and by bringing him in there render him almost incapable of beginning life again. He felt that if they gave able-bodied men with families no relief at all, and so brought them and their families down to the point of starvation, they would be brought so low as to cause a material increase of their sick-list.*<sup>93</sup>

There were, of course, those who exploited the kindness of others, and were adept at making use of a range of charities to supplement their income. The Kingston Mendicity Society, formed in 1870, endeavoured to channel informal aid through their committee, and undertook to investigate all applications to ensure that only those in genuine need, whether resident families or tramps, benefited from gifts. "The committee know that there are still many resident poor, utterly unworthy of relief, who nevertheless succeed in living upon the gifts of the charitable", they warned in 1870, and provided an example

*As an instance of [incautious liberality], one family especially may be alluded to. After having lived here for some years, chiefly on charitable aid, combined with parish relief, they were removed to their place of settlement, in an adjoining union, but returned the next day. In fact, the husband openly announced, before his removal, his intention of returning, "as he could get a better living from charity in Kingston than from work elsewhere." His wife also, a few days back, told a lady of this neighbourhood, who was interested in her case, "there were so many more rich people at Kingston."*<sup>94</sup>

**Figure 7.5**

**Distribution of Public Charities of the parishes within the area of the Kingston-upon-Thames Poor Law Union, 1842**



Note 1: Articles in Kind being Bread, Coals and other Fuel, Clothing, Rugs

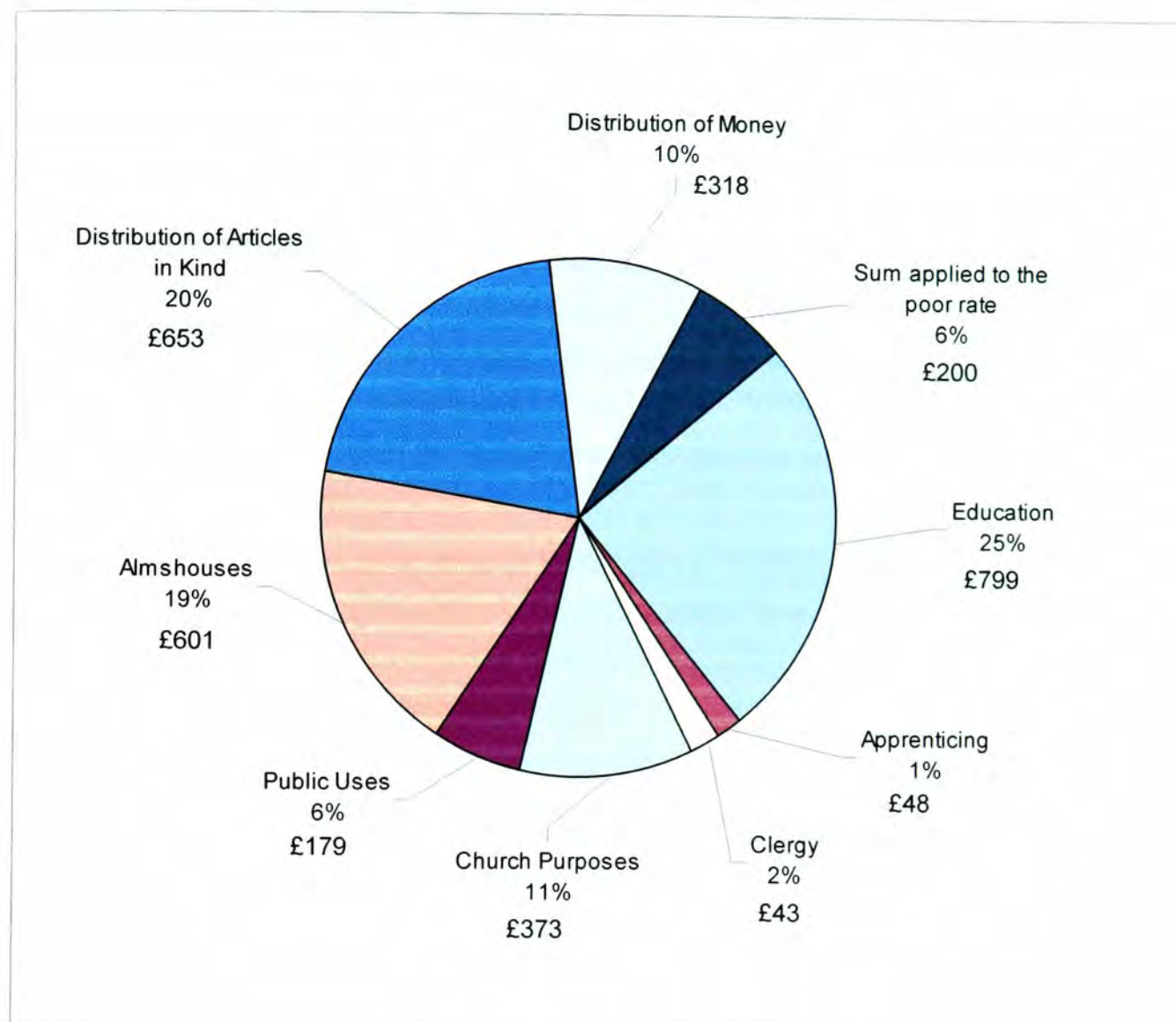
Note 2: In addition, the Wilcocks charity of Thames Ditton was not a financial endowment, but gave the right of sending three patients annually to Westminster Infirmary

Source: *Public charities. I. Analytical digest of the reports made by the Commissioners of Inquiry into Charities. II. Digest of schools and charities for education. III. Return of charities to be distributed to the poor.* PP XVI.1, XVII.1, 1842, pp. 428-30, 430-1, 434-41, 448-9, 798-9, 820-3.



**Figure 7.6**

**Distribution of Endowed Charities of the parishes with the area of the Kingston-upon-Thames Poor Law Union, 1861-3**



Note 1: Articles in Kind being Bread, Coals and other Fuel, Clothing, Rugs

Note 2: In addition, the Wilcocks charity of Thames Ditton was not a financial endowment, but gave the right of sending three patients annually to Westminster Infirmary

Source: *Endowed charities. Return to an order of the Honourable the House of Commons, dated 26 July 1867, copies "of the general digest of endowed charities for the counties and cities mentioned in the fourteenth report of the Charity Commissioners:" "And, of the charities vested in the various London companies, in so far as such digests have been completed, or can be completed up to the time of publication."* PP LII Pt.1.3, LII Pt.II.1, 1868, pp. Surrey 20-1, 24-5, 32-3, 36-7, 40-1, 54-7, Middlesex 26-7, 68-9.



## 7.5 Intemperance

The Mendicity Society also acknowledged that there were families who were responsible for their own poverty through profligacy, but in these children still suffered; in many cases the husbands brought home sufficient wages but much of it went on drink, the wives coming to the Society "with pitiable stories of much privation".<sup>95</sup> Living in conditions of poverty and shabbiness, it is not surprising that parents often sought refuge in the warmth of the public houses. Walvin comments that Sir Edwin Chadwick showed "that crime, vice, drunkenness and so on 'were the results of the domestic physical environment, not the other way round'." <sup>96</sup> In Kingston after the introduction of compulsory elementary education, the closer monitoring of school attendance brought to the attention of the Guardians social problems which were detrimental to children. By 1880 the Guardians had become aware that the children causing the most problems for schools were those who were neglected by their parents, a situation which they attributed principally to drunkenness. The children were not considered culpable, rather it was the "intemperance and improvidence" of the parents.<sup>97</sup> Children suffered in their schooling and in their moral upbringing, and could potentially become destitute or criminal. Kingston Guardians complained that

*...many of the cases being those of Husbands and Fathers, and even Mothers, who, after inflicting years of suffering upon their families, desert them, leaving them either penniless or heavily involved in debt, and thus they are often compelled immediately to make application to the Union for relief.*<sup>98</sup>

It was felt that for Kingston many of the problems they encountered might be alleviated by restricting the sale of alcohol. By a change in the licensing laws Kingston sought to

*diminish intemperance and afford protection to the Ratepayers from influences which produce ... Crime, Pauperism, Lunacy, and Ignorance ... and which not only add greatly to the burdens of the community, but which also tend largely to paralyze trade and commerce.*<sup>99</sup>

The implications for the town were therefore not only that the poor rates were supporting the inebriate, it was felt that drunkenness and crime were affecting the essence of Kingston, its trade. Not only was family life being threatened, but also the town's economic wellbeing. Although having an established hotel and inn trade, the legacy of a coaching town, this concern reflected the growing retail economy of Kingston which provided, in turn, employment for those leaving school. The drunken liveliness of the town associated with the militia had been tolerated to some extent as this had generated trade, provided the young were not corrupted and the female population not in danger, but the militia were not permanent residents as were the poor. The concern of the Guardians in 1880 would therefore have reflected the magnitude of the problem.

The intemperance of parents impinged on social attitudes to their children. Sophia Dalloway was several times convicted of being drunk and disorderly, and her eight-year old son, Thomas, was in consequence sent to an industrial school. Such a decision would have been for the dual purposes of rescue and reform, in order to separate him from the undesirable influence which his mother provided.<sup>100</sup> There were occasions when it suited a man to have his wife and children taken care of in the workhouse to relieve him of the responsibility. In 1859 Joseph Skinner applied for admission for himself, his wife and five children. Once they were all within the workhouse, he immediately abandoned his family, climbed over the gate, obtained work outside, and spent the money getting drunk.<sup>101</sup> His punishment, twenty-one days hard labour in the House of Correction, would have necessitated the family's continued stay in the workhouse until his release. Imprisonment of a husband as a result of drunken crimes was one of many causes of temporary admission to the workhouse for wife and children. James Mansfield was sent to prison for drunkenly kicking a policeman; his wife and children were offered relief in the workhouse rather than at home. However, a more sympathetic approach was taken in the case of Rebecca Payne. Her husband was in prison for cutting his own throat in a drunken fit; she was given 3/- and two loaves for the fortnight he was there. A similar case also elicited sympathy and out-relief; the husband was in prison for three months for getting drunk and stabbing his wife in the shoulder. She had four children to support, and was allowed 4/- and four loaves a week during the entire time of his imprisonment. This costly exercise roused the Surrey Comet to respond:

*Another instance of the taxation imposed upon the sober part of the community, by the drunken and debased.*

*What fools are hard drinkers –  
They cannot be thinkers, -  
Or, thought of the morrow  
Would fill them with sorrow;  
The children all starving, and wives broken-hearted,  
Peace, pleasure and profit, for ever departed.*<sup>102</sup>

## 7.6 Conclusion

Kingston reflected the economic situation nationally, but with variations specific to the locality. These derived from the nature of the local industries, the development of the area, types of employment for the unskilled, and the geographic location, as well as local attitudes to unemployment, poverty and philanthropy.

It is evident from the experience of Kingston families that the poor survived through a combination of strategies, family and community support, charities and the Poor Law. The precariousness of their existence was such that unexpected difficulties might be dealt with occasionally, but a combination of factors might prove too much to cope with. As Murdoch concluded in her study of Barnardo's children, "Parents and children alike drew on a variety of

community and family resources in order to survive these crises" but institutionalising children, whether in a charity home or a Poor Law school, was generally as a result of "a number of often overlapping crises.....".<sup>103</sup> Poor families who were already economically over-stretched might find that they could cope with some misfortunes until circumstances forced them to capitulate and seek in-relief.

Of great value in the chances of survival was the amount of community and family support on which the family could draw. If they were well-established in the area, lived near their relations and remained on good terms with them, they were far better equipped to withstand periods of difficulty. The 'respectable poor' who were mostly in work, endeavoured to keep their homes clean, did not have bastard children, and attempted some measure of self-help, were more likely to receive official and unofficial assistance if they experienced a crisis which was beyond their control.

Families with young children were the most vulnerable, because in times of difficulty the children were not old enough to take over the household chores or take employment, and younger children still required daily care. Thus if the father died and the mother needed to find work, or if the mother died, the assistance of relatives or older children was of great importance. Temporary relinquishment of the care of some children in the family, either to relatives, an orphanage or the workhouse, might be sufficient to enable the rest of the family to remain at home.

A consequence of the economic situation of labouring families was the poor housing conditions, and this, in turn, led to illness and further economic hardship. The "state of the poor in their fetid courts" might have been influenced by the property interests of the members of the Town Council and their desire to reduce expenditure, but in the Guardians' view this only led to an increased demand on the poor rates. Despite the received view that Boards of Guardians were ruthless in their refusal of support to the able-bodied, and their desire to incarcerate families within the workhouse walls, the evidence from Kingston suggests that there were many on the successive Boards whose policy was to keep families with children in their own homes. Whether the reasons were economic or humanitarian, the result was that in Kingston there were numbers of children who were not subjected to the workhouse who might otherwise have been had they lived within a different union. The downward spiral of poverty was hard to break, yet by maintaining families in their own homes, there was a greater opportunity to 'begin life again' and not succumb to the 'cycle of poverty'.

- 1     *Anniversary Meeting of the Kingston Ragged Schools, Surrey Comet*, 15 Dec 1860, p.4 cols. 2-4.
- 2     Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p.17.
- 3     Butters, *The Book of Kingston*, p.101.
- 4     Pamela Reading, 'Reluctant Reformers?: Politics and Society in Kingston upon Thames 1830-1900', Unpublished PhD thesis, Kingston University, (2008), p.19.
- 5     John West, *Town Records* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co Ltd, 1983), pp.310-331.
- 6     Butters, *The Book of Kingston*, p.109.
- 7     Fowler, *Workhouse*, pp.106-7; Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, p.121; Kidd, *State Society and the Poor*, p.3; Walvin, *Victorian Values*, p.21.
- 8     Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor*, p.3.
- 9     Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty: a study of town life* (London : Macmillan, 1902 4th edn.), p.136.
- 10    *1861 Census of England and Wales, Tables of the Population and Houses enumerated in England and Wales, and in the Islands in the British Seas, on 8th April, 1861*, Table 5: "Houses and Population enumerated in the Counties (Proper) in 1851 and 1861"; *1871 Census of England and Wales, Preliminary Report, and Tables of the Population and Houses enumerated in England and Wales and in The Islands of the British Seas On 3rd April 1871*. (1871 LIX (C.381) 659), *1871 Census of England and Wales, Preliminary Report, and Tables of the Population and Houses enumerated in England and Wales and in The Islands of the British Seas On 3rd April 1871*. (1871 LIX (C.381) 659), *1881 Census of England and Wales, Tables: Area, Houses and Population in Registration Counties*, Table 4: "Area, Houses, and Population of Civil Parishes in the several Registration Sub-Districts in 1871 and 1881".
- 11    Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, p.119.
- 12    Ashforth, 'The Urban Poor Law', in Fraser, *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century*, pp.129-130.
- 13    Walvin, *Victorian Values*, p.23.
- 14    *Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws*, House of Commons, 21 Feb.1834, Appendix A p. 553A.
- 15    Mary MacKinnon, 'English Poor Law policy and the crusade against outrelief', *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 47 (3), 1987, pp.603-625.
- 16    Fowler, *Workhouse*, p.103.
- 17    SHC BG8/11/1, Relieving Officer's Report 20 Oct.1841.
- 18    SHC BG8/11/1, Relieving Officer's Report 20 Oct.1841.
- 19    *Reports ... on the means of employing able bodied paupers, The Masters Report*, Board of Guardians Minute Book SHC BG8/11/1, 20 Oct.1841.
- 20    TNA MH12/12393, Kingston Union letter to PLC 25 Nov.1852, doc 44920/52.
- 21    Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, p.172.
- 22    Guardian Mr. Kent. Board of Guardians Meeting 13 Dec 1870, reported in *Surrey Comet*, 17 Dec.1870 p.2 col. 2.
- 23    Letter from Kingston Guardians to PLB, drafted at Board of Guardians Meeting 3 Jan.1871, reported in *Surrey Comet*, 7 Jan.1871 p.1 col. 4.
- 24    TNA PCOM/2/291/359, Wandsworth Gaol, Surrey, Prisoners' Photographs 16 Aug.1873.
- 25    TNA PCOM/2/291/359, Wandsworth Gaol, Surrey, Prisoners' Photographs 16 Aug.1873.
- 26    County Bench, *Surrey Comet*, 4 Feb.1871, p.2 col. 5.

- 27 MacKinnon, 'English Poor Law policy and the crusade against outrelief', p.604.
- 28 TNA MH12/12402, Memorandum of H. Longley, Poor Law Inspector, 13 Dec 1870, doc 53599/70.
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- 31 Richard Rodger, *Housing in urban Britain, 1780-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.10.
- 32 Rowntree, *Poverty: a study of town life*, pp.58-73.
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- 35 *Report on Small-Pox in Young's Buildings*, J.G. Kent, Medical Officer for Kingston, Board of Guardians' Meeting 22 March 1870, *Surrey Comet*, 26 March 1870, p.2 col. 2.
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- 49 Deeping, *Smith*, pp.55, 58-9.
- 50 Butters, *The Book of Kingston*, p.125.
- 51 Merryweather, *Half a Century of Kingston History*, p.29.
- 52 Town Council Meeting, 2 Jan.1871, reported in *Surrey Comet* , 7 Jan.1871, p.1 col. 4.
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- 56 Kingston Public Boys' School Log Book SHC CES/35/1 14 March 1865.
- 57 Richmond Road Girls' School log book, SHC CES/36/1, 13 Dec.1865.

- 58 Richmond Road Girls' School log book, SHC CES/36/1 28 Sept.1863 & 30 Oct.1865.
- 59 Richmond Road Girls' School log book, SHC CES/36/1 Feb.1865.
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- 83 Chaplin, *My Autobiography*, p.19.
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- 90 SHC CES/36/1, Kingston (Richmond Road) Public Girls' School Log Book, 20 Jan.1873.

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- <sup>91</sup> *School attendance*, *Surrey Comet* 10 July 1880, p.3 col. 6; 12 March 1881, p.3 col. 4; *Juvenile Thieves*, Borough Bench, *Surrey Comet* 12 Feb.1881, p.3 col. 6; Letter to the Editor: *Crossing Sweepers*, *Surrey Comet* 19 Feb.1881, p.3 col. 3.
- <sup>92</sup> Merryweather, *Half a Century of Kingston History*, pp. 83, 85-6.
- <sup>93</sup> Outdoor relief for the able-bodied poor, Board of Guardians Meeting 12 Dec.1871, *Surrey Comet*, 16 Dec.1871, p.2 col. 6.
- <sup>94</sup> Kingston Mendicity Society, *Surrey Comet*, 30 April 1870, p.2 col. 4.
- <sup>95</sup> Kingston Mendicity Society, *Surrey Comet*, 30 April 1870, p.2 col. 4.
- <sup>96</sup> Walvin, *Victorian Values*, p.34.
- <sup>97</sup> *Memorial praying for a change in the Laws relating to the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors having regard to the effect of Drunkenness and Pauperism produced thereby*, dated 27 Jan.1880, from the Guardians of the Poor of the Union of Kingston to Rt. Hon George Slater Booth M.P., President of the LGB 30 Jan.1880, TNA MH 12/12415, doc 8792/80.
- <sup>98</sup> *Memorial praying for a change in the Laws relating to the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors.*
- <sup>99</sup> *Memorial praying for a change in the Laws relating to the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors.*
- <sup>100</sup> Borough Bench, *Surrey Comet*, 18 Feb.1871, p.2 col. 5.
- <sup>101</sup> Borough Bench, 23 May 1859, *Surrey Comet*, 28 May 1859, p.4.
- <sup>102</sup> Board of Guardians Meeting 19 July 1859, reported in *Surrey Comet*, 23 July 1859 p.4.
- <sup>103</sup> Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p.79.

## **Appendix 7.1**

### **Case Study: Bulbeck family**

This is a family who lived in one of the poorest areas of Kingston, and had frequent recourse to poor law out-relief. They remained in the same small geographical area for at least 120 years. This is an example of a labouring family whose survival depended not only on the additional assistance provided by the poor law, but the support they obtained from each other within the family. Although the children were dirty and barefoot and not closely supervised, family support was probably a valuable element. During periods of hardship and crises they continued to be geographically close, and remained outside the workhouse through the assistance they were able to provide to each other. In times of difficulty such as bereavement, infirmity, or unexpected expenses, they provided homes for other family members in what must have been very crowded conditions. Two of the boys were sent to reformatories for misdemeanours, and the amount which their father was expected to contribute to their upkeep stretched the family budget still further, compounded by the loss of earnings which these boys could have provided to the family income. When the boys returned home they found employment, married and remained in close proximity to other members of the family.

William Bulbeck (b. 1824), whose father was born in Kingston, worked at various labouring jobs and lived in the riverside area of Kingston throughout his life. He lodged in the 'back lanes' when young and, after marriage to another lodger, remained in Waterman's Passage or Watermans Row for around thirty years, and brought up his family in this area of Kingston.<sup>1</sup> This river area was home to watermen and lightermen with whose families the Bulbecks intermarried, and in addition to general labouring jobs there was work to be found coal heaving, or in the many pubs and lodging houses.

This was not a family of 'respectable poor'; they experienced a series of events which caused successive officials to be critical of them. William's brother, James, caused the pregnancy of nineteen-year-old Harriet Walkeley and then deserted her, leaving her without work or any support. The desperate and heavily pregnant girl wrote a moving letter to her family in Cambridgeshire, and attempted to kill herself with laudanum. When that was unsuccessful she drowned herself in the river. The coroner reprimanded James: "A nice moral reflection. You deceived her, and then deserted her, a ruined girl".<sup>2</sup> As an adult, one of William's sons, another James, claimed medical relief in 1877 to treat his gonorrhoea, and in 1880 was involved in a back lane brawl, the "disgracefulness of such conduct" being made worse by the fact of it being a Sunday.<sup>3</sup>

William and his wife, Elizabeth, had at least eight children. During the 1860s, and into the 1870s, William made several applications for medical relief for one or other of the children when they were ill with a variety of respiratory diseases such as bronchitis, pneumonia and whooping cough.<sup>4</sup> His employment was on a casual basis and seasonally affected; during periods of bad



weather he was unable to find employment and was given work at the workhouse cutting wood in exchange for a few shillings a week and some loaves of bread. Even when employed he found it difficult to earn enough to support his family. As a coal porter in 1871 he could earn 18s a week, where a carpenter or a painter might earn 25s a week.<sup>5</sup>

The proliferation of pubs provided the children with employment; in 1871 the three oldest boys still at home, aged between 11 and 16, all worked as pot-boys. Two of these, William and Henry, separately found themselves in trouble in 1871 and appeared before the magistrates. William and his friend, Thomas, both aged 14, stole a pair of boots from another boy when he left his clothes on the river bank to bathe. The boys' intention was to take the boots and pawn them, and share the money, and until then William hid them at home. They shared the blame: William said to Thomas, "You nicked one and I nicked the other". Both boys were sent to a reformatory for three years.<sup>6</sup>

A younger son, Henry, aged 11 at the time, was caught stealing flowers from gardens in Fairfield Road after 11 o'clock at night. It was suspected that the other child involved, a girl named Mary Ann Smith, aged 10, was sent out by her mother specifically to steal flowers, which she then sold at Hampton Court. The two children appeared in court in a very dirty state. Henry was ragged and barefoot, and the magistrates reprimanded the parents for the condition of their children and for allowing them to be out late at night. The children were fined a total of 7s 6d each. This sum represented nearly half Henry's father's earnings for one week and they must have found it an additional burden to meet the fine.

It appears that Henry subsequently committed another misdemeanour, as the following year his father was ordered to pay 1s a week towards his maintenance in an industrial school, where he had been detained for five years.<sup>7</sup> By 1881, after these boys had returned home, William was working as a Lighterman and Henry was a soldier in Kingston barracks, although ten years later they were both doing general labouring work. Another of the boys was known as "Killer Bulbeck" and persuaded a "half-witted" local boy to carry some coals for him, suspected of being stolen, but the case was dismissed.<sup>8</sup> [see Chapter 9.3]

The close-knit ties of family and community can be discerned by analysing the census returns. In 1881 William and his wife were living in Watermans Row with eight children, ranging in age from 5 to 30. Two of their sons were married, and shared the family home. It is possible to infer that their father, William, still considered all his children to be part of the family unit, even when independent. Although one married son supplied his own census return as head of his own household with his wife and child, within the parental home William also included him on the family return. William also included a son in the army, who was additionally enumerated on the return provided by Kingston barracks. Were all these people present in the Bulbeck home on census night, there would have been twelve persons in one dwelling.

William, the father, remained in the Thames-side area. In 1891, when he and his wife were in their sixties, they still had four unmarried children at home; the oldest was Henry, aged 30, a general labourer. The oldest daughter worked as a hawker. The two daughters married later that same year, one to a flower seller, the other to a labourer.

Further evidence of family support can be seen in the cases of William and Henry, the two sons who had been in a reformatory when children. As adults, these two married sisters Annie and Emma Francis, the daughter of a Thames Lighterman. William's wife, Annie, died shortly after the birth of their second son. She was aged 22 and the baby also died, at 7 weeks old. William and his surviving son, aged 2½, went to live with Annie's parents in Bittoms Lane.<sup>9</sup> In the dwelling next door lived Annie's brother and his family. In old age William (snr) and his wife, Elizabeth, went to live with their son, Henry, where they died in 1900 and 1905 respectively.<sup>10</sup>

The family remained geographically close throughout the period and provided homes and financial support to each other in times of difficulty. [Figure 7.6] The children took work close to home from a young age, and found marriage partners within the same area of Kingston and from a limited range of occupations, mostly connected with river trades. Although not the epitome of respectability, they drew on a range of resources in order to avoid destitution. Despite turning to the poor law during the 1860s in times of hardship, without such family and community support they may have had to rely on the workhouse to a much greater extent than they did.

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<sup>1</sup> Census Returns for Kingston, 1851-1891.

<sup>2</sup> *Lamentable Suicide*, Surrey Comet, 21 Sept.1861, p. 4 col. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Life in the Back Lanes*, Borough Bench, Surrey Comet, 17 July 1880, p. 3 col. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Kingston Guardians' Minute Books BG8/11/7-12.

<sup>5</sup> Poor Law Correspondence MH12/12394-7.

<sup>6</sup> *Surrey Comet*, 5 Aug.1871 p.3 col. 2; 19 Aug.1871 p.5 col. 6, 26 Aug.1871 p. 6 col. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Surrey Comet*, 2 March 1872 p.3 col. 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Alleged Unlawful Possession*, Borough Bench, Surrey Comet 17 July 1880 (1357) p.3 col. 6, 24 July 1880, p. 3 col. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Bonner Hill Burials 1888.

<sup>10</sup> Bonner Hill Burials 1900 & 1905.

**Figure 7.7 BULBECK**

**William BULBECK**  
b.ca 1791-4 Kingston; 1823-38: Labourer, Kingston; 1851: Gardening Labourer, Lower Ham Road; 1861: 73, Widower, Gardener, with son, William; d. 1874 Kn W/h age 83

**Susanna**  
b.ca 1795/6 Kingston; 1851: 55, with husband & son, James; d/bur 1860 Kingston age 65

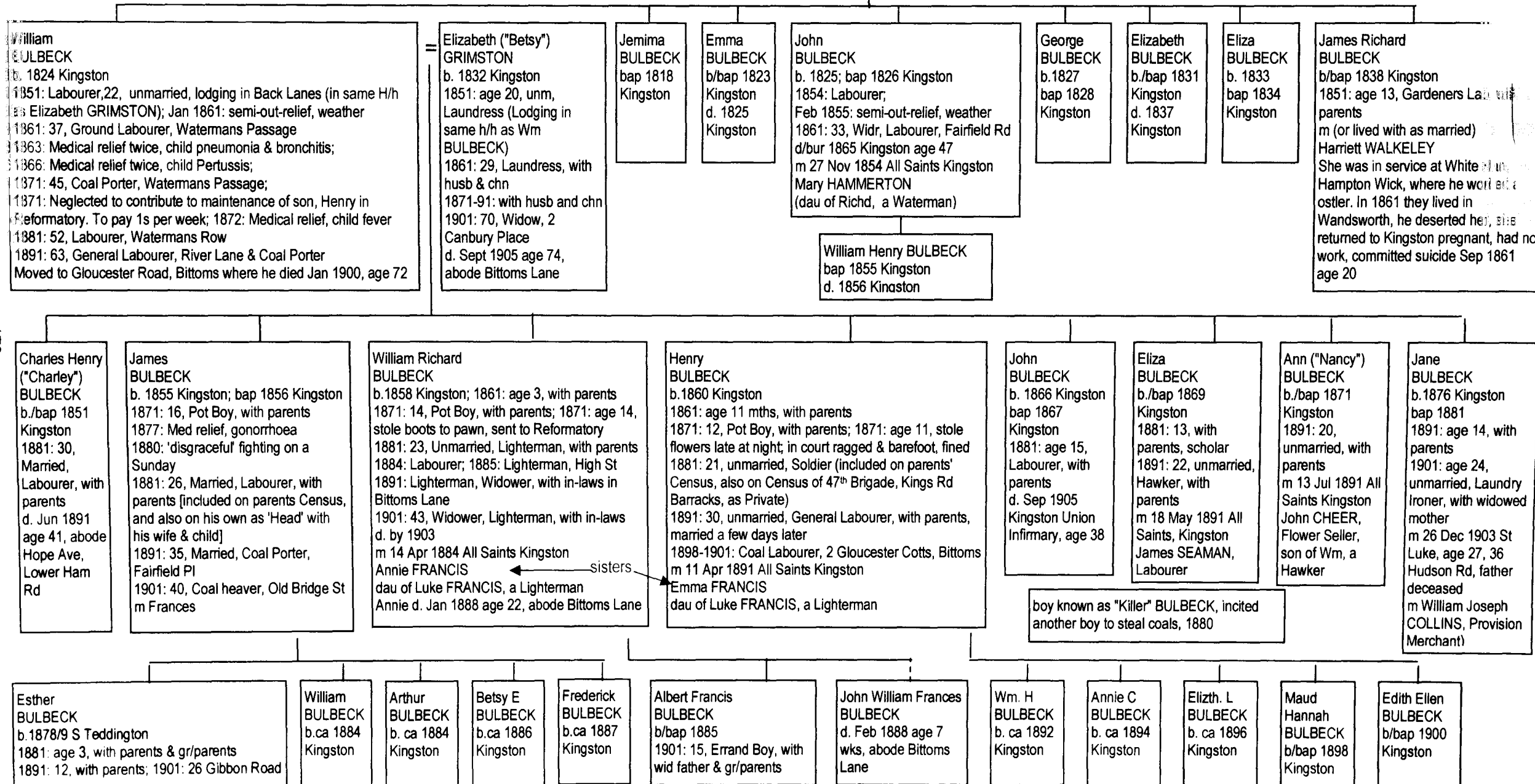
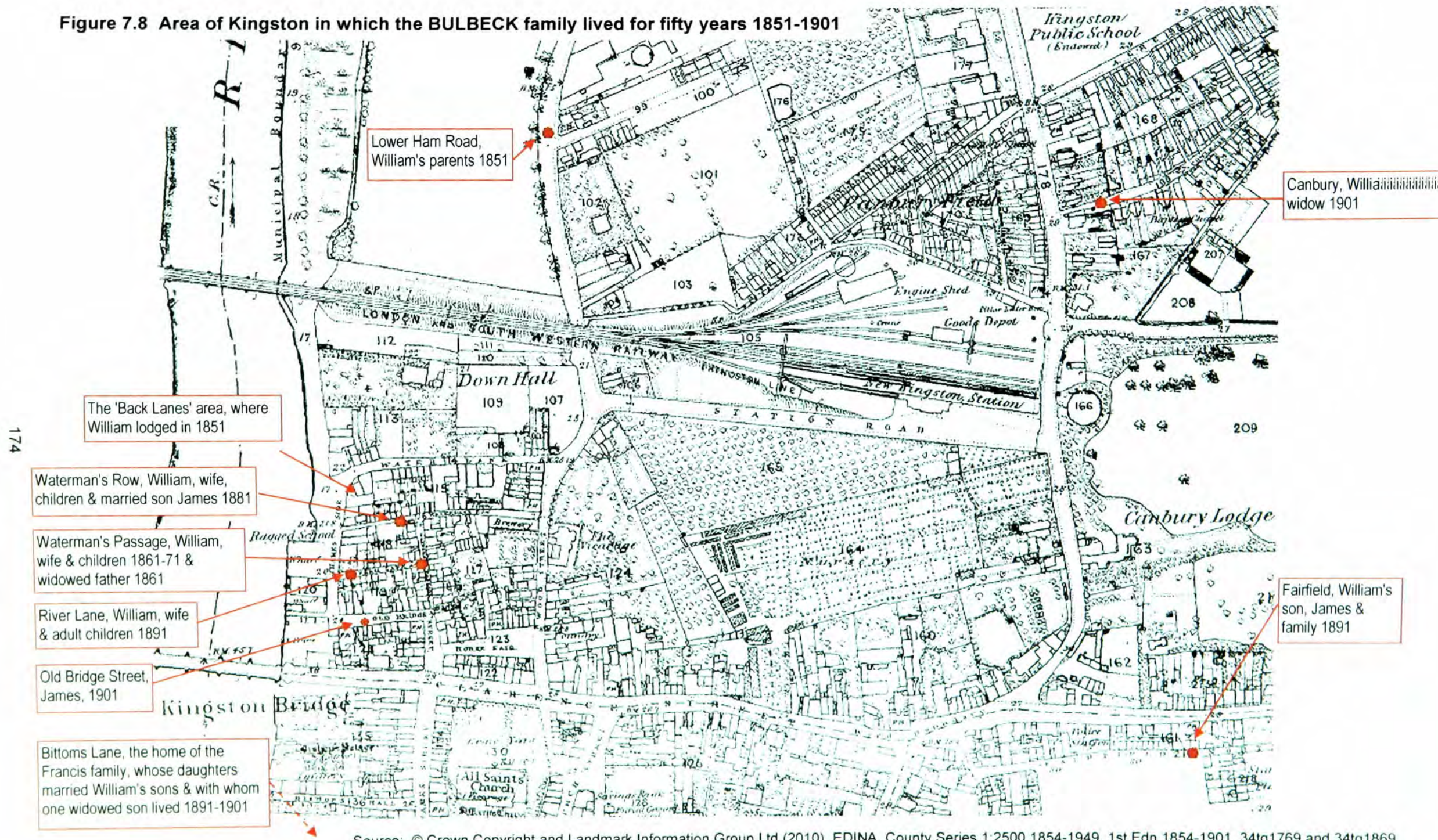




Figure 7.8 Area of Kingston in which the BULBECK family lived for fifty years 1851-1901



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## CHAPTER 8

### Employment of Children

**"It is very difficult to keep many of the Boys regularly in School when they are capable of earning a shilling or two a week" <sup>1</sup>**

*Kingston Public School Master, 1864*

#### **8.1 Introduction**

Within the family children could be an economic burden, requiring clothing, feeding, medical care, and general looking after. The previous chapter illustrates how having a large number of young children in the family could stretch the family finances to the limit. However, with time, children might become an economic asset, bringing much needed income to the family. The economic vulnerability of families is discussed by Kidd, as being "particularly associated with certain points in the life cycle". <sup>2</sup> Families might experience years of hardship while their children were young, gradually making way for improved circumstances as children grew stronger and able to work, either outside or within the home. Yet with large numbers of children of employment age a labourer's home could become seriously overcrowded and the older children obliged to leave. An economic balance had to be maintained.

It is a modern view that the employment of children is undesirable, that it encroaches on the right of a child to be a child. Currently the minimum age for a child to engage in full-time work is sixteen, and for part-time work the age is thirteen, with strict rules applying. <sup>3</sup> The regulation of child employment commenced at the end of the eighteenth century and continued in the early nineteenth century following the notoriety surrounding the employment of children in factories, the use of climbing boys, and the agricultural gang system. Such legislation was designed to regulate the type of employment, the hours worked, and the health and safety of the children, rather than suggest in any way that children should not undertake any form of work. Indeed, it was considered a natural part of family life for children to be involved in the daily labour of a household, and some form of physical labour outdoors was believed to be a healthy activity. This counters the suggestion by Horn that reformatory endeavours such as that of the Philanthropic Society in training young offenders for a trade "encouraged acceptance of child labour". <sup>4</sup> Even as late as 1901 the Interdepartmental Committee on the Employment of School Children regarded a small amount of regular employment to be a "useful part of a boy's education", and such an introduction to the adult world of work was an important stage in their transition to adulthood. <sup>5</sup> It was not considered wrong for children to work, on the contrary it was good for them physically and morally, but as will be detailed in this chapter there were exceptions. Helping their parents or undertaking *ad hoc* jobs introduced them to the work ethic which was required in adult life, and they could contribute to the finances of the family and the country. What was questioned was the type of work they were engaged in and whether it was detrimental to their moral and physical development. With the increase in state involvement in

economic and social affairs, including family life, during the course of the nineteenth century, and with the development of education competing with work, the attitude towards children gradually shifted.

The type of work available for children would depend on the area in which the family lived, the industry of the area, or any social connections the family had. This chapter examines the employment of children in the Kingston area and discusses examples of the type of work in which children were engaged. The largest areas of employment for children in and around Kingston were in agricultural work and domestic service, but there were other occupations which were subject to local conditions and circumstances, and the occupational structure changed as the century progressed. School teachers are also considered, being an occupation equally available to boys and girls, some families having both sons and daughters as pupil-teachers. Analysis within this chapter will focus principally on children within the 10-14 age group, except where the inclusion of younger or older children are required for comparison or particular consideration, for example when considering girls involved in domestic service, or children apprenticed from the district school.

When considering the question of child employment it is right to acknowledge the hardships and undoubted cruelties which existed in the lives of poor children obliged to spend long hours in physically demanding work, but this should be set in context. As Cunningham argued, "only a minority of working children was up the chimneys, down the mines or in factories".<sup>6</sup> This study will, however, consider two of the less prominent occupations in which children were engaged and in which cruelty was considered a factor. Chimney sweeping, although not involving large numbers of children, is worth discussing as this provides an example of how the treatment of children in a notorious occupation was handled at the local level. Brickmaking is also included as this provides an example of a local industry and one in which employment figures were quite probably under-recorded.

It is important to stress the likelihood of considerable under-recording of general child employment. Where children were involved in officially declared full-time employment, these appeared as such in decennial census statistics. Periodic official investigations into child employment revealed more detailed information as to the nature of children's employment. Yet the large numbers of children involved in unofficial or *ad hoc* work make an accurate statistical analysis unachievable. Even census figures cannot be relied upon to provide an accurate reflection of the extent of child employment and its development through the nineteenth century. Higgs draws attention to the "under-enumeration of seasonal and casual work, and of the work of women and children" in agriculture, and these arguments can be equally applied to other forms of employment.<sup>7</sup> Regular employment, other than in their own domestic duties, was to be recorded in census returns, but the term 'regularly' was subject to individual interpretation by householders and enumerators. The varying classification of trades, the enumerators' interpretation of replies, and the assumed extent of a child's involvement in parental

occupations such as farming, all affect the reliability of comparative quantitative analysis. It was with these problems in mind that Booth commented in 1886:

*"The seeker after information is left to grope his way in the dark; if by chance he stumbles on the truth, well and good, if not he but adds his quota to the enormous total of false information before the public."*<sup>8</sup>

The gradual involvement of children in their parents' daily employment, in the home, the workshop, the field or the farm, blends the distinction between childish 'helping', learning parental tasks, and outright employment. It is possible, however, to use the information in the census returns to draw general broad conclusions, which can be supplemented by information from a variety of primary sources. In this way the main areas of employment for children in and around Kingston can be ascertained.

## 8.2 General Employment of Children

It was an acceptable view that the children of labouring families took paid employment and contributed to the family finances. Prince Albert in 1857 recognised that to the working man his offspring were important additional contributors to domestic income. The 1870s and 1880s saw increasing legislation concerning juvenile labour but there was no attempt to outlaw it altogether.<sup>9</sup> Education legislation from 1870 enforced school attendance for children aged between five and thirteen, and this in turn affected employment statistics. Regardless of whether children were undertaking paid employment or not, if a local school board legally enforced school attendance, parents were less likely to admit the extent of their child's employment. As Kingston had decided against creating a school board, but instead formed an Education Committee under Sandon's Act of 1876, the matter of compulsory school attendance arose slightly later than nationally.

According to census statistics, the percentage of children declared to be employed in Kingston between 1851 and 1871 was less than the national average.<sup>10</sup> The data for 1881 has not been included as by that date figures would have been affected by the new education laws regarding compulsory education. Although figures for both the 5-9 and 10-14 age groups are shown, discussion in this chapter will focus on the older group, as the numbers of younger children employed in both the urban and rural areas of the Kingston Union were negligible. This contrasts with areas where local and regional employment opportunities were more available, for example in the St Albans and Berkhamsted regions of Hertfordshire as discussed by Goose.<sup>11</sup> In those areas, where the hat and silk trades involved in the younger children, figures for 1851 for both the 5-9 and 10-14 age groups generally exceeded both the Kingston and national percentages.

**Figure 8.1**

**Percentage of Children aged 5-9 and 10-14 Employed in Kingston compared with national Figures (England and Wales), 1851-71**

Year	% Boys employed in Kingston aged 5-9	% Girls employed in Kingston aged 5-9	% Boys employed in England & Wales aged 5-9	% Girls employed in England & Wales aged 5-9
1851	0.2	0.0	2	1.4
1861	0.5	0.1	2	1.1
1871	0.3	0.1	0.8	0.7
	% Boys employed in Kingston aged 10-14	% Girls employed in Kingston aged 10-14	% Boys employed in England & Wales aged 10-14	% Girls employed in England & Wales aged 10-14
1851	19.9	7.8	36.6	19.9
1861	19.3	8.0	36.9	20.2
1871	18.6	11.7	32.1	20.4

Sources: 1911 Census, PP 1913, vol. LXXXVIII; Kingston *Lifecycles Database* <sup>12</sup>

**Figure 8.2**

**Numbers of Children aged 5-9 and 10-14 Employed in Kingston, 1851-71**

Year	No. of Boys aged 5-9 employed	No. of Boys aged 5-9 not employed plus Scholars	Total no. of Boys aged 5-9
1851	1	664	665
1861	5	957	962
1871	5	1494	1499
	No. of Boys aged 10-14 employed	No. of Boys aged 10-14 not employed plus Scholars	Total no. of Boys aged 10-14
1851	113	464	577
1861	153	624	777
1871	224	963	1187
Year	No. of Girls aged 5-9 employed	No. of Girls aged 5-9 not employed plus Scholars	Total no. of Girls aged 5-9
1851	0	674	674
1861	1	936	937
1871	1	1587	1588
	No. of Girls aged 10-14 employed	No. of Girls aged 10-14 not employed plus Scholars	Total no. of Girls aged 10-14
1851	68	574	642
1861	85	874	959
1871	170	1234	1404

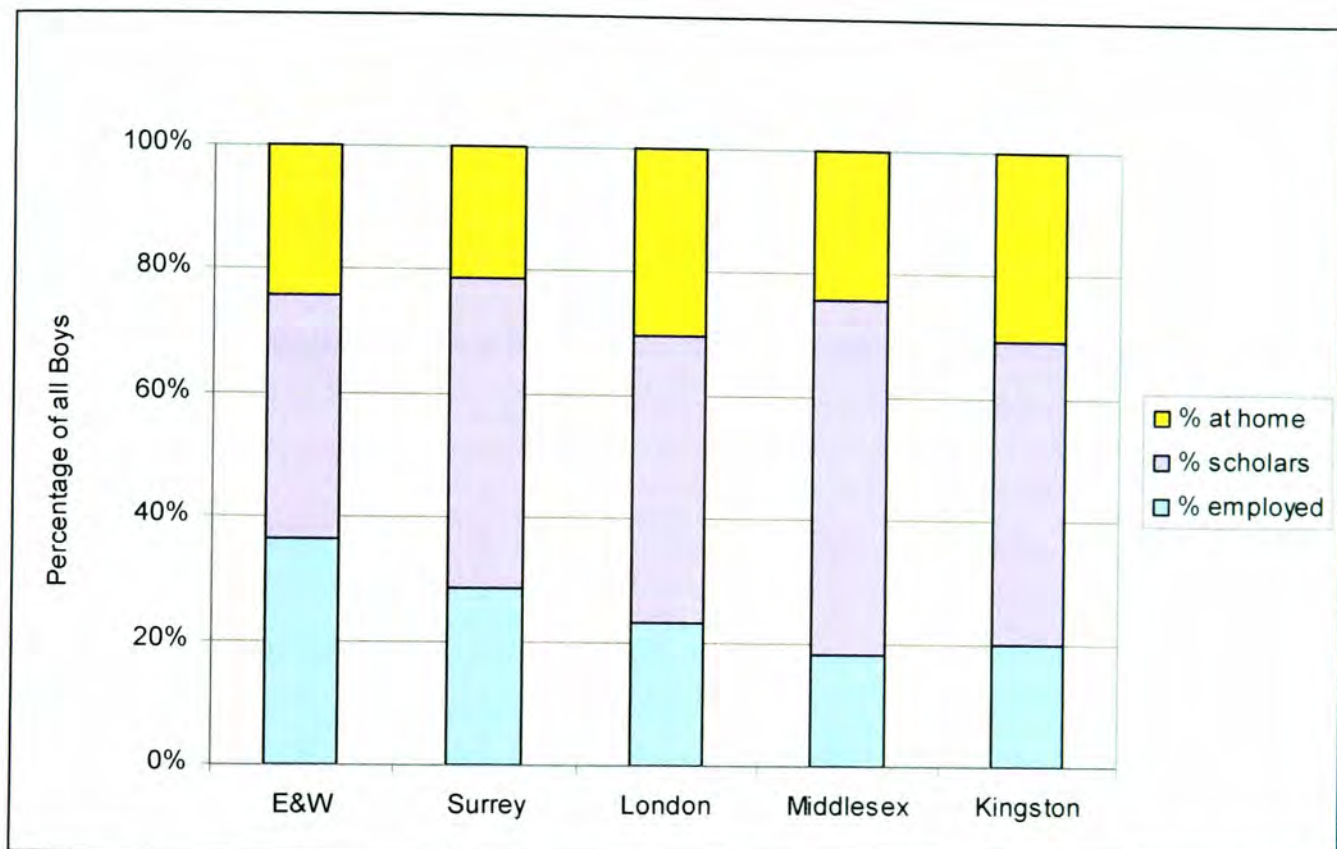
Sources: as for Figure 8.1

Whilst a lower percentage of boys in the 10-14 age group was employed in Kingston than for England and Wales as a whole, the reduction in the percentage for Kingston between 1851 and 1871 is only slightly more apparent than nationally. For girls, the marked increase in the employment percentage for Kingston reflects the growing opportunities in the area for work in domestic service. Regional differences in employment opportunities, such as factory work or farming, contributed to regional variations, as did the availability of schooling.<sup>13</sup> In order to render them meaningful, the above figures require further scrutiny.



It is important to consider not only children declared to be in employment, but also those attending school. Figure 8.3 is a comparative table for 1851 illustrating boys aged 10-14 stated as being either 'in employment' or 'scholars', with the residue shown as 'at home'. 'At home' might be engaged in household duties, helping father in his work, or simply running wild, particularly if the parents could not afford the school pence. The term scholar cannot be consistently interpreted; not only might it refer to those being educated at home, it might equally apply to a child at home learning the father's trade, rather than being taught to read and write.<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 8.3 Comparative Table of Boys aged 10-14 in Employment or otherwise 1851**



Source: Hugh Cunningham, 'The Employment and Unemployment of Children in England c. 1680-1851', *Past and Present*, No. 126 (Feb 1990), pp.115-150, Tables 3-4; *Kingston Lifecycles Database*<sup>15</sup>

Viewing these figures as the proportion 'employed', the actual percentage figures are expressed as shown in Figure 8.4

**Figure 8.4**

**Percentage of Boys aged 5-9 and 10-14 Employed in Kingston in 1851 compared with Surrey as a whole**

	% of Boys employed in England and Wales	% Boys employed in Surrey	% Boys employed in Middlesex	% Boys employed in Kingston
<b>Aged 5-9</b>	2	1	0.3	0.2
<b>Aged 10-14</b>	36.6	28.2	18.0	19.9

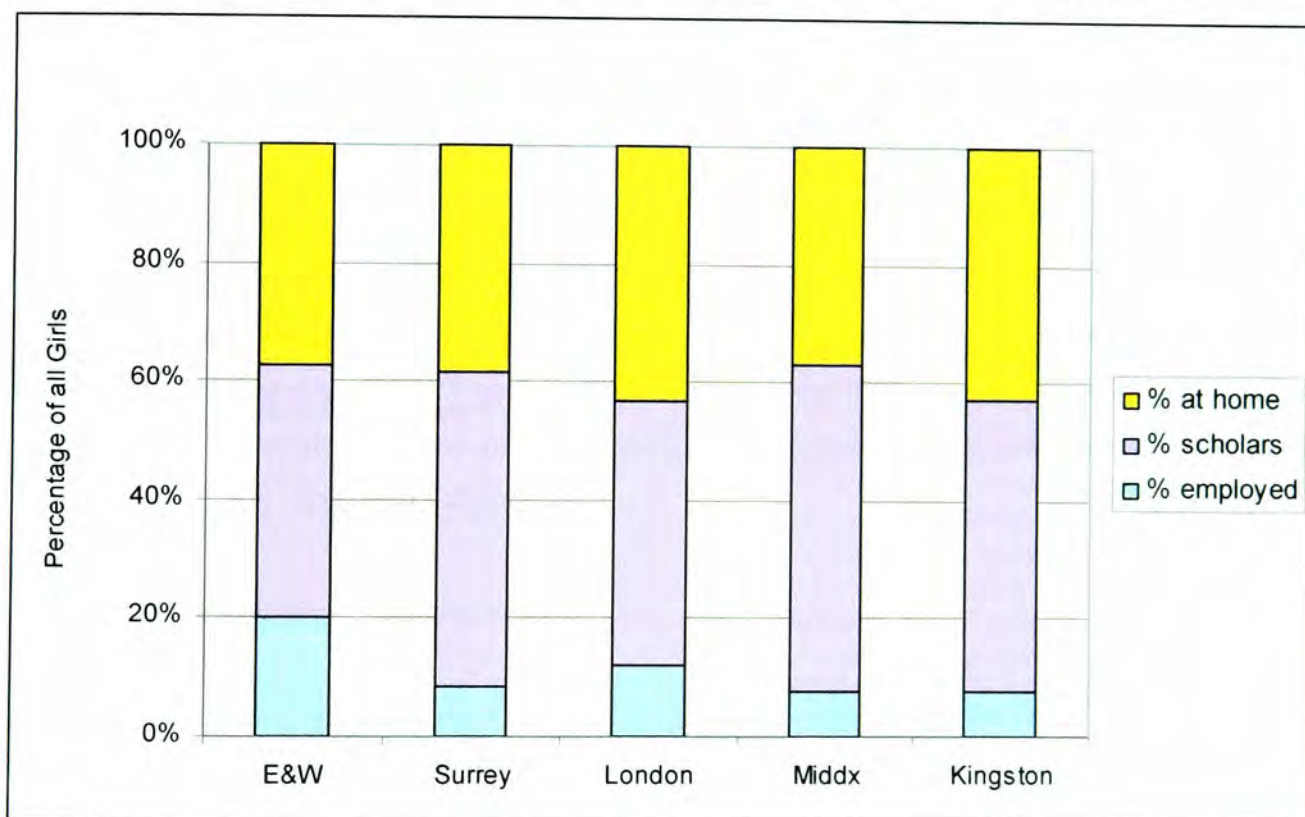
Source: as for Figure 8.3



It can be seen that the figure for Kingston equates more with that of Middlesex than for Surrey as a whole. This may reflect the fact that town children are within easier reach of schools, and also the greater emphasis on farming activities in Surrey as a county. Although Cunningham argued that results such as this indicate that there were many children for whom no work was available and who were, in effect, unemployed, this was less likely to be the case in Kingston.<sup>16</sup> It is more probable that Kingston, being in commuting distance from London, was acquiring the character of a suburban residential town and its development as a retail centre was providing employment opportunities for the young. As will be seen later in the chapter [Figure 8.9], the growth in the numbers of boys carrying out the work of messengers, errand boys or working in shops suggest that, for Kingston, it was in this particular area of work where opportunities were more available. A later section of this chapter will consider in more detail the types of occupations and Poor Law apprenticeships in which Kingston boys were engaged.

Figures 8.5 and 8.6 give the corresponding statistics for girls:

**Figure 8.5 Comparative Table of Girls Aged 10-14 in Employment or otherwise 1851**



Source: as for Figure 8.3

**Figure 8.6**

**Percentage of Girls aged 5-9 and 10-14 Employed in Kingston in 1851 compared with Surrey as a whole**

	% of Girls employed in England and Wales	% Girls employed in Surrey	% Girls employed in Middx	% Girls employed in Kingston
<b>Aged 5-9</b>	1.4	0.05	0.1	0
<b>Aged 10-14</b>	19.9	8.3	7.6	7.8

Source: as for Figure 8.3

For girls, the proportion 'at home' is similar across the range, except for the London area. The percentage figures for 'employed' girls, however, show that in the counties of Surrey and Middlesex, and the town of Kingston, the percentage of employed girls at this date is much lower than the national figures. This possibly reflects that in some areas of the country there was a greater variety of employment opportunities for girls, in factories or engaged in localised cottage industries. It should also be borne in mind that the replies to census questions might be subject to local interpretation, which, in turn, might be reflected in the figures.

The contrast between urban and rural areas, and the particular industries and employment practices at the local level, can be appreciated when comparing Kingston not only with national and county figures, but also with a sample of the outlying villages and with a contrasting region of the country. Figure 8.7 and Figure 8.8 depict the percentages of children in the 5-9 and 10-14 age groups undertaking some form of employment as declared in the 1851 Census. It will be seen that in areas of Hertfordshire, where children were involved in the local silk and hat trades, a higher percentage of both younger and older children were employed than in Kingston and, indeed, than the national average. However, in the two rural parishes of the Kingston Union used in the sample, child employment was greater than in the town, reflecting children's involvement in their families' agricultural pursuits. This will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

This chapter will next consider the occupational structure for children in Kingston, and how this reflected the developing character of the area. Certain occupations will be considered, from those available in the town, in the suburb, and the outlying area. These encompass retailing, domestic service including chimney sweeps, casual earning, teaching, agricultural labour and brickmaking. Comparison will also be made with the types of occupations available for those children from the workhouse schools.

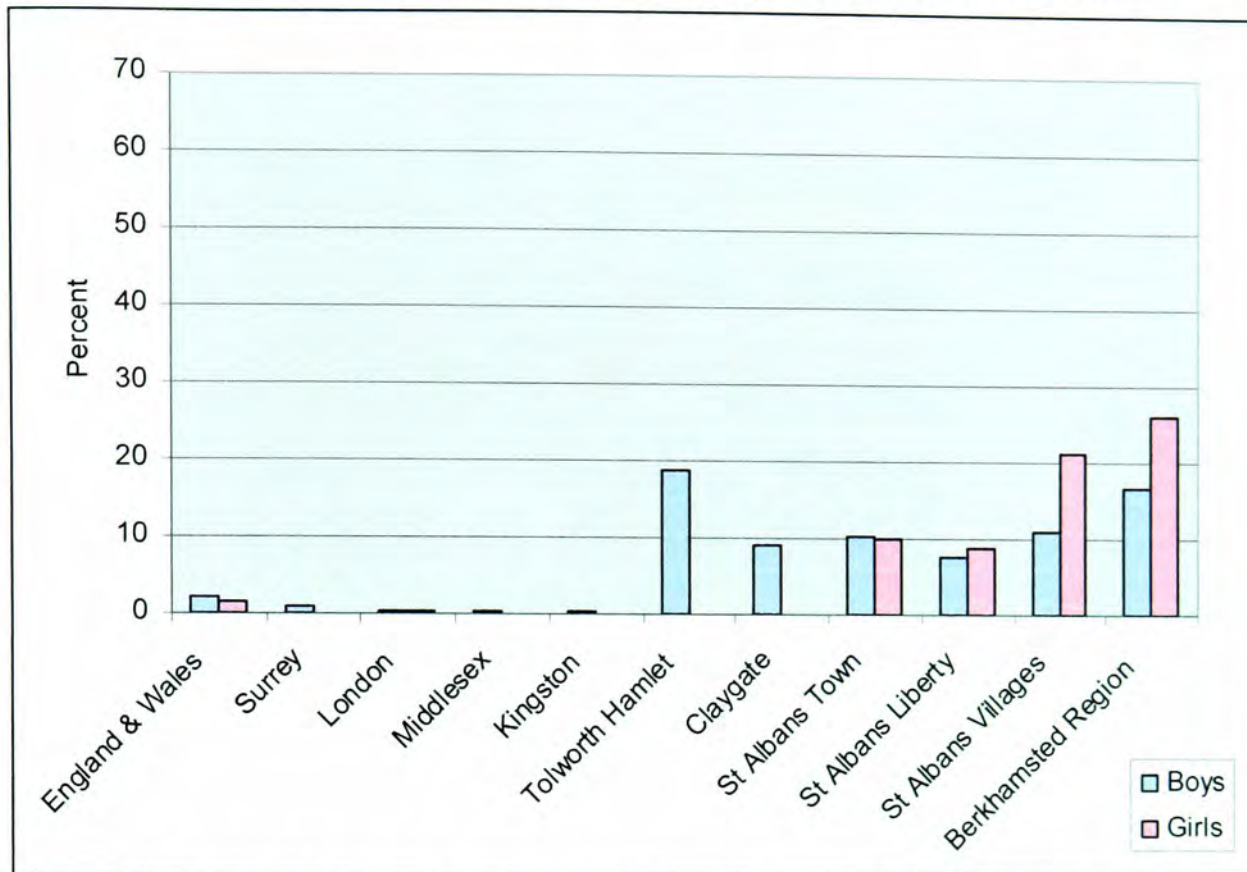
### **8.3 Child Employment in the Town**

Figures 8.9 and 8.10 show the number of boys and girls aged from 10 to 14 employed in the Kingston area, and the sectors in which they were engaged, from which it can be seen that the range of employment opportunities was much wider for boys than for girls. By far the largest proportion of employed girls was in domestic service, with dressmaking and millinery forming a growing area from 1871. For boys the choices were much greater. In 1851 the main opportunities were in agricultural labour and as errand boys; by 1861 there were nearly as many errand boys as agricultural labourers. The development of Kingston and Surbiton as a suburban residential area is reflected by similar numbers of boys working in domestic service and the increase of their involvement in the building trades. Domestic service for both boys and girls will be discussed later in the chapter. By 1871 the largest area of employment in Kingston for boys was as errand boys, and by 1881 errand boys and messenger boys had far outstripped



**Figure 8.7**

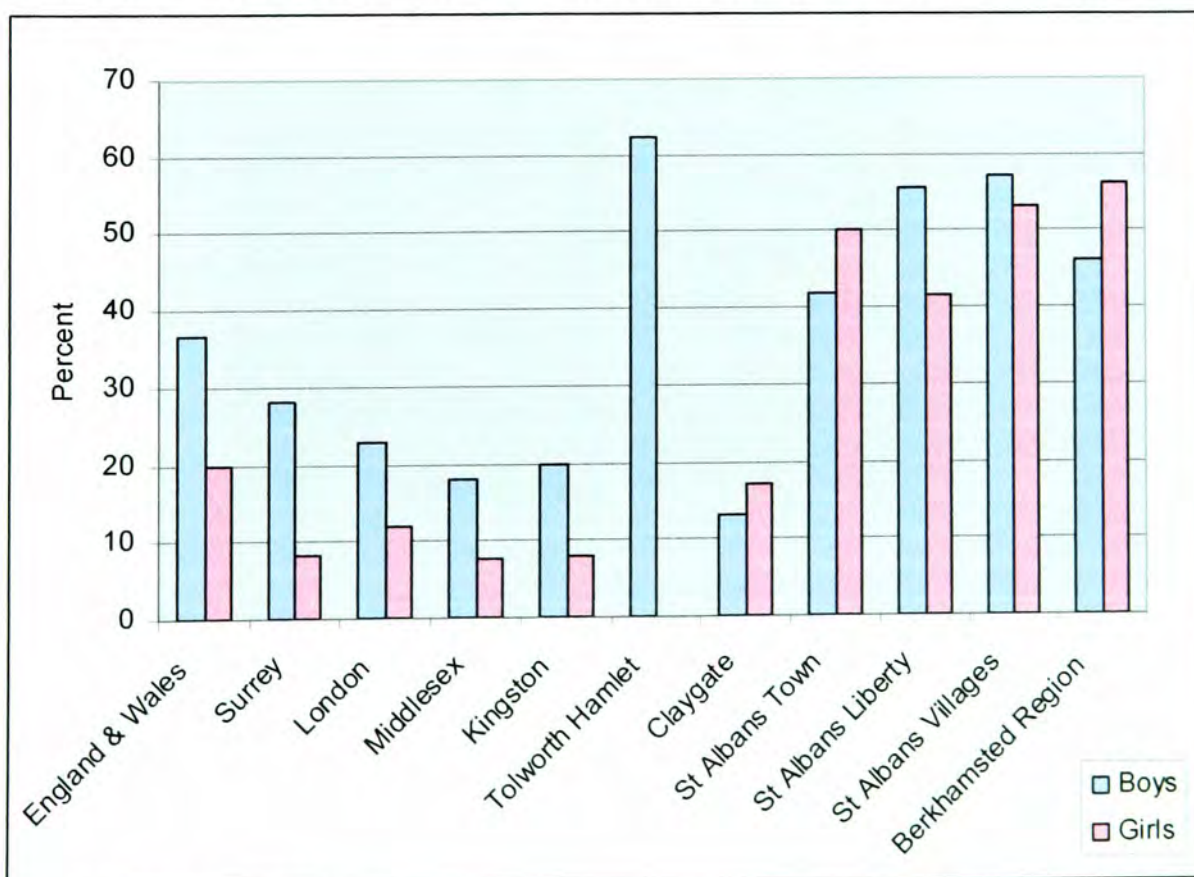
**Percentage of Children Aged 5-9 in Employment, 1851: National and Regional Samples**



Source: as for Figure 8.3 and N. Goose, *Population, economy and family structure in Hertfordshire in 1851, Vol. 1, the Berkhamsted region*, Table 7, p. 41 and *Vol. 2, St Albans and its region*, Table 10, p. 98

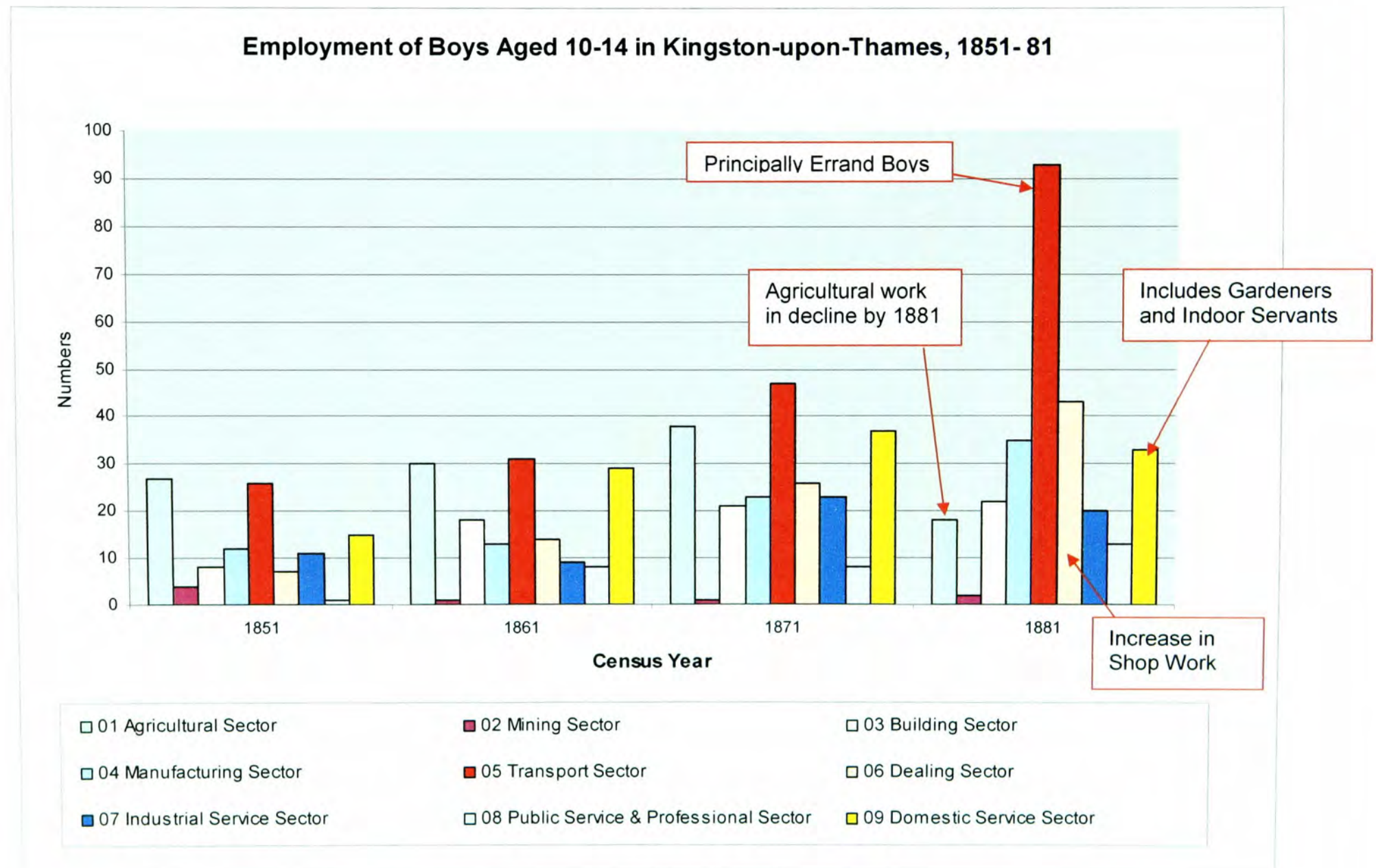
**Figure 8.8**

**Percentage of Children Aged 10-14 in Employment, 1851: National and Regional Samples**



Source: as for Figure 8.7

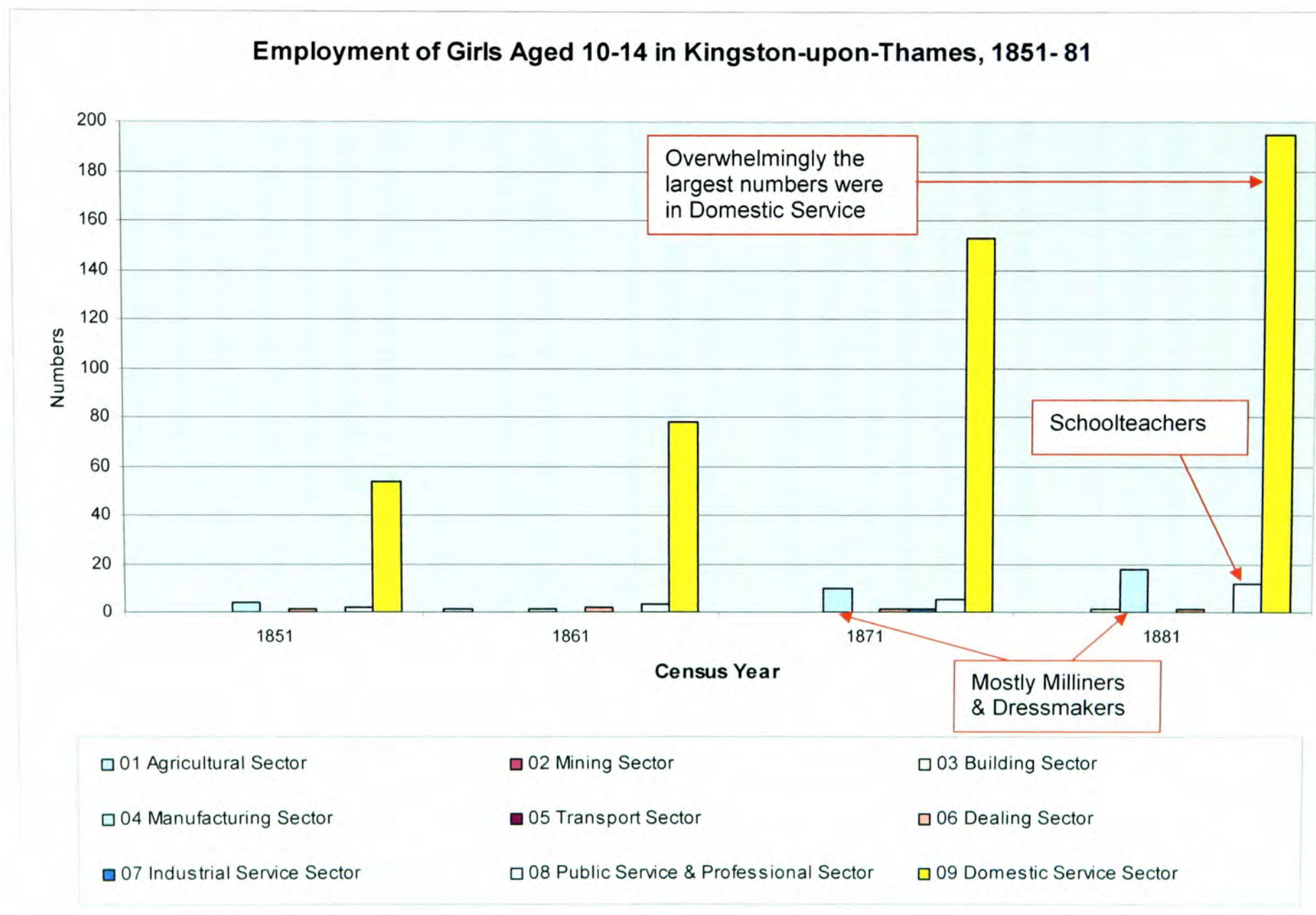
Figure 8.9



Source: From census data on Kingston *Lifecycles* Database. For Key to Occupational Sectors, see Appendix 3



Figure 8.10



Source: From census data on Kingston *Lifecycles* Database. For Key to Occupational Sectors, see Appendix 3

other work, with a noticeable decline in the agricultural sector and the increase in shop work as the century wore on.

Seasonal and periodic employment, not being reflected in census data, impedes any accurate indication of children's activities. Similarly, is difficult to draw satisfactory conclusions from the school attendance figures alone, as any reduction in pupil numbers during periods when there was ample seasonal work available can be balanced by poor attendance during times of bad weather, parental unemployment and widespread sickness, all of which influenced attendance. However, some broad conclusions may be obtained.

The school log books support the findings that shop work and agricultural labour drew boys away from school, and both types of work had their seasons. For both parents and children, the opportunity to obtain work often seemed more worthwhile than schooling. The argument put forward by Eric Hopkins emphasising the importance of children's earnings in the family is not contradicted by the findings in Kingston. Hopkins remarked "some parents could see little point in education, and still preferred to send their children out to work as soon as possible, because of the contribution they could make to the family economy".<sup>17</sup>

The Rist family, described in Chapter 7, is an example of a family for whom earning money to satisfy immediate needs took precedent over the children's future prospects. Parents' disregard for education was commented on by the Richmond Road mistress when visiting the families of absentees in 1874:

*Found many of the parents quite insensible of the wrong they were doing their children by keeping them at home & not seeming to care whether their children were educated or not*<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, even when children did attend school, "it was often only for short periods of time".<sup>19</sup> The evidence from Kingston supports this; children might attend school when there was no work available, but be drawn by the prospect of earnings as they arose, as suggested by the remarks of the Kingston Public School master in the spring of 1864:

*Mar 22 It is very difficult to keep many of the Boys regularly in School when they are capable of earning a shilling or two a week*  
*Apr 4 Several Boys leave at this season of the year*  
*May 27 The irregular attendance of the boys is occasioned partly by the demand for "Boy Labour"*  
*May 31 Boys continue leaving, there being a great demand for Boys by shopkeepers.*<sup>20</sup>

This last comment reflects the increasing opportunities for children in Kingston's growing retail sector. Boys might be involved either as an errand boys or working in the shop. As in other sectors, children might gain experience helping out in their parents' shop, and as both paid work

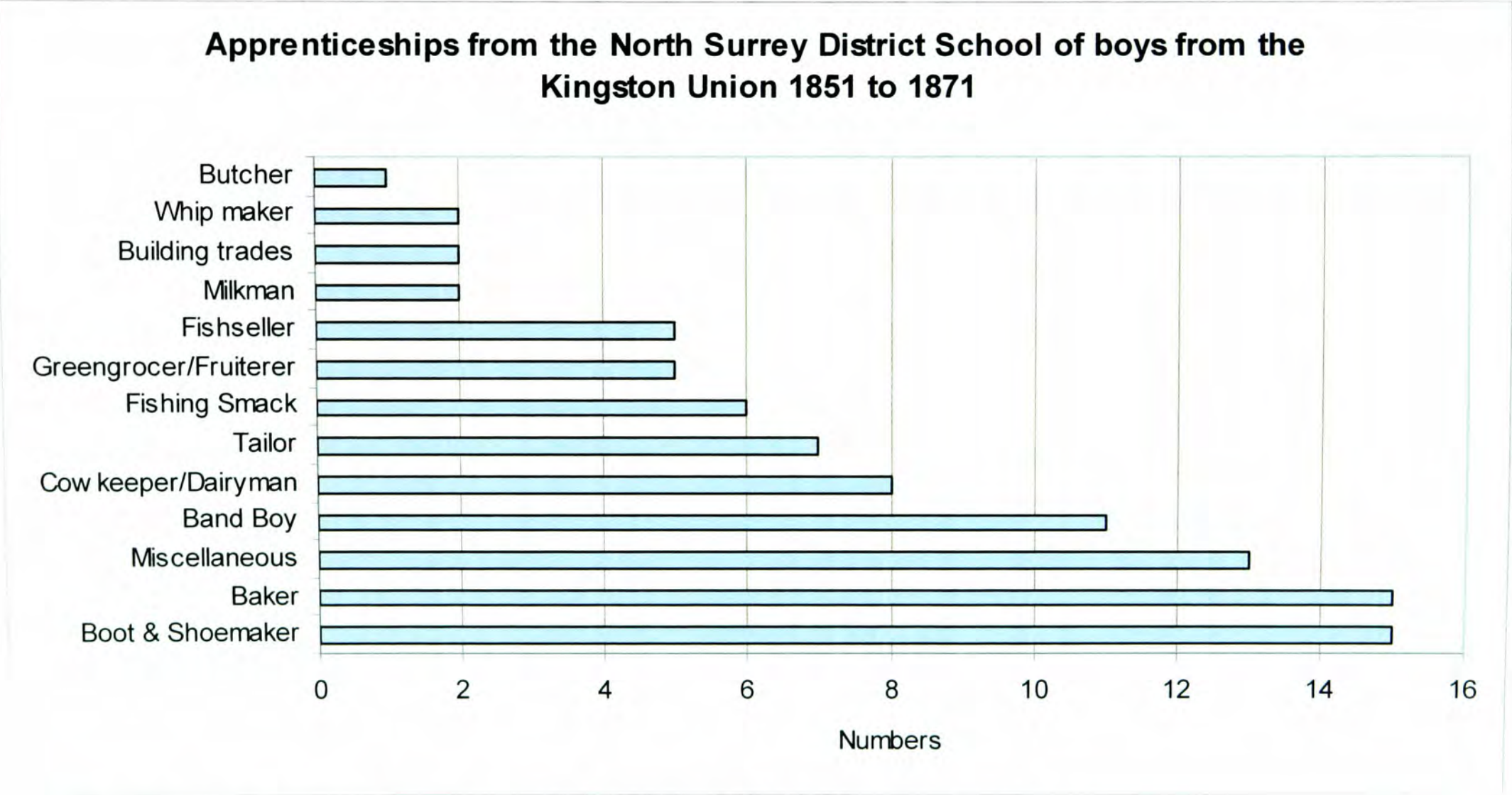
and assisting in the family business might be undertaken in conjunction with some schooling, this would lead to under-recording of children in retailing. Similarly, a young person recorded in the census return as being a 'servant' to a retailing family might have undertaken either domestic duties or shop work, or both. It is only where the particular occupation is specified, or if the child was bound formally as an apprentice to a specified trade, can the extent of child employment be viewed with more certainty.

In the same fashion, teaching was an occupation which was accessible to children in the town schools and in which experience was gradually gained in conjunction with the child's own schooling, owing to the system of pupil-teacher apprenticeships. It was also available for children in the workhouse schools. For a bright girl who was given this opportunity at school, teaching presented an alternative to domestic service. Agnes and Susannah Quarterman, the daughters of a mat weaver who was, in 1881, the vergers at Christ Church, Surbiton, were both pupil teachers at the Richmond Road School. They were able to remain as schoolteachers for many years, whereas their sister went into service. Teaching was one of the few careers equally available to both boys and girls. Arthur Eldridge, the son of a wheelwright, began his teaching experience as a monitor at All Saints National School in Kingston at the beginning of 1874, went on to become a pupil teacher there, and was assistant master by 1880. He took a scholarship examination in 1881 and returned to All Saints School in 1884 as Head Teacher. In 1888 he married Mary Ann Legg, the daughter of the Master of the Richmond Road school, where she and her brothers had all been pupil teachers.<sup>21</sup>

Hopkins states that "...the system of pupil-teaching opened up a new career to the working classes."<sup>22</sup> In practical terms, however, very poor children still experienced difficulties. Whilst, in theory, any bright and able boy or girl could become a pupil teacher and make teaching their career, regular attendance at school was required, which might not be possible for families who found it difficult to pay the school pence, or who withdrew their children periodically for work. Arthur Eldridge was fortunate in having a father in a skilled trade. The Quarterman girls, whose father would have been less well paid, necessitating their sister's going into service, may well have benefitted from their father's later involvement in the Church. If family income was limited, a promising pupil teacher might be withdrawn from school when the possibility of other paid work presented itself. Pupil teachers, such as Elizabeth Farren, were unable to realise a teaching career if they were needed at home. As discussed in the case study of Thomas Ockenden in Chapter 4, the stigma and restrictive life of a workhouse school often meant that a capable and promising apprentice teacher would leave the system and work elsewhere.



Figure 8.11



Source: NSDS Apprenticeship Registers LMA NSSD/190, NSDS/191; NSDS Band Register LMA NSSD/188

Boys aged up to the age of 16 may be included in these numbers, being incorporated in the children's section of the workhouse up to that age

## 8.4 Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship from Poor Law Schools varied slightly from those found for children at home, particularly where boys were concerned. The numbers of apprenticeships for Kingston boys during the twenty years the union used the North Surrey District School (NSDS) are shown in Figure 8.11. For both boys and girls the mode of entry into employment could differ from that of the workhouse child, as there was more opportunity for gradual involvement for those still living at home. Where a child was living with his or her family, there was the opportunity of gaining experience of the world of work through sharing the parental occupation or taking casual or part-time employment. The workhouse school did endeavour to replicate this transition through the system of industrial training, although the nature of the training did not necessarily prepare the child for their ultimate apprenticeship.

Apprenticeship from the Poor Law School meant removal of the child from the school and being placed in the home of his master for immediate full-time work. Of course, the same applied to a child apprenticed from home. If the family home were overcrowded, or should economic necessity dictate, a child might be apprenticed and sent to live with a master or take up domestic service in another household. As expressed in Dorothy Edwards' account of her aunt's domestic service: "Of course, I cried when I left home ... but I was the eldest and there wasn't room for me anymore..."<sup>23</sup> It was, of course, possible that such a child remained geographically close to home, whereas a child apprenticed from the Poor Law Schools might be placed at some distance from any remaining family, as previously discussed.

Whereas boys in Kingston most frequently worked as errand boys, artisan trades featured largely in the pauper apprenticeships from the District School. The types of trades into which workhouse boys were sent did not always offer a secure or lucrative career. The Chaplain to the NSDS commented in 1862 on the merits of the various trades into which the boys were apprenticed:

*...tailoring and shoemaking often proves of great advantage to our boys in any situation in which they may be placed, as one source of self-help ... yet experience rather disposes me to think that the supply of labour to such branches of industry is greater than the demand, and the consequence is ... our boys ... become discontented with their position, and occasionally forsake their particular trade for some other occupation. Those sent out as bakers are somewhat more stationary, boys brought up to engineering have turned out remarkably well. ... Farm-boys are not much in demand in our neighbourhood, except for dairymen's purposes – an employment which they rarely continue in long. Garden-boys are, with us, more intelligent than the class just mentioned, and from time to time obtain good places in gentlemen's service, though changes to other occupations are very frequent; the same may be said of those sent out as shop-boys. ...*

*The employment of girls, is of course, entirely in domestic service, for which there is an unceasing demand.... I regret to be obliged to add, that a few of the girls sent out since my last report have fallen into sinful courses* <sup>24</sup>

One of the principal advantages of a boy learning tailoring and shoemaking whilst still in the school, was that it increased his 'self-help' skills and gave him an advantage when entering the army or navy, as he would be able to make and repair his own clothes. It was the army and navy which proved the most enduring and successful destination for workhouse boys. This was enhanced thorough the introduction of band music and drill at the schools, and many boys entered the services as band boys. Those destined for the sea were transferred from the schools to training ships such as the *Exmouth*, run by the Metropolitan Asylums Board. The subjects of band music, the army, navy and fishing fleets are all worthy of separate discussion.

A notorious child apprenticeship had long been as climbing boys to chimney sweeps. Although chimney sweeping formed only a small proportion of the available occupations for children in Kingston it is one frequently associated with the cruelties of child employment and therefore cannot be overlooked. <sup>25</sup> With national sympathy towards the negro slave abroad, the enslaved black and sooty climbing boy was a reasonable object of concern at home. The treatment of these boys was not compatible with Christian teaching. In the public view climbing boys straddled that boundary between slavery and apprenticeship, and it was a popular belief that many climbing boys had been sold into service by poor parents, or stolen by others for sale to chimney sweeps. John Burn described in his 1855 autobiography being kidnapped by a chimney sweep while out playing, his undernourished frame making him an ideal size for the work, but his mother retrieved him. <sup>26</sup> The influence of the evangelical 'Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor' extended to Kingston, where steps had been taken from the late eighteenth century to improve conditions for climbing boys, including the establishment of a Sunday School to provide them with a general and religious education. In 1799 the Bishop of Durham had commended the measures taken in Kingston and recommended the adoption of similar standards in other market towns. <sup>27</sup> The establishment in 1817 of the 'Kingston Association for Bettering the Condition and Morals of the Poor in the Town and Neighbourhood' promoted further improvements. The Association in Kingston encouraged, and rewarded, the use of 'machines' rather than children for sweeping chimneys, and even paid for the 'machines' which they hoped the Kingston chimney sweeps would use. Such 'machines' in use in England comprised interconnecting rods which were, however, of little effect in twisting flues. The Kingston sweeps undertook not to use climbing boys except where the machines proved ineffective, and although the Association was supposed to have been informed of such occasions, no evidence survives as to the extent to which these recommendations were adopted. Nevertheless, the prominence given to the problem through such public debate and cooperation strongly suggests an awareness in the locality of the plight of these children, although their moral and religious needs were certainly considered before their physical ones.

This level of awareness is supported by the recollections of G.W. Ayliffe, a tradesman in Kingston from 1856 to 1885, who recorded that the chimney sweep, John Rowles, was:

*a model employer, fitted up hot and cold baths for his boys, whom he also clothed, fed and educated well, and took them with him every Sunday to the Congregational Chapel*<sup>28</sup>

However, despite the regularity of the baths they were supposed to be encouraged to take, these boys remained resolutely sooty and in many cases illiterate despite the Sunday School. It is significant that in 1860 the adult class of the Kingston Ragged School "was composed of Chimney Sweeps, Grinders, Bricklayers' Labourers, Lamplighters and Stokers", who presumably had obtained little practical benefit from their Sunday education.<sup>29</sup> That the sweeps' boys continually bore the ingrained dirt of their profession can be inferred from frequent references in the *Surrey Comet* to "a sooty little fellow" in describing any of these children. Indeed, they could be easily identified with their trade on this account, and in any mischief in which they might be involved they were far less anonymous than other boys. One witness to an 1862 window-breaking activity was at a loss to identify the boys involved, except for the distinctive appearance of a sweep boy, George Gillan. At the police station the witness "admitted they were all alike, except Gillan".<sup>30</sup> His employer was Mr. Rowles, who "gave the boy Gillan a good character, mentioning that he had on one occasion found Mr. Herrick's gold watch, which he at once made known, and was rewarded with 10s 6d for his honesty". Furthermore, Rowles immediately paid his apprentice's fine of 12s 8½d, whilst the remaining boys waited in the police station to see if their families would do the same.

The Rowles family were chimney sweeps in Kingston for fifty years, from at least 1841. Others with long associations with the trade included the Bengo, Harrall and Lloyd families. Chimney sweeps, both masters and employees, resided in the poorest and most overcrowded areas of Kingston, Young's Buildings and the Back Lanes. The children of these families assisted in their father's trade from a young age and in many cases continued the business in adulthood and took over from their fathers. It is reasonable to expect an established tradesman to provide work for his own children, and the situation was no different for the chimney sweeps. The sons worked and lived alongside any apprentices their father might have, suggesting a crowded, sooty household of young boys. In 1841 James and Mark Harrall were working as sweeps for their father when aged fourteen and seven, in addition to the apprentices he employed. Their home in the Back Lanes in 1851 comprised eleven persons, six of them chimney sweeps, a challenge to the cleaning skills of Mrs Harrall.

Some of the apprentices were drawn from the poorest families nearby. Mark White was born in 1850, the youngest but one of a family of eight children. His father was a Coal Porter in the Back Lanes, so the family was not unused to coal dirt in the home. When he was five, his father died and his widowed mother had to work as a charwoman, and the older daughters found work as servants. It was undoubtedly economic necessity which obliged Mark's mother to apprentice him to a chimney sweep, and he was working for Mark Harrall at the age of eleven. He did,

however, remain in the trade and was still working as a sweep in 1881, by which time he was married and with children of his own. He remained poor, however, as his wife had to take work as a laundress at the same time as caring for their young children.

To support Mr. Ayliffe's anecdotal recollections, and the aims of the Kingston Association, there is documentary evidence suggesting that the principal employers of sweeps' apprentices in Kingston treated them fairly. Loyal and hardworking apprentices were submitted to the Association for rewards; Mr. Rowles recommended several of his apprentices during the 1830s and 1840s. His apprentices who received rewards included two boys who had been apprenticed to him from the age of nine, and had remained with him at least seven years. Another of his apprentices to give long service was Richard Timmins. He had been born in Whitechapel and was apprenticed to Mr. Rowles aged thirteen. Timmins remained with Rowles at least four and a half years and after he had left Rowles' service he continued to work as a chimney sweep in Kingston for over twenty years.<sup>31</sup>

There appeared to have been a certain fraternity in the chimney sweep community. They not only employed each other's apprentices, but often apprenticed each other's children. This 'rotation' of employees may, however, have arisen from the unsuitability of a sweep's apprentice for any other type of work, after seven years of soot and little education. Alfred Sash worked for Joseph Lloyd for four years, then went on to work for Rowles, but unfortunately took some of Lloyd's equipment with him. Mr. Lloyd gave him a good character and the boy was not punished.<sup>32</sup> Boys might be bound as apprentices or be hired under an annual contract. George Wright was bound to John Rowles for twelve months, but abandoned his brushes at Winter's Bridge and ran away to Ripley, where he was found and brought back.<sup>33</sup> Sweeping chimneys was not for him as he had left Kingston by the following year.

Parish apprenticeship records for this date no longer survive, but it is evident that children could still be apprenticed to a chimney sweep from the workhouse school, just as they were to other tradesmen. During the period the Kingston Union was part of the North Surrey School District, there is evidence of only two instances of Kingston boys being apprenticed to chimney sweeps, and in one of those cases enquires of the prospective master proved unsatisfactory and the binding did not take place. The one boy who was apprenticed was an orphan, John Cook, who was apprenticed in 1869, aged 15, to a sweep in Norwood. He remained in the trade after apprenticeship and returned to Kingston, working as a chimney sweep there in 1881.<sup>34</sup>

It would therefore appear that by the 1860s and 1870s pauper apprenticeships to chimney sweeps were still being authorised by the Kingston Guardians, but not in great numbers, and some care was taken with the placements. In the town, all the resolve of the philanthropists of Kingston did not necessarily mean that, in practice, their laudable suggestions were being enacted by employer or customer, but it does suggest at least that there was an awareness in Kingston of the plight of young sweeps and some effort to improve their working conditions.

Whatever such apprentices might have endured, binding to a suitable master did offer the opportunity of an enduring trade, as seen in several Kingston examples, but was likely to be the option for the very poor.

Another notorious occupation was that of crossing-sweepers, regarded in Kingston as tantamount to begging. As Hopkins remarked, "The line between selling and begging was a thin one...".<sup>35</sup> The Kingston Mendicity Society, formed in 1870, took a dim view of this form of earning:

*The committee earnestly entreat persons not to give money to crossing sweepers, who are merely "beggars with brooms in their hands;" many of them in Surbiton being the children of most disreputable and undeserving parents, and the money given only goes to support them in idle and vicious courses.*<sup>36</sup>

There were also shoe-blacks, who were assisted by the Ragged School and Shoe Black Society, but as they received charitable support through an organised local society, they were regarded more favourably than the crossing sweepers.

It is therefore not a straightforward undertaking to quantify and analyse the extent of child employment, as this would range from formal apprenticeships with a fixed term, full-time work, part-time and casual work, through to informal work such as running errands, holding horses' reins, helping parents, or even activities interpreted as begging. The contribution of a local study takes the general consideration of child employment to the individual experience.

## 8.5 Domestic Service

Domestic work for girls can be considered in two ways. There was paid domestic service within another household, which was treated as 'employment' in census returns. In addition, girls might also perform full-time domestic duties at home, helping mother with her large family, or looking after the house for her widowed father, or unmarried brothers, and this was not normally recorded as 'employment' by the census clerks.<sup>37</sup> Whilst at school, the pattern of attendance and nature of schoolwork set the tone for a girl's future employment. Preparation for a girl's domestic rôle was reflected in the classroom. At the Richmond Road Public School a large part of the girls' time was spent in needlework and knitting. This was not confined to example pieces or samplers; the older girls undertook to make the school uniforms for the charity boys and girls, measuring, cutting out and making up the dresses and shirts in their respective brown or green colours according to the charity. This all had to be completed in time for Easter when the trustees of the various charities inspected the children. There were also items to be sewn or knitted up for charity missions and also for sales of work. This reduced the amount of time the girls spent in more academic classwork, and although at the Richmond Road school the inspectors considered the standard of needlework to be very good, their other work suffered in consequence.

Hopkins emphasises the domestic expectations of girls socially and within the home, and this is reflected in the experience of the girls in Kingston.<sup>38</sup> The girls' education was also liable to interruption by the demands of home, as they were often required to assist their mothers in domestic chores, or look after younger siblings in their mother's absence. This might be to release their mothers for paid seasonal work, or to take over the household tasks if their mothers were ill. Cunningham found that in London the absence of girls from school on Mondays was unquestioned, it being washday and mothers requiring their help.<sup>39</sup> The death of a mother could mark the end of a girl's education as she would then be required by her father to run the home. Periodic absences not only affected a girl's education, but might also impinge on the efficiency of the school if she were a pupil teacher or assisted the mistress in the classroom. In 1867 Elizabeth Farren was required at home during her mother's illness, and as she was a pupil teacher and a favourite of the schoolmistress, this would have disrupted the school's efficiency as well as her own education.

Elizabeth Farren was the daughter of a carpenter who had moved his family from Alton in Hampshire to Kingston around 1857. They lived in Holly Cottage, in the London Road, before moving to a cottage in Grove Lane, which they named Alton Cottage after their home town. Elizabeth had three brothers, the oldest of whom became a pupil teacher at the boys' school in Richmond Road. The second son, Frank, died in Kingston at the age of 14; twenty of the boys from school attended his funeral. The schoolmistress considered Elizabeth to be "a very good gentle child ... her parents are respectable and the child an only girl has been most carefully reared".<sup>40</sup> Being the only girl put many domestic responsibilities on her. In addition to her schoolwork, a pupil teacher had to attend additional lessons either before or after school for an hour, supervise the charity girls during their obligatory church attendance, take annual examinations, and teach during the day, possibly taking over classes if the mistress was unwell or absent. She might also have had domestic responsibilities at home:

*1867 Mar 11 E Farrens brother came to say she could not come because her mother was not well*

*1867 Mar 18 Mr Farren came yesterday to say his wife was ill and they could not spare Lizzy till she was better.*<sup>41</sup>

Sometimes messages of absence were rather more terse:

*1867 Jan 25 E Farren's brother came and said 'Lizzy ain't coming today'*

Elizabeth's attendance was sporadic during 1867 and she did not return regularly until May, although her father insisted that he had not kept her at home for some time. By this date 'Lizzy' would have been aged fifteen, and having once been given the responsibility of running the home may have found it difficult to return to the discipline of school life; as her teacher recorded, "poor Lizzie".<sup>42</sup> She left school and worked as a dressmaker, but eventually she and her family left Kingston for St Pancras. She did not marry, but assisted at home, helping her mother look



after her two surviving brothers who, by 1881, were still unmarried and working as Railway Clerks. After her parents died, she remained as housekeeper to her two unmarried brothers.

Elizabeth's fellow pupil-teacher, Ann Gray, also had to divide her time between the demands of school and home.

- 1866 Feb 5      *Small pox very bad in Kingston. Ann Gray on Leave because her sister has it*
- 1867 July 3      *A Gray did not come to lessons this morning. She came at 9 O'clock and said her mother was ill and she had been up all night. She has not been fit for work all day*

Examples were not confined to the Public School. Elsewhere in Kingston the situation was the same, as in St Paul's school, Kingston Hill:

- 2 Jun 1873      *Caroline Butcher has obtained leave for this week through her mother's illness*
- 24 Nov 1873      *Sarah Chilvers asked for leave to be absent through the winter months because of home circumstances.*
- 19 Oct 1874      *Maude Wilton (proposed candidate for P.T.) left because work was given her to do at home* <sup>43</sup>

Sarah Chilvers' 'home circumstances' no doubt arose from the size of her family. Her father was a tailor, and Sarah was the oldest daughter in what eventually became a family of thirteen surviving children. In the household also were, at various times, a widowed grandmother, an uncle and a cousin. Sarah and her younger sister worked as dressmaker and milliner, and Sarah did not marry until she was over thirty years old.

If the demands of home did not take a girl away from schoolwork, the most likely reason for leaving school would be the opportunity to work in service. Agnes and Amy Crandley left school in 1873 aged thirteen and eleven respectively and went into service, as did their sisters, Sarah Ann and Mary. <sup>44</sup> Their father, George, lived in the Forty Acres with his second wife and at least seven children, although taking into account his first marriage there had been fourteen children altogether to provide for. The economic pressure drove George to claim medical relief for various illnesses for his children during the 1860s and again in 1873 when scarlet fever struck the family. <sup>45</sup> However, they managed to remain independent of the workhouse and George worked as a coach trimmer throughout his life. The oldest sons followed their father's trade of coach-trimmer and the family remained in the same area of Kingston, Canbury, for forty years or more.

The children of this family began work around the age of eleven, the boys as errand boys, regardless of their ultimate occupation, although the older sons undoubtedly assisted their father in his trade; the girls went in to service. As Amy was only attending school for half-days at the time she left school it seems reasonable to suppose that girls might begin their working



life by taking daily work on a part-time basis and reduce their daily school attendance prior to finally leaving school. This enabled them to learn their domestic duties and prove themselves in work. Once they had gained some experience they were more able to obtain permanent live-in work with a small household. Both Agnes and Sarah Crandley later worked in small households of the clerical or private income class, but as the only live-in servant. These were the type of households which might require additional daily help, ideal for a young girl to learn what was required, commencing by helping the permanent servants by undertaking the rough tasks before progressing to the more delicate domestic work. This was the experience of Dorothy Edwards' aunt who began work in Teddington in this way before she had reached the age of ten:

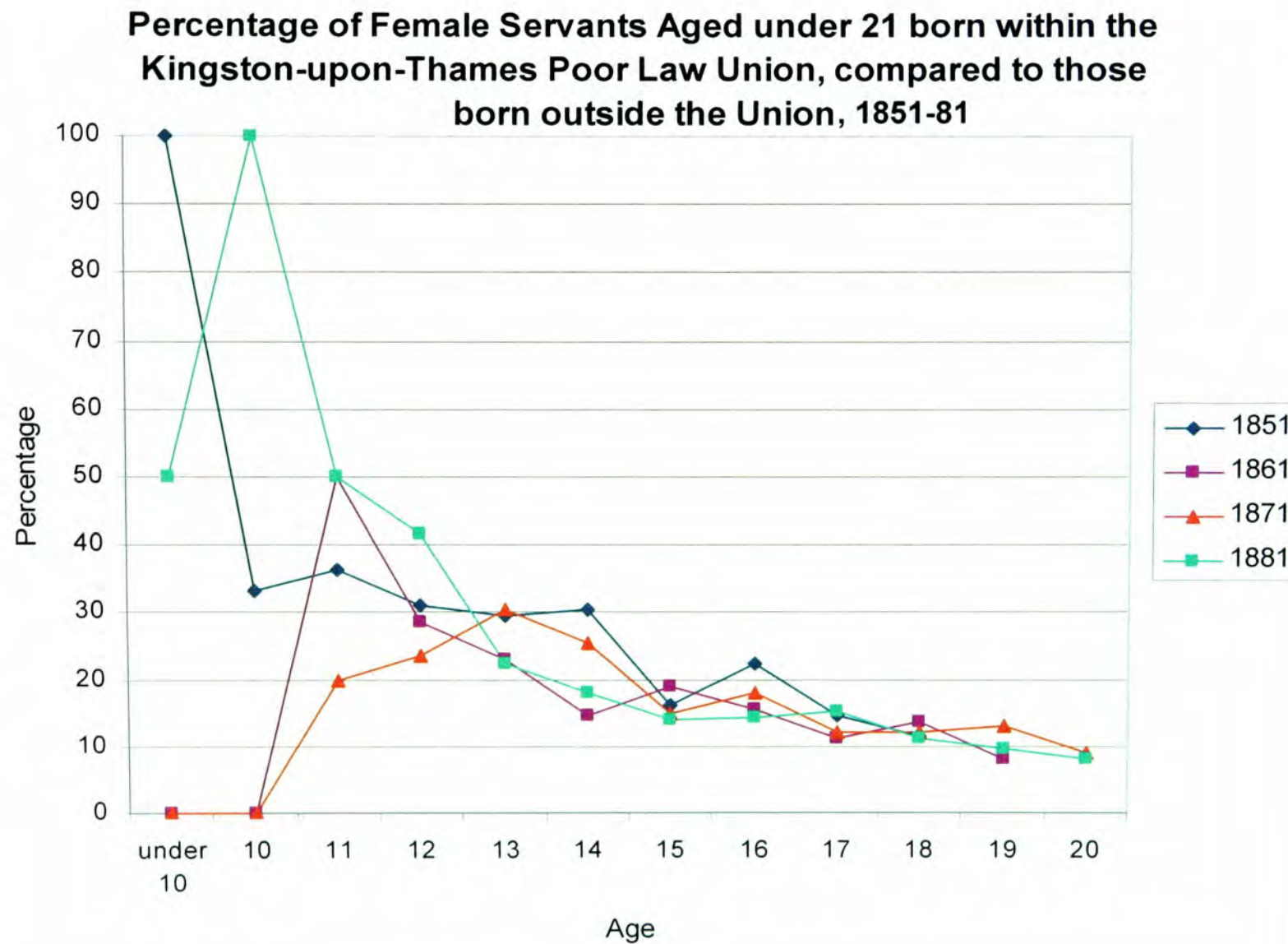
*[The Vicar's wife knew] one or two ladies who would like their kitchen fires laid or their doorsteps cleaned. She said, 'Ladies with only one maid often need a little extra assistance'.<sup>46</sup>*

Being early-morning work this might also be undertaken before school, and as such it would not be revealed in census records. It is therefore likely that girls undertook some form of paid work at a younger age than can be calculated from census data. According to the Kingston census figures, there were only small numbers of girls aged eleven and under in domestic service, yet the experience of the Crandley sisters and other references in school log books suggests otherwise. Part-time work and 'odd-jobs' as a preparation for full-time work would explain this inconsistency.

That younger children were gaining experience in domestic service by working closer to home, as suggested above, can be supported by an analysis of the birthplaces of the younger female servants. A study by Tilley and French concluded that the proportion of female domestic servants in Kingston born outside the town was significantly higher than for the population of Kingston as a whole.<sup>47</sup> Analysed in conjunction with the birthplaces of female servants at various ages under twenty-one, it can be shown that the younger the servant the more likely she was to have been born within the Kingston-upon-Thames Poor Law Union [Figure 8.12]. John Pink's study of Kingston and Surbiton female domestics suggests that the demand for servants in this developing suburban area attracted girls from the metropolis and from the countryside. As discussed later in this chapter, in section 8.6, an analysis of the families in the agricultural hamlet of Tolworth suggests a migration of girls aged between 10 and 15 into the town.

Social connections could be of considerable importance in obtaining domestic work. If a girl's mother had herself been in service and could approach her former employer, or if she knew of someone who could recommend her daughter to a friend, this was a useful way of obtaining work. The Kingston Ragged School, Shoe Black and Help Society was also instrumental in finding work for its pupils. It encouraged the public to hire the children for work "at the small charge of two-pence per hour", which would have been a good introduction into the labour market and enabled the children to obtain references for further positions.<sup>48</sup> The ladies who

Figure 8.12



Source: From census data on Kingston *Lifecycles* Database

took an interest in the school assisted by finding domestic work for the girls:

*...many of the earlier scholars are now in service... Upward of seventy girls whose names stood on the books for the first two or three years after the school was opened, are now domestic servants, some of them filling, to the satisfaction of their Mistresses, respectable situations, to which they have been introduced by the recommendation of their teachers.*<sup>49</sup>

Whatever the quality of the education received, attending the Ragged School did, at least, place children within the orbit of philanthropic people who could arrange employment or apprenticeships, and with whom very poor children may not otherwise have come in contact. Similar efforts were taken in the Ham Orphan Home, a charitably-funded girls' orphanage which received royal and distinguished patronage. Here domestic training was given and positions found for the girls through influence and connections, the employers sending reports back to the school and prizes being given for being diligent employees. For those children in the workhouse school, situations might be recommended by Guardians or clergymen, or advertisements placed in the local press; positions thus obtained were probably of poor quality, as 'maid-of-all-work' in families not much higher up the social scale than they were themselves. Despite her 'industrial training', a workhouse girl was poorly equipped to deal with the refinements of a professional household; however, this might equally apply to some labourers' children for whom plush furnishings and delicate china would be beyond their experience. If a workhouse girl was lucky enough, she might be employed by a philanthropic lady who undertook to train her in the more exacting tasks and then recommend her to another employer, thereby improving her prospects.

Adapting to the more delicate surroundings of an employer's home was often difficult for a child from a poor household, and this was a common experience regardless of whether she had been trained by her mother, or at the workhouse, or in the orphan home, as expressed in this anecdotal remark:

*After all them bare boards and yellow blinds and tin plates this here is Heaven... I still like to rub me cheeks on the curtains and take a roll on the rugs when no one's about, because of the richness*<sup>50</sup>

It was not only girls who went into domestic service. Between 1851 and 1881 between 12% and 20% of employed boys in Kingston worked in the domestic service sector. Yet for Kingston boys this work tended to be in pubs and inns as potboys or in domestic households as pageboy. The other main domestic work was in gardening; there were many households in Kingston, and especially in Surbiton, who were able to afford gardeners, but as the gardens were not very large many gardeners lived at home and went out to work for several houses.<sup>51</sup>



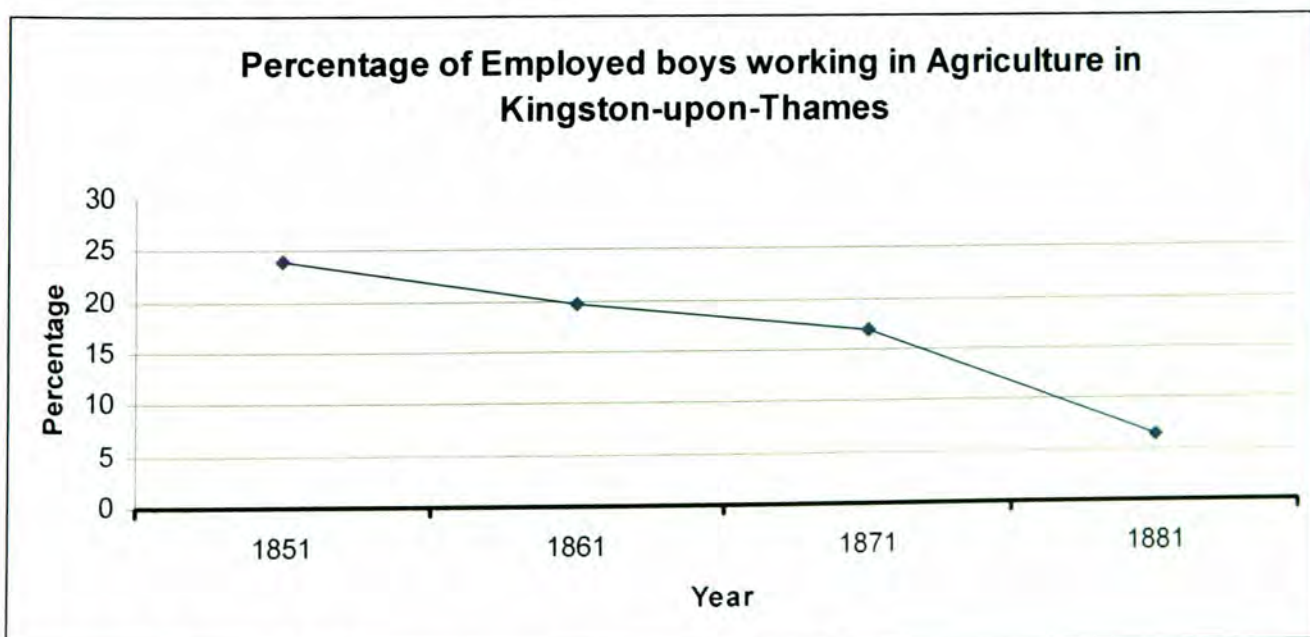
As the century progressed, there was an increasing attraction for girls to work in retailing rather than domestic service; shop-work was felt to be more socially enjoyable for a girl, more so than the restrictive life of a domestic servant. A large shop had a greater number of employees to mix with, and there was a little more freedom. Whilst the numbers of girls in domestic service in Kingston grew, the rate of growth was not as great after 1871, which seems to have been the hey-day for domestic service. This might be attributed to the growth of retailing in Kingston, but the slight growth in numbers of dressmakers may reflect their involvement as either manufacturers or retailers. There was also a slight increase in the number of schoolteachers.

## 8.6 Agricultural labour

Undoubtedly the largest area of employment of children in England, certainly of boys, during the mid-nineteenth century was agriculture. Although Snell argues that the availability of work in the south-east of England was limited, and was mostly "seasonal and supplementary", Goose's study of farm service in Hertfordshire highlights the discrepancies between census data, recorded information and contemporary literature which cannot necessarily be explained by seasonality, and thus questions this view.<sup>52</sup> In Kingston a significant proportion of working boys aged between ten and fifteen were engaged in the agricultural sector, although a noticeable reduction can be seen by 1881 [Figure 8.13]. The work in which children were involved varied with the location and the seasons. The type of soil, the climate, and the crops grown varied from area to area, so the experiences of children in one village would not necessarily have been the same in another. Even in an area the size of the Kingston union, the soils varied from sand to London clay, providing considerable geological variations within a relatively small area; children in such places as Claygate or the Dittons would have encountered more physically demanding outdoor work due to the nature of the soil.

**Figure 8.13**

**Percentage of Employed boys working in Agriculture in Kingston-upon-Thames**



Source: as for Figure 8.9 [Actual numbers shown in Figure 8.9]

The area around Kingston was given over mainly to market gardening, orchards and arable land; it was a market town within an agricultural county, and the produce of the land was a significant aspect in the lives of many. An unquantifiable number of children worked alongside their parents. In his 1843 investigation into the employment of women and children in agriculture in Kent, Surrey and Sussex, Mr. Vaughan, Assistant Commissioner, concluded that boys and girls might be involved in field labour full time, but were particularly in demand during certain seasons. Furthermore, although children might be expected to undertake tasks which were physically damaging, and work exceedingly long hours, outdoor work was "generally beneficial" to their health.<sup>53</sup> The seasonal aspect is not, of course, reflected in the census figures, so that it is probable that at various times of year the proportion of children involved in this sector was higher than shown.

In notorious child occupations such as climbing chimneys, scrambling under mill machinery or crawling through mine tunnels, smaller, undeveloped, children proved useful, but for working in the fields strength and weight were an advantage.<sup>54</sup> Children required strength and stamina to undertake many field tasks, and the work served to increase their physical strength. This was not, however, considered altogether an advantage where girls were concerned as the rough work rendered many unsuitable for certain types of domestic service, usually the only other option available for girls of poorer labouring families.<sup>55</sup> The coarse and undisciplined work of field and farm did not prepare a girl adequately for a life of cleanliness and subservience in a professional household.

Initiation into the world of work was a gradual process. It was assumed that in farming, more than in any other occupation, wives and children would be involved in the work of the family farm. This is suggested by the categorisation of farmers' families in the 1851 census; regardless of whether they were declared to be employed, they were enumerated as such, as "they almost invariably work in some way on the farm".<sup>56</sup> In the families of farm labourers children would grow up, as Vaughan noted in 1843, with agricultural implements hanging in their cottages, "where they are seen by the young, and looked at as implements of manly labour."<sup>57</sup> Young children would accompany their parents into the fields and help them in their work, and as they increased in age and strength, so the nature and hours of the work would increase.<sup>58</sup> As they became able to undertake greater physical labour, this would release their parents for other work, and increase the income for the family. Should a farm labourer be paid by the task, rather than the day, which tended to be the case in areas of Surrey where the soil was heaviest, recruiting the help of his family meant the work could be completed all the sooner. In areas of lighter soil payment by the day was more usual, so the more family members a labourer could recruit, the greater the combined earnings for the family.

Vaughan considered that, with some specific exceptions, farm labour was not as morally detrimental as might be supposed. The advantages were that a child often worked alongside the parent and was therefore under continual parental guidance, a particularly important

consideration for the girls. Two occupations, bird-scaring and cattle-keeping, being solitary, allowed more scope for a boy's "natural genius for indolence or mischief", but the chief moral danger of agricultural work lay in the influx of casual labour during harvest time. Hop-picking attracted a "motley" crowd of itinerant labourers and gypsies, and families might travel out of their area to take advantage of the work. Not only did this introduce young girls to the dubious morals of strangers, but the question of accommodating temporary workers provided its own problems, as they were often given lodgings in already overcrowded cottages. This concern was common to the brick-making industry, and this will be discussed later, but in both these occupations the extent of the problem can only be inferred, as the census returns were undertaken outside the seasons for such work. As far as morals went, Vaughan also considered that agricultural work was very often the only employment available to young women "whose characters for chastity are blemished" as they were less likely to be taken on as domestic servants in households where their "doubtful characters" might be detrimental to the other female servants.

Agriculture was important to the economy and labourers of Kingston, although diminishing in significance towards the close of the nineteenth century. The school log books reveal how aware the schools were during the 1850s and 1860s of the natural rhythm of the seasons, and how the school year was dependent on the rural economy. Significant events affecting the lives of both schoolmaster and children included the swarming of bees, the cherry fair and the summer harvest. The summer holidays were called at harvest time, sometimes with very little notice, and the "Harvest all gathered in" a sufficiently important achievement to be noted amongst the sparsely recorded events of the log books of the 1860s.<sup>59</sup> Indeed the diminishing importance of the farming year is suggested by the 'harvest holidays' ceasing to be referred to as such by the 1880s, when they were more prosaically named the 'summer holidays'. The importance of elementary education by this date might have diminished the prominence of the harvest in the view of the schools, and is also reflected in the decline in the proportion of boys regularly employed in agriculture as shown in Figure 8.13, but this did not mean that children were no longer involved in the seasonal work opportunities they provided. It was not until 1878 that the Kingston schools felt the need to co-ordinate their summer holidays; until then the holidays had been called as the need arose, often with barely a week's notice, and without reference to other schools in the area.<sup>60</sup>

Having once returned to school after the harvest holidays, if they returned at all, only a few days or weeks elapsed before many children left the classroom and returned to the fields. August 1869 saw "Several boys out gleaning" and during the 1870s and 1880s hop-picking caused annual absences from school until mid October.<sup>61</sup> These were very often family activities, which took priority over school. Even before the harvest holidays had begun, field work affected school attendance, more noticeably in the girls' schools, where the girls would either be working themselves, or helping at home to release their mothers for work. Although these absences



were frequently lamented by the schoolteachers, they did offer some respite to their own daily pressures, as recorded by the Richmond Road mistress in 1863:

*It has been a very hot week but fortunately, the mothers being much employed, the School has not been full* <sup>62</sup>

Therefore in Kingston, even for the town children, the additional income provided by seasonal agricultural work took priority over education, resulting in a reduction in school attendance between May and October each year. <sup>63</sup>

The pattern of farm work had begun to change from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and accelerated with the new settlement laws introduced in 1834. Until the 1830s it was usual for boys leaving home for farm work to take up farm service on an annual contract and reside in the home of the farmer. Farm service had been a common way for young men to acquire settlement rights in a parish, and the alteration in the settlement laws introduced with the New Poor Law encouraged new working practices, as farmers preferred to hire by the day or by the task. The average age for a boy to leave home was fifteen in Surrey, slightly older than the average for the country as a whole. <sup>64</sup> Whilst the practice of farm service may not have died out in the south-east of England by 1834, it was certainly in decline. However, as discussed by Howkins, Verdon and Goose, inconsistent data recording and variation in employment practice at the local level, emphasise that generalizations may be misleading. <sup>65</sup> This is particularly the case with child employment in agriculture, where Verdon argues that "evidence is contradictory" and that "the child labour market was highly localized". <sup>66</sup> Snell's analysis of settlement examinations suggests the re-establishment of parish allegiance as the practice of annual hirings died out. It is worth considering whether the prospect of gaining residence and ultimately settlement in a 'liberal' union such as Kingston might have contributed to the immigration of agricultural labouring families in earlier generations. The effects of this change can be seen in the Kingston Union, for the few farm servants still described as such in 1851 originated within the union; whilst their boundaries of allegiance had gone beyond their own parish they remained securely within the union.

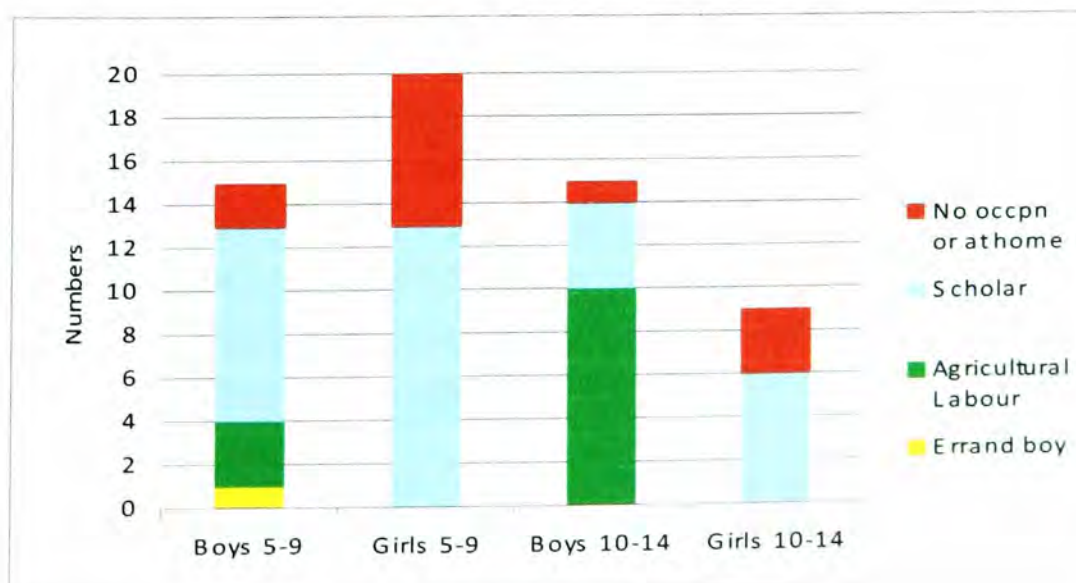
Goose's study of live-in agricultural labourers in the St Albans district of Hertfordshire emphasise the difficulty of obtaining an accurate impression of the extent of farm service from census occupational descriptions alone. Contemporary accounts of employment practice, and agricultural labourers not specified as being farm servants yet living in their employer's household are at variance with census enumerators' recordings. <sup>67</sup> There were very few agricultural workers of any age being described as farm servant in the Kingston census of 1851, although some examples can be found of younger men in the nearby villages. The low numbers of young people described as 'farm servants' in the area is strikingly similar to the findings of Robin in her study of Elmdon in Essex, a village of a similar population size to Claygate and only slightly greater than Tolworth. <sup>68</sup> The 1861 census instructions stipulated that the farm servant should be enumerated in accordance with his work, such as 'carter', consequently the basis of his contract would not be immediately apparent. <sup>69</sup> In Tolworth in



1851 David Hayward, age 18, was a farm servant in the household of William Fuller, a farmer of 360 acres. David was born in Hampton, a few miles away on the north side of the Thames, in Middlesex, but still within the union.<sup>70</sup> Another example appeared in Claygate in 1851, where Mark Scott, 15, was an agricultural servant in the household of Francis Elworthy, farmer. However, Mark was not far from home; he was born in Claygate and the Scott family was numerous in the area, so this would appear to be a case of an older boy having to leave an overcrowded home, and finding convenient work with a neighbour.<sup>71</sup> He was from a well-established local farming family; of the 451 inhabitants of Claygate in 1851, forty-two of them bore the surname Scott, and not one of them was involved in anything other than agricultural work.

Whilst many parishes and villages within the Kingston union had a mixed economy, the hamlet of Tolworth was largely agricultural. Although only a small community with a population of 347 in 1851, analysis of the families involved in agriculture in Tolworth in 1851 shows that most of the working boys in the area undertook full-time agricultural work from as young as nine years of age.<sup>72</sup> [Figure 8.14]. This analysis also reveals a significant difference in the experience of the boys to that of the girls. In 1851 a significant number of boys was involved in agricultural labour, yet the girls were either still at school or "at home". The ages of the children reveal a possible cause; whilst there were similar numbers of boys in the 5-9 age range as there were aged 10-14, there were fewer girls in the older age group compared to younger girls. The reduction in the numbers of older girls suggests that from the age of ten many of them were employed in domestic service away from home. This is borne out by the findings of Tilley and French in their analysis of the age distribution of males and females in Kingston in 1851 and 1881; which also indicate that young girls from country areas migrated into Kingston to work in domestic service.<sup>73</sup> It also reflects the observations of Robin concerning the agricultural village of Elmdon.<sup>74</sup>

**Figure 8.14 Numbers, Occupations and Ages of Children of Labouring Families in Tolworth Hamlet, 1851**



Source: 1851 Census Tolworth Hamlet HO1604a ED2

The family of William Couling, agricultural labourer in Tolworth, shows his sons aged ten and twelve both working as agricultural labourers in 1851, with his sixteen-year-old daughter, Mary, looking after the younger children and keeping house for her widowed father. By 1861 Mary and the older boys had left home, the younger boys remained and worked as agricultural labourers as their older brothers had done. Similarly, the sons of the Davis family were agricultural labourers from the age of nine. Daughters tended to remain at school until slightly older than the boys, reflecting contemporary observation. Whilst the older sons of the Cox family worked, the ten- and eleven-year-old daughters were still at school, and this pattern was maintained in this family in 1861. Quite possibly the contribution of the older boys to the family income placed them in a position to allow the girls to remain at school for longer. Alternatively, this could be said to support Cunningham's suggestion that there was no work available, and those families who could afford it simply sent the girls to school. In the poorer families, economic necessity could have prevented even the daughters attending school. For John Neal, agricultural labourer, his wife had to supplement the family income as a laundress and whilst their older daughter was in service, the other daughters, the youngest of whom was eleven, remained at home, quite probably assisting their mother.

The situation in Tolworth contrasts with Robin's findings for Colyton, in Devon, where young girls were employed in lace-making on a half-time basis from a young age, until engaging in the work full-time.<sup>75</sup> The effect of cottage industry is also discussed by Goose; in Hertfordshire it was the straw plait and hat trades which occupied the girls, whilst the boys went into agriculture.<sup>76</sup> No similar cottage industry presented itself in the villages near Kingston to the same extent; instead domestic service drew girls into the town. Robin's conclusion that "the money [girls employed in lace-making] brought into their homes may have helped to pay for their brothers' education" is in direct contrast to the Tolworth children.<sup>77</sup>

A study of the Hallett family provides examples of the employment of children from an agricultural community, as well as illustrating a number of other aspects raised in this study. The Hallett family had moved into the Kingston Union by 1824 and settled in the hamlet of Hook. The first generation to be born in the parish were involved in farm work and gardening, and the occupations of their children emphasise the movement into the town as errand boys, in shop work and in domestic service. The varied paternity of the children and the family's acceptance of bastard children, step-children and adopted children, might be said to reflect a more relaxed attitude to family relationships and confirm the value of a supportive family network. The Hallett family are set out in more detail in the case study to this chapter, but their experience suggests that despite financial difficulties and having to provide for numbers of children, they were able to benefit from considerable family support.

## 8.7 Brickfields

Whilst in Tolworth in 1851 the principal employment of boys was in agricultural labour, seventy percent of heads of households in that hamlet were involved in agriculture.<sup>78</sup> In contrast, the village of Claygate, with a population of 451, although rural, had a more mixed economy, with sixty-three percent of heads of households involved in agriculture.<sup>79</sup> The principal manufacture in Claygate was brickmaking, which was also a seasonal occupation not adequately reflected in the census figures. Although the figures for farm workers were officially adjusted in 1851 to reflect familial involvement in family occupations, it was not only farming families where wives and children were involved in the father's work. There is contemporary evidence which suggested that brickmaking was another activity where boys would accompany their fathers and participate in the work. Brickfield work is therefore being included in this study of child employment, being a long-established industry in the area, and one which also provides an example of the possible under-recording of child employment.

In 1866 H.W. Lord gave evidence at the *Children's Employment Commission* on the employment of children in the brickfields in and around London. He commented on the reticence of brickfield workers and the impossibility of obtaining accurate information as to the extent of children's involvement. He found the workmen hostile or deliberately misleading, not allowing the children to reply to questions.<sup>80</sup> This factor, and the greater participation of children during the summer months, combine to underestimate the extent of their employment.

Working in the brickfields was considered highly damaging to a child's morals. In Mr. Lord's opinion, "it is almost impossible ... for a child to pass through the ordeal of a brickfield without great moral degradation."<sup>81</sup> This was due to the proximity in which men, boys and girls worked together, the "intemperate habits" of the labourers, and the "scandalous" language the children heard.<sup>82</sup> Physically, the work was very hard, the hours long and the working conditions, if wet, were unhealthy and unpleasant. Discipline was also considered to be lax, as the workforce tended to absent themselves for any local fairs or races, which in the Kingston area were numerous, and the allocation of tasks in the brickfield meant that if one workman stayed away, the work of the entire gang ground to a halt. However, the work was well-paid, even for children, although the adult labourers had a reputation for spending their earnings on drink. Brickfield labourers were under considerable pressure to complete work while the weather was fine, and they often worked excessively long hours to make up time lost through wet weather or drunkenness. The growth of the built-up area in Surbiton and Kingston at this time "like a wave, engulfing acre after acre" fuelled a demand for housing materials.<sup>83</sup> This would have undoubtedly contributed to the pressure on long hours of employment and, presumably, for child labour in their manufacture.

A further pressure may have been placed on children by their fathers to undertake this work; not only was it well-paid, but the method of organising labour gave the workmen every incentive to involve their own children. The owner of a brickfield would engage a labour-master whose responsibility it was to hire and pay a gang of workers. Economic shrewdness might encourage the labour-master to recruit his own family, including his own children. Mr. Lord's view of parental attitudes towards the children so employed bordered on the incredulous:

*There seems no ground for thinking that the children are ill treated, in the sense of being cruelly and brutally knocked about. ... It does not appear to have occurred to many of them that a child of 7 or 8 years old who works for its father from 4 or 5 in the morning to 8 or 9 at night, can be said to be ill-treated by him.* <sup>84</sup>

An additional moral danger presented itself by this method of recruitment. If the labourer employed itinerant workers he was also obliged to find them board and lodging, and the most economical method was to take them into his own home, adding to the overcrowding; the life of a brickmaker's wife was certainly not one to be envied.

Such work was, of course, an example of the 'hidden' work in which children were engaged. Not only were brickfield workers reluctant to acknowledge to officials that their children were so employed, but the brickmaking season did not coincide with the census, so very often these workers were not recorded as such. In Claygate in 1851 and 1861, for example, where there were three clay-pits, indications of the start of the brickmaking season appear, in the lodgers and visitors, but the heads of household were very often at this season still described as agricultural or general labourers, and their children shown with no occupation, but neither are they stated as being scholars. The Strudwick family of Claygate, for example included, in 1851, a son of eleven and daughter of eight, neither declared to be scholars. Their father was an agricultural labourer and the household included two lodgers, both brickmakers. It is a strong possibility that, given the number of brickfields in the area, such families might take on brickmaking work as the season progressed and the demand for labour increased.

Evidence that this practice persisted even into the 1880s is provided by the first prosecution at Kingston County Bench for contravention of the Education Act regarding the employment of children. The owner of the Claygate brickfield stated that eleven-year-old John Rosam "did not work for him, but for his father, who was engaged for him on piece-work [and who said] his son hadn't to go to school any more". <sup>85</sup> The case against the employer was subsequently dismissed. <sup>86</sup>



## 8.8 Conclusion

Regardless of the opportunities available, a poor family's immediate financial needs could take precedent over a child's education and future prospects. The additional income provided by children might make all the difference between survival and destitution. Very young children might be a financial drain on the family, but as they grew older they would bring in money, and the girls helping in the house could release their mother for work. In extreme financial necessity a younger child might be relinquished to the care of an employer or the workhouse. The apprenticing of a child to a chimney sweep, or the withdrawal of a promising apprentice teacher from school to earn more money elsewhere, might be the necessary solution to a family's immediate financial situation, regardless of the future. For those in less straitened circumstances, involvement in the father's trade, or the opportunity to take an adult rôle within the family either by bringing in money or helping in the home, might have been welcomed by children. Ross emphasised this pride, and suggested that children valued their own paid labour as "working for their mothers".<sup>87</sup>

Although employment from the pauper school was likely to be in a poorly-paid trade or an unsophisticated household, these were also the likely destinations of a child from the slum areas of Kingston. For the children of the destitute the opportunities afforded by the workhouse school or the Ragged School may well have represented an improvement in their prospects. Burn expressed in his autobiography how acutely he was aware of the disadvantage of not receiving an education or being apprenticed by his parents, "whereby I could be looked upon as an honest member of society."<sup>88</sup> For any child, the opportunities created by family connections or philanthropic influence could be as valuable as schooling in obtaining worthwhile situations.

Cunningham argued the likelihood that children without declared occupations, yet not 'scholars' were, in fact, unable to find any wage-earning work and were, in effect, unemployed.<sup>89</sup> For the Kingston area this was more likely to be the case in the villages than in the town. It would appear from the findings that there were more varied opportunities in the town than in the rural areas, and given the narrow range of choices available for girls it would follow that migration to the town was the practical solution in finding work. However, there is also the possibility that such work which was available was seasonal and varied, or even that parents were reticent or misleading in supplying information to any officials, including the census enumerator. It may have also been true that any unpaid assistance given to parents by children was not regarded as being 'in employment'. All these variables serve to emphasise that the true picture of the extent of child employment cannot be determined; census reports can only give a broad impression. There was undoubtedly an unquantifiable amount of part-time employment such as before and after school, in school holidays, helping in the shop or at home when a parent was ill, and half-day working. Hopkins also argues that such employment was "very common" and that a "variety of jobs was available for them in towns, especially as errand boys, messengers, and delivery boys."<sup>90</sup> The 1901 Report of the Committee on the Employment of School Children

acknowledged the difficulties of estimating the number of children at school who were also involved in some kind of employment, and suggested the figure to be considerably in excess of 300,000.<sup>91</sup> The evidence for half-day working in Kingston can be seen in school log books, and although this can sometimes be attributed to the distance a child had to travel to school, it is often related to employment. As older children prepared for work there was also a gradual dwindling in their attendance at school. The arguments which draw attention to the involvement of children in their parents' agricultural activities can be equally applied to a range of occupations. It is through close study of local circumstances and occupational practices, using case studies and other qualitative primary sources, combined with census data, that greater understanding of childhood employment be approached.

- 1 Kingston Public Boys' School Log Book, SHC CES/35/1, 22 March 1864.
- 2 Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor*, p.3.
- 3 [www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/ParentsRights/DG\\_4002945](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/ParentsRights/DG_4002945) accessed 20 Jan.2009.
- 4 Horn, *Children's work and welfare*, p.1.
- 5 *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children, appointed by H.M. Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department* (London: H.M.S.O., 1901), p.19.
- 6 Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*, p.59.
- 7 Edward Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census Revisited*, (London: University of London, 2005), p.108.
- 8 Charles Booth, 'Occupations of the People of the United Kingdom, 1801-81', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, vol. 49 (2), 1886, p.318.
- 9 Horn, *The Victorian Town Child*, p.100.
- 10 *Kingston Lifecycles Database*, Kingston University.
- 11 Nigel Goose, *Population, economy and family structure in Hertfordshire in 1851, Vol.1 The Berkhamsted region* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1996), Tables 5 & 6, p. 41; Nigel Goose, *Population, economy and family structure in Hertfordshire in 1851, Vol.II, St Albans and its region* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2000), Tables 9-10, pp. 97-8.
- 12 1911 Census, PP 1913, vol. LXXVIII, pp.461-9 in Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor, Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p.166, Table 2; *Kingston Lifecycles Database*.
- 13 Hugh Cunningham, 'The employment and unemployment of children in England c. 1680-1851', *Past and Present*, No. 126 (Feb.1990), pp.115-150.
- 14 Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census Revisited*, p.104.
- 15 Cunningham, 'The employment and unemployment of children', p.142, Table 3; 1851 Census, British Parliamentary Papers (Shannon 1970), Population, viii-ix; Kingston 1851 Census, Kingston Lifecycles Database, Kingston University.
- 16 Cunningham, 'The employment and unemployment of children'.
- 17 Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, p.233.
- 18 SHC CES/36/1, Kingston (Richmond Road) Public Girls' School Log Book.
- 19 Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, p.233.
- 20 SHC CES/35/1, Kingston Public Boys' School Log Book.
- 21 SHC C/ES/40/1 All Saints National School log book; 1871 Census RG10/858, f. 7, p.6; 1881 Census RG11/835 f. 18, p.29; 1891 Census RG12/610 f. 105, p.5; 1901 Census RG13/668, f. 11, p.13; *Kingston Lifecycles Database*.
- 22 Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, p.140.
- 23 Edwards, *A Strong and Willing Girl*, p.20.
- 24 Reports of the North Surrey District School 1852-1876, LMA NSSD/87, *Chaplain's report 1862*, pp.6-7.
- 25 In the Booth-Armstrong categorisation tables, Chimney sweeps are category 09.03.06, the Domestic Service Sector.
- 26 Burn, *The Autobiography of a Beggar Boy*, p.59.
- 27 *The reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor*, 4th ed., Vol II, London, 1805, pp.146-154.
- 28 Ayliffe, *Old Kingston*.



- 29 The 7th Public Anniversary Meeting of the Kingston Ragged Schools, *Surrey Comet*, 15 Dec 1860, p.4 col. 1.
- 30 Borough Bench, 17 Feb.1862, *Surrey Comet*, 22 Feb.1862, p.4 col. 4.
- 31 Minute Book of the Kingston Association for bettering the conditions & morals of the Poor, SHC P33/5/2, Dec.1836, Dec.1840, Dec.1843.
- 32 Kingston Borough Bench, 31 Dec.1860, *Surrey Comet*, 7 Jan.1860, p.4 col. 2.
- 33 Borough Bench, 26 April 1860, *Surrey Comet*, 28 April 1860, p.4 col. 4.
- 34 North Surrey District School Apprenticeship Register, LMA NSSD/191 27.
- 35 Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, p.192.
- 36 First Report of the Kingston Mendicity Society, *Surrey Comet*, 5 March 1870, p.2 col. 1.
- 37 Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census Revisited*, pp.101-2.
- 38 Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, p.317.
- 39 Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*, pp.172-3.
- 40 Kingston (Richmond Road) Public Girls' School Log Book, SHC CES/36/1, 1 Sept.1865.
- 41 Kingston (Richmond Road) Public Girls' School Log Book, SHC CES/36/1.
- 42 Kingston (Richmond Road) Public Girls' School Log Book, SHC CES/36/1, 22 May 1867.
- 43 St Paul's, Norbiton School Log Book.
- 44 Kingston (Richmond Road) Public Girls' School Log Book, SHC CES/36/1, 28 April 1873, 6 Sept.1873; 1881 Census RG11/0834, f. 28; 1891 Census RG 12/604-618, ED35, p.11.
- 45 Kingston Board of Guardians' Minute Books, SHC BG8/11/7 1862; BG8/11/8 1864; BG8/11/8 1865; BG8/11/12 1873.
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- 47 Tilley and French ' "From 'ocal history towards total history"'.  
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- 49 *Anniversary of the Ragged School, The Ladies' Report. Surrey Comet*, 29 Oct.1859, p.4 cols. 1-2.
- 50 Edwards, *A Strong and Willing Girl*, p.21.
- 51 John Pink, 'Country Girls Preferred'; *Victorian Domestic Servants in the Suburbs*, (Surbiton: JRP, 1998), p.48.
- 52 Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, p.54; Nigel Goose, 'Farm service, seasonal unemployment and casual labour in mid nineteenth-century England', *Agricultural History Review*, vol.54, (2), 2006, pp. 274-303.
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- 54 *Mr Vaughan's Report, On the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture*, p.130.
- 55 *Mr Vaughan's Report, On the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture*, p.150; Nigel Goose, 'Working women in industrial England' in Nigel Goose (Ed.), *Women's work in Industrial England: Regional and Local Perspectives*, p.4.
- 56 *Census of Great Britain, 1851. Population tables. II. Ages, civil condition, occupations, and birth-place of the people: with the numbers and ages of the blind, the deaf-and-dumb, and the inmates of workhouses, prisons, lunatic asylums, and hospitals. Vol. I. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1854, p.xci.*
- 57 *Mr Vaughan's Report, On the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture*, p.133.
- 58 Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, p.11.
- 59 Kingston (Richmond Road) Public School Register 1857-62, NKC KT43/3, Aug.1861.
- 60 Kingston (Richmond Road) Public Girls' School Log Book, SHC CES/36/1, 27 July 1863.

- 61 Kingston Public Boys' School Log Book; Kingston-on-Thames Boys National (All Saints Boys) SHC C/ES/40/1.
- 62 Kingston (Richmond Road) Public Girls' School Log Book, CES/36/1, 17 July 1863.
- 63 Kingston (Richmond Road) Public Girls' School Log Book, SHC CES/36/1, 3 May 1867.
- 64 Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, pp.324, 326.
- 65 N. Goose, 'Farm Service in Southern England in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Local Population Studies*, vol.72, 2003, pp.77-82; Goose, 'Farm service, seasonal unemployment and casual labour in mid nineteenth-century England'.
- 66 Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, p.71; Alun Howkins and Nicola Verdon, 'Adaptable and sustainable? Male farm service and the agricultural labour force in midland and southern England, c.1850-1925', *Economic History Review*, vol. 61 (2), 2008, pp. 467-95; Nicola Verdon, 'Child Work in Agriculture in Britain', in Hugh D. Hindman (ed.), *The World of Child Labor: an Historical and Regional Survey* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), p.558; Goose, 'Farm Service in Southern England in the Mid-Nineteenth Century'.
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- 71 1851 Census of Claygate, HO1604 ED3, f. 35.
- 72 1851 Census of Tolworth, HO107/1602 ED2, ff. 16-25.
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- 74 Robin, *Elmdon: Continuity and Change*, p.188.
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- 76 Goose, 'Cottage industry'.
- 77 Robin, *From Childhood to Middle Age*, p.21.
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- 79 1851 Census Claygate, HO 107/1604a ED3, ff. 29-40.
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- 81 Lord, 'Report on Brickfields', p.133.
- 82 Lord, 'Report on Brickfields', pp.127, 130.
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- 85 *Illegal Employment of a Boy*, Kingston County Bench, *Surrey Comet*, 27 May 1882, p.3 col. 5.
- 86 Kingston County Bench, *Surrey Comet*, 3 June 1882, p.4 col. 6.
- 87 Ross, ' "Fierce questions and taunts" ', p.220.
- 88 Burn, *The Autobiography of a Beggar Boy*, p.105.
- 89 Cunningham, 'The employment and unemployment of children in England', p.139.
- 90 Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, p.224.
- 91 *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children*, p.17.

**Appendix 8.1**  
**Case Study: Hallett family**

The Hallett family provides an example of a family from a relatively rural area of the Kingston Union. Their circumstances illustrate many of the topics discussed in other chapters, for example, the support provided within large, close-knit families, which emphasises that poverty and large numbers of children did not necessarily lead to long-term destitution. The Hallett family was largely self-sufficient, although they did have to resort to the Poor Law on occasions and some of the children spent a year in the North Surrey District School.<sup>1</sup> They were also affected by the change in the law concerning illegitimacy, without which change they might have avoided the workhouse in the Union's early years. For the purposes of this chapter, the Hallett family provides examples of the occupations available to rural children, and migration into the town in search of work.

Henry was the head of a large family which was resident in the rural districts of Kingston from 1824 and was involved in farming, gardening and farm labouring. The family moved house several times, but continued to live in the more rural areas surrounding Kingston, Hook and Surbiton. [Figure 8.13]

One of the older daughters, Charlotte, was among the earliest of the unmarried mothers to be affected by the 'Bastardy Clause' in the Kingston Union. When she applied for relief in 1840 in consequence of her pregnancy and the birth of her illegitimate daughter she was offered 'the House' rather than given out-relief.<sup>2</sup> She accepted the workhouse as she was not eligible to receive domiciliary relief under the new law. She was seventeen and did not acknowledge the name of the father of her child.<sup>3</sup> She gave birth to two more illegitimate children at the workhouse in 1844 and 1848.<sup>4</sup> Charlotte was an example of the unmarried mother referred to by Mr. Hind in his report to the PLC, who would most likely have remained at home to have their babies prior to the new laws: "Such applicants formerly sought relief in their respective parishes, and when they were confined were scattered about in the cottages of their respective friends".<sup>5</sup> This can be inferred from the continued family support provided in subsequent years within the Hallett family, regardless of the legitimacy or paternity of the children, and the fact that Charlotte and her children continued to live with her family.

Charlotte was not a permanent inmate of the workhouse, but only entered to comply with the 'Bastardy Clause'. She returned to her parents after each birth and lived with them, her children and also her younger siblings. When her sister married an agricultural labourer and had children she, too, remained in the parental home. At the time of the 1851 census the household comprised Henry, his wife and their children, the youngest being six years old. Also living there was their daughter, Charlotte, and her three illegitimate children, and also Henry's married daughter and her family, making a household of thirteen.<sup>6</sup>

Their occupations, and those of the children, reflected the work available in the district. Henry's son-in-law, living with them, was an agricultural labourer. All Henry Hallett's children were, in accordance with standard instructions to census enumerators, assumed to undertake some farm work, including the six-year-old boy. Henry's oldest son at home, also Henry, was specified as a farm labourer, work he continued to do during the 1860s, after which he worked as a gardener. After moving into the less rural surroundings of Surbiton he worked as a road labourer, subsequently becoming a foreman road labourer with Kingston Corporation.<sup>7</sup> However, in 1851 the family was presumably struggling because within a month or two of the census Charlotte's children had been taken into the workhouse and sent on to the North Surrey District School.<sup>8</sup> They remained in that institution for a year.

Henry Hallett's wife, Jane, died in 1857 aged 56, and was buried at the cost of the parish.<sup>9</sup> He married again, to Phoebe Boon, a widow twenty years his junior who brought with her at least two dependent children. During the period 1841 to 1861 Henry Hallett was responsible for a total of 17 children, not all his own. He claimed medical relief in 1863 when one of the children was ill with scarlatina, and again in 1864 for a child with pneumonia.<sup>10</sup> This is a family for whom large numbers of children do not seem to have been a problem in social terms, only occasionally financial. Henry's son, Henry, married a widow eight years his senior who already had four children, and they went on to have five of their own. When Charlotte's illegitimate son, Thomas, grew up and married, he and his wife did not have children of their own and instead took on the care of three parish children.<sup>11</sup>

Henry Hallett senior continued to work as a gardener throughout his life, and his sons also worked as gardeners and farm labourers. As the children grew, their earning capacity would increase, and the district in which they lived offered seasonal work to children on the land and in the brickfields. By 1861 and 1871, as agriculture became less prominent in the area and the retail trade grew in Kingston, the younger sons and grandsons became involved in shop work, as errand boy or shop assistant, and this trend is reflected in Figure 8.7 as previously discussed. The wider variety of employment opportunities available in the town of Kingston can be discerned in this family as, by the third generation, this once agricultural family were involved in a diverse range of occupations. These included the retail trade, labourers in the building trade, labouring in trades deriving from proximity with the river, such as coal delivering, and also occupations connected with the railway. The girls took work as domestic servants, either living-in, or remaining at home.

Charlotte, however, with her illegitimate children, reflects the observations of Mr. Vaughan, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, that those in her position were unlikely to be taken on as domestic servants in certain households.<sup>12</sup> She remained in agricultural households, and took laundry work. Her occupational description in 1861 as 'housekeeper' to James Davey may be misleading as they married the following year and may or may not already have had a child together.<sup>13</sup>

There appears to have been little family dispersal, despite some contact with the workhouse. One of Charlotte's illegitimate daughters who had been in the North Surrey District School was found work as a servant in Kennington, but later obtained work closer to home, in Teddington. One of Henry's youngest sons joined the Marines and went to sea with the Royal Navy, but most of the children over the two generations remained in the area. One of Charlotte's sons, George, undertook another of the occupations discussed in Chapter 8, as he worked in a claypit from the age of twelve, but he later made a career in the army and ultimately moved to America.<sup>14</sup> Older children out at work would have provided some financial contribution to this large family, and older girls at home would have assisted with domestic responsibilities and child care. Husbands appeared to have accepted the care and responsibility of children not their own; the acceptance of these children no doubt contributed to their poverty whilst the children were young, but offering the prospect of additional income as the children grew stronger. The ties of family seem to have remained intact, and this may have provided the family with the community support needed to survive many domestic emergencies.

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<sup>1</sup> NSDS Admission & Discharge Index LMA NSSD/169.

<sup>2</sup> *Return of Women applying for relief on account of pregnancy or having a bastard between 29th Sept.1839 and 29th Sept.1841, Kingston Parish*, George Rowland, Relieving Officer, filed under TNA MH12/12390 doc 9985a, 2 Nov.1841.

<sup>3</sup> Baptisms, All Saints Church, Kingston from Kingston *Lifecycles* Database.

<sup>4</sup> Baptisms, St. Peter's, Norbiton, from Kingston *Lifecycles* Database.

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Hind's *Report on Bastards &*, 2 Nov.1841, Kingston on Thames Union, TNA MH12/12390, doc 9985a.

<sup>6</sup> 1851 Census HO107/1604, p.4.

<sup>7</sup> 1871 Census RG10/861, f. 108; p.49; 1881 Census RG11/836; f. 130; p.33; 1891 Census RG12/610; f. 50; p.41.

<sup>8</sup> NSDS Admission & Discharge Index LMA NSSD/169.

<sup>9</sup> Burials, St. Paul's Hook.

<sup>10</sup> Kingston Board of Guardians Minute Book SHC BG8/11/8.

<sup>11</sup> 1891 Census RG12/613; f. 20; p.43.

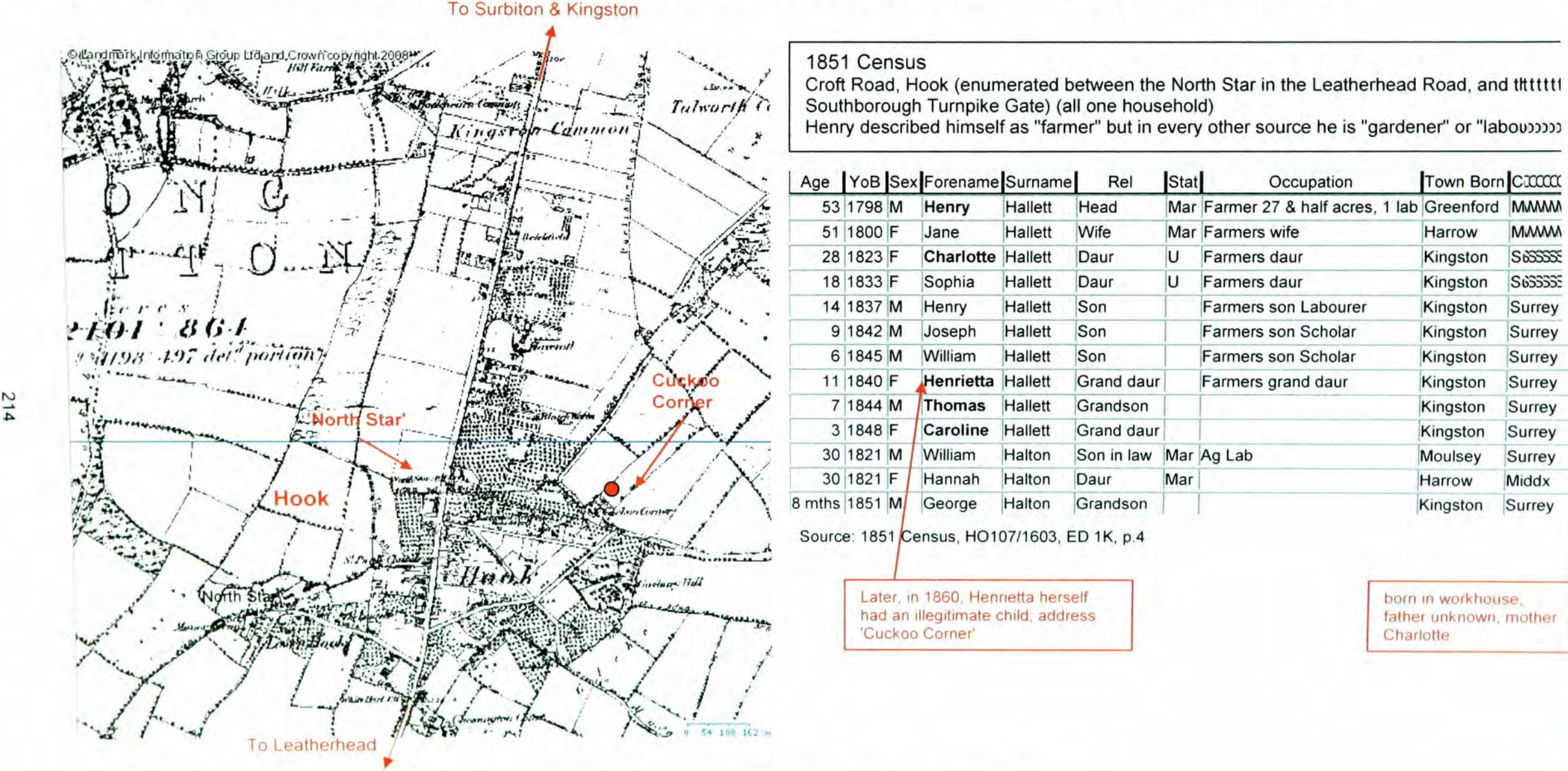
<sup>12</sup> *Mr Vaughan's Report, On the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture*, pp.162-124.

<sup>13</sup> 1861 Census RG9/457 ED8B f.116 h/h 52; Long Ditton Marriage Register.

<sup>14</sup> Information provided by George Hallett's great-grandson, David Attridge 10 Jan.2009.



Figure 8.15 Approximate location of the home of Henry Hallett and family in 1851, showing their household at the time of the census



Source: © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (2010), EDINA, County Series 1:10560 1846-1969; 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1849-1899



**Figure 8.16**  
**Henry HALLETT**

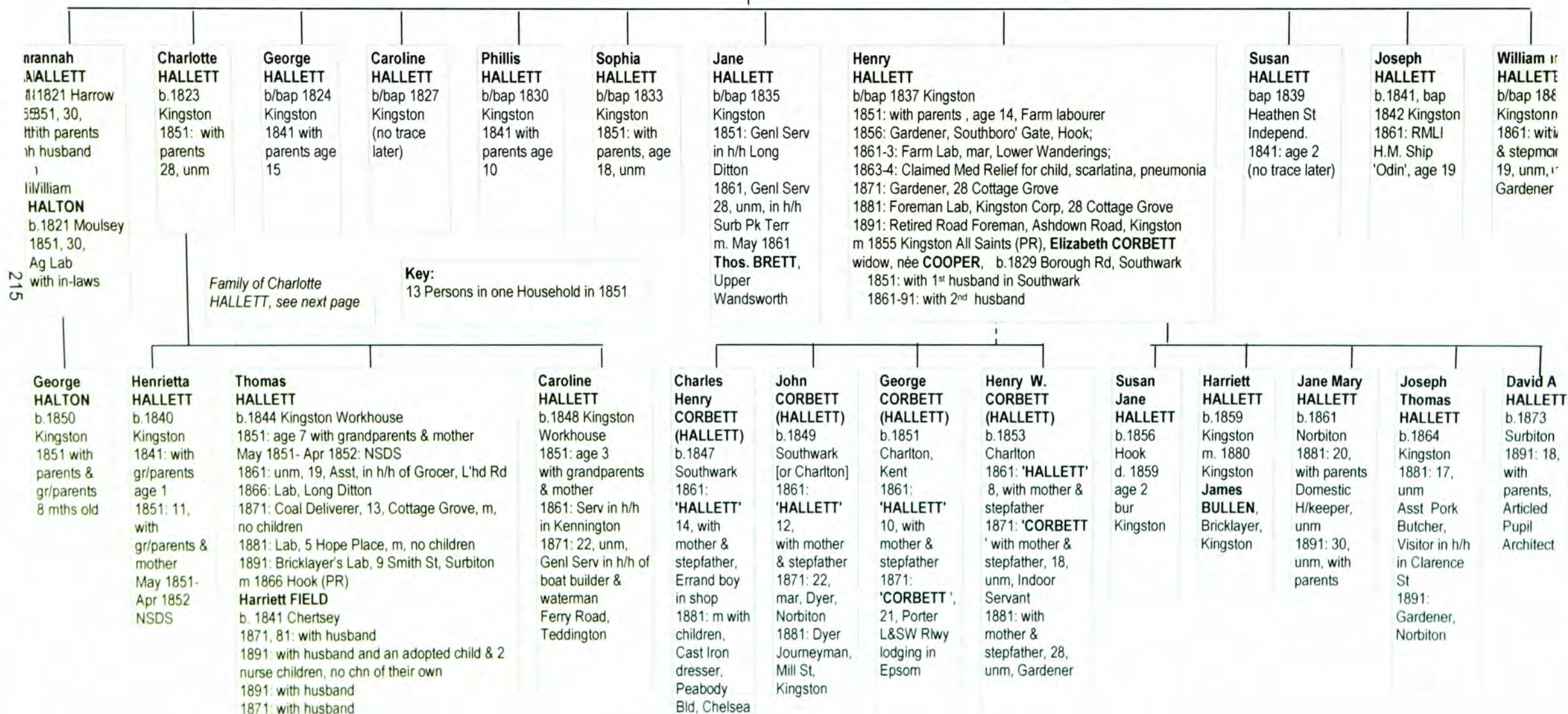
**Henry HALLETT**  
b.1798 Greenford, Mx  
1824-44 Gardener / Labourer, Surbiton  
1851: Farmer of 27½ acres, Croft Road, Hook  
1861: Gardener, Southborough  
1871: Gardener, Grove Lane, age 72  
d. 24 Dec 1877: age 80, Green Lane, Kingston; bur Bonner Hill

= (1)

**Jane**  
b.1800 Harrow, Mx  
d.1857 age 56, Southborough Gate, Hook.  
bur Hook (PR)

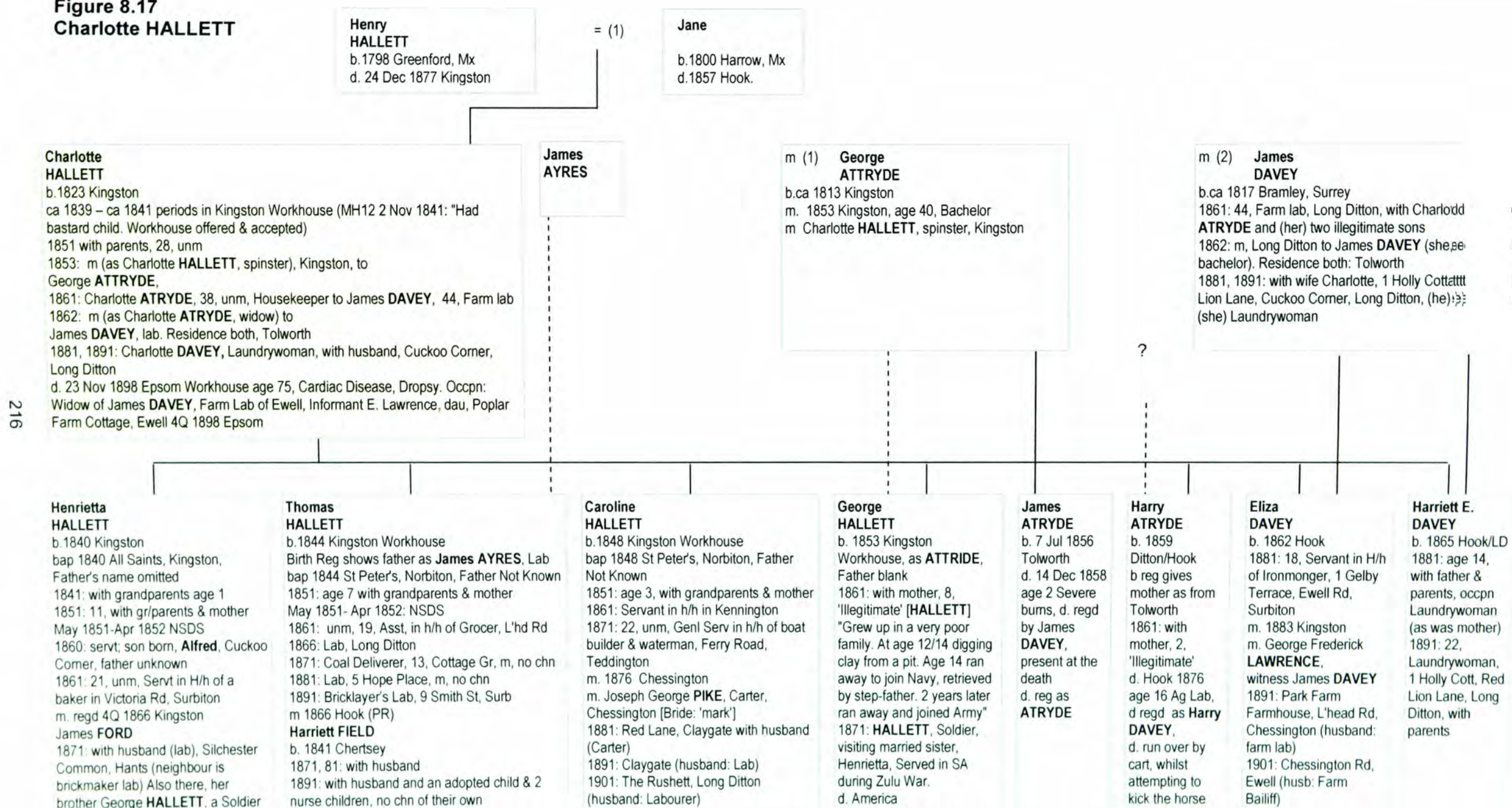
= (2)

**Phoebe BOON** (widow of **Ambrose BOON**, butcher in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cross Road, Twickenham iri  
b.1818 Richmond  
1861 with husband (& her chn **Sarah Ann BOON** age 12 b 1849 Wilts & **Wm m**  
**BOON** age 9 b. Twickenham b 1852)  
1871 with husband (& son **Wm Hy BOON**, age 18, a Smith, unnm)  
1881 lodging at Dairy, Grange Passage  
d. 1882, bur Bonner Hill Abode: Offers Passage, Mill st





**Figure 8.17**  
**Charlotte HALLETT**



## CHAPTER 9

### The Experience of Children

"more sinned against than sinning" <sup>1</sup>

*H.W. Peek, Magistrate, Eighth Annual Meeting of the  
Kingston Ragged Schools, 1870*

#### **9.1 Introduction**

Earlier chapters evaluated the ways in which children's lives were affected by their housing, their family circumstances, occupational opportunities, or the actions of officials. Much of this has necessarily been drawn from documented records created by adults for specific reasons, ranging from furthering a social argument or promoting a local interest, or for administration purposes. Providing an impression of daily life from the perspective of the children themselves is much more problematic, but as they constitute the subject of this study they deserve to be fully considered. Remarks attributed to children in official sources, or in the press, were necessarily paraphrased and possibly recorded some time after the event. The period under research precludes the use of oral histories which have been used in later studies, and there are very few reminiscences or autobiographies of Kingston children. Whilst researches such as Fletcher's *Growing up in England* were able to draw on family diaries, these exist in far greater numbers higher up the social scale, and rarely for labouring families. <sup>2</sup> Accounts such as Burn's *The Autobiography of a Beggar Boy*, written in 1855, various sources mentioned by Vincent in *Bread, Knowledge & Freedom*, and the life stories of Charles Chaplin and Will Crooks provide supporting evidence in the examination of children of poor families. <sup>3</sup> The paucity of such primary evidence for Kingston has necessitated an approach based on meticulous reconstruction from a broad range of source references. All located documentary references to children from the Kingston area, having been brought together in a database and record linkage applied, as described in Chapter 3, were reassessed from the child's perspective. By further close examination of the details contained in these primary sources, it was possible to utilize the existing material to provide more illumination on the children themselves.

Previous chapters have focussed on what was done on behalf of children in official spheres, so it would be valuable to consider the activities of children within the family and in their leisure time. Although much of their day was spent in school or work, children had a range of strategies to enliven mundane or routine tasks. This chapter will discuss the extent to which children were involved both in organised entertainments, especially those with a local flavour, and their own activities. If any activities brought them into contact with authority, their punishments and effectiveness will be considered. How their families dealt with poverty, and the effect this might have had on parenting and family relationships, will be discussed. The little documented, but frequently debated, aspect of parental affection will be explored. It is also

important to consider the impact on children of family unemployment, abandonment or bereavement, both on emotional and practical levels.

Children were ubiquitous; the Kingston Medical Officer of Health frequently alluded to the "large population" of children in Kingston.<sup>4</sup> In 1871 48% of the population of Kingston was aged under fifteen, and although this was not exceptional for some Surrey towns it was a greater proportion than that found in London metropolitan areas.<sup>5</sup> As Walvin expressed, "The noise and play of children was a constant feature of life, forever disturbing the peace of their elders", therefore it would have been difficult to overlook such a visible and audible group.<sup>6</sup> The 'children of the poor' ranged from those of artisan parents with regular, but small, earnings and those who handled their money responsibly, to those living in a state of chronic want, in slum areas, and those of no home at all.<sup>7</sup> These were not static states; families moved from one level to another as fortune demanded and held to their own codes of morals and manners.

It would be wrong to suppose that all children amused themselves solely through mischief and bad behaviour. It is important to emphasise that whilst it was mostly those who did wrong, or suffered accidents, who made their way into the local newspaper or the schoolteacher's log book, the majority led harmless lives. There were children who worked hard at school, won prizes for good work, regular attendance or good behaviour. They involved themselves in the choir and sporting activities, gave concerts and entertainments, entered flower shows and, although poor themselves, collected for charity and mission work and made goods for sales of work. They are also included in this study, yet appear less frequently in the sources.

This chapter therefore endeavours to draw together numerous references from local sources on the activities of children, their leisure and family life, to construct an overview of childhood in Kingston. Their diversity of activities and circumstances and degrees of resourcefulness emphasises that there can be no archetypal child experience, and also highlights the value of exploring social history at the micro-level through case studies.

## **9.2 General Amusements of Kingston**

The location, functions and traditions of Kingston created an annual calendar of events; as acknowledged by John Burnett there were local variations in festivals and games.<sup>8</sup> These were not specifically arranged for children, but provided entertainment for all, and were so well-established that it was not even deemed necessary to request a day off school, and schoolmasters and mistresses new to the area simply had to accept local custom. There were regattas and eel catching events on the river; the courts, corporation and militia provided spectacle; the racecourses and markets attracted fairs. So much energy was expended by children at these events that younger children often took a few extra days off school to recover from the excitement. For older boys, these events provided temporary release from responsibilities and opportunities to emulate the men.

The centuries-old Shrove Tuesday football, which occurred in Kingston town until the 1860s and in nearby villages until the 1870s, was an accepted day off for both schoolchildren and apprentices and was considered "the poor man's holiday".<sup>9</sup> Kingston football day was a large event, attracting visitors and vagrants from other towns; in 1860 around 2,000 people attended.<sup>10</sup> It was a "boisterous" occasion, and although much was made by critics of the chaos and damage associated with the event, advance preparations were made in the boarding-up of windows and closing of shops, which no doubt built up the excitement and anticipation for the children.<sup>11</sup> It was not an activity confined to children; the event involved youths and adults as participants and all ages as spectators, and was accompanied by music and "yelling" and a huge crowd. The match lasted six hours; such a day of licensed anarchy, even in the cold of February or March, drew children from the classroom and youths from their work, and channelled their boisterousness into an accepted annual tradition. Children had a licence to behave with wild enthusiasm, as the adults were just as unrestrained, and with the cessation of such events their natural boisterousness had to find other outlets.

Another great attraction was the November Stock Fair, which continued for three days and was accompanied by a sizeable pleasure fair, originally in the Market Place but after 1867 in the Fairfield. There were stalls, sideshows, freakshows, toys, food, and numerous sensations, a much more exciting prospect than school could possibly be. Schoolteachers were fortunate if they saw many of their pupils during the entire week. Entrance to sideshows cost anything up to a shilling, beyond the pockets of most poor children, so they may have been denied the pleasure of seeing a kangaroo or a tiger, performing animals, or the sight of theatrical actresses in "naughty, short dresses". A penny could buy them a ride on a steam roundabout, "and make themselves sick into the bargain".<sup>12</sup> 'Carriwans' and travelling entertainers began to arrive on the Sunday, so that by the opening of the fair on the Tuesday the children would have been full of anticipation. For those too poor to participate fully, the event provided ample spectacle. Within the small area of the Market Place was the noise of brass bands and barrel organs playing different tunes all at once, the "shouting and touting" of showmen, the cracking of shooting galleries, steam whistles blowing, the barking of dogs, the sales patter of quack doctors.<sup>13</sup> As well as the noise were various smells, steam machinery, naphtha from gas lamps, sausages cooking, sweets and cakes, exotic animals. These combined with the general stench which hung over Kingston, the smell of the river, the tannery, the brewery, pubs, drains, horses and manure.<sup>14</sup> It was certainly an assault on all the senses and for poor children in the darkening winter days contrasted to the cold and damp of their own homes.

The beginning of November saw boys preparing for the 'Guy Fawkes' celebrations, in sneaking off school to gather firewood from the common for the bonfire in the market place. Although the Metropolitan Police curbed the main Market Place activities in 1840, boys continued to celebrate the day.<sup>15</sup> Being new to the town, the public school teacher had not realised the draw of Guy Fawkes in Kingston: "Many boys absent as today they keep Guy Fawkes".<sup>16</sup> Whether local motivation derived from its historical significance or simply that it afforded another day of fun



away from school, is not recorded. Certainly by 1872 it would appear to have been the latter; following the rolling of a lighted tar barrel around the Fairfield, the boys emulated the men and went off to "have a booze".<sup>17</sup>

The lure of a parade, uniforms and a band drew children as passive spectators. The militia provided entertainment for which parents approved their missing school:

*In the afternoon a thin attendance. A Militia serjeant who had committed suicide was buried. This caused the absence of many*<sup>18</sup>

*Thirty boys short of yesterday it being a Field Day with the Militia, and parents allow the Children to witness it.*<sup>19</sup>

*The Militia being in the town always affects the attendance*<sup>20</sup>

Children were also drawn to the ceremonies associated with the opening of the assizes in Kingston and the Sunday attendance of the Mayor and corporation at church, or the passage through the town of a royal party; there always seemed to be something providing free spectacle. Furthermore, the associated crowds provided opportunities and local children would try to earn a few pennies turning cartwheels for the passing traffic. This activity was enjoyed by children in other towns; Jack Lanigan, who grew up in the industrial north, also described doing the cartwheel for adults returning from outings:

*...it meant getting in some practice doing the cart wheel. The men and women would throw coppers for which we scrambled. When we became exhausted we shouted cheerio to the coach and walked back home. [The loot] would be taken home to our mothers, because we knew the money would be spent to the best advantage.*<sup>21</sup>

There were also activities and treats organised particularly for children. These were centred on church, chapel and school and occurred in summer with a picnic and games in a local park, or at Christmastime with an indoor feast, any entertainment provided being drowned out by the noise of over-excited children.<sup>22</sup> For those in the surrounding villages, the 'big house' might also be the source of festivities, as was Boyle Farm in Thames Ditton, with Lord St. Leonards providing tea and entertainments for the local schoolchildren and those from orphanages.

Every year on Christmas Day the Ragged School pupils enjoyed "a substantial repast of good old English cheer – hot roast beef and plum pudding", cooked by Mr. Nuthall the confectioner.<sup>23</sup> Eileen Baillie described slum children at the Sunday School Christmas tea "at which every child crammed itself to bursting point with food", and certainly the Ragged School children did full justice to the meals, and turned up in force, as neatly dressed as their parents could manage, upholding their respectability.<sup>24</sup> One of the teachers remarked that they "looked perfect little princes to what they do on some occasions, when they come to school with unwashed faces and dirty hands."<sup>25</sup>

Even at times when events subdued the mood of the adults, for example after the death of Prince Albert, children were less affected, drawn to confectioners' displays to "liquefy the mouths of the juveniles who flattened their noses against their shop windows".<sup>26</sup> The great showpiece in the window of Nuthalls in Thames Street was generally an "immense twelfth cake".<sup>27</sup> In 1862 the cake was raffled and formed the centrepiece at the County Ball, but rather than being cut it was donated to the children of the Ragged School and a party was held for them in The Griffin. Children who would never have previously set foot inside the Griffin Assembly Room enjoyed "a hearty meal ... too often beyond their reach". The fact that the party food comprised leftovers from the Mayor's dinner did not seem to dampen the children's enjoyment; tarts, pies, jellies and blancmanges were a treat even if four days old. The cake itself was "mammoth" and

*Probably it was the first twelfth cake of such dimensions that had graced a Ragged School treat, and many of the juveniles who partook of it had probably looked at it with watering mouths as it stood in Messrs Nuthall's window, never dreaming that it would be their luck to taste it. As to its quality an idea will be best conveyed in the words of a boy whom we overheard – "My eye! that was a cake."*<sup>28</sup>

Those beyond the sphere of church or school, and not coming into contact with philanthropic or influential individuals, had fewer community resources on which to draw. Michael and John Sullivan spent Christmas morning with their father

*begging from house to house in Knights-park ... The father said he had no supper nor breakfast for the children, and he wanted to get something for the children. He had never seen a Christmas like this before.*<sup>29</sup>

The resultant seven days' imprisonment would at least have provided them with meals.

### **9.3 Activities outside the home**

Where no entertainment, official or accidental, was provided, children involved themselves in all kinds of activities, to pass the time, amuse, earn money or make mischief. The presence of children in Kingston could not be overlooked; they gathered in groups, played games in the streets to the annoyance of pedestrians, fell under horses' hooves, threw stones at passers-by, used bad language, knocked on doors and urinated on walls and in pillar boxes.<sup>30</sup> Many street games, even on a small scale, were the causes of rebuke to many children, for example street hockey or tip-cat; not only did children and youths take up much of the street to play it, and use bad language, but the game tended to cause damage to property and person. They also played at marbles in the street, blocking the path of pedestrians, which was an annoyance. Playing such games for money on a Sunday constituted gambling, and was considered a serious matter.

For the poorer children, with no gardens of their own to play in, the streets, riverside, parks, commons and wastes were there for all. The Fairfield was considered a rough area:

*The Fairfield, the old "Playing Place" of the Kingstonians [...] was, in 1837 [...] an untidy and unenclosed waste, on which the roughs of Water Lane were prone to indulge too freely in horseplay, and across which, at night, it was dangerous to pass.* <sup>31</sup>

The Fairfield area comprised mixed housing, some of it poor and, according to one correspondent to the *Surrey Comet*, containing "the degradation of humanity". <sup>32</sup> It was surrounded by market gardens and common land; the fruits and vegetables grown often found their way into childish hands, either through sheer temptation, or deliberate thieving. In 1859 Thomas Fish was charged with stealing a quantity of onions from the garden of Ann Day, but:

*The poor unfortunate child said he did not know he was doing wrong as other boys were also getting onions from the same place.* <sup>33</sup>

Systematic thefts were also carried out by children. In 1871 Henry Bulbeck, an eleven-year-old from the Back Lanes, crept into gardens near the Fairfield after eleven o'clock at night to pick flowers. [See Bulbeck case study] To be in that area late at night suggested that the children were confident in such a "dangerous" area and were familiar with the "roughs" who gathered there. <sup>34</sup> Henry's little accomplice, ten-year-old Mary Ann Smith, said her mother sent them to steal the flowers with the intention of selling them at Hampton Court. <sup>35</sup> These children were ragged, barefoot and filthy, and the pennies earned from selling flowers would have helped the family income. Instead, each child had to pay 7s 6d in fines and costs, not an easy matter for poor families who had to resort to thieving and peddling to make ends meet. Henry was out working by the age of twelve, as a pot boy in one of the local public houses, as were his three older brothers.

Anna Davin suggests that late bedtime for children was not unusual in poor neighbourhoods and, although applying to a much later period, refers to evidence supplied to the Employment of Schoolchildren Committee of 1902 that in poorer areas "they all go to bed late". <sup>36</sup> Booth referred to the evidence of Mary Tabor which suggested the same: "Bedtime is when the public houses close [...] The hours before that are the liveliest of the twenty-four, and they swarm about undisturbed until then." <sup>37</sup> A number of circumstances accounted for this. In overcrowded, multi-function rooms, having all the children at home at once might have interfered with other family activities. Mothers trying to settle young children to sleep probably preferred the older ones to be out of the house; mothers working at home doing laundry or needlework in the evening would find work easier with fewer children around; parents busy all day might like to spend their evenings more peacefully. If parents were out working in the evening, or had gone to the public house, their unsupervised children would have been able to behave as they wished. Further up the social and economic scale, these circumstances would have been less likely to occur. In the account of her childhood in Poplar, in the east end of London, Eileen Baillie, the daughter of clergyman, described her own early bedtimes whilst she listened to the street



children playing and yelling, who "never seemed to have to go to bed".<sup>38</sup> The most prosaic reason may have simply been a reluctance "to meet the rampant bed bug" in an overcrowded bed.<sup>39</sup>

Far from bearing collective responsibility if there was trouble, boys frequently pointed the finger of guilt at their companions whilst claiming their own innocence, in a display of individual resourcefulness rather than communal unity. These claims did not always convince a policeman or magistrate. Henry Bowyer, age eleven, and George Bucknell, age fourteen, stole cheese from a grocer in the Wanderings; another boy who had also been involved tried to blame them entirely. How fortunate for these two boys that the magistrate considered their friend and his evidence "untrustworthy", and discharged them.<sup>40</sup> A boy might speak up for an accused, but more in the spirit of self-preservation; 'Killer' Bulbeck declared that simple-minded John Arnold had not stolen any coal, but had merely picked up dropped coals from the river, when other boys had intimated that 'Killer' had enticed Arnold into carrying the sack of stolen coal on his behalf.<sup>41</sup>

As a group, the Pledger, Booker and Bragg boys of Surbiton were frequently involved in petty crime, culminating in arson when they set fire to a haystack in Long Ditton in 1870.<sup>42</sup> Walter Booker said the others had made him go along and that it was Pledger who set the rick on fire; Henry Pledger said it was not him but Booker who did it, and Bragg kept lookout; Bragg said it was Booker who did the deed and that it was Pledger's brother who bought the matches. The judge had no patience and sentenced all three to twelve months' hard labour and a birching, but later changed his mind and sent them to a reformatory. This had little effect on Pledger's little brother, William, who deliberately broke a window at his school a few months later, which cost his parents ten shillings. As the fathers of these boys would have had to contribute to the maintenance of their sons in the reformatory, such additional expense would have depleted their limited funds still further.

Groups of boys with time on their hands gave rise to different styles of mischief between town and country. Village boys seem to have been more prone to fire-raising than their town counterparts, barns, sheds and haystacks being particularly vulnerable. Quite young boys seemed to be involved in setting fire to property; two young brothers from Claygate, Henry and Frederick Francis, aged nine and seven, had an idle Saturday afternoon and played on a nearby farm setting fire to a cart shed. Fortunately the fire was discovered before the barn and corn stacks caught light, and as the farmer did not wish to press the charge the boys were given a telling-off and dismissed.<sup>43</sup>

Being unsupervised gave rise to more opportunities to cause mischief and annoyance. However vigilant a parent might wish to be, economic necessity and exhaustion diluted the opportunities available for control. This should not, however, imply that struggling parents were

regardless of behaviour, or disinterested, and this will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

It must be emphasised that, despite hardships and an economically poor start to life, there was an unquantifiable number of children who were involved in respectable activities. They might enjoy socially approved hobbies, commit selfless acts or work hard at school. Among the Queen's Scholars who won prizes at the Norbiton National Schools in 1881 were John Jonas and Tom Jays, boys from poor homes who consistently worked well at school. Aged twelve, both boys were awarded certificates "for good answers in the Diocesan Examination three years in succession". They also had a year's school fees returned to them for "passing well in the fourth and successive standards at a very early age".<sup>44</sup> This amounted to £4 each, a welcome sum for a poor family. John Jonas was the son of a brushmaker in Mill Place, who subsequently worked as draper's clerk and later as a Warehouseman in Norbiton, a fitting occupation for a boy who had won the arithmetic prize.<sup>45</sup> Family unity and support were evident in this family; in adult life John had his parents living in his home.

Tom Jays was born in December 1868, the son of the publican of the Cemetery Inn, Norbiton, in a poor area of Kingston, a pub frequented by hawkers and Italian organ grinders.<sup>46</sup> In 1873, when Tom was nearly four, his father died and his family lodged in a house nearby, with his mother working as a laundress. In 1877 she applied for medical relief for a child with hip disease.<sup>47</sup> Their home in Burritt Road was in multiple occupancy and overcrowded; seventeen persons were living there in 1881, when Tom was aged twelve.<sup>48</sup> Despite this poor start, Tom excelled at the Norbiton National School and went on to attend the Islington college of the Church Missionary Society, and the Battersea Missionary School where he was a theological student in 1891.<sup>49</sup> In 1892 he went as a missionary to Nigeria and often gathered the crowds to whom to preach by performing tricks on a bicycle.<sup>50</sup> Whilst in Africa he had to attend to a number of medical emergencies, which led him to take up medical studies at St Thomas' Hospital; during this time he lodged with his married sister in Kingston.<sup>51</sup> He qualified as surgeon and doctor in 1904, the year of his marriage to Sarah Coles, who had been in service.<sup>52</sup> During the following years he worked as a doctor and missionary in West Africa, performing operations, and also went on lecture tours of England, Canada and America.<sup>53</sup> Between 1907 and 1918 he lived in Kingston, in a house in Norbiton Avenue which he named 'Wasimi' after the village in West Africa in which he had worked.<sup>54</sup> He later became the vice-principal, and in 1921 the principal, of Livingstone College in Essex, a college which prepared missionaries and provided them with a medical grounding.<sup>55</sup> He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in the First World War and served in Egypt.<sup>56</sup> He retained the headship of Livingstone College until his death in 1947.<sup>57</sup>

Children like Tom Jays, from families on the edge of destitution, who still managed to improve their situation, were encouraged and applauded. Another example is George Drake, who had lived with his parents in Middle Mill Lane in 1851, but by 1861 his mother was widowed and in

service. Too poor to afford the National School or the Public School, George attended the Ragged School and later joined the 12<sup>th</sup> Surrey Volunteer Corps. When he developed terminal consumption, from which he died aged nineteen, his friends in the Corps instigated a collection to "alleviat[e] his last sufferings" and provide some support for him and his widowed mother. He also received gifts of jellies and tea during his illness. He was described in 1862 as "a deserving young man".<sup>58</sup> Despite his impoverished start in life, "by perseverance and industry [he] had raised himself to a respectable position". His conduct in life "had gained him the respect of his friends and acquaintances".<sup>59</sup> Such self-improvement was recognised and applauded. His funeral was attended by 150 members of the Volunteers with band, drums and fifes, and "three parting volleys" fired over the grave. He was buried in the Bonner Hill Cemetery on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1862. His blind and aged mother died in 1879, aged 84, having been granted parish relief.

Another boy to receive public recognition was William Denham. He was from a family of bakers in London Street, Kingston, and was working as a pawnbroker's assistant in 1881 at the age of fifteen. That year he was given an award for bravery by the Royal Humane Society for saving a lad from drowning in the River Thames near Kingston bridge.

#### **9.4 Experience of Authority**

Not all poor children, certainly, were involved in mischief-making. Those that did, and were discovered, might come in contact with authority, for reprimand or reform. Where the decisions of official bodies resulted in major disruption to a child's life the practical effects are more likely to be documented. How the children themselves regarded matters is more obscure. For children, immediate and tangible consequences were more likely to impress. This, indeed, was one of the few arguments voiced in Kingston in favour of a 'whipping', although most of Kingston's magistrates in 1880 were against corporal punishment for children: "Where the whipping took place at the time the offence was committed, the effect might be salutary; but where it took place days after, in cold blood, it could do no good".<sup>60</sup> The practice was described as "degrading", and of having little effect on boys who were used to being "kicked and cuffed from their childhood upwards". This is reflected by the behaviour of children in the Kingston area.<sup>61</sup>

The reprimand of the magistrate or the threat of punishment might, however, be sufficient to reform an impressionable child, and supportive parents accompanied them to court. Occasionally parental exasperation, exhaustion or poverty left the child at the mercy of the law, or to the kindness of benevolent strangers. When Thomas Keywood was fined 2s. 6d. for stealing peas, his mother "hesitated about paying the fine", which would have meant the boy having to serve a seven-day prison sentence. "On this being announced some humane persons made a subscription in the court and contributed the fine."<sup>62</sup> This kind of action was not infrequent; where children could not pay fines and were thus faced with prison, someone in

the court might take pity and pay the fine on his behalf, and it was not unknown for the magistrate to do so himself.

To enter the court room charged with an offence could be a frightening prospect for a little boy, as it was for Henry Nye, seen going into a henhouse and carrying out some eggs in his 'pinbefore'. The magistrate, Admiral Sir George Lambert,

*feelingly admonished the defendant, who, with his mother was crying bitterly, and stated the Bench would look over the offence that time, but they hoped it would operate as a lesson to him, to be a better boy in future* <sup>63</sup>

To an impressionable young child a magistrate would have been an imposing figure, able to strike terror into the hearts of small boys, yet having no intention of doing anything other than tell them off. Little Henry Nye could not know that Sir George Lambert could be benevolent towards children; Sir George and his family had been known to bear the costs of maintenance for various young children to remove them from the Poor Law. <sup>64</sup> The 'urchins' brought before the magistrates for stealing fruit could hardly see over the magistrates table and were discharged, whilst their older accomplices received one month's imprisonment. <sup>65</sup> Other youngsters were also released; it was often sufficiently intimidating to have been arrested, spent a few hours in the police cells and then taken to court, even if matters went no further. Children could not always count on the tolerance of the long-suffering courts as their patience was not inexhaustible:

*The chairman said it was impossible they could go on having boys up for this description of offence, and then discharging them, and they must make an example* <sup>66</sup>

He then proceeded to fine them the grand sum of 2d. although when costs were added each boy, or probably their fathers, had to pay 5s.

For every child who hung his head and wept in the court room there was another whose swagger and disdain suggested no promise of reform. Thomas Jennings, age thirteen, was unremorseful when caught placing a chair on the railway line; when the danger of derailment and loss of life was pointed out to him he responded: "a b- -y good job too, if the engine went down the slope and the carriages on the top of it." His father said he had tried all he could to improve his behaviour to no avail; the court sentenced the boy to prison and reformatory, in the hope that that would be the solution. <sup>67</sup>

If fear or fury left a child unaffected, shame and guilt might make an impression. Four boys from labouring families in the Wanderings who were caught stealing peaches from someone's garden were subjected to a lecture designed to invoke their conscience. One magistrate

*addressed them, expressing his sorrow to see boys at their age brought before him under such circumstances, and he quite agreed with the opinion expressed by his brother Magistrate, Mr Williams, that it would be better for them to be well horse-whipped. They*

*ought to think of the punishment and disgrace they brought on their parents, who might be hard working people, and it was very cruel to cause their parents to have to pay for their wickedness.*<sup>68</sup>

The boys were fined, but as one of the fathers, an agricultural labourer, could not afford to pay the fines for his sons, William and Robert Cannon, the magistrate Mr. Williams paid the fines himself.

This leniency and appeal to the boys' sense of parental disgrace and financial hardship presumably had little effect on Robert Cannon who was caught stealing pears the following year. Magisterial patience had worn thin by then, and the outcome was two months' imprisonment for this thirteen-year-old. In adult life Robert became an omnibus conductor, and his brother, William, joined the Royal Marines.

The lure of an immediate need, whether for money, food, or to impress their companions, might easily have conquered any fear of future punishment. It must have been a great temptation for a lad just starting work to be handling money all day, and plenty of small change found its way into errand boys' pockets. There was also more deliberate stealing of goods; Henry Norton stole from his employer, a plumber, but it was his first offence and the magistrates recognised the vulnerability of boys in his position:

*the Mayor [John Williams] said the Bench were unanimous in the opinion that if there were no receivers there would be no thieves; as receivers encouraged boys to rob their employers*<sup>69</sup>

For children who were caught in acts of petty theft, there were likely to have been many others who escaped detection. Such actions as stealing food, small change or items to sell might often have been less in the nature of mischief-making than part of the family survival strategy. The children, and their families, might not have thought of it in terms of theft, as suggested by Steve Tremeere of Dover: "We didn't thief it. ... God helps those who help themselves. So we used to help ourselves..."<sup>70</sup>. Perhaps in such circumstances the parental paying of their children's fines was more in the nature of an occupational hazard.

Although deliberate and persistent wrong-doing called for physical punishment, the opportunity of reform followed. Yet before reaching the situation of imprisonment or reformatory, children might have benefitted from the benevolence of countless individuals, their schoolteacher, vicar or employer, as well as philanthropists and magistrates, not to mention the support of neighbours and family. A child's future might be affected by the influence of numerous adults. Ladies found work in service for girls, boys were found places in shops, school fees were paid, uniforms provided, magistrates appealed to, influence used, money collected, medical services procured and fines paid by many Kingstonians who felt moved to assist the poorer parishioners. Some campaigned on behalf of the orphans of 'respectable shopkeepers' to secure places in charity orphanages in order to spare them the workhouse, some arranged for children in their

service to have some form of schooling. A child may have been unaware of the sponsorship of philanthropic individuals in their education and welfare, and might not have appreciated the extent to which they were assisted. Such connections may well have made a substantial difference to their future, but they may not have been conscious of their significance.

### 9.5 Poverty and Family Life

A child's life would have been considerably influenced by its home and family experiences. Walvin argues that the family way of life depended on "the economic success of the principal bread-winner. The more his success waned lower down the social scale, the more vital it became that wife and children turned to the task of working and contributing to the joint family income".<sup>71</sup> Within the home economic difficulties influenced family stability and harmony, and although it is difficult to assess the degree to which the children were affected, there were situations which could not be ignored in overcrowded homes and which must have had some impact on children. An important factor was how the parents themselves coped with poverty.

For some parents, drink was a refuge. It would not be surprising that beer-shops and public houses drew the poor from their back lane lodgings or their overcrowded rooms, the warmth and life in such places presenting an attractive contrast to their cold, damp homes. Children were often brought into these places with their parents, or waited outside for them, or worked there as pot-boys. For many the rented rooms within such premises were their homes. The consequences for children of habitually drunken parents were not only financial but emotional, for in overcrowded dwellings family arguments could not remain private. Such emotional distress was described in the reminiscences of Faith Osgerby of Yorkshire: "My parents [...] used to have terrible rows sometimes which really distressed me and sometimes it lasted for days and we were all unhappy" "...I believe life must have been pretty tough for my mother, and I excuse her harshness to me..."<sup>72</sup>

Many examples can be found for Kingston. The Woods family of Fairfield South, who had first moved to Kingston around 1860 from their native Liverpool, had domestic disputes which their children would no doubt have witnessed:

*John Woods, an engine cleaner, of the Fairfield, was brought up on a warrant, charged with assaulting his wife. Complainant, who gave her evidence very reluctantly, said: 'On Thursday my husband came home about 7 in the evening. I gave him his supper, but he would not have it, and threw it under the grate. He abused me and struck me: I have four bruises about me. He destroyed some furniture and also some of my linen, and has threatened my life.' The Mayor said it was a disgraceful thing for a man of the prisoner's age to be in such a state, having so large a family as he had. He had a great mind to send him to prison for six months without the option of a fine.*<sup>73</sup>

However, if Woods had been sent to prison this would have deprived the family financially. His wife, Ann, was already having to work as a laundress to supplement their income, so practical necessity rather than personal safety led her to continue to have him in her home as she and the children needed his wages:

*Complainant said she only wished prisoner bound over to keep the peace, as she had a large family, and should have no means of keeping them if he were sent to prison.*

John Hawkins, a carpenter in Surbiton and known for some reason as 'Spider', was convicted of a similar offence, but he was imprisoned for six months in the House of Correction. His wife and two very young children were left destitute during this time, and had to be assisted with money and bread by the Guardians of the Poor.<sup>74</sup> Despite his contrition, it was not the first time 'Spider' had behaved in this way. His wife stated:

*that on Sunday morning last, at a quarter to 1 o'clock, her husband came home, intoxicated, when she invited him to have some dinner, but he said he would have his breakfast. He then took the frying-pan off the fire and struck me with it on my head. I called in P.C. Osborne, who endeavoured to soothe my husband, but shortly afterwards he began to beat me again.*

There were many children who had to witness their father's drunken assaults on their mothers. Yet mothers often chose to keep the family intact and endure the scenes rather than risk losing the man's income. Frequently fathers were spared prison through the pleadings of their wives, or their refusal to give evidence in spite of bruises. In court, Samuel Fisher

*blubbered and promised never to [assault her] again and never touch beer again; and the wife begged hard to be excused from giving evidence, saying he was a good husband excepting when in drink. This appeared to be frequently the case. Defendant received a bad character, for his cruelty to his wife, from the police and his neighbours*<sup>75</sup>

William Marchant, a farrier in Brick Lane, accused his wife of neglecting their children by repeatedly going out and leaving them, and also of her violent behaviour. He, too, was a violent and abusive man, hitting and swearing at his wife when drunk, and he was bound over to keep the peace. During these periods of family turmoil, mothers were faced with the choice of escape from immediate danger, or remaining to protect the children. In this family it would appear that heated arguments and bad language constituted normal life.<sup>76</sup> It is unlikely that such scenes would have left their six children unaffected.

For children in these circumstances the alternatives available were to live with their family and experience their fathers' drunken rages, or exist in more peaceful destitution, either with their mother working at menial tasks and receiving out-relief, or within the walls of a Poor Law institution, depending on the prevailing attitude of the Board of Guardians and the current laws. Children whose fathers were sent to prison for stabbing or beating their mothers, beating horses,



stealing coal, kicking a policeman or attempting to cut their own throat in a drunken fit, very often had only the workhouse to fall back on, unless their mothers could think of any other way of bringing in money. A mother was sometimes tempted to escape her predicament by more permanent means. Susan Ayres became demoralised by her husband's ill treatment, and the final straw came in 1861 when she found he had spent the night with another woman and she attempted suicide through taking laudanum. The magistrates dismissed her and admonished her husband, but

*pointed out to her the magnitude of her offence, the strong ties her children were to be, that the law would protect her against her husband, and that nothing could justify her in attempting such a desperate act*<sup>77</sup>

As their two daughters were aged ten and twelve, they probably continued to manage the household chores during these periods of parental difficulty. Both daughters later went into domestic service, although one of them was handicapped by deafness and subsequently returned to live with her parents, who remained together until the father died.

Where a child's mother had much to do, looking after a large number of children as well as working by going out cleaning or taking in washing, the amount of time and energy left for her children would undoubtedly have been limited. Children may have come home from school in the dinner-hour and had to do household chores themselves, as described by Syd Foley who grew up in London; he and his widowed mother and sister lived in one room in a narrow street near a power station and when the children came home for their mid-day meal they did housework. There were children who had a mother who was physically there but continually exhausted, as expressed by Bim Andrews, an illegitimate girl brought up in poverty in Cambridge: "Our house was run on the dregs of my mother's energy".<sup>78</sup> Such absence, either mental or physical, is considered in a later section.

## 9.6 Family Affection and Protection

Burnett concluded that in general the more children in the family, the lower the level of affection, simply through lack of time and energy, and pressing financial anxieties.<sup>79</sup> Yet despite parental exhaustion and the lack of supervision when both parents were fully occupied, evidence of family attachment can still be discerned. Where parents were unable to look after children themselves, family affection could be transferred to other relatives, yet parents had ultimate claim. When Mary White's parents emigrated, leaving her in the care of her grandfather when she was two years old, a bond grew between them during the years he brought her up. When her parents finally sent for her to join them, seven years later, her grandfather

*seemed very loth to acquiesce in that arrangement. It appeared that between them [grandfather and uncle] they had supported the girl and given her schooling, since her parents had been away, and always behaved kindly to her. The child herself, who was in court, said she had no wish to go to her father and mother*<sup>80</sup>

In this case affection was over-ruled by the law, and the child was dispatched to New York, to a family she would have barely remembered.

Whatever the family circumstances or level of demonstrative affection, children could often rely on their parents' protection. Elizabeth Bennet of the Fairfield saw young "Dickey" Bird hitting her little girl; she tried to stop him and an argument quickly developed between the respective mothers, which came to physical blows.<sup>81</sup> William Alderton, age ten, was fined for illegally fishing in the river Mole; he said he had gone there to fish "because his father told him he might". A quarrel broke out between William's father and the man who complained about the trespass, and they, too, ended up in court.<sup>82</sup> An incident of stone throwing between two children which came before the Bench was dismissed by the magistrate because "the two mothers could not be kept from wrangling in Court".<sup>83</sup> Family solidarity was maintained, and could be construed as a manifestation of attachment.

Having a large family did not lead to James Edser's indifference to his children. George Rodway, a fly-master in Surbiton was continually badgered by 10-year old Sidney Edser and his brother, who would throw things at him, call him names, and swear at him. Mr. Rodway complained to their father, a bricklayer and father of six who lived nearby. Mr. Edser responded:

*"I'll wring your nose out of your face, if you touch my boys."*<sup>84</sup>

It need not necessarily be the threat of physical assault towards their child which roused parents, but signs of perceived unfairness were quite enough to bring an angry parent to the school:

*One of the mothers came in the dinner time saying that [another girl] had taken her child's pencil ... She threatened me very much and finally left saying the child should not come [until I had given back] the pencil.*<sup>85</sup>

In some cases a parent's fierce defence was also accompanied by an acknowledgement that the child was difficult to deal with:

*Delay in opening School caused by one of the parents coming with a false charge against A. Gray of being unkind to her child: before leaving she acknowledged that the girl was so stubborn and awful that she had enough to do with her at home*<sup>86</sup>

An affront to their dignity might also arouse a parent, as in the case of the Dobson family in the Cowleaze area of Kingston; the father was a baker:

*When I called places in the play ground at 5 minutes to 2 oclock this afternoon Matilda Dobson continued to play and shouted as loud as she could. ... I went close to her and said Dobson you heard me call places. She laughed took her clothes in her hands made a mock curtsey and swung her self round several times. I gave her a stripe in each hand. ... In the evening Mrs Dobson came to ask if I presumed to think her child was a charity girl that I had dared to cane her. She would let me know that her child paid 2d a*

*week and should not go any where to be corrected. I told [her] all who were wilfully disobedient would be punished it was no question of payment.*<sup>87</sup>

Demonstrative signs of affection might well have been absent, but evidence of protective parenting suggests a family bond:

*Mrs Stuck came up on Friday & was very insulting & abusive because Rose had been punished. The child is very rude & naughty, but because she has been an invalid her mother objects to her being punished. N.B. The punishment was simply two stripes on the palm of the hand & the girl is in her 11th year. [...] R Stuck came to school [the following week] but was sent home with a note to her mother saying that she could not be received into the school again on account of her mother's rude & insulting conduct.*<sup>88</sup>

Rose Stuck had been in the Great Ormond Street Hospital with paraplegia, and plainly her mother acted indulgently towards her. This was no pampered only child of a middle-class family; Rose was one of seven children of a gardener, and her father had recently died. Her mother had begun a new relationship with a widowed carpenter with children of his own, and they subsequently had more children together.

In some cases a parent's complaints were fully justified. Frederick Stuck, Rose Stuck's younger brother, was ten when he was struck on the head with a book by the assistant master for continually whispering to his friend when he should have been doing his sums; the boy subsequently died from inflammation of the brain. As there had been a two-month gap between the incident and the boy's death, it was not possible to attribute his death directly to the master's action; it could have been caused by any fall or blow. The Coroner expressed:

*he thought this inquiry would have done some good, if it should lead managers of schools to make some stringent regulations for preventing children being struck about the head by anyone connected with a school, because there was no telling what mischief might arise.*<sup>89</sup>

Where a National School master was involved, fathers would often march their child round to the vicar and display the bruises. Although Elizabeth Knowles was a very obstinate child and tried the patience of an otherwise kind and experienced teacher once too often, three years old was considered too young to be caned on the knuckles.<sup>90</sup>

Parents were particularly concerned for the moral safety of their daughters; the father of Caroline Drescher, pupil-teacher at the Richmond Road school, "thinks it not right that his daughter should come to the early lessons while the Militia are in training".<sup>91</sup> Although in Kingston there were children who were exposed continually to the language and behaviour of the rougher element, there were many whose parents did their utmost to protect them from it. The Militia proved a source of anxiety. Despite the disruption and influences, the militia was generally welcomed in Kingston as it brought in trade and provided employment, but it did alter

the character of the town whilst the men were billeted among the sixty-seven public houses and beer shops of Kingston and Surbiton. They had a noticeable effect on the children:

*Rev. H.P. Measor, Vicar of Kingston, said the Militia had a most prejudicial effect on young persons in the schools, many of whose evil courses might be traced to the Militiamen being in the town.*

*The Mayor [said]: There had also been instances of very severe fighting, ladies were deprived of sending their children out, or going out themselves while the Militia were about, and were consequently prevented from coming at such times into the town to make purchases. In some cases women had been secreted in the men's rooms until the landlords had dragged them out from under the beds.*

*Mr W M Wilkinson, Town Clerk, said it was patent the men brought large numbers of women and others, who he might term camp followers, with them – something like 300 or 400 of the scum of Lambeth.*<sup>92</sup>

The pubs and lodging houses, frequented by the very poor, contained billeted militia, "boys from the lowest parts of Lambeth", whose "disgusting language", "skylarking" and womanising enlivened the area.<sup>93</sup> No wonder the school teachers despaired of moderating the language of some of the children, if these were the circles in which they lived. Even without such influences, bad language was a constant problem. The Ragged School teacher felt that all his hard work with the children was immediately undone through the bad language in normal use at home

*Mr Swain ... implored his hearers, the parents especially, to refrain from the profane and disgusting language he so frequently heard, which had such an evil influence on the children, who became thoroughly imbued and saturated with this bad habit. His teaching at the school was of little avail if they did not assist him at home*<sup>94</sup>

Parental influence and involvement in parents' daily activities could give rise to positive results and was an opportunity for reinforcement of family affection. Children could be encouraged by their parents who taught them their own trades and pastimes. Samuel Farrant and his wife were a Devon couple, who moved to Regent Cottage on Surbiton Hill. Samuel was a gardener by occupation, and he and his wife passed on their skills to their children from a very young age. Three-year-old Edith, and five-year-old Maude, both won prizes in the Cottagers' Flower Show in 1880, for their collections and arrangements of wild flowers.<sup>95</sup>

Whilst for some parents their children could be a trial and a burden, various actions within families suggest that in spite of hardship there could be affectionate feeling. Notwithstanding the absence of overt displays of affection, the fierce physical defence of their children exhibited by many parents towards other parents, teachers, policemen and even other children could be taken as evidence of strong attachment. Many children may have been "strangers to the meaning of a kiss", but their parents were prepared to bloody the nose of anyone who hurt them.

Certainly there were parents who exploited their children and abused them, but conversely there were those who took pleasure in their children and were actively involved in their interests.

### **9.7 Abandonment or Neglect**

Despite the foregoing, there were children who had to endure various forms of abandonment and neglect. This might be deliberate, or the unfortunate result of financial or social circumstances. Whatever the reason, the consequence for the child could be the same, a complete change of residence and feelings of isolation and bewilderment.

Children might not always be able to rely on their fathers for family security, appearing to them to be burdens, better discarded. Joseph Skinner, a plasterer, arrived at the workhouse in 1859 with his wife and five children. No sooner had the family been admitted, than Skinner climbed over the gate and went off to the pub, leaving his wife and children in the care of the workhouse during the next few weeks. His subsequent imprisonment merely extended his family's stay as inmates. Existing memoirs of those who entered the workhouse as children describe a sense of guilt that they had done something wrong to be incarcerated, as it was for Will Crooks, "haunted as he was by the strange dread that he must have committed some unknown crime to be taken from home, torn from his young brother, and made a little captive in what seemed a fearful prison".<sup>96</sup>

The prompt abandonment by the father of the Skinner family would have done nothing to ameliorate that sensation for his children. The family had been living in a small two-bedroomed cottage in George Street, Surbiton, which, with parents, children, lodgers and lodgers' children, had been crowded with fourteen people. The Skinner children were out at work by the age of twelve but, too young to look after themselves, had to accompany their mother to the workhouse. It was probably an improvement for the children when, two years later, they were living with their mother and a married brother in an similarly crowded cottage in Cleaveland Road, but this time without their father who was again in the workhouse.

A mother's wrongdoing could also result in destitution for her children. Mary Ann Micquean brought her children to a Kingston lodging house, stole a pewter pot from the 'Two Brewers' and was sent to the House of Correction for a month. For her children, brought to a strange town, having their mother taken away by the police, and themselves taken into the workhouse must have been a bewildering experience.<sup>97</sup>

Whatever William Langridge's feelings towards his son, Henry, his need for money was greater than any attachment. Henry had not had the easiest start in life. His family lived in Young's Buildings, off Heathen (Eden) Street, the conditions in these dwellings being described in an earlier chapter. Three households occupied one dwelling, at least fourteen people living in a small space. William was a shoemaker, and his wife assisted him. There was sickness in the

family and they applied for regular out-relief. Their four-year-old daughter died, and in 1865 the six-year-old girl and their mother died on consecutive days. Henry and his brother, William, were taken to the workhouse, and when they were old enough were sent to the District School. The older boy, William, did not remain there long and subsequently obtained work in Kingston, but Henry was there longer. Their father also entered the workhouse a few years later when he was out of work, but when he left in 1870 to look for work he applied to take Henry with him. For Henry, only a baby when his mother died, and not having had any family with him since his brother left the school three years earlier, it must have been a mixed experience to be dressed in a new set of clothes and handed over to his father. Unfortunately, any happiness he might have felt was short-lived. His father

*went into the Old Crown, Church-street, with the boy [...] Some four or five hours afterwards, cries were heard to proceed from a closet in the yard, and on opening the door, which was fastened on the outside, the son of [the] prisoner was found there. The day was cold, and the boy having been stripped of most of his clothes, was in a pitiable condition, suffering from cold and hunger, and crying bitterly.*<sup>98</sup>

The boy's clothes were later found at the pawn shop. Henry was taken back to the District School, and a year later was entered into the school band with a view to joining the army.

Exploitation could take more serious forms. For Mary Ann Wills, "a miserable looking girl aged twelve", her father was complicit in her corruption. She was arrested for soliciting prostitution in Surbiton in 1859, and although the magistrates did not treat her harshly, but merely admonished her, they insisted that she and her father leave the area. Although this solved the problem for the parish, presumably the unfortunate girl simply continued her way of life in another town.<sup>99</sup>

There were various involuntary forms of neglect or abandonment. Illness made a mother emotionally remote from her children, and physically remote if she were removed to the infirmary or asylum. Post-natal "lunacy" was often cited, but there was doubt within the Kingston Board of Guardians whether removal of these mothers to the asylum was the appropriate action to take, yet husbands continued to apply to have their wives removed.<sup>100</sup> The mental illness of a father could also have financial and emotional implications for the children, as he might be continually ill at home and unable to work, or removed.

When illness struck at home, not only would the children have had to manage without an adult to look after them, but with no income there would be nothing to eat. Whilst a meagre allowance could be obtained from the relieving officer, there were occasions when the parents were not well enough to leave the house to apply for it. In 1859 the family of Joseph Elford, a shoemaker who lived in the Canbury area, found matters very difficult in such a situation. Although there was an older son at home who was working, and they had been receiving cash and loaves through poor relief, the father was consumptive, the mother ill in bed and neither could attend the Board of Guardians. Their home was in a "wretchedly dirty state", which was a source of horror to the Board as "it was indispensable to have cleanliness on the part of

applicants for, or recipients of, relief', although how parents were supposed to cope with maintaining a spotless home under these circumstances is difficult to see.<sup>101</sup> The medical officer visited them, and further financial support was given, but there was concern that unless their home could be cleaner they would have to enter the workhouse. The family survived the crisis, and undoubtedly the children were helped by the earnings of their older brother. This case illustrates how tenuous family life could be, how uncertain family security, and how important the earning capacity and domestic support provided by older children still at home.

It was not only death, destitution or desertion which might affect family circumstances. There were also occasions when a father might be away from home in order to find employment. Whilst Alfred Dixon was in service as a butler in a large household in Marylebone in 1871, his wife and children were living in more humble surroundings in a cottage in Esher. The children were therefore living with only their mother, who was working as a laundress, and the oldest boy was working for a blacksmith at the age of eleven. Their mother even took in a baby to nurse, which would have provided a small amount of extra income. If the children saw their father during this time, his stories of life in a fine house would have contrasted considerably with their own home, particularly as the children had a poor diet, despite their mother's efforts. One of the children died of croup at the age of three-and-a-half and another, Phoebe, developed rickets. Phoebe was in a great deal of pain, and used to cry a good deal, which must have been a constant strain for her mother and the other children. Although Phoebe was taken into the Great Ormond Street Hospital for a few weeks when she was six, her condition did not improve and she continued to have bent legs.<sup>102</sup> Later, their father became unemployed and the family moved to Suffolk, where their mother supported them by baking and the boys worked as agricultural labourers. Phoebe stayed at home and helped in the house. The Dixon family illustrates the vicious circle of struggling on a low income; the health of the family can be affected by poor diet and this, in turn, could affect the employment prospects of the children. In this family the surviving boys had sufficient strength and stamina to work at physical jobs, but without the efforts of their mother to earn money whilst still caring for them, they might not have been so fortunate, and the girls did not appear to be as healthy.

Where there were children who were neglected by their parents, there also existed strangers prepared to care for them, and whilst financial gain might have been the motivation for some, this was not always the case. Some families might not have been able to rely on community support for themselves alone, but in the case of young children assistance was more forthcoming. Vigilant friends and neighbours were more willing to intervene if they felt a child were being neglected; in better-off households a servant might protect the children. The Kirkman children were "frightened of their father, who threatened to kill them" and they were removed from the house by the young female servant who said "the children were afraid to be in the house with their father, and would not return home". The magistrate considered she had acted in the children's interest and that she was a "trustworthy respectable person". Kirkman responded by giving her immediate notice.<sup>103</sup> For poorer families, where no such protection



existed in the home, children might find help from neighbours. Some families survived domestic tragedies through the help and support of their community, and the distress and hardship of the children of respectable families, however poor, was frequently alleviated by public appeals.<sup>104</sup>

The women living in Burritt Road, Norbiton in 1872 took a joint decision to report a mother for neglecting her baby. They frequently heard the baby cry and moan, and noticed that the mother, an unmarried dressmaker, often went out and left the baby alone all day. A neighbour had been asked to look after the child on one occasion and noticed that "it appeared three parts starved", and after first approaching various relatives of the mother the neighbours decided to report the matter. The baby was taken to the workhouse infirmary, but was in a very weak state: "The bones were but just covered with flesh, the arms were no thicker than a man's thumb, and the hands were almost transparent."<sup>105</sup> Although the mother was not, herself, assisted by her neighbours, her child was not ignored by them and without their concern may not have survived her neglect.

### **9.8 Death**

The ultimate abandonment for a child was in the death of someone close. Hopkins referred to "... the early death of one or more parents during childhood with all its economic and psychological consequences ...".<sup>106</sup> The practical effects of the death of a parent could include loss of income, loss of their carer, or possibly the break-up of the family; the emotional effects are more difficult to determine. Death could not be ignored, and would certainly have been a more obvious experience for children in crowded homes. As Walvin points out, "In the poorest areas ... where could a child escape to when a relative was dying but in its home? Unless taken in by a neighbour ... working-class children were obliged to witness the protracted and often painful process of death in their homes."<sup>107</sup>

Both Ariès and Stone connected the high infant mortality rate with the level of emotional investment of parents in their children.<sup>108</sup> Although little direct evidence exists for Kingston, it is possible to offer an argument which challenges these views. Affection takes many forms and the absence of emotional displays need not imply indifference. Recent studies including those by Fletcher, Burnett, Jalland and others emphasise the grief surrounding bereavement and provide some insight into the effect of death on children.<sup>109</sup> It has also been suggested that the greater presence of death within the family could reduce its emotional impact. The mystery of death, despite its greater frequency in the experiences of children then than now, suggests that fear and terror were not any the less for a child in the nineteenth century. Deaths of siblings with whom one was to used sharing a bed or counting as a friend, sharing a room with the body of a dead relative prior to the funeral, and even the proximity of slaughter houses, certainly made death more a part of life than for a modern child. Yet this does not mean that its horrors were diminished for a child through ubiquity, or that the sense of abandonment was any less. Neither does it suggest that parental bereavement was any less acute. The numbness of grief

cannot be taken as evidence of absence of distress. If a schoolteacher recorded with sadness the death of a pupil, how much greater must have been the reactions of the parents, and such distress cannot fail to have been noticed by the remaining children.

*One of my dear little girls was not well in School Sunday morning. She asked leave to go home to her mother which I granted, and this Morning at 2 O'clock she went Home to her Saviour.* <sup>110</sup>

How the loss of a parent, sibling or grandparent was regarded by children is rarely documented in surviving records for Kingston, other than documentary evidence that children took time off school to attend their funerals, or were allowed to leave a Poor Law institution to visit a dying mother, the latter suggesting a recognition of attachment rather than one of mere duty. It is therefore difficult to state with certainty how family bereavement was experienced by the child. The practical implications are more easy to construe; the financial impact would certainly be felt. The experience of Jack Lanigan, although relating to life in Salford, cannot have been unusual: "We became very hungry kids after father died. [...] Mother did not enjoy good health, but she tried to do washing for others, who could afford to pay her ...". <sup>111</sup>

On a practical level, the death of a father could mean a decline in family circumstances. The additional financial pressure, the reduction in time which a mother could spend in guiding her children's morals, could take their toll. It was possible that the family would have to move to a poorer area, exposing the children to a different set of friends and influences. Such was the case with George Buzzing, the subject of the case study to this chapter. His father, although from a labouring family, found work as an ostler in Surbiton. Despite being poor they remained in work and managed with few applications for relief. After the father died in 1870, the family income and circumstances were affected and the widow and children moved to the Fairfield area of Kingston. Here George found work with a reputable printing firm but lapsed into theft. He made friends with John Hanks who also worked there and the two boys were caught stealing a shirt from a shop in Surbiton and were sent to Wandsworth Prison for fourteen days. <sup>112</sup>

Deaths of siblings would also have had an impact. The death of an older sibling still living at home would have altered the family structure, responsibilities and tasks falling on the remaining children. Emotionally it is harder to say, but the distress of parents at the death of a child would have affected the emotions of the whole family for a time. Alfred Ireson, born in 1856, the son of a stonemason in a village near Oundle, came from a close, loving, religious family. His reminiscences describe the effect caused by the death of his sisters:

*We had two pretty little baby sisters; one, the eldest, was called Nellie. She was about two and a half years old [and] was very dear to all. ... [S]he was put to bed about 8 o'clock ... [Later] Mother and dad came up ... to look at us. They found dear little Nellie quite dead. This terrible shock caused quite a commotion in our home. Mother and dad*

*were broken-hearted. ... Our hearts were sadly broken... A few months later ... [o]ur little baby sister Caroline became suddenly ill, and died. She was 18 months old.* <sup>113</sup>

James Legg, a carpenter in Surbiton, committed suicide when the death of his wife followed that of one of his children, the loss being too great for him to bear. <sup>114</sup> This provides a local example of the emotional upheaval caused by such events, but how his four remaining children coped with this triple tragedy is difficult to imagine and is undocumented. It would appear that they were taken into the care of the Guardians and were then faced with institutional life. The oldest was eleven and already out at work as an errand boy, so his familiar and independent life was curtailed. Eight-year-old John was boarded out with foster-parents in the Kingston area until he was old enough to be apprenticed at the age of fourteen. <sup>115</sup> He would then have had to leave his foster home to live with his employer, so he would have been faced once again with a complete change. The surviving evidence suggests that the older boys were sent to a Poor Law training ship, as in adult life their occupations were mariners. <sup>116</sup> Although their early childhood was spent in an overcrowded cottage which they shared with another large family, at least they had the security and familiarity of family, and their grandfather and aunt were near at hand. Within the space of four months their lives had changed completely. In poorer homes where a family lived in close proximity in multi-function rooms, sharing beds, children grew up used to the presence of family members of all ages. <sup>117</sup> If a child was familiar with physical closeness in an overcrowded family, with never being alone, and always being with a family member, how much more of a shock it must have been if death or destitution separated them from the familiar by placing them in an institution, away from family and friends.

Henrietta Wheeler and Jessie Gardener were also orphaned, and they benefitted from the new system of boarding-out with foster parents rather than being confined to an institution. They attended the local school until their lives were disrupted once again by bereavement, as their teacher recorded:

*Henrietta Wheeler & Jessie Gardener, two first class children, orphans who have been maintained at the expense of the parish with a respectable woman in the neighbourhood, have been removed this week owing to the death of their foster-parents within a few weeks of each other.* <sup>118</sup>

These girls would have had their home life disturbed once again, and if they had become attached to their foster parents then this would have meant further distress. They would have been taken away from their homes, their friends and their school and brought again into the workhouse. What effect this continual severing of attachments would have had can only be a matter for conjecture.

However poor a child might be, their prospects were improved if their families were considered respectable. Widows and deserted wives received all the assistance the community and the Poor Laws could provide, but this was unlikely to prove adequate for them and their children. Mothers had to look to their own resources and take whatever work they could, and if they

turned to other men for comfort and shelter their respectability might be lost, along with official support. It was possible to receive the sympathy of the Guardians in such cases, but they were powerless to act if the rules were strictly against providing assistance. In 1859/60 one such widow, with four children, and also looking after her late husband's mother, applied for poor relief, but the Guardians, even though "much struck with the neatness and cleanliness of the house" could find no legal way of assisting her as she had had an illegitimate child since her widowhood. They considered that "it would be very foolish to bring a young woman with four children into the house, where they would doubtless become permanent occupants".<sup>119</sup> The family survived for as long as they could by gradually selling their possessions.

In such situations it was understandable for a widow to form a new attachment, but for her children the results were mixed. There were stepfathers who had no interest in their wives' previous children, for whom the price of their mother's security was their own abandonment. Other stepfathers took on the responsibility of quite large step-families, occasionally finding themselves the sole carer if the mother subsequently died. To suffer the loss of a parent meant not only emotional distress but financial hardship, and possibly rejection by a step-parent, either willingly or simply through economic necessity. In marrying a widow, John Taylor acquired seven of her dependent children as well, quite an undertaking for an agricultural labourer from the Lower Wanderings. They went on to have three children of their own; ten children on a labourer's wage would not have made for an easy life. It was not always possible for them to manage; there were winters between 1855 and 1860 when there was no work available and John had to apply to the Guardians for work, and latterly they were on permanent out-relief. When John's wife gave birth in 1860 his inability to pay for immediate medical care, and the 'mismanagement' of the available Poor Law medical assistance, resulted in her death from hæmorrhage, an avoidable misfortune according to contemporary midwifery practice.<sup>120</sup> He was unable to support his large family, so two of his youngest stepchildren went into the workhouse.<sup>121</sup>

One of these children was Georgiana Hughes, named in memory of her own father who had died two weeks after she was born. Although she had never known her father, she had grown up with her mother and seven older brothers and sisters, and since the age of five she had had John Taylor as her step-father. She was eight when her mother died and experienced the consequent separation from her entire family, other than her sister Eliza who was with her in the workhouse. The two girls attended Poor Law schools and remained in institutions until they were apprenticed; Georgiana was sent into service as a live-in maid, and although she continued to work as a servant she later went to live with her married sister in London.

Six-year-old Frederick Simpson lived alone with his mother in Thames Ditton; his father was in a lunatic asylum and his mother was "of rather intemperate habits". One morning, after his mother had been in bed for some days, the little boy went and

*called a gentleman in, thinking that something was wrong with his mother, when it was found that she was dead. ... there was blood and foam on her mouth and nose. ... and there was some vomit in a basin. ...*<sup>122</sup>

The inquest showed that his mother had impaired health due to "the habitual use of intoxicating drink"; her young son had been the only person with her in the days before her death. The road in which they lived was a quiet side street of artisan cottages off the Portsmouth Road and, unless Frederick went to school and found companionship and normality there, a life comprising an absent, mentally ill, father and an inebriate mother with few visitors constituted a very limited life. His parents had married in Islington, so there is nothing to suggest that there were any relatives nearby.

Some situations could be simply too bewildering for a child to cope with, especially if there were no adults around. Henry Rhodes' father was an agricultural labourer, and his mother went out cleaning and washing, leaving the children alone. One day when the father came home from work "he found his son Henry, a child aged about 5 years, sitting down at Mr. Page's shop, about 350 yards distant, and who said he could not get in." At his home the father found the remains of his ten-year-old daughter, Jane, in the kitchen. His son, Henry

*told him that while the deceased was blowing the fire in the morning a piece of lighted stick fell out of the fire and ignited her dress. She asked him to put his foot on her dress, but he said he could not as he had only his socks on. He dressed himself and went to school, but said nothing about it to anybody ... he was so frightened; he had no breakfast or dinner that day*<sup>123</sup>

Such examples emphasise that, quite apart from the practical consequences of family tragedies which might be documented in official records, these incidents often left in their wake distressed and frightened children whose lives were suddenly altered.

## 9.9 Conclusion

Understanding life lived in poverty from the perspective of the child is problematic. In the absence of personal testimony, the most that can be achieved is to re-examine the available sources and consider how the child might have experienced events. This can best be obtained through consolidation of the information obtained on families as explored in the previous chapters. By taking into account their living accommodation, family relationships, parental occupations and the crises necessitating poor relief, and reconstructing the circumstances and situation of the child during these life events, an enhanced understanding of the child's experience can be achieved.

In earlier chapters, the importance of community and family support is apparent in the survival of families in times of need, and after these have been exhausted, in the provision of Poor Law assistance. The actions of influential and benevolent individuals could also be of vital

importance. Whilst the child would have benefited as a consequence, it is possible that there would have been less awareness of these benefits, and more likely that the presence of family members and an established home life had far more prominence. There was no doubt that there were children with no family who had to care for themselves, sleeping in barns and on boats, until discovered and rescued by the authorities.

The examination into the children's perspective on their lives suggests that the wider question of poverty was of less significance for a child than their daily home life and pleasures. There is evidence which suggests that for a child life was perceived as either happy or unhappy, not always in terms of poverty. If their daily needs were met, after a fashion, and they had a family, even if drunk or cruel, that was their life, and there was security in familiarity. Social position and standards were upheld even in the poorer families, in their efforts to ensure cleanliness and standards of dress, and this social awareness was sensed and defended by the children. Burnett concluded that "[i]n all ranks of society it seems that children were more conscious of social class and of class rivalries than one might suppose".<sup>124</sup> Although they may not have been conscious of the extent of their poverty, children were quite likely to have a sense of their social position and of being teased. In Salford, Jack Lanigan said of his school:

*"You were considered posh if you could attend Sunday School, but we went to Gravel Lane Ragged School on a Sunday evening. You never saw such a bunch of scruffy kids in all your life. If we had been bunched together you could not have made a suit from the lot"*<sup>125</sup>

Burnett's findings suggest that even within the strata of a school commensurate with their social standing, there was an awareness of social grading: "One of the many causes of unhappiness at school was the cast-off clothes, boots and shoes which poor children often had to wear, and which made them the target for bullying by other children...".<sup>126</sup> In Kingston, a desire to be fashionable might be discerned in even the poorer little girls. One sought to improve the appearance of her blue charity uniform:

*Oct 13 Emma Stevens a Blue Girl came to School with hoops and took occasion to make them conspicuous, swaying them against my legs. I said Emma you know the rules about hoops, you must take them off. She swung out of the room calling out that she would not take them off and she would never come again. She came again in them at 2 O'clock and when I saw her in the play ground I said Emma you have not taken off the hoops you know the rules as well as I do. She made grimaces and walked out of the playground.*

*Oct 16 Emma Stevens came again in hoops and was sent back by order of the Trustees*

*Oct 17 E Stevens came to School without hoops*<sup>127</sup>

Emma was the daughter of a dredgerman, who lived by the riverside in Barge Walk; her two older brothers were also dredgermen. When Emma left school she worked as a servant in the household of a manufacturer nearby. As a servant, she would still not have been permitted to wear her hoops, or a bustle, as they tended to sweep the ornaments off shelves. Her desire for some form of social improvement may have been met, however, by her employment in a middle-class household.

Economic considerations may have lain behind some parental attachments. However, the findings could certainly challenge the view that affection was absent, although this might manifest itself in less obvious ways than demonstrative affection. Reminiscences from elsewhere support the evidence from Kingston that it was family unity and community support which was important, and that emotional attachment, however expressed, was valued. Being a contributor to the family survival strategy, where family solutions included the children, and children's punishments involved the parents, consolidated the family unit. There could indeed be affection in even the most underprivileged of lives. Burnett remarked that "children's happiness at home bore no direct relationship to wealth or poverty, to possessions or the lack of them, to overcrowded or inadequate housing conditions."<sup>128</sup> Edna Bold, the daughter of a Manchester confectioner, stated "My twin brother and I had no sense of deprivation as we roamed and played in the labyrinth of mean, intricate streets."<sup>129</sup> Although written from the perspective of old age, Kate Taylor, born in 1891 in Suffolk declared "even poverty can be laughed at from a distance when it is shared with family love."<sup>130</sup>

The more immediate desires of a child can be seen in how they spent their leisure time and how they responded to punishment. Hunger and financial difficulties may well have initiated some crimes, but so might childish desire or devilment. There were children who were overawed by official punishment, and cried, with anxious, respectable mother or father accompanying them, and who went on to lead blameless lives. Just a few were worldly-wise, and scornful, seeing seven days' imprisonment as a joke. Many others plainly stretched their over-resourced parents to the limit, especially with repeat offences and repeat fines, and their undoubtedly irate and exhausted parents were often tempted to have the child sent to prison, it being the cheaper and less worrying option. With the introduction of a reformatory term after prison, parents would not be completely released from financial responsibility, as they had to pay what they could afford towards the child's maintenance, and were also deprived of any earnings the child might have brought home. There were several fathers who followed their child into prison in default of these payments, the sins of the sons falling on the fathers, and not the other way about. Punishment was often a family matter.

Children were children, then as now. Some liked school, some did not. Many were well behaved and dutiful, others were mischievous, some were just plain wicked. Punishments worked for some, but had little impact on others, who continued to misbehave even in the reformatory. There were those who led miserable lives, and slid further down the social scale



into homelessness, unemployment, and obscurity, despite every care given in accordance with contemporary methods. Others pulled themselves up through their own efforts and became respected members of the community. There can be no universal child experience, but the current research attempts to expand understanding by considering the child's perspective. The value of examining the lives of these children at the micro-level has been fundamental to this aspect of the study.

- <sup>1</sup> H.W. Peek, Magistrate, Eighth Annual Meeting of the Kingston Ragged Schools, *Surrey Comet*, 12 Nov.1870, p.3 col. 2.
- <sup>2</sup> Fletcher, *Growing up in England*.
- <sup>3</sup> Burn, *The Autobiography of a Beggar Boy*; Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge & Freedom*; Chaplin, *My Autobiography*; Haw, *From Workhouse to Westminster*.
- <sup>4</sup> H. Beale Collins, D.P.H., *Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 21 January 1896*, (Kingston-on-Thames: W. Drewett & Sons, 1896), p.8; H. Beale Collins, D.P.H., *Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 16 March 1897*, (Kingston-on-Thames: W. Drewett & Sons, 1897), p.4.
- <sup>5</sup> 1851: Population tables II, Vol. I. England and Wales. Divisions I-VI, 1851 pp.2 and 41; 1861: Population tables. England and Wales. Vol. II. Part 1, 1861 pp.3 and 63; 1871: Population abstracts, England and Wales, Vol. III, 1871 pp.3 & 43; 1881: Population abstracts, England and Wales, Vol. III, 1871 pp.3 & 43.
- <sup>6</sup> Walvin, *A Child's World*, p.17.
- <sup>7</sup> Booth Classification system in Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London vol. 1* (London: Macmillan, 1902) pp.33-62.
- <sup>8</sup> Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*, p.241.
- <sup>9</sup> *Surrey Comet*, 8 March 1862, p.4 col. 5.
- <sup>10</sup> *Surrey Comet*, 25 Feb.1860.
- <sup>11</sup> *Surrey Comet*, 8 March 1862, p.4 col. 5.
- <sup>12</sup> *Surrey Comet*, 18 Nov.1871, p.3 cols. 3-4.
- <sup>13</sup> Kingston Stock Fair and The Pleasure Fair, *Surrey Comet*, 17 Nov.1860, p.4 cols. 2-3.
- <sup>14</sup> Kingston Stock Fair and The Pleasure Fair, *Surrey Comet*, 17 Nov.1860, p.4 cols. 2-3.
- <sup>15</sup> Butters, *The Book of Kingston*, p.127.
- <sup>16</sup> Kingston Public Boys' School Log Book SHC CES/35/1, 6 Nov.1865.
- <sup>17</sup> *Surrey Comet*, 9 Nov.1872, p.4 col. 6.
- <sup>18</sup> Kingston Public Girls' School Log Book, SHC CES/36/1, 4 May 1865.
- <sup>19</sup> Kingston Public Boys' School Log Book, SHC CES/35/1, 13 May 1864.
- <sup>20</sup> Kingston Public Boys' School Log Book, SHC CES/35/1, 10 May 1864.
- <sup>21</sup> Jack Lanigan in Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*, pp.98-9.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ragged schools Christmas dinner, Surrey Comet*, 28 Dec.1861, p.4 col. 4.
- <sup>23</sup> *Kingston, The Ragged Schools, Surrey Comet*, 1 Jan.1859, p.5.
- <sup>24</sup> Baillie, *The Shabby Paradise*, p.90.
- <sup>25</sup> *Christmas at the Ragged School, Surrey Comet*, 1 Jan.1870, p.2 col. 5.
- <sup>26</sup> *Christmas in Kingston, Surrey Comet*, 28 Dec.1861, p.4 col. 4.
- <sup>27</sup> *Christmas in Kingston, Surrey Comet*, 28 Dec.1861, p.4 col. 4.
- <sup>28</sup> *A Good Treat, Surrey Comet*, 22 Feb.1862, p.4 col. 3.
- <sup>29</sup> Borough Bench Tuesday, *Surrey Comet*, 30 Dec.1871, p.2 col. 6.
- <sup>30</sup> *Surrey Comet*, 17 Nov.1860, p.4 col. 6.
- <sup>31</sup> Merryweather, *Half a Century of Kingston History*, pp.17-18.
- <sup>32</sup> *Room for Improvement*, Letter to the *Surrey Comet*, 6 May 1871, p.2 col. 5.
- <sup>33</sup> *Surrey Comet*, 3 Sept.1859, p.4.
- <sup>34</sup> Merryweather, *Half a Century of Kingston History*, pp.17-18.
- <sup>35</sup> *Surrey Comet*, 5 Aug.1871, p.3 col. 2.

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- 38 Baillie, *The Shabby Paradise*, p.14.
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**Appendix 9.1**  
**Case Study: George Buzzing**

George Buzzing was the oldest child of George Buzzing and his second wife, Ann. When Ann married in 1856 she was only twenty and her husband was a widower of forty-two, a labourer living in the Wanderings.<sup>1</sup> George senior later worked as an ostler, and the family moved to a small cottage in Surbiton. The couple had five children. They were poor, but managed without poor relief except when their child, either young George or his brother, William, fractured his arm in 1864.<sup>2</sup>

In 1870 George died age 57; the family circumstances changed and their income fell.<sup>3</sup> His wife, Ann, was still only thirty-five, and at first she continued to live in Surbiton although she was given parish out-relief to help her provide for her children, the youngest of whom was still a baby. Her oldest son, George, then aged fourteen, was helping his widowed mother by working as a domestic groom. The year after his father died, George's seven-year-old sister, Elizabeth, died.<sup>4</sup> Ann moved her young family to Hobb's Cottages, Fairfield, and young George found work nearby in Hawks Road with Messrs Le Blond and Co, who were engravers and printers of colour illustrations. Here he made friends with another boy his age, John Hanks, who lived in Mill Street, Fairfield; both boys worked as printers, manufacturing the type of sentimental pictures of rural simplicity which was a far cry from their own cottage lives.

Having experienced the death of his father and sister, a change of residence and descent into poverty, George was tempted into crime. In December 1872 he and his friend went into a draper's shop in Maple Road, Surbiton and stole a woollen shirt valued at 10s 6d, which George tried to hide under his overalls. A police detective spotted him walking home and looking rather bulky and arrested him. Both boys were sentenced to fourteen days' hard labour in Wandsworth gaol.<sup>5</sup>

At this time George's mother, Ann, would have found life a considerable struggle with her eldest son, the only wage-earner, in prison. Her second son, William, was aged only twelve, and there was two-year-old Henry, born a year before his father's death. She had also recently given birth to a girl who could not have been her late husband's child, and in such circumstances her parish relief may have ceased entirely.

Ann went on to have two more children, and subsequently married their father in 1881, George Hale, a labourer in Cambridge Road. She lived in the Cambridge Road / Washington Road area of Kingston, latterly without her husband, and ultimately worked as a charwoman.<sup>6</sup>

When young George Buzzing came out of prison he returned home and worked as a general labourer. He married and had six children, although the youngest three died before the age of twenty-one. George lived in the same area of Kingston throughout the remainder of his life, in

Cambridge Road and Washington Road, and remained a labourer. Also in Washington Road lived his two brothers, the younger of whom was married, as did his married sister.

Although George Buzzing came from a poor family, there had been signs that their circumstances might have been steady had not the father died when he did. They had moved away from the Wanderings, and although they lived in a very small cottage in Surbiton, they were in an area with more opportunities for employment with better-off households; father and son were able to work with the horses in the inns and private houses. The death of the father, closely followed by one of the children, would have increased George's responsibility as the oldest son to provide for his mother and younger brothers and sisters, even though he was only fourteen. A widow with older children might have been able to survive through any earnings she and the children could bring in, but with a baby, and another on the way, work opportunities were limited for George's mother and most of her children were not of working age. They returned to Kingston to live, but their problems were compounded by George's crime and consequent loss of employment. The main support through the remainder of their lives would have come through the geographical closeness of the family; their persistence in a very small area of Kingston would also have enabled them to draw on community support.

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<sup>1</sup> Kingston Marriages, Kingston Lifecycles Database.

<sup>2</sup> Kingston Board of Guardians Minute Book SHC BG8/11/8, 11 Oct 1864.

<sup>3</sup> Bonner Hill Burials.

<sup>4</sup> Bonner Hill Burials.

<sup>5</sup> Stealing a Shirt, *Surrey Comet*, 21 Dec.1872, p.3 col. 2; Wandsworth Gaol. *Prisoners: photograph album*, Wandsworth Gaol, Surrey, TNA PCOM/2/290/19, 28 Dec.1872.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the area see French, 'Infant mortality in Asylum Road'.

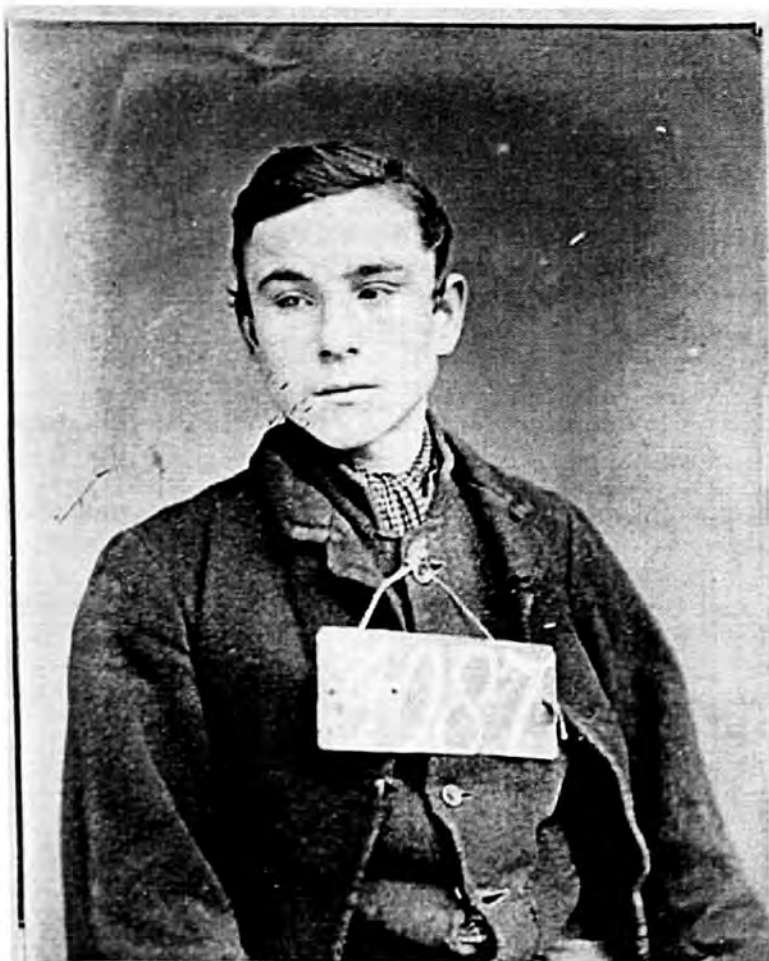


**Figure 9.1 Washington Road and Cambridge Grove area of Kingston**  
 showing the area of densely packed housing, occupied largely by labourers, laundresses and needlewomen



Source: © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited (2010), EDINA, County Series 1:2500 1854-1949, 2nd Revision 1906-1939

Figure 9.2 George Buzzing



George Buzzing, when aged 17, as a prisoner at Wandsworth Gaol in 1872

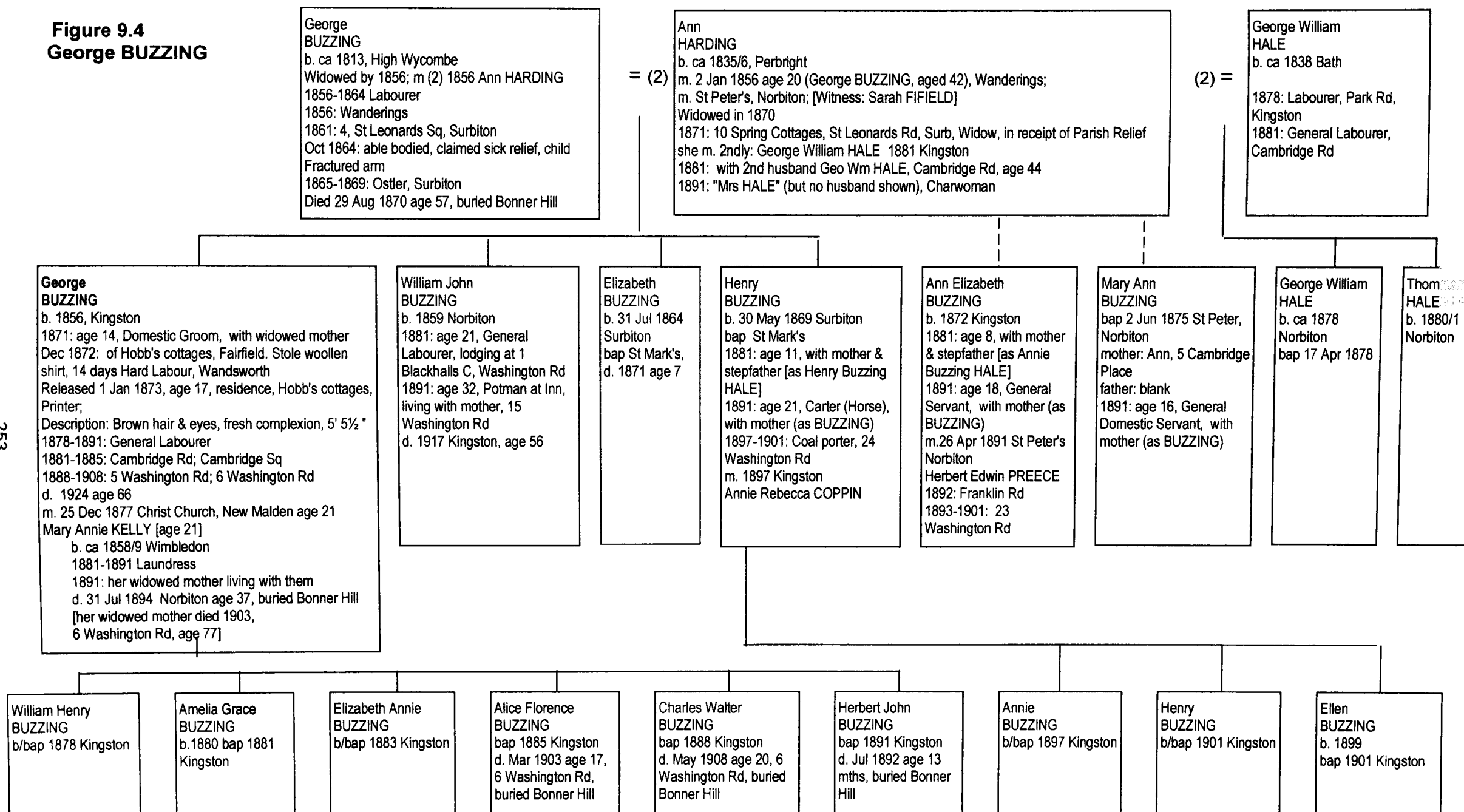
Figure 9.3 John Hanks



His friend, John Hanks, aged 16, also a prisoner at Wandsworth Gaol in 1872

Source: Wandsworth Gaol, Surrey, 28 Dec 1872, TNA PCOM/2/290/19 Buzzing 4087; PCOM/2/290/22 Hanks 4088

**Figure 9.4**  
**George BUZZING**



## CHAPTER 10

### Conclusion

**"It may seem trite to thus remark upon the changes of yesterday, but to-morrow they become matters of history, and possess a curious interest for the next generation"**

*F. Somner Merryweather, Kingston Historian and Guardian of the Poor, 1887*<sup>1</sup>

The treatment and experience of children from poor families living in the Kingston area has been discussed, both in regard to children within the workhouse system and in the domestic sphere. The findings have emphasised that full appreciation of the lives of the children of the poor cannot not be achieved by confining study to the workhouse or the slum. Both spheres are elements of the community in which these children belonged, and a broader study is therefore more informative.

Examining the problems relating to poor children has also highlighted the independent attitude of the administrators of Kingston, and emphasised that local opinion could serve to adapt, ameliorate or bridle at the interference imposed by central laws, and were manifested in solutions which cannot be taken as typical of the country as a whole. As Robin puts it, "a single parish" or, in this instance a union of parishes, "can be taken as typical only of itself", whilst at the same time resembling in some degree similar districts.<sup>2</sup> Further local studies combining both spheres, and including the administrative as well as the personal, would be welcomed to see how far Kingston's experience reflects that of other market towns or suburban areas.

The responses of the Kingston Union provide an opportunity to study a range of solutions available to Poor Law unions regarding their child pauper inmates. Far from being an entirely standardised system, with one history, the alternative systems possible under the Poor Law allowed for an array of local solutions, most of which seem to have been considered by Kingston at one time or another [see Appendix 2]. The Guardians endeavoured to balance acting legally with their desire to apply their own solutions. They also attempted to act humanely within various constraints as opinion on the Board ranged from those who were concerned with the requirements of the ratepayers, to those who emphasised the needs of the paupers. In studying the effect of national policy and local administration in one particular union, it is possible to view the consequent effects on children. Pauper children, although they should not have been subjected to 'less eligibility', were affected by administrative crises, and also as a result of the more stringent treatment of the able-bodied pauper. Pauper education also came in for criticism, from those who found difficulties in providing adequate teachers to those who felt pauper children were unduly favoured. By the nature of their apprenticeships, children could be affected by an unofficial 'less eligibility'. Guardians had to steer a difficult path between securing the best employment opportunities available for the children for whom they acted, yet at the same time avoid criticism that workhouse children had advantages over the independent labourer's child.

The second half of the thesis extends consideration of the pauper child beyond the workhouse to the wider community. Through detailed case studies, and through a range of source material, it has been possible to place the workhouse child in the broader context of official and community aid. By approaching the child as a participant in a complex network of family survival strategies, and as a contributor to the social complexities of their neighbourhood, the importance of children within history can be raised from that of mere adjunct.

Such complexities can best be appreciated and evaluated through a local study. For example, individual cases suggest that children's awareness of their economic state was probably not as pronounced as their awareness of their social position within their own small group. Physical discomforts and deprivations may have been unpleasant and uncomfortable but matched those of the community of streets in which they lived. Children were probably more preoccupied with the social and emotional differences which impinged on their daily lives; whether they were higher or lower down the social scale than their classmates, whether their clothes made them conspicuous. The value of social connections and family support also becomes apparent, and anecdotal evidence in literature is supported by the individual experiences revealed in the case studies.

Cunningham's analysis of the historiography of childhood highlights the various trends in research into the history of children.<sup>3</sup> From the studies of public policies towards children, which were a feature of the 1960s and 1970s, the emphasis changed to questions of family affection which focussed studies on the emotional and private lives of families.<sup>4</sup> This present study not only deals with children as elements of legislative history or family studies, but places them firmly within the community. Children were ubiquitous, therefore they concerned everyone, not just their parents. They might pose a problem for the community, but they were also a potential community asset. They were certainly the future of the country, and their health and education affected the efficiency of the next adult generation. In the everyday lives of the poor, children played a significant rôle in family survival strategies, whether consciously or not. They partook in family schemes to make money, their deprivations contributed to the family's economic savings, and they exercised their powers of ingenuity and labour so necessary to family survival.

The growing Romanticism of the nineteenth century, which suggested that children had a right to childhood, together with the problems caused by industrialisation, metropolitan population growth and large numbers of children, meant that children as a group were less likely to be overlooked. Rightful concern over children's working conditions and domestic safety instigated greater legislation. From the initial reluctance of the state to intervene in what was considered private, family concerns, legislation developed bringing the powers of the state into the home, the school and the workplace. Parental obligations gave way to children's rights.

Additionally, the philanthropic and evangelical movements of the nineteenth century were concerned with educational and religious rescue and reform of children, which gradually expanded from the 1870s to encompass their physical needs as well as spiritual.<sup>5</sup> Women were increasingly involved in this work, first in an amateur capacity, later in officially recognised rôles. Women such as Ellen Ranyard's 'Bible Women' initiated schemes from which home visiting and district nursing were to evolve. Closer scrutiny into the validity of charity and poor relief claimants, combined with efforts to curb school truancy, brought to official and community notice the conditions in which poor children lived. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Infant Life Protection Acts and the powers of Poor Law Guardians to 'adopt' children at risk evolved into the child protection laws of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> From exposure of children's working conditions as an emotive tool to review working hours and factory systems generally, developed concern for children in themselves. From the 1880s children moved from being the concern primarily of philanthropy and the church, to that of the state as social policies and child welfare initiatives developed.<sup>7</sup> An ideal home life depended in many ways on the mothering and housekeeping skills of women; the wars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries necessitated fit and healthy male youth. The rescue and protection of children would thus contribute to the rescue and protection of the country and empire.

Historically, therefore, the condition of children came to be viewed in a more holistic manner, and improvements in child health and welfare were seen as not merely improving the lives of the children themselves, but were for the future benefit of the country and the empire. Improvements therefore encompassed educational programmes for mothers, environmental concerns and midwifery, which affected infant mortality and child health. In addition, improved nutrition and physical health in childhood contributed to an effective future workforce and defence, as did efficient elementary and technical education. As Hendrick puts it, "children came to be seen as a national asset; a source of raw material."<sup>8</sup>

Again, the local study enables the historian to view the effect of national improvement programmes, and emphasises the conditions in which such programmes proved beneficial, through improved sanitation, vigilance in the milk supply and improved public health, for example. In Kingston particularly, the relationship between slum dwellings and infant mortality can be appreciated. The large-scale demolition of the slum area of the Back Lanes was seen as necessary to eradicate the spread of disease, as suggested by Kingston's Medical Officer of Health in the 1890s.<sup>9</sup> Areas of dense overcrowding, containing lodging houses whose occupants "confer no benefit on the community" were seen as dispensable.<sup>10</sup> In the poorest areas of Kingston child deaths were attributed to "carelessness combined with ignorance", and when a child was ill "trained nurses are ... unattainable."<sup>11</sup> Kingston's Medical Officer emphasised the value of the early physical examination of children, to discover any sight or hearing difficulties, or tooth decay. The opportunity of seeing children in their own home environment, which occurred following the appointment of school attendance officers, was evident in Kingston, and valued by Kingston's Medical Officer:

*The arrangement recently made for visiting these children in their own homes entails considerable time and labour, but gives many valuable opportunities for detecting infectious diseases of a mild character unattended by medical practitioners, as well as cases of overcrowding, dilapidated house property and other nuisances. My attention has also been drawn to matters of great importance, being not only on the health of the school children, but upon their future usefulness to society."*<sup>12</sup>

A number of major themes emerge from this present research, one specifically concerning the method of approach. This research has demonstrated that even where a major section of society has a disproportionately poor rate of documentary evidence devoted to it, constructing a meaningful study, whilst problematic, is still possible. The subjects under scrutiny have not generated a comprehensive source for analysis. Children do not create documentary evidence in the same quantities as adult officials, poor children are even less likely to do so. Their parents, occupied with the daily struggle for existence, are unlikely to have produced a written record. A vital element in survival strategies for poor families, the 'informal' economy and the efforts of charitable women, is not quantifiable and is largely undocumented. The contribution of mothers and children to the finances of the family need not necessarily have been great to have been vital; to paraphrase Mr. Micawber, a sixpence may have made the difference between happiness and misery. Withholding the children from school for a week would easily save this amount, and if they brought home pennies by holding horses' reins, that was a financial bonus. Even the fines imposed for missing school, stealing fruit, or activities regarded as begging, were probably exceeded, on balance, by the additional income the child could contribute, and were considered a worthwhile risk.

Children might not have left a record of their personal views, but in approaching the surviving material from the standpoint of the child it is possible to infer the impact their circumstances had on their lives. It is only by considering the significance of a cold home, wet clothes, a walk to school through sewage-ridden alleys, an ailing mother or a father out of work, that other aspects of a child's achievements, amusements or actions can be appreciated. These circumstances need not be imagined or assumed, but can be substantiated by the small details in a wide range of sources which, when combined, provide an evocation of their lives more powerful than would be possible from a single documentary source.

The conscious or unconscious activities of the children, and the social skills of their mothers in developing and consolidating a support network, are difficult to substantiate directly, but can be inferred from the accumulated body of evidence. By viewing the official Poor Law documents in conjunction with the material available relating to children in their daily activities at home and at school, the relationship between the official and unofficial spheres can be appreciated. Various family resources could be utilized in times of difficulty, with out-relief and the workhouse only part of many external resources which might be used periodically and temporarily, or resorted to on a permanent basis.



Another aspect which emerges is the breadth of experiences encountered by a poor child in Kingston. The detailed studies of children within their families and their community emphasise that there can be no typical experience and it would be dangerous to make generalisations or to cite one example to represent the life of a child in this market town. The lives of these children were influenced by the assistance or hindrance of a range of individuals and bodies. It is also evident that much depended on their own family's ethos and morals despite their fluctuating fortunes, and also on the personal attributes and character of the individual children. The social, geographical and economic circumstances of the area in which they lived also ensured that the lives of the children of the poor of the Kingston Union need not necessarily reflect those from other regions, and there were, indeed, variations within that same Union. The availability of schooling, the opportunities in the labour market, the personalities and opinions of influential adults, and many other factors, all combined to affect their lives. Where the law had no choice but to impose a fine on a child for a misdemeanour, an additional, local, discriminatory element was introduced by those who might chose to pay the fine on the child's behalf. In this way, local knowledge of the family, the estimation of remorse and likelihood of redemption, came between a child and prison.

Children played their part in their family's economic survival in numerous ways, either by deliberate actions or unconsciously. The assistance in the home, the workshop or field which they provided might release their parents for other, remunerative, work. Working alongside a parent might, however, hinder the work, yet consolidate family attachment which had a worth beyond the financial. Such parental guidance also contributed to a child's future: "Father used to say, 'I shall not leave you much money, but I will teach you every job, then you can always get work'." <sup>13</sup> Economic necessity, or a family's established strategy, might encourage a child to share in a family's criminal activities, and if caught, the resultant fine was a burden shouldered by the whole family. There was little discernable difference between the 'self-help' earning schemes of enterprising children and begging. Sweeping crossings, doing cartwheels, holding reins or hawking were borderline activities, yet should the money earned set the child on the road to independent respectability, as it did for market-stallholder 'Punch' Shepherd, such enterprise was praised. The death of a father, a childhood in an overcrowded cottage, a mother working as a laundress, might all be cited as causes of a life of destitution and deprivation, as indicated by many of the individual examples shown, yet Tom Jays had a highly respected career ahead of him despite all these difficulties.

Neither can the local officials who developed their strategies towards pauper children be considered as a uniform and consistent body; they had their own parochial interests and opinions and these often differed from the desires of the central Board and indeed within the Kingston Board itself. Despite accusations of 'bumbledom' where these bodies were concerned, the Kingston Guardians comprised many hard-working men, and later women who, during seasons of unemployment or epidemic, had an enormous workload. Certainly there were those who complained if they had missed out on committee lunches or days out, or who were

influenced by their own interests, but as circumstances made the living conditions of the children of the poor more visible, consciences were more frequently tested.

The early schemes adopted by the Kingston Guardians for the care and education of the union's child paupers suggested a willingness to provide innovative solutions. Financial and legislative restrictions elsewhere in the New Poor Law gradually eroded their intentions and Kingston Guardians finally settled into a pattern of inertia interspersed with activity as emergencies arose. From the 1870s, having finally developed an arrangement which operated with few serious problems, a combination of Boarding-Out and the Cowley Schools, no further initiatives were made until the end of the nineteenth century when 'Scattered Homes' began to be introduced in the Kingston area. In 1902 the Kingston Union had 49 children living in their Scattered Homes, with the numbers at Cowley diminishing as their use increased; there were only 16 Kingston children at Cowley in 1905.<sup>14</sup> Kingston's pauper children were increasingly boarded out or placed in scattered homes and received their education at the local elementary schools; 185 pauper children were being educated in local schools by 1906.<sup>15</sup>

Kingston's belief in removing children from the workhouse, boarding them out and sending them to local schools was not enthusiastically welcomed by the central board at the time, but their persistence was ultimately justified. The Annual Poor Law Report of 1913 praised the Kingston union particularly, noting the academic and sporting successes of the children. In one local school the 'top' three children were from scattered homes. The extent of the boys' involvement in the boy scout movement came in for special mention.<sup>16</sup>

Although their early enthusiasm and innovation in embracing Kay-Shuttleworth's educational suggestions for pauper children were officially acceptable, the Kingston Guardians were, throughout most of the period of study, continually criticized by the central board for their distinctive stance regarding many aspects of their application of the Poor Laws. Yet by 1912 their "progressive administration" drew praise.<sup>17</sup> Where the central board had once refused to sanction's Kingston's requests to send ailing children to the seaside to recuperate, by this date their suggestion to hire a house specifically for this purpose was commended.<sup>18</sup>

Although the contribution of women within certain spheres of Poor Law work was valued, they were not represented on the Kingston Board of Guardians during the period of study. When it was suggested in 1882 that a lady from Wimbledon be nominated for the Board the *Surrey Comet* Editorial considered that females should be spared "the coarser revelations of the applicants". Yet through their involvement with the infirmary, the boarded-out girls and "cases of delicate enquiry" they were quite likely to have encountered plenty to shock. It is more likely that the gentlemen of the Board might have felt inhibited by female presence rather than "one lady, sitting at a Board composed of some six and twenty gentlemen, would find it neither comfortable to herself, nor conducive to the public good".<sup>19</sup> The first woman to sit on the Kingston Board of Guardians was Mrs M.J. Minett, in 1894, and she was still serving in that

capacity in 1930 when Boards of Guardians were abolished.<sup>20</sup> By 1897 there were six women Guardians.<sup>21</sup> The first woman to be chairman of the Board was from 1912 to 1915.

Accusations of cruelty towards children in the workhouse system must be held in the context of the time. Separation and confusion for the child would have rendered the experience distressing, but this practice was not restricted to the pauper child; upper class public school boys were also separated from family and brought up in a regimented manner and subjected to physical punishment. The boys "flogged until they bled freely" were not at a workhouse school but at 'St James' School' which Winston Churchill attended.<sup>22</sup> Yet having no-one to turn to in times of difficulty, institutionalised children were more vulnerable than most, and this was not overlooked at the time; Tufnell acknowledged that many incidents of cruelty in workhouse schools did not come to light. Those incidents experienced by the Kingston children, when they were discovered, were investigated but it is not possible to estimate how many unreported occurrences there were. Documented incidents included "unnatural acts" by the male schoolmaster on boys, which resulted in criminal proceedings; deaths during a cholera epidemic at an overcrowded establishment which caused public outcry and a change in the law; accidental poisoning of children by arsenic produced no deaths but received no publicity; beatings by the Porter resulted in dismissal, although not for cruelty but for acting beyond his authority; and walking miles in circles turning the capstan to provide the school with water ceased on the grounds of inefficiency rather than cruelty.

Quality of workhouse meals was dubious and clothing basic, but for some they were an improvement on the destitute circumstances in which they had been living. Although some children ran away and sought their families, for others the workhouse school might have been a place of refuge from parental cruelty and poverty. The appalling conditions at Drouet's school which became public in 1849 following the cholera outbreak, can be compared with the conditions of a greengrocer's daughter in Kingston, as described by the medical officer in 1882:

*In the upstairs back room a female child, about 10 years old, was lying on an iron bedstead; there was no bed nor mattress, but a narrow plank down the middle of the bedstead upon which the child was partly lying, and partly upon the iron laths of the bedstead, which were only covered by a sack. The child was wrapped in an old coverlet, dirty and filthy to a degree, and had on a chemise in the same state. She was covered by two dirty old coats over the legs. As regards her person, she was just losing the marks of measles, but altogether covered with marks where she had been bitten by vermin, and her hair was swarmed with the ova of lice. Her skin was extremely dirty. In the room there were two pails, one two-thirds filled with water and excrement (human), and the other about one-third full. Between the two there was a basket containing vegetables. The surroundings of the room were quite sufficient to cause typhoid. The marks of ill-usage which the [mother] bore, was the result of the husband's cruelty. He gave her a beating almost every day. They both were in the habit of drinking, but the wife was in the habit of doing so to excess. ... the child was now at the workhouse.*<sup>23</sup>

Community support was given in the spirit of reciprocal assistance; charitable aid by non-neighbours given in the spirit of Christianity, and even Poor Law aid at the local level influenced by the same Christian spirit within the limitations of a legal framework. As discussed by Prochaska and Steadman Jones, nineteenth century philanthropic work has been "demonised", but acknowledgement of individual efforts should rehabilitate this.<sup>24</sup> Consider that those patrons who attended, for example, the Ragged School Christmas dinner would have had to leave their own family celebrations, gone to the Back Lanes, walked through the narrow, slop-filled lanes in their Sunday best, gone to the old barn in which the school was situated, and spent a couple of hours in a noisy room full of over-excited children cramming their faces. Similarly, their wives and daughters who taught at the school would have walked through those same lanes, past pubs and lodging houses, and spent evenings with ragged, dirty and verminous children or visiting the sick; the genteel horror of which was evoked by the novelist Rhoda Broughton in her description of the Back Lanes of 'Queenstown' in 1867.<sup>25</sup> Wives and daughters visited the public school and church schools, reading or sewing with the children, or made soup in the winter and stood for hours doling out portions to young and old. Such work was onerous, took time, cannot have been particularly pleasant, and has left little written record.

The value of a local study involving partial family reconstitution and investigation into individuals reminds the researcher that historical events are not necessarily derived from bodies or groups labelled 'Government', 'Guardians', 'town', 'country', 'the poor', 'the rich' or 'children'. It is rather that such bodies or communities are comprised of individuals with varying opinions, skills and needs, and it is often the influence or personalities of these individuals which can have a significant effect. Even where Boards of Guardians were not of one mind, the character and influence of particular members served to remind the board of their responsibilities. This study has necessarily focussed on the experiences of the children of the poor, yet it would be worthwhile to investigate in similar depth the individuals on successive Kingston Boards of Poor Law Guardians, or those involved in the charitable activities of the town, their family connections and the extent of their involvement in both charitable and official spheres.

It has also been revealing how far the "changes of yesterday" have been replicated in modern times, often in the spirit of innovation. The difficulty of discerning the genuine applicant for relief, the dilemma of troublesome children, the conflict between flawed parental care and the interference of state institutions, the indirect value of physical and musical education, and methods of child discipline, remain with us today. Thus the study of the evolution of approaches to these subjects should "possess" more than "a curious interest for the next generation" but be given due regard as having taxed the minds of concerned officials and philanthropists over a considerable period of time.

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- 1 Merryweather, *Half a Century of Kingston History*, p.18.
- 2 Robin, p.154.
- 3 Cunningham, 'Histories of childhood'; Cunningham, *Children & Childhood in Western Society*.
- 4 Cunningham, *Children & Childhood in Western Society*, pp.186-7.
- 5 Harry Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English society 1800-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.41.
- 6 The London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children established 8 July 1884; Infant Life Protection Act 1872 concerned registration of houses maintaining infants; Infant Life Protection Act 1897 required notification and local authority supervision of houses maintaining children under the age of five; Poor Law Act 1889 enabled Poor Law Guardians to undertake the care of abandoned children.
- 7 Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English society*, p.41.
- 8 Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical dimensions, contemporary debate* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2003), p.20.
- 9 H. Beale Collins, D.P.H., Medical Officer of Health to the Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames, *Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 20 February 1894* (Kingston-on-Thames: W. Drewett & Sons, 1894), p.4.
- 10 H. Beale Collins, D.P.H., *Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 21 January 1896* (Kingston-on-Thames: W. Drewett & Sons, 1896), p.27.
- 11 H. Beale Collins, D.P.H., *Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 15 January 1895* (Kingston-on-Thames: W. Drewett & Sons, 1895), p.9; Beale Collins, *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 21 January 1896*, p.17.
- 12 H. Beale Collins, D.P.H., *Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 16 March 1897* (Kingston-on-Thames: W. Drewett & Sons, 1897), pp.6-7.
- 13 Fred Boughton, born 1897, Forest of Dean, Gloucs in Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*, p.299.
- 14 'Questions and Answers Circulated with the Votes. Poor Law - Isolated or Scattered Homes', *Hansard*, 20 Nov.1902, vol. 115 cc. 9-10; *Thirty-fourth annual report of the Local Government Board*, 1904-1905, p.490.
- 15 *Thirty-fifth annual report of the Local Government Board, 1905-1906*, p.579.
- 16 *Forty-second annual report of the Local Government Board, 1912-1913*. Part I. Administration of the Poor Law, the Unemployed Workmen Act, and the Old Age Pensions Act, p.24.
- 17 *Forty-first Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1911-1912*. Part I, Administration of the poor law, the Unemployed Workmen Act, and the Old Age Pensions Act, p.75.
- 18 *Forty-first Report of the LGB, 1911-1912*, p.75.
- 19 *Surrey Comet Editorial*, 25 March 1882, p.4 col. 6.
- 20 *The Local Government Act 1894* (56 & 57 Vict. c. 73).
- 21 *Phillipson's Almanack and Directory of Kingston and Neighbourhood* (Kingston-on-Thames, G. Phillipson & Sons: 1897), p.30.
- 22 Winston S Churchill, *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (London: Leo Cooper, 1989; First published 1930), p.26.
- 23 The case of George and Margaret Ashby, *Gross neglect of a Child*, Borough Bench Wednesday *Surrey Comet*, 13 May 1882, p.3 col. 6 and 20 May 1882, p.3 col. 4.
- 24 Prochaska, *Schools of Citizenship*, p.3.
- 25 Rhoda Broughton, *Not Wisely, But Too Well* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1867).

## Appendix 1: Key to Family charts

A note on the charts:

These have been drawn up in pedigree format and compiled from a variety of primary sources. Where reference has been located in a finding aid, such as the International Genealogical Index, but not checked against the primary source, this has been indicated.

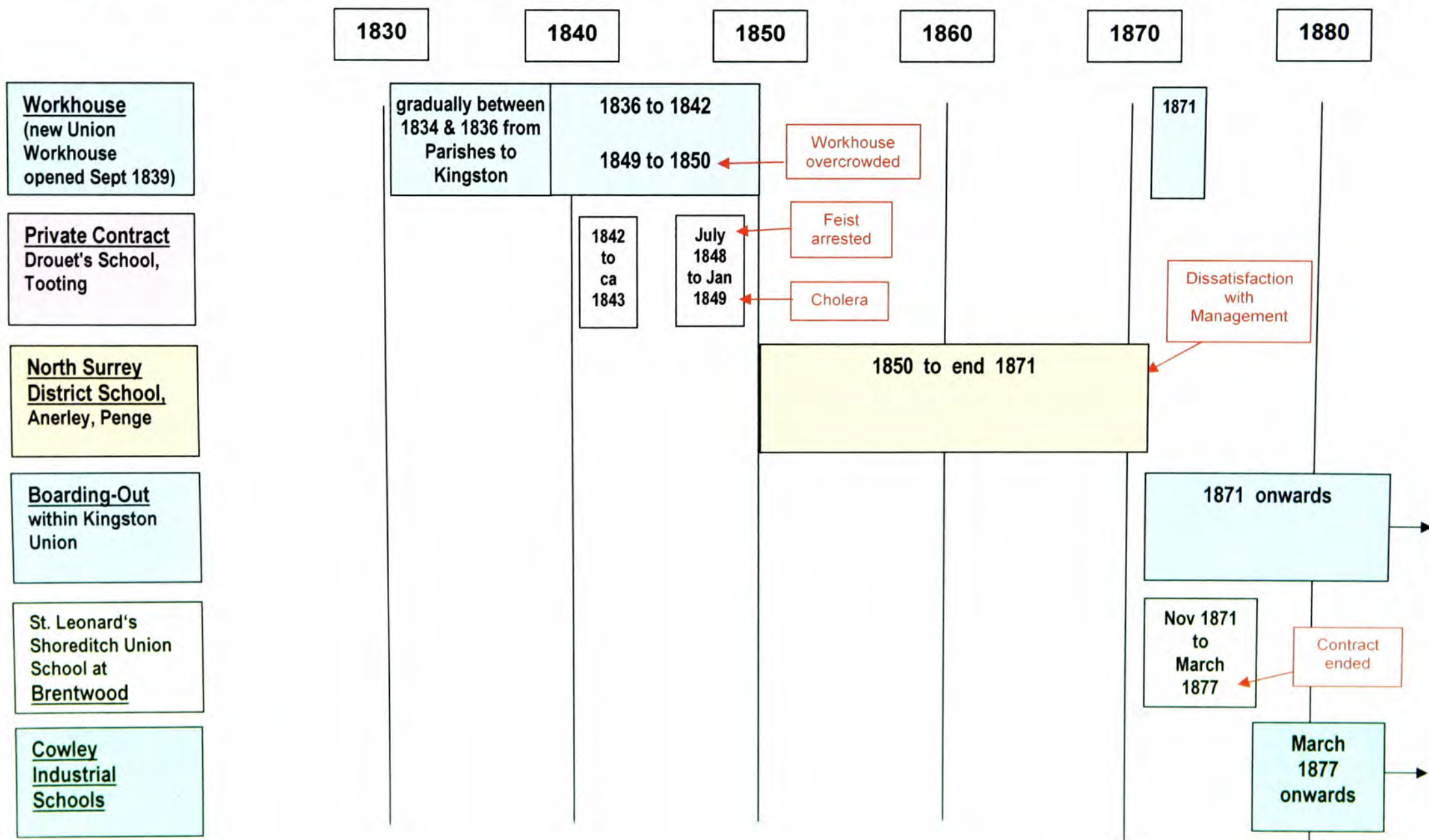
The information located in the census years may have originally been located using a finding aid or with the valuable 'Lifecycles' database, but as many references as possible have been checked against the original census enumerators' books or parish registers.

A number of abbreviations have been used to indicate source origins or other information, and these are shown below:

IGI	International Genealogical Index compiled by the Church of Latter Day Saints
PR	located in parish registers
b.	born
bap	baptized
d.	died
bur	buried
BH	Bonner Hill cemetery, Kingston-upon-Thames
Kn	Kingston-upon-Thames
=	married
m.	married
ca.	circa
Lab.	labourer
wid	widow
widr	widower
NSDS	North Surrey District School, the Poor Law school used by the Kingston-upon-Thames Union
W/h	Workhouse
h/h	household
FreeBMD	Index to Civil Registration transcription for England & Wales on <a href="http://www.freebmd.org.uk">www.freebmd.org.uk</a>

A bold line indicates that primary evidence supports this family relationship; a broken line either that the family relationship was suggested by a secondary source, or that the child was illegitimate, or the paternity uncertain.

## Appendix 2: Chronology of the main locations of Kingston's pauper children under the New Poor Law 1834-1880





### Appendix 3: Booth Armstrong - Occupational Sector Codes

<b>01 AGRICULTURAL SECTOR</b>
<b>Farming</b> Comprising: Farm bailiffs, stewards; Farmers, graziers; Farmers' sons, grandsons, brothers, nephews; Agricultural labourers, farm servants; Shepherds; Woodmen; Nurserymen, seedsmen, florists; Gardeners; Others in agriculture
<b>Land Service</b> Comprising: Agricultural machine proprietors, attendants; Land drainage service
<b>Breeding</b> Comprising: Horse proprietors, breeders, dealers; Horse breakers, keepers, grooms; Vet. surgeons, farriers; Cattle sheep etc. salesmen, drovers; Others engaged about animals
<b>Fishing</b> Comprising: Fishermen
<b>02 MINING SECTOR</b>
<b>Mining</b> Comprising: Mine Service; Coal Miners; Iron Miners; Copper Miners; Tin Miners; Lead Miners; Miners in other or undefined minerals
<b>Quarrying</b> Comprising: Stone quarriers; Slate quarriers; Stone and slate cutters; Limestone quarriers, lime burners;
<b>Brickmaking</b> Comprising: Brickmakers; Sand, flint, clay, gravel workers and others
<b>Salt and water works</b> Comprising: Salt makers; Waterworks service
<b>03 BUILDING SECTOR</b>
<b>Management</b> Comprising: Architects; Civil engineers; Surveyors (land, house, ships); Contractors; Builders
<b>Operatives</b> Comprising: Masons; Bricklayers; Plasterers, whitewashers; Slaters and Tilers; Thatchers; Carpenters and Joiners; Plumbers, painters, glaziers and paperhangers; Gasfitters; Locksmiths and bell hangers; Others in Building Operations
<b>Roadmaking</b> Comprising: Paviers; Road labourers; Railway labourers, navvies; Others in Road and Rail making
<b>04 MANUFACTURING SECTOR</b>
<b>Machinery</b> Comprising: Engine and machine makers; Boiler makers; Domestic machinery and bicycle makers; Weighing and measuring machine makers; Agricultural machine and implement makers; Millwrights; Spinning and weaving machine makers
<b>Tools etc.</b> Comprising: Tool makers; Cutlery and scissors makers; Pin, needle, steel pen and pencil makers; Gunsmiths, sword, bayonet makers, ordnance manuf.; Typefounders, die, seal, coin, medal makers etc.
<b>Shipbuilding</b> Comprising: Ship, boat, barge builders, shipwrights; Mast oar and block makers; Riggers, fitters etc. Sailmakers
<b>Iron and Steel</b> Comprising: Iron and steel manufacture; Anchor and chain manufacture; Bolt, nut, rivet screw, nail manufacture; Blacksmiths
<b>Copper, tin, lead etc.</b> Comprising: Copper and copper goods manufacture; Tin and tin goods manufacture; Lead and leaden goods manufacture; Zinc and zinc goods manufacture; Brass, bronze manufacturers, braziers; Wire makers, workers, weavers; Lamp, lantern and candlestick makers; Metal refiners, workers, burnishers; Pewter, white metal, plated ware manufacturers; Whitesmiths; Others in Copper, tin lead etc
<b>Gold, Silver and Jewellery</b> Comprising: Gold and silversmiths, jewellers; Lapidaries and others
<b>Earthenware etc.</b> Comprising: Earthenware, china, porcelain manufacture; Glass manufacture; Plaster and cement manufacture
<b>Coal and Gas</b> Comprising: Gasworks service; Others in coal, coke, peat and charcoal
<b>Chemical</b> Comprising: Manufacturing chemists, alkali manufacture; Dye and paint manufacture; Ink and blacking manufacture; Drysalts; Gunpowder manufacture; Matches, fuzes and fireworks manufacture
<b>Furs and Leather</b> Comprising: Furriers and skinners; Tanners, fellmongers, parchment makers; Curriers
<b>Glue, tallow etc.</b> Comprising: Glue, size and gelatine manufacture; Tallow chandlers, candle and grease manufacturers; Soap boilers and makers; Manure manufacture
<b>Hair etc.</b> Comprising: Hair and bristle workers; Brush and broom makers; Quill and feather dressers; Comb makers; Bone, horn, ivory, tortoiseshell workers
<b>Wood workers</b> Comprising: Sawyers; Lath, wooden fence and hurdle makers; Coopers, hoop makers and benders; Woodturners, box and case makers; Willow cane and rush workers; Cork and bark cutters and others
<b>Furniture</b> Comprising: Cabinet makers and upholsterers; Carvers and gilders; French polishers; Undertakers and others
<b>Carriages and harness</b> Comprising: Coach makers; Wheelwrights; Saddle, harness and whip makers; Railway carriage makers
<b>Paper</b> Comprising: Paper manufacture; Envelope manufacture; Paper box and bag makers; Paper stainers; Others in Paper
<b>Floorcloth and Waterproof</b> Comprising: Floorcloth and oilcloth manufacture; Japanners; India-rubber, guttapercha, waterproof goods makers
<b>Woollens</b> Comprising: Woollen cloth manufacture; Worsted and stuff manufacture; Flannel manufacture; Blanket manufacture; Carpet, rug and felt manufacture; Woollen knitters; Others in Woollens
<b>Cotton and Silk</b> Comprising: Cotton and cotton goods manufacture; Silk and silk goods manufacture; Ribbon manufacture; Fustian manufacture; Crape, gauze, shawls, and fancy goods (textile); Weavers, spinners and factory hands (textiles)
<b>Flax, Hemp etc</b> Comprising: Flax, linen and damask manufacture; Canvas and sailcloth manufacture; Sacking and bag manufacture; Hemp, jute and cocoa-fibre manufacture; Rope twine and cord makers; Net makers; Mat makers; Others in Flax, Hemp etc
<b>Lace</b> Comprising: Lace manufacture; Embroiderers; Thread manufacture; Tape manufacture; Trimming manufacture; Artificial flower makers and others



<b>Dyeing</b> Comprising: Fullers; Cotton and calico printers, dyers and bleachers; Wool, woollen goods, dyers, printers; Dyers, printers, scourers, bleachers (undefined)
<b>Dress</b> Comprising: Tailors and clothiers; Milliners and dressmakers; Shirtmakers and seamstresses; Hosiery manufacture; Hat manufacture; Straw hat, bonnet and plait manufacture; Glove manufacture; Shoe and boot makers; Pattern and clog makers; Others in Dress etc
<b>Sundries connected with Dress</b> Comprising: Accoutrement makers; Umbrella, parasol and stick makers; Button makers; Leather goods manufacture
<b>Food preparation</b> Comprising: Oil millers, oil cake makers; Corn millers; Sugar refiners; Mustard, vinegar, pickles manufacture
<b>Baking</b> Comprising: Bakers; Confectioners and pastry cooks
<b>Drink preparation</b> Comprising: Maltsters; Brewers; Distillers, rectifiers; Ginger beer, mineral water manufacture
<b>Smoking</b> Comprising: Tobacco manufacture; Tobacco pipe and snuff box manufacture
<b>Watches, Instruments and Toys</b> Comprising: Watch and clock makers; Phil. and surgical instr. and electric app. makers; Musical instrument makers; Fishing tackle and toy makers
<b>Printing and Bookbinding</b> Comprising: Printers; Lithographers and copper-plate printers; Bookbinders
<b>Unspecified</b> Comprising: Manufacturers, managers, superintendents; Apprentices; Engine drivers, stokers, firemen (in manufacturing); Machinists, machine workers; Artisans, mechanics; Factory labourers
<b>05 TRANSPORT SECTOR</b>
<b>Warehouses and Docks</b> Comprising: Harbour, dock, wharf and lighthouse service; Warehousemen (not Manchester); Meters, weighers; Messengers, porters and others
<b>Ocean navigation</b> Comprising: Pilots; Seamen (merchant service); Steam navigation service; Ship stewards and cooks; Boatmen-on-seas
<b>Inland navigation</b> Comprising: Canal and inland navigation service; Bargemen, lightermen, watermen and others
<b>Railways</b> Comprising: Railway officials and servants; Railway engine drivers, stokers
<b>Roads</b> Comprising: Toll collectors; Livery stable keepers, cab and bus owners; Cabmen, flymen, coachmen; Carmen, carriers, carters and draymen; Tramways service; Wheelchair proprietors, attendants and others
<b>06 DEALING SECTOR</b>
<b>Coals</b> Comprising: Coal merchants and dealers; Coal heavers and labourers
<b>Raw materials</b> Comprising: Timber merchants, wood dealers; Hop merchants, dealers; Hay, straw and chaff dealers; Corn, flour and seed merchants, dealers; Woolstaplers
<b>Clothing materials</b> Comprising: Cotton and calico warehousemen, dealers; Manchester warehousemen; Cloth, worsted and stuff merchants, dealers; Silk merchants, dealers
<b>Dress</b> Comprising: Drapers, linen drapers, mercers; Hosiers, haberdashers; Hatters; Clothes dealers
<b>Food</b> Comprising: Butchers, meat salesmen; Poulterers, game dealers; Fishmongers; Milksellers, cowkeepers; Cheesemongers, buttermen; Provision curers, dealers; Grocers, tea dealers; Greengrocers, fruiterers, potato dealers; Others dealing in food; Oil and colourmen
<b>Tobacco</b> Comprising: Tobacconists
<b>Wines, Spirits and Hotels</b> Comprising: Wine and spirit merchants; Inn and hotel keepers, publicans; Beersellers; Cellarmen
<b>Lodging and Coffee Houses</b> Comprising: Lodging and boarding house keepers; Coffee and eating house keepers
<b>Furniture</b> Comprising: Furniture brokers, dealers; Dealers in pictures and works of art; Pawnbrokers
<b>Stationery and Publications</b> Comprising: Stationers, law stationers; Publishers, booksellers, librarians; Newsagents; Music publishers, sellers; Ticketwriters, billstickers
<b>Household Utensils and Ornaments</b> Comprising: Earthenware, china and glass dealers; Ironmongers, hardwaremen; Gold and silversmiths, jewellers
<b>General Dealers</b> Comprising: General shopkeepers, dealers; Hawkers, hucksters, costers; Marine store and rag dealers
<b>Unspecified</b> Comprising: Merchants; Brokers, agents, factors; Auctioneers, appraisers, valuers, house agents; Salesmen and buyers; Commercial travellers
<b>07 INDUSTRIAL SERVICE SECTOR</b>
<b>Banking, Insurance, Accounts</b> Comprising: Bankers; Bank service; Insurance service; Accountants; Commercial clerks; Officers of commercial companies and others
<b>Labour</b> Comprising: General labourers
<b>08 PUBLIC SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL SECTOR</b>
<b>Administration (central)</b> Comprising: Civil Service officers and clerks; Civil Service messengers; Post Office; Telegraph, telephone service; East India service
<b>Administration (local)</b> Comprising: Municipal, parish, union, district officers; Other local and county officials
<b>Administration (sanitary)</b> Comprising: Town drainage and scavenging
<b>Army</b> Comprising: Army officers (effective and retired); Soldiers and NCOs; Military yeomanry, volunteers; Army pensioners
<b>Navy</b> Comprising: Navy officers; Seamen, RN; Royal Marines (officers and men); Coastguards, RN reserve; Navy pensioners
<b>Police and Prisons</b> Comprising: Prison officers; Police
<b>Law</b> Comprising: Judges, barristers, solicitors; Law students; Law clerks and others



<b>Medicine</b> Comprising: Physicians, surgeons, practitioners: Medical students, assistants: Chemists, druggists: Dentists: Midwives: Medical Services
<b>Art and Amusement (Painting)</b> Comprising: Painters (artists): Sculptors (artists): Engravers (artists): Photographers: Art students: Figure and image makers: Animal and bird preservers, naturalists
<b>Art and Amusement (music etc.)</b> Comprising: Musicians (not teachers): Actors: Art, music and theatre service: Performers, showmen, exhibition service: Billiards, cricket and other games service
<b>Literature</b> Comprising: Authors, editors, journalists: Reporters, shorthand writers
<b>Science</b> Comprising: Engaged in scientific pursuits: Literary and scientific instruction service
<b>Education</b> Comprising: Schoolmasters: Teachers, professors, lecturers: School service
<b>Religion</b> Comprising: Clergymen (Established Church): Roman Catholic priests: Ministers and priests of other denomination: Missionaries and service readers: Theological students: Nuns, sisters of charity; Church, chapel, cemetery officers and servants
<b>09 DOMESTIC SERVICE SECTOR</b>
<b>Indoor Service</b> Comprising: Indoor servants; Inn and hotel servants; College, club, hospital, institution etc. servants
<b>Outdoor Service</b> Comprising: Coachmen and grooms; Gardeners; Park, lodge and gate keepers; Gamekeepers
<b>Extra Service</b> Comprising: Cooks (not private); Charwomen; Office keepers (not government); Washing and bathing service; Hairdressers, wig makers; Chimney sweeps
<b>10 RESIDUAL POPULATION</b>
<b>Property owning, independent</b> Comprising: Landowners; Houseowners; Mine owners; Ship and boat owners; Persons of independent means
<b>Indefinite</b> Comprising: Persons of indefinite occupation; Vagrants, paupers, lunatics, prisoners
<b>Dependent Class</b> Comprising: Persons dependent on others
<b>11 SCHOLARS</b>
<b>Scholars</b> Comprising: Scholars
<b>12 SUNDRY</b>
<b>Sundry</b> Comprising: Not Given; Unclassified

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SHC CES/35/1	Kingston (Richmond Road) Public School, Boys	1862-88
SHC CES/36/1	Kingston (Richmond Road) Public School, Girls	1862-1900
NKC KT 43/3	Kingston Public School Register	1857-62
CLHS	Norbiton National School, Girls	1871-82
CLHS	St Paul's National Infants' School, Kingston Hill	1873-83
CLHS	St Paul's National School, Norbiton	1870-1882
SHC CES/49/1	St Peter's National Girls' (Norbiton)	1863-1892
SHC CES/50/1	St Peter's National Infants' (Norbiton)	1865-1902

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**Kingston-upon-Thames**

**Includes Kingston-upon-Railway, Surbiton, Norbiton, Ham with Hatch, Hook, Malden**

1841	HO107/1075
1851	HO107/1603
1861	RG9/455-456
1871	RG10/858-862
1881	RG11/832-838
1891	RG12/604-618
1901	RG13/662-666
1911	RG14/3498-548

**Esher, Thames Ditton, Long Ditton, Talworth (Tolworth), Moulsey (Molesey, East and West), Claygate**

1841	HO107/1071, 1075
1851	HO107/1604
1861	RG9/457
1871	RG10/863-4
1881	RG11/839-40
1891	RG12/614-5
1901	RG13/669
1901	RG13/670
1911	RG14/3549-54

**Wimbledon**

1851	HO107/1603
1861	RG9/454
1871	RG10/856-7
1881	RG11/829-831
1891	RG12/604-7

**Hampton, Hampton Wick**

1841	HO107/718
1851	HO107/1604
1861	RG9/458
1871	RG10/865
1881	RG11/841
1891	RG12/617
1901	RG13/671

**Teddington**

1851	HO107/1604
1861	RG9/458
1871	RG10/866

**Elsewhere:**

1881	Abthorpe, Northamptonshire	RG11/1534
1861	Alconbury, Huntingdonshire	RG9/973
1901	Alverstoke, Hampshire	RG13/1013
1901	Banstead, Surrey	RG13/578
1891	Battersea	RG12/436
1891	Battersea Missionary School	RG12/439
1841	Battersea Normal School	HO107/1046
1901	Bermondsey	RG13/396
1871	Bingham, Hampshire	RG10/3547
1891	Bradford, Yorkshire	RG12/3614
1901	Bradwell Grove, Oxfordshire	RG13/1397
1841	Brentford, Middlesex	HO107/689
1881	Bromley, Middlesex	RG11/500
1881	Byfleet Industrial School (Surrey Certified Industrial School, Byfleet)	RG11/769
1891	Byfleet Industrial School (Mayford Industrial School, Byfleet)	RG12/556
1901	Byfleet Industrial School (Mayford Industrial School, Byfleet)	RG13/599



1901	Cardiff	RG13/4989
1841	Castle Camps, Cambridgeshire	HO107/66
1881	Chelsea	RG11/76
1891	Chessington	RG12/546
1861	Chester House of Industry, Cheshire	RG9/2629
1901	Christchurch, Hampshire	RG13/1037
1861	Clerkenwell, Middlesex	RG9/192
1871	Cowley Industrial Schools, Oxford	RG10/1436
1881	Cowley Industrial Schools, Oxford	RG11/1497
1891	Cowley Industrial Schools, Oxford	RG12/116
1901	Cowley Industrial Schools, Oxford	RG13/1383
1881	Cowley, Oxfordshire	RG11/1497
1891	Deptford, London	RG12/499
1851	Dover Heights Barracks	HO107/1632
1841	Drouet's Establishment for Pauper Children, Tooting Graveney	HO107/1068
1871	Epsom	RG10/798
1881	Epsom	RG11/762
1891	Epsom	RG12/546
1901	Ewell	RG13/582
1871	Feltham	RG10/1303
1871	Feltham Industrial School (Middlesex Industrial School, Feltham)	RG10/1304
1881	Feltham Industrial School (Middlesex County Industrial School, Feltham)	RG11/1327
1891	Feltham Industrial School (London County Council Industrial School, Feltham)	RG12/1015
1861	Finchley, Middlesex	RG9/789
1901	Finchley, Middlesex	RG13/1233
1871	Fishing Vessel 'Truelove' off the Yorkshire coast	RG10/4797
1881	Hackney, Middlesex	RG11/293, 299, 309
1891	Hammersmith, Middlesex	RG12/40
1881	HM Prison Clerkenwell	RG11/348
1881	HMS 'Inconstant'	RG11/5636
1851	Holland Farm School, Kensington	HO107/1468
1841	Horsham Union Workhouse	HO107/1097
1871	Hull	RG10/851
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1861	Ipswich, Suffolk	RG9/1161
1881	Islington, Middlesex	RG11/268

1901	Iver, Bucks	RG13/1339
1891	Kensington	RG12/24
1861	Kirtling, Cambridgeshire	RG9/1031
1861	Lambeth	RG9/360
1891	Lambeth	RG12/402
1901	Lambeth	RG13/417
1871	Lambeth Workhouse School, Lower Norwood	RG10/694
1861	Leatherhead	RG9/420
1881	Leatherhead	RG11/763
1851	Leyton Union Workhouse, Essex	HO107/1769
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<i>Liverpool Mercury</i>	1882
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<i>The Champion and Weekly Herald</i>	1837
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Post Office Directory of Essex, Herts, Kent	1855	<a href="http://historicaldirectories.org">http://historicaldirectories.org</a>
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