

POVERTY IN NORTH-EAST LANCASHIRE IN 1843: EVIDENCE FROM QUAKER CHARITY RECORDS

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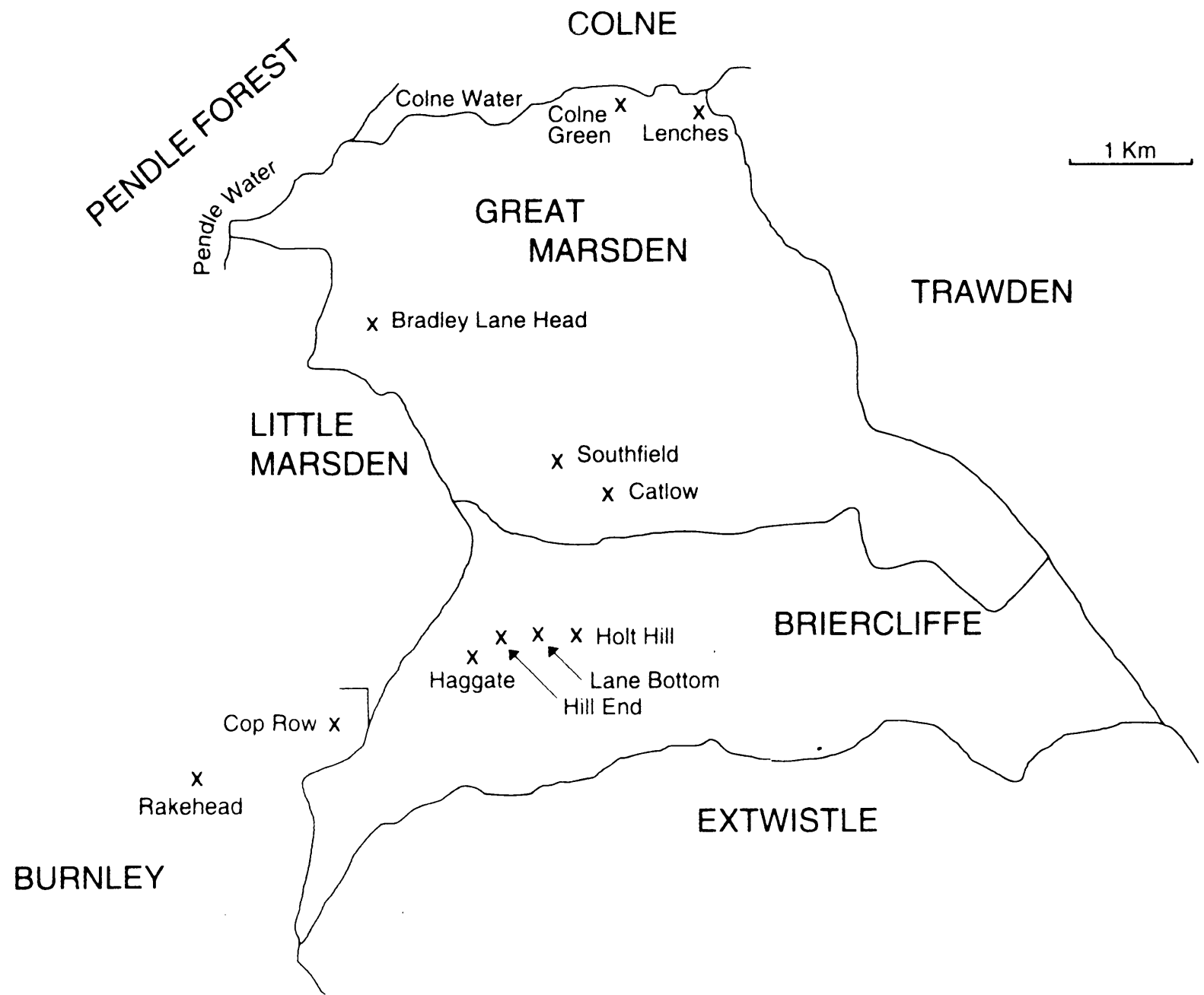
Introduction

The plight of the handloom weavers, particularly the Lancashire handloom weavers, during the earlier part of the nineteenth century is well-known. The definitive work on the cotton handloom weavers by Bythell tellingly entitles its last chapter 'Displacement and disappearance'.¹ Estimates of the numbers of cotton handloom weavers year by year are given by Mitchell and Deane:² from a figure of 240,000 in the period 1821-31, they declined to 188,000 by 1835, 123,000 by 1840, 60,000 by 1845, 43,000 by 1850, and a mere 3,000 by 1862.² Handloom weavers in other materials, for example silk and wool, disappeared later by and large, partly at least because the early power looms were not able to weave these other fibres with the same success as cotton.

The early 1840s was a period of general depression in the cotton industry, with many weavers lacking work, or only having part time work. Piece rates for those who had work were low. Bennett gives some detail for Marsden in north-east Lancashire in the 1830s, which also experienced problems of depression.³ Also in 1842, according to a nineteenth-century writer on the history of Burnley, Marsden had 2,000 paupers out of a population of 5,000.⁴ The consequent poverty, particularly for handloom weavers, was such as to render public poor relief insufficient in some areas. In the Marsden area public relief was supplemented by the efforts of the Quakers, who provided mainly clothing and bedding in substantial quantities. Such work had been undertaken at times of depression since 1819 and probably earlier, and was to continue until at least 1853.

Records of this charitable work survive in a series of notebooks and papers kept by Ann Ecroyd of Edgend in Marsden, the Ecroyds being a leading Quaker family in the area.⁵ A description of these documents is provided by Rayson and does not require repetition in this article.⁶ This essay will focus on the detailed analysis of one of the notebooks; that of 1843 which gives much information on the condition of 440 households (2,196 people) occupying part of the area.⁷ Sections of this notebook have already been used quite extensively by Frost in his **History of Briercliffe-with-Extwistle**, in which he gives many examples of the dire conditions in which some families were living.⁸ This article will concentrate mainly on some overall quantitative aspects of poverty and its relief, aspects which could not be determined, for example, from the 1841 Census. Consequently, it is hoped that the analysis will show something

Figure 1 Map of part of north-east Lancashire



of the considerable value of the documents in the collection, and maybe lead to greater use of a relatively little-known source.

The study area

The geographical area covered by the notebook is indicated by the map reproduced in Figure 1. In summary this can be divided into three key areas, as follows:

1. Forty households at Cop Row, a long row of cottages in the north-east corner of Burnley township, but close to the main nucleus of settlement in Briercliffe-with-Extwistle township (see 2 below). The total population of these households numbered 196, with a mean of 4.9 per household. Most of the cottages still stand today.

2. One hundred and sixty-seven households in the township of Briercliffe-with-Extwistle (including one just over the boundary with Little Marsden township), all but six in Briercliffe, the more easterly parts of Extwistle being excluded. It is clear from a comparison with the Ordnance Survey six inch map of 1844 that quite a number of places even within Briercliffe appeared not to be included. In some cases this would no doubt be because the inhabitants were clearly not needy; also there might simply have been a limit to the coverage that the 'visitor', John Chapman, was able to achieve. The population of these 167 households numbered 872 (834 in Briercliffe), giving a mean household size of 5.2. Frost gives the 1841 Census population of Briercliffe as 1,256 (Extwistle 242), consequently about two-thirds of the Briercliffe population seems to have been included. These 1,256 people were in 232 houses, giving a mean of 5.4 per house.⁹ Whilst one needs to be wary in relation to the household/house distinction, there seems to be little difference between the mean household size of those visited and the general such mean for the township.

3. Two hundred and thirty-three households in the township of Great Marsden (also including one just over the boundary with Little Marsden township). Again a comparison with the 1844 Ordnance Survey map shows that some places are excluded, and in particular a section of the township in the north-west seems to be absent. The population of the 233 households numbered 1,128, giving a mean of 4.8. The 1841 Census population for Great Marsden was 1,987, recorded across 373 houses, a mean of 5.3 per house. This would suggest that the notebooks cover rather under two-thirds of the total population. Again, in terms of household size, those visited seem quite typical of the wider community, though possibly the better-off tended to have slightly larger households.

It is worth making a few additional observations about the area of study. The western part of Briercliffe included the substantial 'village' of Haggate, with 54 households visited. Quite close were Hill End, where 30 households were visited, and Holt Hill, where 15 households were visited. Otherwise the

township of Briercliffe-with-Extwistle consisted of scattered farmsteads and small groups of cottages, generally becoming more sparsely populated towards the east as the terrain becomes more rugged away towards the moors. There is, however, hardly any mention of farming activity under 'Occupation' in the notebook, and it seems that those principally engaged in farming were not generally visited. Frost indicates that by this time there was a power weaving mill near Hill End, called Hill End Mill and owned by William Smith.¹⁰ In the Briercliffe section of the notebook there is no mention of 'factory' weavers, unlike in the Great Marsden section (see below). It seems unlikely, therefore, that it was regarded as unnecessary to visit those factory weavers living nearby, though it may be that some of the 'weavers' given as living, at, say, Hill End and Holt Hill, and employed by William Smith, were at the factory. (William Smith also employed many handloom weavers). There was also a factory at Rakehead in Burnley township about a mile towards Burnley town from Cop Row, and this may similarly have provided employment for a few Cop Row inhabitants. Further comments will be made later on this and related points concerning occupations.

In Great Marsden, to the north of Briercliffe, the most substantial settlements were in the extreme north, at (Colne) Green with 32 households visited and Lenches with 35 households visited. These lie just to the south of Colne Water, which marked the boundary with Colne township. Colne town itself is only about half a mile away. Some of the inhabitants of these and other smaller places nearby are given as weavers in factories in Colne. Another fairly substantial settlement was that of Bradley Lane Head, 21 households visited, in the west of the township: much of the township with adjacent parts of Little Marsden was to grow into the modern town of Nelson in the next 50 years. In the south were the adjacent settlements of Catlow, which had 9 households visited, and Southfield, with 11 household visited. There were large quarries in Catlow, and some occupations are given as 'delver' (quarryman). For the rest, Great Marsden, like Briercliffe, consisted of farms and small groups of cottages.

An indication of the living conditions in the study area can be gained from the description arising from William Cooke Taylor's **Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire** of 1842, taken on behalf of the Anti-Corn Law League.¹¹ Cooke Taylor visited Marsden, also Colne, Burnley and nearby Pendle Forest, and in relation to the houses he found there noted that, 'Externally and internally everything was scrupulously clean, but the houses and their inmates had neither clothes, food, nor furniture'. He also paid tribute to the help given by the slightly better-off to the poorest elements of the population.¹² He met the father of Ann Ecroyd, who was himself involved in textiles as a manufacturer, and who indicated to Cooke Taylor that the number of handloom weavers was greater than ever before, giving also his views on the prevailing distress.¹³ Cooke Taylor was unable to meet Ann Ecroyd, but reported on her efforts on behalf of the local community: '[her] praise was literally in all the houses in the neighbourhood. She has devoted her moderate income and all the energies of her life to elevating the condition of the poor; not merely relieving their physical necessities, but remedying their moral wants by affectionate instruction and kind remonstrance...in the neighbouring village of Marsden, I heard of husbands that she had recalled from extravagance, and children that

Figure 2 First page of the notebook

No.	Name	Business Employed	Home Employed	Age of each, with his or her weekly earnings
1	Rich & Muttler Pop Row	Dole road		B B 36.39.10.7.3 no bed but good bed clothes, 7 Cloys
2	Jane Watson	husband died, 3 weeks since	Widow at Dole.	G B B B B B B 45.22.16.10.9.6.4. Nov. 2
3	Ellen Simpson	Weaver	Mrs Spencer	19 1/6 32.14.10.7.5.1
4	Henry Watson	wife has only done 1/2 pieces at 1/2 in 3. Months they have no change of stockings for any	Mr Halstead	3/6 2/- 4/- 48.49.19.16.8 8 Cloys bad, he needs jacket & trousers
5	Eli Walton	8 Cloys wpt - could take 2 blankets towards	Rag Gatherer	7/- 27.32.8.5.2.1 making up another bed, wife poor husband near without shirt
6	Mrs Walton	wife busy off for an hour, Children all badly off for	Weaver	4/- 1/6 4/- 1/6 39.39.(20)14.10.7.3 2 Stockings, he is rather poor and like planned

Notes: It should be noted that reference to 'Parish Relief' might more accurately be styled 'Township Relief': Briercliffe-with-Extwistle, Burnley and Great Marsden were three of a large number of townships of the ancient parish of Whalley, covering much of north-east Lancashire. The term 'parish relief' is used in the ensuing discussion.

she had rescued from profligacy'.¹⁴

The evidence of the notebook

The 440 households recorded in the notebook are numbered sequentially from 1 to 426, with one number not used and some 'halves', such as 43 1/2. As is indicated in Figure 2, for each entry the name of the household head and residence is given, followed by 'Employ', 'Name of Employer', 'No. in each Family', 'Total Weekly Income', 'Parish Weekly Relief', 'Ages of each with his or her weekly earnings' and 'No. of Beds'. Not all of these column heads are recorded fully, yet the sex of children within the household is often also given. Often the entry is followed by some comment about the families' circumstances, with details of their material needs. As noted earlier these needs were usually formulated in terms of clothing or bedding: a possible reflection of the fact that the survey took place in February. For some families the detail is only partial, particularly in the few cases where a family is stated as not being needy. The first page of the notebook is reproduced as Figure 2, and the entries shown there can be taken as fairly typical. The ninth column across from the left is the most complex with the income of the individual household members being written above their age, or alternatively a 'B' or 'G' being inserted indicating the sex of the child. It can be seen, therefore, that the information given in the source is extremely rich; however, the article will primarily concentrate on an analysis of the following three columns of information: beds and bedding, earnings and parish relief.

Beds and bedding

Information about the number of beds is available for 222 households. Table 1 summarises this according to the household size. It should be noted that in no case is the number of beds given as zero, although it may have been the case that some of the households for which no information is given might have been in this situation. It must also be remembered that the notebook generally covers only the less well-off households.

With reference to Table 1 a reasonably steady increase in the number of beds as household size increases can be seen, however the numbers of households represented for sizes nine and upwards are small. The survey covers a total of 1,239 people who apparently slept in 410 beds, giving an overall mean of 3.02 people per bed. However, too much stress must not be placed on this mean figure since the ratio of people to beds across the reported households varied very considerably. In general it would seem likely that three or four to a bed was not uncommon, unless, that is, some members of the family slept on the floor or in chairs. Another possibility might be some sort of shift arrangement implemented around differential working hours, as was the case in Richard Arkwright's early mill at Cromford.¹⁵ The lack of bedding is specifically noted in the case of 31 households.

Table 1 Number of beds, related to household size

Household size	Number of beds				Mean number of beds according to household size
	1	2	3	4	
1	3	0	0	0	1.00
2	17	2	0	0	1.11
3	13	6	0	0	1.32
4	25	10	1	0	1.33
5	16	16	2	0	1.59
6	8	26	6	1	2.00
7	1	14	8	0	2.30
8	1	15	9	1	2.38
9	0	2	4	2	3.00
10	0	2	3	1	2.83
11	0	0	4	0	3.00
12	0	0	3	0	3.00

The survey includes no information on size of beds, nor the use of cradles for babies. There are a few specific mentions of the need for further beds or bedding, for example: 'has to lie on the floor on a little straw and his sister's cradle clothes'; 'need another bed very much'; 'has another bedstead but no bed'; '17 [year-old] has to lay with father and mother'; 'all [mother and children of both sexes aged seven to eighteen] lays in one bed for want of more bedding'. Each of these would point to a marked concern about not only the lack of suitable bedding but also the undesirable situation of children and adults sleeping together.

Earnings

In his book on handloom weavers Bythell devotes two chapters to wages, one on the piece-rate, and the other on earnings and the standard of living.¹⁶ He discusses in detail the problems of deriving reliable measurements of wage levels, and it is not intended here to rehearse these, but rather to discuss the type of 'financial' information available in the notebook, and then to explore a limited number of aspects for which the available information seems particularly suited.

As noted earlier, typically the information for households includes 'total weekly income', which consists of the weekly earnings of the members of the household and any parish relief granted. This is illustrated by the example given in Figure 2. Sometimes, however, the information for a household is partial or missing. This section which follows concentrates on an analysis of the earnings of male heads of household, particularly handloom weavers.

The survey only gives details of 'actual' earnings, in a current week, or occasionally notes an average over a small number of weeks. Such amounts would of course depend upon a variety of factors, notably the amount of work

Table 2 Earnings of male heads of household by occupation

Occupation	Earnings			
	amount	n	amount	n
Handloom Weaver	- to 2-0d	20	5-1d to 6-0d	17
	2-1d to 3-0d	27	6-1d to 7-0d	13
	3-1d to 4-0d	28	7-1d to 8-0d	6
	4-1d to 5-0d	34		
Factory Weaver	5-0d	3	10-0d	1
	6-0d	1	11-2d	1
	7-6d	1	12-0d	2
	8-0d	4		
Labourer	12-0d	3	14-0d	1
Delver (Quarryman)	10-0d	1	15-0d	1
	14-0d	2		
Collier	4-0d	1	12-0d	1
	10-0d	1	14-0d	1
Shoemaker	3-0d	1	7-0d	1
Sizer (coated warp cloth with 'size')	7-0d	1	12-0d	1
Carter	12-0d	2		
Beamer (factory worker, preparatory process)	10-0d	1	20-0d	1
Others:	Rag Gatherer	7-0d		
	Winder	1-0d		
	Chair Bottomer	2-0d		
	Tailor	4-6d		
	'Jobs'	1-6d		
	Warper (as for Beamer)	10-0d		
	Engine Tenter	14-0d		
	Gasman	8-0d		

Notes: 'Gassing' is a treatment applied to yarn, though the occupation may have some other meaning.

obtained. For many handloom weavers, current work was only part-time (they are sometimes described as 'shorted' of work), and for some, the unemployed, there was no current work at all. Another important factor for weavers was the piece-rate, which varied from employer to employer, and according to the type of cloth. The majority would probably have been weaving plain calico, though there is one mention of worsted, and two of 'delaines', a type of woollen cloth. The piece-rate is discussed later on. The earnings of male heads of household is summarized in Table 2; however in interpreting this table it must also be remembered that the better-off in the community were not visited, and that for some in the notebook not receiving poor relief no earnings are given. The table also excludes those who received 'dole' money, generally for working on the roads; those are considered later. It should also be remembered that a few of those given in the table as handloom weavers may actually have been factory weavers, as already noted.

It is immediately noticeable how low handloom weavers' earnings were in comparison with most other contemporary occupations. Factory weavers clearly had the ability to earn more, though the best-paid handloom weavers could rival some factory workers, if the assumption that these did not work in a factory is correct.

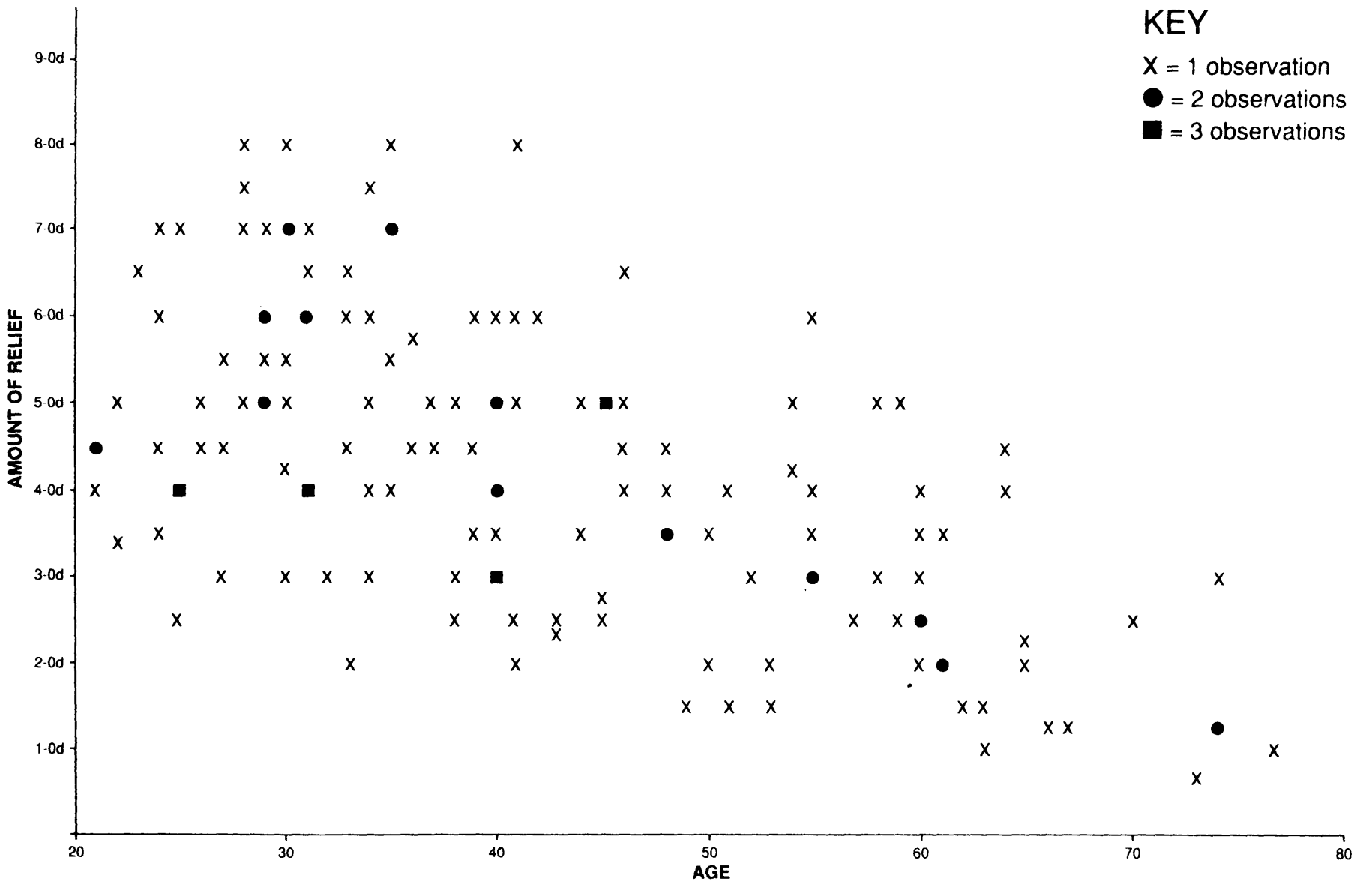
In his general discussion of earnings, Bythell points out that 'It is erroneous to think that most factory workers – many of whom, again, were women and children – received high wages in the early nineteenth century'.¹⁷ He goes on to cite Leonard Horner, a Factory Inspector, who reported in 1842 that 'with the exception of the mule-spinners, dressers, overlookers, mechanics, and a few others, all of whom constitute but a small proportion of the whole, the majority of workers in a cotton mill receive very moderate wages'.¹⁸ However, at this desperate time for handloom weavers in our area the male head of household factory weavers were generally substantially better off than their handloom counterparts, and also there would probably be other factory workers not visited, being not needy.

Piece work is often seen as an important element of the structure of early nineteenth-century textile working. In the case of the notebook chosen for this study there are three specific references to the 'piece-rate'. One for 7 1/2d can be seen in Figure 2, another entry gives 'cotton at 5d and 7d', and a third gives '6d a piece for one employer, formerly, but now 1s-6d for another employer', with a note that '[she] [aged 67] can do 3 [in a week]'. Bythell gives a series of piece rates for calico from 1814 to 1841, though for the last few years these are based on only one set of figures.¹⁹ For all years these rates are above 1s-0d, though since 1836 had not been above 1s-4d. From the evidence of the notebook it would seem that things had worsened even further by 1843, coupled with the increased problem of lack of work.

Absent as an occupation is that of spinner. Whilst it is true that later in the century the area came to specialise in weaving, with little spinning being undertaken, at this relatively early period of the development of the cotton industry there were spinning factories in the region: indeed powerloom weaving would often start up as part of an existing spinning establishment. Such factories were concentrated on Colne Water, Pendle Water, and on the smaller rivers. Despite this no heads of household were noted as spinners, suggesting that spinners, as no doubt some factory weavers, were not visited.

The information in the notebooks enables an analysis to be undertaken on the earnings of handloom weavers by age. This information is summarized in the form of a scatter diagram presented in Figure 3. As expected, older men had less earning capacity than younger men, only two over the age of 42 earned more than 5s. This is not surprising given that handloom weaving was quite demanding physically, placing strains on various parts of the body with its repetitive movements. Wages in fact peaked between the ages of 28 and 35. The low earning power of the youngest might be explained by the fact that weaving was semi-skilled and that it would take some time to develop skills fully. However, the activity could be learnt at a basic level fairly quickly, and

Figure 3 Scattergraph of earnings of male heads of households, handloom weavers, against age



it may be that the higher earners were weaving a type of cloth requiring greater skill than plain calico. Perhaps more likely is that workers were not considered by the employers as warranting a mature adult's wage until they had reached their late twenties and thirties.

Parish relief

For 326 of the 440 households surveyed there is 'full' information on total weekly income and the part of this, if any, which was parish relief. Thirty-eight of these come under the special category of 'dole' workers. This is not a contradiction in terms, but refers to those with no ordinary income who received money from the parish for taking on 'parish work', usually road mending. This second category will be discussed separately.

Of the 288 non-dole receiving households, 105 received some parish relief, including 32 who had no earnings at all, that is, all their income was relief. As Boyson points out, the pre-1834 system of making up wages by 'outdoor' relief persisted for many years in Lancashire, not least because of the scale of the needs of the poor.²⁰ The 32 households with no earnings at all consisted mainly of one or two people. These were usually the older members of the population; younger male heads of household with no ordinary earnings normally being on dole work.

Table 3 provides detail on the amount of relief payments in relation to the earnings gained through work and presents this information according to size of household. Considering the mean total income by household sizes for those households for whom part of the 'total' income was relief, it would seem that wages were increased on average by an amount which very roughly generally made the income up to 1s-6d per head, though the amount was rather less in the case of some middle-sized households. This figure of 1s-6d may be compared with amounts made under the Old Poor Law of 2s-6d for Wilmslow in 1826, and 2s-0d for Manchester in 1834.²¹ For northern industrial areas generally under the New Poor Law, Rose gives approximate payments of 1s-0d to 1s-6d (2s-0d to 2s-6d for an old person), as amounts for those with no regular earnings, acknowledging, however, that an applicant for relief would often have some other source of income such as sporadic earnings, or indeed charity.²² One may wonder in fact whether the public relief granted, in whatever form, was sometimes lessened on account of the existence of charitable efforts.

The variation in payments given in Table 3 by household size is considerable. Returning to the notebook it is possible sometimes to speculate why the total income for particular households is well above or below the appropriate mean. For example, one of the households of size two having total income of only 1s-6d (all relief) consists of a widow aged sixty-eight who 'begs', and her son, who 'jobs'. As a converse example, in the household of size five with total income 12s-3d (1s-0d relief), the seventy-three year old head of household has himself no earnings, and has 'bad sight', though the rest earn quite well: maybe the authorities were sympathetic to an older person with a sight disability. Of

Table 3 Total income, for those relieved, and for those not relieved, according to household size

Household size	Total income when relieved (N = total number) (M = mean total income)		Total income when not relieved (N = total number)		
1	1-0d (5) 1-6d (3) 2-0d (7) N = 22	2-3d 2-6d (4) 2-9d (2) M = 1-10d	2-6d 3-0d 5-0d N = 3		
2	1-6d (2) 2-0d 2-9d 3-0d (2) 3-3d N = 12	3-6d (4) 5-6d M = 3-1d	1-6d 2-9d 3-2d 3-6d 3-9d N = 15	4-0d 4-3d (2) 4-6d 4-9d 5-0d (2)	8-0d 9-0d 13-0d
3	2-0d 2-6d 3-0d (2) 3-3d 3-6d 4-0d (2) 4-3d (2) N = 18	4-4d 4-6d 4-9d 5-0d 6-0d 7-6d (2) 8-3d M = 4-6d	2-0d 3-4d 4-0d (2) 4-6d 5-0d 5-2d 5-6d (2) N = 17	5-8d 6-0d 6-9d 7-0d 7-6d 11-9d 12-0d	12-6d
4	2-0d 2-6d 5-0d 5-9d (2) 6-6d 7-0d N = 9	7-6d (2) M = 5-6d	2-0d 3-0d 4-6d 5-0d (4) 5-2d 5-6d (2) N = 44	6-0d (5) 6-4d 6-6d (5) 7-0d (10) 7-3d 7-6d (2)	8-0d (3) 8-6d 9-6d 11-2d 12-0d (3) 13-0d
5	3-0d 5-6d 6-6d 7-6d 7-9d 8-0d 9-6d N = 9	12-3d 12-6d M = 8-1d	4-0d 5-0d 6-0d (2) 6-6d 7-0d (6) 7-6d (4) 7-9d N = 32	8-0d (2) 8-3d 8-6d (2) 9-6d 11-0d 11-9d 12-0d	13-9d 14-0d (2) 14-6d 15-9d 20-6d 21-0d
6	5-0d 5-9d 6-0d (2) 8-0d (2) 8-3d 8-6d N = 11	9-0d (2) 13-0d M = 7-10d	3-0d 6-0d 6-6d (2) 7-0d (4) 8-0d 8-6d (2) N = 22	9-0d 9-4d 9-6d 10-0d 12-0d 12-3d	13-0d 14-0d (2) 15-0d 16-7d
7	3-0d 5-0d 8-6d 9-6d 10-0d 11-6d N = 6	M = 7-11d	5-0d 7-3d 7-10d 8-0d 8-6d (2) 9-2d N = 21	9-9d 10-0d 11-0d 11-6d 12-0d (2) 13-0d	13-2d 14-0d (2) 15-0d 16-6d 17-8d 18-0d

Table 3 continued

8	8-0d	13-0d	7-6d (2)	13-6d	30-0d
	9-0d	13-6d	8-6d	15-6d	
	10-6d	15-6d	10-0d	17-0d	
	11-0d	16-9d	10-4d	20-0d	
	11-6d (2)		12-0d	20-3d	
	N = 10	M = 12-0d	N = 12		
9	11-6d (2)		4-6d	14-0d	15-0d (2)
	15-4d		10-8d	14-6d	17-0d
	N = 3	M = 12-9d	N = 7		
10	12-6d		9-6d	13-0d	18-0d
	16-0d		12-9d	16-0d	20-0d
	N = 2	M = 14-3d	N = 6		
11	16-3d		18-0d	18-6d	28-0d
	N = 1	M = 16-3d	N = 3		
12	15-0d	17-0d	18-6d		
	N = 2	M = 16-0d	N = 1		

course there could be many relevant factors not revealed by the detail given in the notebook, and it is no doubt safest to stick to general trends.

For the larger household sizes, say from about four upwards, there is, of course, considerable variation in household composition. Yet, equally it is interesting to look in some detail at some specific cases of the smaller households in order to gain a full insight to the operation and structure of relief. This is done by taking each of the household sizes one to three in turn.

Household size one – Of the 22 ‘households’, 19 of the individuals were aged 65 or more, the next youngest being 35. The mean income figure of 1s-10d is not too dissimilar from that quoted earlier for older people from Rose. Of the 19, nine were men, ten women. Using the Mann-Whitney U-test, no significant difference between the total income of the sexes was found at the ten per cent level. Next, the 19 elderly relief recipients were ranked according to age and according to total household income, and the Kendall rank correlation coefficient calculated. Again testing at the ten per cent level, no significant correlation emerged.

Household size two – Of the 12 households, it is a reasonable assumption that six of these were old married couples given they had ages of 59 or upwards. The youngest of these, by eight years in terms of combined ages, had a total household income of only 2s, whereas the others received at least 3s. The lowest two households, each receiving 1s-6d, were both formed of an old person and, presumably, a son. In contrast, the highest of the 12, receiving 5s-6d consisted of an old person and, presumably, a daughter.

Household size three – Of the 18 households, seven consisted of, presumably, a widow with two young children. The total income for these, in three cases all relief, ranged from 2s to 4s-3d, with a mean of 3s-4d. The four highest, at 6s or more, each contained at least one old person, as well as at least one younger adult, probably earning.

Taking all households together the information in the notebooks allows investigation into the basic question of whether some age groups were treated more generously than others in terms of relief. For each member of a household that received some relief, the total income for the household divided by household size gives a figure of 'notional income' (NI). This can be applied equally to earners, unemployed adults, children, old people, and so on. Table 4 gives the mean NI values for seven age groups. These age groups are generally arbitrary, however, the 10-14 group corresponds roughly to an age where small earnings were quite common, and the 61 plus group to an age where earning potential had declined. The approach adopted is not without its problems. For example, children in the first three or four groups would usually be in households with one or two parents in the fifth and sixth groups. Thus there is probably considerable interdependence between the groups, rendering formal statistical testing using analysis of variance of doubtful significance.

The mean NI values in Table 4, with one exception, are positively related with age. This might suggest that young recipients would not have required so much food as the more elderly and, young children apart, would have had greater earning potential. Conversely the older recipients would have required more by way of clothing and fuel, and have had little earning potential. As already noted, Rose found that old people tended to receive more. The small dip in the mean NI value for the most 'able-bodied' group 21-40 may perhaps indicate that relief was administered according to earning potential, however, as noted above, members in this age group would often share a household with children recorded in the three younger age groups.

NI values were also calculated for the 14 households headed, presumably, by widows, with no children of age 15 or over, and 19 households with, again presumably, both parents and no children of age 15 or over. For the widows' households the mean NI value is 15.21d, for the second group it is 15.16d. Consequently it seems there was no greater support available for the households of widows with children none of whom was aged 15 or more than for the corresponding households of married couples. However, the latter group unsurprisingly tended to have rather larger household sizes and it was noted earlier that generally middle-sized households had rather lower total incomes per head. Thus, if anything, it seems that there was a tendency for widows' households to be less well supported than those of married couples.

Lastly, the situation of those relieved is compared with those who were not. Table 3 shows quite a few examples of households not relieved with earnings well below the mean total income of households of the same size receiving relief. It is, of course, not possible to do more than speculate why relief was not

Table 4 Mean Notional Income, within households relieved, according to age group

Age group	Mean Notional Income (pence)
0-4	15.46
5-9	16.08
10-14	17.11
15-20	17.75
21-40	17.18
41-60	19.71
61+	20.14

obtained in the case of those low-earning households. The details of material wants and needs provided by the source would indicate that income level was often insufficient.

'Dole' relief

As noted earlier, the heads of thirty-eight households were recorded as being on 'dole', often noted to be road work. Such 'dole' workers received relief under the Outdoor Labour Test Order of 1842, which was introduced for able-bodied males in many Poor Law Unions in the manufacturing areas as an alternative to the 1834 Workhouse Test. This 'working' form of relief was granted only to male heads of household with sizeable families where the household had no other earnings and was not combined with other forms of relief. Of the thirty-eight household heads receiving dole, six were in their twenties, twenty-five in their thirties, six in their forties, and one aged fifty. With few exceptions the Guardians worked to a sliding-scale dependent on the size of the household: 9s-0d for a family of five, and just 1s-0d for each extra member. Compared to non-dole households, the dole worker's household seem generally to have been rather better supported, except for the largest households.

According to the Test Order, half the relief was to be in kind and half in money.²³ Boyson suggests that the central authority, namely the Poor Law Commission, took the view that 'the pauper was not to be trusted and was likely to misappropriate relief given wholly in money'. He also indicates however that the local Guardians took an opposite view, believing that the pauper had a right to decide how to spend his relief.²⁴ The notebooks give just two examples of relief received 'in kind'. One male head of household in Briercliffe lived '5 1/2 miles from Burnley and goes thither for their relief in meal or flour', whilst the other, also from Briercliffe, received '6s-0d a week and his meat'. In view of the favourable comparison with households relieved by supplement to wages noted in the previous paragraph, and the fact that the notebook is almost totally lacking in reference to relief in kind, it seems likely that the Burnley guardians did not conform to the requirements to relieve dole workers partially in kind. This is in part supported by evidence from the Lancashire Unions studied by Boyson, for which, throughout the period 1834-71 a lower proportion of relief was given in kind than had been the case by the

autonomous pre-1838 township authorities.²⁵ Equally, Rose notes that in the case of the industrial West Riding of Yorkshire, local Boards of Guardians did not find themselves too restricted by the Labour Test Order.²⁶

Conclusion

Before summarising findings, it is perhaps worthwhile stressing again that caution is needed with this source, in that by its very nature it largely covers only the poorer sections of the community: about two-thirds of the population. Yet still a number of interesting findings are forthcoming in regards to sleeping arrangements. The mean of three people per bed, together with the considerable variation in the ratio of people to beds within households, would imply either some overcrowding in this respect, or substantial use of floors, chairs, etc., with maybe some 'shift' arrangements. Concerning earnings, there is reasonably firm evidence that handloom weavers were generally behind their factory counterparts, though it must be borne in mind that a few of those designated handloom weavers may in fact have worked in a factory.

The stated earnings are usually just for the current or recent week, and only occasionally are given as an average over a number of weeks. Thus the notebooks provide a 'snapshot' view and as such would have been influenced by fluctuating conditions, for example the current state of trade, and the weather (if this were particularly bad, handloom weavers might have difficulty obtaining supplies of yarn, or delivering their finished product). Equally, the piece-rates would have varied according to the type of material. In the case of household heads, handloom weavers' earnings peaked between the ages of around 28 to 35. This would have been influenced by physical factors and the ability to establish contacts.

Turning to relief, income within households was generally made up to about 1s-6d a head, and somewhat more for older people. This confirms the findings of Rose. Indeed the Mean Notional Income values given in Table 4 clearly indicates how notional income increased with age. Tentative evidence also suggests that widows with no older 'children' in their household were slightly less well supported than married couples similarly placed, but one must be careful in drawing too strong a conclusion from this. Examining incomes of all households, both relieved and not, reveals that many were badly off. In some cases a special set of circumstances can be seen as an explanatory factor, but for most poverty was a general way of life. For 'dole' workers, normally 1s-0d for each family member was given on top of 9s-0d for a family of five. For many middle-sized families this level of payment resulted in the fact that the 'dole' household tended to be rather better-off than those in receipt of relief paid conventionally.

Lastly, it can be seen that relief in kind seemed very much the exception, though the document may, of course, have tended to disregard this issue. It is hoped that the detail presented in this article will have proved of intrinsic interest, and illustrated some of the aspects of the 'Hungry Forties', in a community that is perhaps typical of a rural Pennine area in this period.

Acknowledgement

In conclusion I should like to remember my son Philip, who had his own interests in history, and spurred me on more than he knew in the writing of this article.

NOTES

1. D. Bythell, **The handloom weavers**, (Cambridge, 1969). A recent publication by Timmins takes a more 'robust' view of their survival and role in the mid-nineteenth century: G. Timmins, **Last Shift: Decline of Handloom Weaving in Nineteenth-century Lancashire**, (Manchester, 1993).
2. B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, **Abstract of British Historical Statistics**, (Cambridge, 1962), 187.
3. W. Bennett, **The history of Marsden and Nelson**, (Nelson, 1957), 165-6. Marsden was roughly equivalent to modern-day Nelson.
4. J.W. Kneeshaw, **Burnley in the nineteenth century**, (Burnley, 1897), 29.
5. Bythell, **The handloom weavers**, 240.
6. D. Rayson, 'Poverty in NE Lancs, 1819-53', being Part Two of 'Dr William Farrer, 1861-1924, and his manuscript collections', **The Manchester Review**, 12(2) (1972), 55-60.
7. Manchester Central Library, Archives Department. (Farrer papers) L1/2/24/60.
8. R. Frost, **A Lancashire township: the history of Briercliffe-with-Extwistle**, (Burnley, 1982), 168-72.
9. Frost, **A Lancashire township**, 27.
10. Frost, **A Lancashire township**, 59.
11. W. Cooke Taylor, **Notes of a tour in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire**, (London, 1842) (modern reprint 1968).
12. Cooke Taylor, **Notes of a tour...of Lancashire**, 85-6.
13. Cooke Taylor, **Notes of a tour...of Lancashire**, 74-7.
14. Cooke Taylor, **Notes of a tour...of Lancashire**, 77-8.
15. This is often quoted, for instance in A. Burton, **The rise and fall of King Cotton**, (London, 1984), 79.
16. Bythell, **The handloom weavers**, 94-138.
17. Bythell, **The handloom weavers**, 135.
18. Bythell, **The handloom weavers**, 135.
19. Bythell, **The handloom weavers**, 105.
20. R. Boyson, 'The New Poor Law in north-east Lancashire, 1834-71', **Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society**, 70 (1960), 35-56.
21. Bythell, **The handloom weavers**, 236-7.
22. M.E. Rose, 'The New Poor Law in an industrial area', in R.M. Hartwell ed., **The industrial revolution**, (Oxford, 1970), 130.
23. M.E. Rose, 'Introduction: the poor and the city, 1834-1914', in M.E. Rose ed., **The poor and the city: the English Poor Law in its urban context, 1834-191**, (Leicester, 1985), 7.
24. Boyson, 'The New Poor Law', 41.
25. Boyson, 'The New Poor Law', 41. The New Poor Law came into operation in this area in 1837-8.
26. Rose, 'The New Poor Law', 133-4.