

THE POPULATIONS OF TWO HAMPSHIRE WORKHOUSES, 1851-1861

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Introduction

Shortly after the New Poor Law was introduced in 1834, the workhouse became a fully integrated part of the system of poor relief in most of southern and eastern England. Influenced by the notion that a good deal of poor relief expenditure under the pre-1834 system had gone, in effect, to subsidize idleness among the working people, the authorities considered the principal function of the workhouse to be to deter the feckless and 'undeserving poor' from applying for relief. This function was to be performed through the so-called 'workhouse test'.¹ Conditions in workhouses were, according to this test, to be made humane, but inferior (the preferred term was 'less eligible') to those which the working poor might ordinarily experience. Workhouse labour was to be more onerous than ordinary labour, but not so burdensome that the genuinely destitute would refuse to perform it. The idea was that as a result relief in the workhouse, or 'indoor relief', would be offered to many more persons than would accept it. Those who were really destitute would accept; other applicants for relief (including many of bad character, or who had relatives who might support them, or whose applications were dubious or fraudulent) would withdraw when faced with the workhouse.²

This view of the role of the workhouse implies that its integration into the poor relief system cannot be separated from the prohibition of 'outdoor relief' (relief paid to a person who remained resident in his or her own home) for the able-bodied.³ Under this prohibition, any able-bodied man who applied for relief could only be 'offered the house' unless one of three exceptional circumstances obtained: 'sudden or urgent necessity'; sickness, either of the man or of a member of his immediate family; or that the application for relief was connected solely with the payment of funeral expenses.⁴ Certain classes of able-bodied females and their children were also allowed outdoor relief. These included the wives and children of servicemen, women in their first six months of widowhood, and all widows who had dependent children and who had not borne an illegitimate child since they were widowed.⁵

Unfortunately, in practice, things did not work out quite as straightforwardly as the architects of the New Poor Law had supposed. First, for many poor families, especially in the rural areas of southern and eastern England, there was little or no work available at certain times of the year (especially the winter months). Under such circumstances, the deterrent effect of the workhouse was likely to be

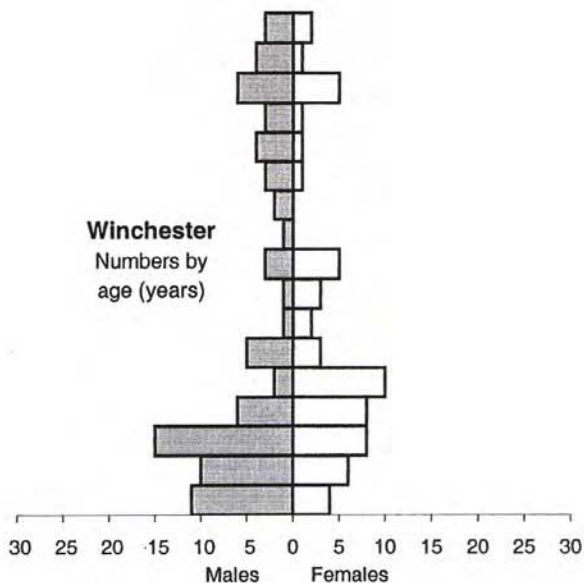
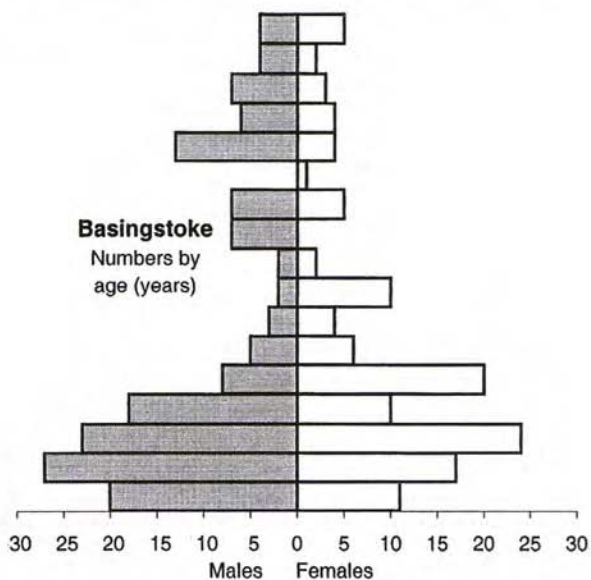
reduced, as it relied upon the poor having a realistic choice about whether or not to apply for relief. In addition, some boards of guardians seem to have been unwilling to shame married men who only needed help due to their dependence on seasonal employment by compelling them to enter the workhouse. Second, indoor relief was more expensive than outdoor relief.⁶ Admitting able-bodied married men to the workhouse, in particular, involved a potentially large financial commitment, as their wives and children also had to be admitted. In the countryside of southern and eastern England, those making the decisions about what to do with applicants for poor relief were frequently the same people who were footing the bill. To avoid the extra expense of sending able-bodied married males and their families to the workhouse, some boards of guardians took advantage, where possible, of the exceptions to the orders prohibiting outdoor relief (especially that relating to sickness).⁷ There is also evidence that employment policies favouring married men over unmarried men when employment was scarce were in operation.⁸ These employment policies would reduce the need to admit married men and their families to the workhouse by reducing the number of applications for relief from such men. The ability to operate such employment policies in rural unions in southern England was enhanced by the fact that most of their guardians were from the farming or landed sectors of society, and so were also the chief employers of the labouring classes.

If, then, the workhouses did not, generally, contain the underemployed able-bodied poor who had been habitual recipients of relief under the Old Poor Law, who did end up being admitted? Moreover, how did boards of guardians interpret the various orders handed down from the central authorities and decide upon whether to grant a particular applicant outdoor relief or whether to 'offer the house'? This paper is an attempt to answer these questions for one rural area in southern England, that centred on the ancient city of Winchester and the (then) market town of Basingstoke during the 1850s.⁹ By the 1850s, there had been time for the New Poor Law to 'bed in', and so we have a good idea of how things should have been operating. This article makes use of a variety of sources. The census enumerators' books for 1851 and 1861 enable us to obtain a cross-sectional picture of the population of the workhouses in those years to be obtained.¹⁰ Detailed records of admissions to and discharges from Winchester workhouse during the intervening decade enable the dynamics of the workhouse population to be traced.¹¹ The minute books of the Boards of Guardians provide a wealth of evidence about the policies being followed.

The structure of the workhouse populations

The Winchester workhouse under observation here was constructed in a place known as 'Oram's Abour' on St Paul's Hill in the mid-1830s, following the introduction of the New Poor Law.¹² On 30 March 1851 it housed 140 inmates (80 males and 60 females), and in April 1861 its population was 135 (78 males and 57 females).¹³ The Basingstoke Union workhouse was built in the parish of Old Basing, a few miles east of the town of Basingstoke. On 30 March 1851 it housed 285 inmates (156 males and 129 females) and in April 1861 there were 75 male and 69 female inmates, a total of 144.¹⁴

Figure 1 Age-sex structure of populations of Winchester and Basingstoke workhouses, 1851.



Source: Public Record Office: Census enumerators' books, Winchester workhouse, parish of Weeke, 1851: HO 107/1673; Basingstoke Union workhouse, parish of Old Basing, 1851: HO 107/1681.

The age distribution of these inmates in 1851 is shown in Figure 1. Only 40 per cent of the 1851 inmates in the Winchester workhouse and only 39 per cent of those in the Basingstoke Union workhouse were aged between 15 and 59 years. This compares with about 46 per cent of the population of Hampshire as a whole which was within this age group.¹⁵ Another 40–45 per cent of the inmates were aged under 15 years and about 20 per cent were aged 60 years or more.

The age distribution suggests either that few persons of working age applied for poor relief, or that the Winchester and Basingstoke guardians were managing to find a way of giving these persons and their families relief in their own homes, or that the deterrent effect was working, in that many applicants 'disappeared' when faced with the prospect of indoor relief. Evidence from the minutes of the Winchester Board of Guardians suggests that outdoor relief was common in the Winchester area. For example, in March 1857 there were 567 *families* receiving some form of outdoor relief in the Winchester Union, compared with only 145 *persons* in the workhouse.¹⁶

Some other features about the age-sex structure of the workhouse inmate populations in 1851 and 1861 are worthy of note. There is an excess of young adult females over males (observable especially in the age group 20–24 years), and a small excess of females at ages 30–44 years. The excess of young adult females over males consisted mainly of young unmarried mothers. A substantial proportion of the workhouse inmates consisted of these young women and their illegitimate children. The small excess of females at ages 30–44 years seems to consist mainly of widows and deserted wives with their children. Whereas boards of guardians would often go to great lengths to keep able-bodied married men and their families out of the workhouses, they seem to have been quicker to admit families without a male breadwinner.

At ages over 45 years, by contrast, males greatly outnumber females. It might be speculated that this is because older (especially widowed) men were less able to look after themselves than older (especially widowed) women. It is also possible that they were less useful to their families in caring, say, for grandchildren, and so their families were less inclined to take them into their own households.

The general shortage of families headed by married men manifests itself in the marital status of the inmates. In the Basingstoke workhouse in 1851, 18 per cent of adult inmates aged 20 years and over were married, 48 per cent were single and one third were widowed.¹⁷ These proportions were very different from those in the general population (Table 1). The comparison between the workhouse population and that of the rest of the parish of Old Basing confirms the fact that widowed males were particularly likely to find themselves in the workhouse. In Winchester workhouse, only about one in six of the adult inmates was married. About half were single and the remainder widowed.¹⁸ These proportions changed little between 1851 and 1861.

So far, then, the structure of the inmate populations of the Winchester and Basingstoke workhouses have been identified, and it has been established that it was different from that of the population as a whole. It is worth asking whether

Table 1 Marital status of persons aged 20 years and over in Basingstoke Union Workhouse and the non-inmate population of Old Basing parish, 1851

Marital status	Number of persons							
	In workhouse				In parish, but not in workhouse			
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%
Unmarried	31	23	34	25	75	14	61	11
Married	12	9	13	10	184	34	182	33
Widowed	24	18	20	15	13	2	33	6
Total	67		67		272		276	

Notes: Percentages are of the total population in the workhouse or in the parish, as the case may be. A few persons whose marital status was not given have been eliminated from the denominators used to calculate the percentages.

Source: Public Record Office: Census enumerators' books, Old Basing: HO 107/1681.

Table 2. Age distributions of selected workhouse populations, 1851 and 1861

Age group	Winchester		Basingstoke		South Newton, Wiltshire	Harrogate, Pateley Bridge & Ripon	8 Hertford- shire workhouse s	Leicester
	1851 %	1861 %	1851 %	1861 %	1851 %	1851 ^a %	1851 ^b %	1881 ^c %
under 15	40	46	44	42	39	35	34	28
15-29	24	11	22	22	19	14	16	12
30-59	16	17	16	12	22	26	20	21
60 +	20	27	18	24	20	25	31	38

Notes: The percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding
 (a) The populations of these three workhouses have been aggregated for the purposes of this table.
 (b) Aggregated populations of the workhouses of St Albans, Berkhamsted, Barnet, Bishop's Stortford, Royston, Hitchin, Hertford and Watford.
 (c) Age groups used for Leicester workhouse are 0-14 years, 15-30 years, 31-60 years and 61 years and over.

Source: Public Record Office: Census enumerators' books, Winchester workhouse, parish of Weeke, 1851: HO 107/1673; 1861: RG 9/691; Basingstoke Union workhouse, parish of Old Basing, 1851: HO 107/1681; 1861: RG 9/709; South Newton workhouse, 1851: HO 107/1848; Harrogate workhouse, 1851: HO 107/2282; Pateley Bridge workhouse, 1851: HO 107/2280; and Ripon workhouse, 1851: HO 107/2281. Data on the Hertfordshire workhouses were kindly supplied by Nigel Goose. Figures for Leicester workhouse from S. Page, 'Pauperism and the Leicester workhouse in 1881', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 63 (1989), 89.

the population of these workhouses was typical of workhouse populations generally. This question can only properly be answered by taking a random sample of all workhouses, which is beyond our scope in this paper. However, an indication of how representative they were of other workhouses can be obtained by comparing their populations to those of a number of other workhouses for which data is available (Table 2). It seems that the two Hampshire workhouses had a larger proportion of children under 15, and a smaller proportion of persons over 60 years than some other workhouses (for example Leicester in 1881 and the Hertfordshire workhouses in 1851).

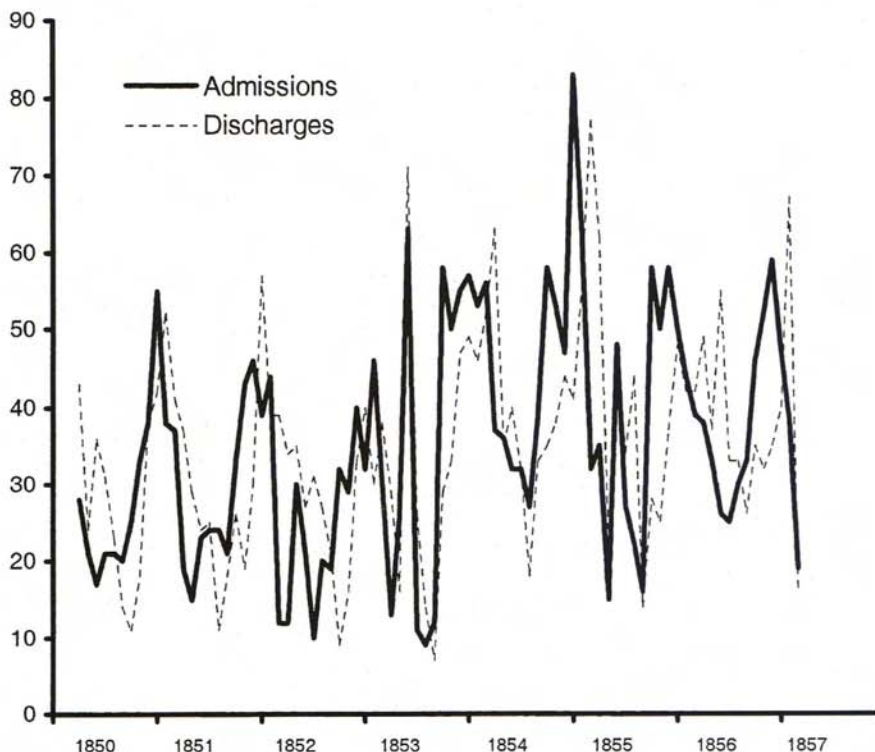
Further examination of the populations of these other workhouses reveals that many features of the population of the two Hampshire workhouses are also present. For example, in the three Yorkshire workhouses, there were 20 males aged 60 years and over, but only eight females. Conversely, there were 16 females aged 15–29 years but only four males.¹⁹ An excess of widowed males over females seems also to be a general feature: this is true, for example, of all eight Hertfordshire workhouses in 1851 and Leicester workhouse in 1881.²⁰

Workhouse population dynamics

The snapshots of the censuses give indications of the characteristics of the workhouse population at a single point in time. However, their usefulness is limited by the fact that workhouse populations changed very quickly. The most notable changes (especially in the rural areas of southern and eastern England) were seasonal, the population varying inversely with the demand for agricultural labour. However there were also considerable fluctuations in the totals once seasonality has been accounted for. For example, in the Basingstoke workhouse the average number of paupers 'relieved' per week rose from 145 in 1840 to 207 in 1841.²¹ During the following decade it fluctuated from year to year, rising to 284 in 1843 before falling to 227 in 1844 and 204 in 1846. In 1847 it rose again to 292.²² Rural conditions in southern England during the 'hungry forties' were often very bad, and the precarious economic situation of the poor may account for these abrupt changes.

The ebb and flow of the population of Winchester workhouse can be charted by using the administration books, which list each day's admissions and discharges.²³ The information in these books has been used to count the numbers of admissions and discharges each month from April 1850 to March 1857. The sheer numbers of admissions and discharges are worth noting. In an average workhouse population of around 150, there were about 30 to 40 admissions and discharges each month. The workhouse population, therefore, exhibited a very rapid rate of turnover. Many people who were admitted stayed only a short time, and some individuals were admitted and discharged several times in a short period. For example Elizabeth Bramble, a single woman of the parish of Littleton in the Winchester Union, was admitted to the workhouse on 1 June 1850 because she had no work. She discharged herself back to Littleton six days later but was re-admitted on 20 June because of 'bad conduct'. Two days later she discharged herself again, only to enter the workhouse for a third time on 6 August. This time she stayed for nine days. On 31 August she was back again

Figure 2 Monthly numbers of admissions and discharges, Winchester workhouse 1850–1857

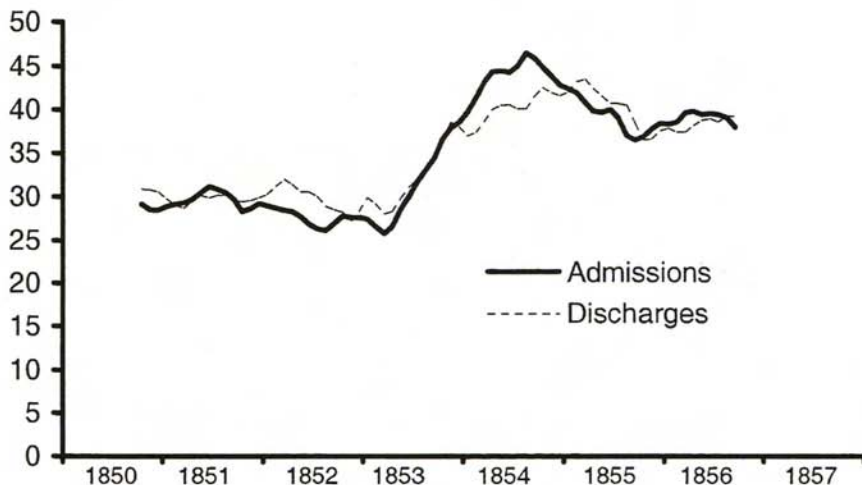


Source: Hampshire Record Office: Admission and discharge books for the Winchester workhouse, 1850–1857: PL5/11/20-21.

(due to 'destitution') for a further period of six days. In three months, therefore, Miss Bramble had spent four separate periods in the workhouse.²⁴

The time series of admissions (Figure 2) displays a clear seasonal pattern, with admissions normally peaking in the winter months (especially January and February) and falling to a low point in June and July. There are some irregularities: in May 1852 and June 1855 there are non-seasonal peaks, and, most notably, there is a large rise in the number of admissions in June 1853. The time series of discharges looks rather like a lagged version of the admissions series. It tends to peak in the spring months and fall to a low point in the late

Figure 3 Seasonally-adjusted admissions and discharges, Winchester workhouse 1850–1857



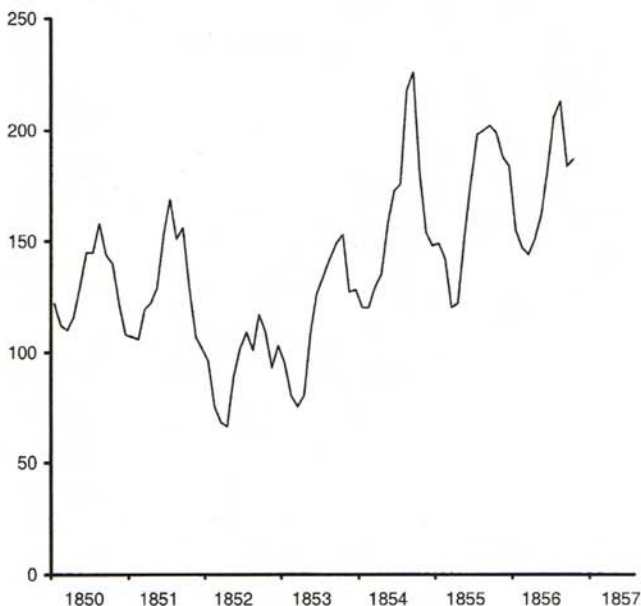
Sources: Derived from Figure 2.

summer/early autumn (August, September or October). Again, however, there was an exceptional (and very marked) peak in June 1853.

The seasonal pattern is characteristic of agricultural areas of southern and eastern England, where the demand for labour was slack during the winter. Between November and February many unemployed agricultural workers would enter the workhouse, leaving the following spring when the demand for labour rose again. The implication of the earlier discussion about the reluctance of boards of guardians to admit married men and their families to the workhouse, together with what is known of the workhouse populations at the 1851 and 1861 censuses, makes it reasonable to infer that the majority of these seasonal inmates were unmarried. There is also the evidence that employers favoured married men with families when work was scarce. The same seasonal pattern of admissions and discharges affected other groups as well. Because earnings were higher in the summer and autumn months, families found themselves better able to support elderly relatives, and so some of the aged inmates would discharge themselves in the spring only to be re-admitted the following autumn.²⁵

The seasonal cycle makes other patterns in the admissions and discharge data hard to discern. By applying some elementary time-series analysis, however, the data may be 'seasonally adjusted' (that is, fluctuations which are purely due to the seasonal effect removed), to reveal the underlying trend.²⁶ The result of seasonally adjusting the admissions and discharges data is quite striking (Figure 3). Until the spring of 1853 there was a gradual fall in the underlying number of

Figure 4 Estimated population of Winchester workhouse, 1850–1857



Sources: Hampshire Record Office: Admission and Discharge Books for the Winchester Workhouse, 1850–57: PL5/11/20–21; Public Record Office: Census enumerators' books: Winchester 1851: HO 107/1673.

admissions, but after March 1853 the trend in admissions increased quite rapidly until the summer of 1854, when it began to fall. This fall was arrested in the autumn of 1855, at which point the underlying number of admissions settled down at a level substantially higher than that which had obtained prior to the spring of 1853. The underlying trend in discharges is similar in some respects to that in admissions. There is a large increase after the spring of 1853, but the 1854 peak is lower, and somewhat later, than that in admissions.

It is possible to carry out a further exercise with the time series of admissions and discharges. Since the workhouse's population on 30 March 1851 is known (the night of the 1851 census) its population at the end of each month between April 1850 and March 1857 can be calculated (Figure 4). This is achieved first by subtracting each month's discharges from the same month's admissions to obtain the change in the workhouse population over that month. This gives the change in the workhouse population over each month from April 1850 to March 1857. To obtain the population at the end of each month from April 1851 until March 1857 the census population is taken and successively the changes are added, month by month. For the period prior to the 1851 census the monthly changes are successively subtracted to obtain the population at the end of each month from February 1851 back to April 1850.

The results show the impact of the seasonal pattern of admissions and discharges: there could be more than twice as many inmates in, say, January or February as there would be the following summer (compare January and September 1852 in Figure 4). However, there are two other features worth commenting on. First, the winter of 1852–1853 did not see as rapid an increase in the number of inmates as did other winters. Indeed, for the whole period between September 1851 and September 1853 there was only one month when the underlying number of admissions exceeded the underlying number of discharges, and even in that month the difference was trifling (Figure 3). Second, a fairly obvious upward trend in the workhouse population underlies the seasonal pattern after 1853 (Figure 4). This upward trend was particularly marked during the calendar year 1854, as shown by the excess of (seasonally-adjusted) admissions over discharges throughout that year (Figure 3).

The rapid increase in the workhouse population after the summer of 1853 demands an explanation. The time series suggest that an additional factor appeared at that time which was not related to the agricultural cycle, but which led to more admissions.²⁷ The first indication of what this might have been comes in March 1853, when 27 persons entered the workhouse. Of these, six 'had no work', eleven were 'destitute', three were ill, one was born to a woman already in the workhouse, and five were the wives and children of soldiers.²⁸

The cause of the great influx to the workhouse in June 1853 is revealed in correspondence between the Winchester Board of Guardians and the Poor Law Board in London.²⁹ In that month, upwards of 30 soldiers' wives and children entered the workhouse as a result of the posting of the 48th infantry from Winchester to Carlisle; these women wished to join their husbands in Carlisle but were prevented from doing so by destitution.³⁰ The Board of Guardians asked the Poor Law Board if there was any way that the women and their children could be sent to Carlisle without burdening the Winchester ratepayers with the expense, but received the terse reply that these cases were to be dealt with 'in the same manner as other cases of destitution arising within the Union'.³¹ This raises an interesting question. The wives and children of soldiers were exempted from the order prohibiting outdoor relief to able bodied males and their families. So why were they in the workhouse in the first place? It is possible that the Winchester Board of Guardians had refused to allow them outdoor relief (the exemption permitted outdoor relief, but did not make it mandatory). However, it may have been that they had entered the workhouse as a deliberate ploy to encourage the Winchester Board of Guardians to fund their travel to Carlisle. It was certainly not unknown for people to threaten to enter workhouses (thereby putting the ratepayers of their parish to great expense), in order to achieve some objective. In his 1850 report on Hampshire, John Revans stated that '[t]he threat on the part of the labourer to enter the Union-house with his family is becoming daily more and more common'.³²

In April 1854, the Board of Guardians wrote again to the Commission asking for advice about the system of relief for the wives of soldiers who had been affected by their husbands' departure to the war in the Crimea.³³ The reply instructed that these women were to be treated in the same way as all others in need, reminding

the Winchester Guardians that they could be given outdoor relief, as the wives of soldiers, sailors or marines were exempted from the Prohibitory Order.³⁴

It would seem likely, therefore, that the increase in the number of inmates in the Winchester workhouse during the second half of 1853 and the first half of 1854 was, at least in part, caused by the admission to the workhouse of servicemen's wives and families. For some reason, it seems that the Winchester Board of Guardians did not to exercise this option to grant these persons outdoor relief.

Categories of pauper in the workhouses

It has already been shown that persons in certain age and sex categories were more likely to be in workhouses than were others. The evidence from Winchester and Basingstoke shows that most of the inmates can be placed into a fairly small number of categories. First, there were the children. Children were the largest single group being given indoor relief. Some of these were in the workhouse with their mothers (and a few had both parents with them), but many were without either parent. From the census returns it is impossible to identify the exact circumstances of a child in the workhouse without either parent. However, the admissions records and the minute books of the Winchester Boards of Guardians can help reveal the true situation in the workhouse. In 1847 nearly 40 per cent of the children in the Winchester workhouse were orphans, 30 per cent were illegitimates present with their mothers, just over 20 per cent were the children of widows, with the remainder being abandoned.³⁵ For example, Henry Chisers, aged five years, who was in the Winchester workhouse at the time of the 1851 census, had been abandoned by his mother on 23 June 1850.³⁶ Sometimes, especially in winter, one or two offspring of a married man might be temporarily housed in a workhouse to relieve the economic pressure on the household. According to Digby, guardians were, in general, very reluctant to admit married men 'of good character' to the workhouse, and taking in one or two of the children of such men represented a convenient alternative. It was also a cheaper option than taking the whole family into the workhouse.³⁷ It is likely that some of the children in the Winchester and Basingstoke workhouses in 1851 and 1861 fell into this category, but demonstrating this for individual cases would require quite a sophisticated record linkage exercise. Genuine orphans often became long-term inmates.³⁸

A second group consists of unmarried mothers and their illegitimate children. Over 90 per cent of children born in the Winchester workhouse during the 1850s were illegitimate.³⁹ The case histories of single women and their children reveal some repeated patterns. Some young women seem to have entered the workhouse for only a short time, probably to receive attention during their confinement. For example, Carolina Sherman, a servant, entered the workhouse on 23 January 1851, at which time she was eight months pregnant. Her daughter Eliza was born on 15 February 1851, and two months later they both left, upon Carolina's own notice. Janet McFaulin, from Scotland, entered the workhouse on 18 March 1851, giving birth to her son William nine days later. Both she and her son discharged themselves on 27 May in the same year. In both these cases no further records can be found to reveal their subsequent history. More complex,

however, is the case of Maria Hall. This woman, who was born in the late 1820s, was admitted to the workhouse for a short period in April 1850, having 'no place to live'. She discharged herself on 27 April but returned, pregnant, on 30 July in the same year. Her child Elizabeth was born on 4 March 1851. Subsequently she discharged herself, but on 24 June 1853 she deserted her daughter. Three years later, on 18 March 1856, she gave birth to a second illegitimate child in the workhouse.

Anne Digby has pointed out that in Norfolk the fate of women when they applied for poor relief depended on their marital status and their 'morality'. Single women, especially those with illegitimate children, were generally offered relief in the workhouse.⁴⁰ By contrast, widows were often treated with respect, as their poverty was considered to be due to misfortune beyond their control. The Winchester data certainly support the suggestion that many pregnant unmarried women were admitted to the workhouse, but the evidence suggests that they typically only stayed a short time before discharging themselves. It seems plausible that many single women were taking advantage of the workhouse's 'lying-in' facilities and choosing to have their babies in the workhouse, presumably because they felt they would be more comfortable and better looked after there than outside.

A third major group consists of single or widowed males aged 30 years or more. It is helpful here to distinguish between single males of working age and those who were probably elderly or infirm. The number of single males of working age in a workhouse such as that in Winchester varied seasonally. Single males did not have the 'security' of other family members who provided opportunities to escape the workhouse through the 'sickness in the family' loophole; moreover the financial incentive to grant them outdoor relief during the winter was much less than was the case for married men. Elderly and infirm men who had no living wives seem to have been more likely to enter the workhouse than aged women in similar circumstances, possibly because they were less able to look after themselves, but possibly also because they were generally an absolute burden on their families. Indeed Digby says that in Norfolk the authorities preferred to offer the aged poor indoor relief.⁴¹ To encourage them to enter the workhouses, outdoor relief to the aged poor was very meagre, but the workhouses treated them well. It has been suggested that some old people would be admitted to the workhouse on account of their bad character and profligacy, or in order to put pressure on their families to support them.⁴² The latter probably worked in many cases, as working class families in general regretted their aged relatives' entry into the workhouse.⁴³ However, 'the disproportionate number of old men who ended their days in the workhouse suggests that some working families were not reluctant to hand over a former tyrant to the Poor Law, even if he were not altogether infirm'.⁴⁴ According to Crowther, old women tended not to enter workhouses unless they were too ill or infirm to care for themselves: they were too useful to their families (for example, because they could look after young children).⁴⁵

Finally, there were some family groups in most workhouses, but they were few in number. In Basingstoke workhouse in 1851 there were only six married

couples of working age, most of whom had some children with them.⁴⁶ In the Winchester workhouse in 1851 is the family of John and Ann Karner with their seven children.⁴⁷ They had been admitted on 21 September 1850, at which time Ann was pregnant with her seventh child, who was born in the workhouse. The Karner family stayed seven months in the workhouse, discharging themselves on their own notice on 23 April 1851.⁴⁸

The discussion in this section has indicated that many people who were admitted to the workhouse only remained there a short time. The seasonally unemployed, women admitted when pregnant, and family groups all tended to be short term inmates. However there were other inmates, often elderly, who stayed for lengthy periods.

Conclusion

The admission of any poor person to a workhouse may be seen as the outcome of a process with several stages. First, the person must apply to the local Board of Guardians for relief. Clearly, certain classes of person were much more likely to need relief than others on account of age or infirmity. The demand for relief also depended on the time of year, on the general economic situation of the locality, and on other ephemeral factors (such as the dispatch of the Winchester-based soldiers to Carlisle in 1853).

Once a person had applied for relief, then the Board of Guardians would either offer outdoor relief or relief in the workhouse. This decision was governed by a number of orders handed down from the Poor Law Board in London. Despite these, individual boards of guardians in practice had considerable discretion. The chance of being offered indoor relief was greatest for single men, pregnant single women, women who had borne illegitimate children and orphaned and abandoned children. It was also greater if the applicant was a person who was believed to be of bad character, or to have contributed in some way to their misfortune. There is some evidence that the workhouses were used to relieve 'economically useless' members of society.⁴⁹ Outdoor relief tended to be offered somewhat more to the aged and infirm, and to married men and their families.

As has been seen, the evidence from the Winchester and Basingstoke workhouses seems consistent with the general pattern. Able-bodied married males and their families were certainly rarely admitted to either workhouse. It seems probable that they were preferentially employed when labour was scarce (which reduced the likelihood that they would require relief), or they were offered outdoor relief on the grounds of 'sickness'. Aged persons and children formed the majority of inmates. Most children were not present with either parent. There were more elderly males than females.

Perhaps the most interesting question raised by the history of these workhouses during the 1850s relates to able-bodied women and their children. These fell into two groups: those who could be given outdoor relief, since they fell into one of the categories exempted from the Prohibitory Order, and those who could not. It seems clear that the Winchester and Basingstoke guardians routinely admitted

the second of these categories to the workhouse. Such were deserted wives, widows without dependent children whose husbands had died more than six months previously, and widows who had borne illegitimate children. It is possible that some of these persons (for example deserted wives) were homeless and therefore the workhouse provided them with a roof over their heads. However, there is evidence that, at least in Winchester, certain of the first, exempted, group (notably the wives of servicemen) were also being admitted to the workhouse. The striking growth in the workhouse population during 1854 testifies to this. The question remains, therefore, as to whether the (entirely male) Board of Guardians was adopting different policies towards able-bodied married men and their families and towards deserted wives and their children.

NOTES

1. P. Wood, *Poverty and the workhouse in Victorian Britain*, (Stroud, 1991), 68–9, 98–9.
2. K. Williams, *From pauperism to poverty*, (London, 1981), 88. It should, perhaps, be noted here that conditions in workhouses varied considerably from place to place, and attempts by the central poor law authorities to establish a uniform standard were often thwarted by local boards of guardians.
3. The prohibition on outdoor relief was not ordered everywhere in England and Wales at the same time, but orders were issued to most southern, central and eastern areas by 1844. Both the poor law unions studied in this paper had been issued with prohibitory orders by 1841; British Parliamentary Papers [hereafter BPP] 1841(1)/XXI, 37.
4. BPP 1841(1)/XXI, 76–79. Williams, *From pauperism to poverty*, 64 ff. contains a vigorous statement of the thesis that the New Poor Law was, fundamentally, an attack on outdoor relief to able-bodied adult males.
5. Workers Educational Association Eastern District, *In and out of the workhouse: the coming of the New Poor Law to Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire*, (Ely, 1978), 34.
6. Estimates of the difference range from 50 per cent to over 100 per cent.
7. Anne Digby has made this point in a number of well-known studies: see especially A. Digby, 'The labour market and the continuity of social policy after 1834: the case of the eastern counties', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 28 (1975), 69–83; A. Digby, *Pauper palaces*, (London, 1978), 6–7, 105–14; and A. Digby, 'The rural poor', in G.E. Mingay ed, *The Victorian countryside*, vol. 2 (London, 1981), pp. 591–602.
8. Digby, *Pauper palaces*, 6–7, suggests this was true of Norfolk; for Hampshire see *Report of John Revans, Esq., to the Poor Law Board on the operation of the law of settlement in Dorsetshire, Hampshire and Somersetshire*, (BPP 1850/XXVII), 331; and for Kent see M.A. Crowther, *The workhouse system 1834–1929: the history of an English social institution*, (London, 1981), 230.
9. This paper therefore follows a long tradition of local studies of the operation of the New Poor Law in specific unions and of individual workhouses. In addition to the aforementioned studies by Digby, see, for example, A.G. Parton and M.H. Matthews, 'The returns of poor law out-relief—a source for the local historian', *The Local Historian*, 16 (1984), 25–31; V.J. Walsh, 'Old and New Poor Laws in Shropshire, 1820–1870', *Midland History*, 2 (1974), 225–43; W. Apfel and P. Dunkley, 'English rural society and the New Poor Law: Bedfordshire, 1834–47', *Social History*, 10 (1985), 37–68; R.N. Thompson, 'The working of the Poor Law Amendment Act in Cumbria, 1836–1871', *Northern History*, 15 (1979), 117–37; and N. Land, *Victorian workhouse: a study of the Bromsgrove union workhouse 1836–1901*, (Studley, 1990). For more general studies of nineteenth-century workhouses, see F. Driver, *Power and pauperism: the workhouse system, 1834–1884*, (Cambridge, 1993); and N. Longmate, *The workhouse*, (London, 1974).
10. The only study we have found which analyses the inmate population of a workhouse as a collectivity is S. Page, 'Pauperism and the Leicester workhouse in 1881', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 63 (1989), 85–95. This is surprising, because the listings in the census enumerators' books make analysis very straightforward.

11. Hampshire Record Office (hereafter HRO): Admission and discharge books for the Winchester Workhouse, 1850–57: PL5/11/20–21. Admission and discharge books do not seem to have been used widely in published work for aggregative analysis, perhaps because of their erratic survival.
12. C. Moxley, *An introduction to the history of St Paul's Hospital, Winchester: the New Winchester Union, 1835–1846*, (Winchester, 1987).
13. Public Record Office (hereafter PRO): Census enumerators' books (hereafter CEBs), Winchester workhouse, parish of Weeke, 1851: HO 107/1673; 1861: RG 9/691. All figures relating to workhouse populations in this paper exclude the resident workhouse master and matron and their immediate family, and all resident workhouse employees (nurses, porters, etc.).
14. PRO: CEBs, Basingstoke Union workhouse, parish of Old Basing, 1851: HO 107/1681; 1861: RG 9/709.
15. Census of Great Britain, 1851, *Population tables II. Ages, civil condition, occupations and birth-place of the people, vol. 1* (London, 1854), 41 (BPP 1852–53 LXXXVIII Pt I). The shortage of persons of working age was even greater in the Winchester workhouse in 1861, when only 31 per cent of inmates were aged 15–59 years (PRO: RG 9/691).
16. HRO: Minutes of the Winchester Union Board of Guardians: 111M91W/1. The copy we used was a transcript of the original text typed by Rev C. Moxley in 1991. We use the month of March as our comparison as the census of 1851 was in March, and poverty had a strong seasonal component in the Winchester area.
17. PRO: HO 107/1681.
18. PRO: HO 107/1673; PRO: RG 9/691.
19. PRO: CEBs, Harrogate, Pateley Bridge and Ripon workhouses, 1851: HO 107/2280–2282.
20. Data on Hertfordshire workhouses kindly supplied by Nigel Goose; Page, 'Pauperism and the Leicester workhouse', 89.
21. *Returns relative to the poor law unions in England and Wales* (BPP 1844/XL), 104.
22. BPP 1844/XL, 104; *Returns relative to the poor law unions in England and Wales* (BPP 1847–8/LIHI), 202–3.
23. HRO: PL5/11/20–21. Records of admissions and discharges do not seem to have survived for Basingstoke workhouse.
24. HRO: PL5/11/20–21.
25. Crowther, *The workhouse system*, 230–1.
26. For an introduction to time series analysis, see C. Chatfield, *The analysis of time series: an introduction*, 5th edn (London, 1996).
27. Crowther, *The workhouse system*, 229, makes the point that workhouse relief varied according to two 'overlapping patterns': one was seasonal, and the other was related to 'sudden emergencies'. This certainly seems to be a fair description of what was happening in Winchester during the 1850s.
28. HRO: PL5/11/20–21.
29. PRO: Poor law unions and local authorities (MH 12): MH 12/11171, the correspondence begins on 14 June 1853.⁸
30. PRO: MH 12/11171, 21 June 1853 Winchester Board of Guardians to Poor Law Board.
31. PRO: MH 12/11171, 21 June 1853 Winchester Board of Guardians to Poor Law Board; 23 June 1853 Poor Law Board to Winchester Board of Guardians.
32. *Report of John Revans, Esq.*, (BPP 1850/XXVII), 329.
33. PRO: MH 12/11172, 18 April 1854 Winchester Board of Guardians to Poor Law Board.
34. PRO: MH 12/11172, 3 May 1854 Poor Law Board to Winchester Board of Guardians. For the relevant exception to the Prohibitory Order, see BPP 1841(1)/XXI, 76.
35. C. Moxley, *The minutes of the Boards of Guardians, Winchester Union*, (Winchester, 1991).
36. PRO: HO 107/1673; HRO: PL5/11/20–21.
37. Digby, *Pauper palaces*, 144–5.
38. Wood, *Poverty and the workhouse*, 103.
39. HRO: Winchester Workhouse birth register: PL5/11/59.
40. Digby, *Pauper palaces*, 150, 152–3. Digby's view is that for unmarried mothers, the decision to offer them the workhouse was partly punitive, and partly to act as a deterrent, as after 1834 it was expensive to seek reimbursement from the father of an illegitimate child.
41. Digby, *Pauper palaces*, 163.
42. Wood, *Poverty and the workhouse*, 113.

43. Crowther, *The workhouse system*, 239.
44. Crowther, *The workhouse system*, 234.
45. Crowther, *The workhouse system*, 234.
46. PRO: HO 107/1681.
47. PRO: HO 107/1673.
48. HRO: PL5/11/20-21.
49. Digby, *Pauper palaces*, 12.