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Making the most of opportunity: the economy of makeshifts in the early modern north¹

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Overview

The introduction to this volume suggested that the old poor law has been subject to a positive historiographical makeover by some welfare historians. To commentators such as David Thomson and Martin Daunton, the old poor law was a flexible, increasingly humane (by design or simple loss of control) and frequently generous *system* which came to represent the *central plank* of the welfare strategies of many people by the opening decades of the nineteenth century.² There is persuasive empirical support for this point of view, with various authors mining bland poor law account books to show that over the course of the long eighteenth century the poor law came to relieve more people (sometimes at more generous levels), to recognise *relative poverty*, to pay for a greater range of goods and services and to relieve people for longer, than had been the case before.³ In pioneering work linking family reconstitution evidence and poor law accounts, Richard Smith has clearly shown the development of more expensive pension strategies, the changing composition of relief lists and a widening of the services provided by the poor law from the late eighteenth century.⁴ Peter King has used pauper inventories from Essex to show that poor law authorities there were willing to recognise relative as well as absolute destitution, and to intervene to preserve the household possessions of those who faced sudden need.⁵ And Steve Hindle has analysed the vestry minutes, charity accounts and poor law book of Frampton in Lincolnshire to show that,

at least for its *settled* poor, the community could demonstrate considerable paternalism to those in need.⁶

Of course, there were stark variations in local practice. This was to be expected given that the 1601 codification act which implemented the old poor law had established for all parishes a duty to relieve the deserving poor but had allowed local administrators to decide both who was deserving and who not, and on the form and generosity of relief. Rate-saving was thus always a temptation, and in most places we see periodic attempts to cut back the scale and cost of the relief list, something which becomes more generalised after 1820. Ultimately, however, the *system* appears to have coped moderately well with the three types of poverty which dominated the 'national' picture – endemic, trade-related and life-cycle.⁷ Indeed, for many access to poor relief had become a 'right' by the later eighteenth century, and overseers had to tread a sensitive path between the competing demands of economy and customary treatment of different groups of poor people. Little surprise, against this backdrop, that we can find evidence up and down the country of poor law administrators setting out in advance a 'tally' of relief payments which would apply to different classes of paupers over the forthcoming year.⁸

The 'problem' that the poor law was obliged to confront was severe even in the late seventeenth century. Keith Wrightson's perceptive analysis of economic life starts from Gregory King's observation that 62 per cent of families (containing 51 per cent of the population) were decreasing the wealth of the kingdom in 1695 and suggests that such levels of poverty must be understood against the backdrop of slim profit margins in agriculture for most farmers, seasonal working patterns which depressed annualised income, frequent payment of wages in forms other than cash, and demographic uncertainty.⁹ Such influences on the economic lives of some 70 per cent of the population were to remain in force after 1750 and were augmented by trade-cycle fluctuations, structural unemployment, the vagaries of an increasingly urbanised labour market and increasing levels of sickness amongst the population even as life-expectancy improved. By the early nineteenth century inherited poverty was common and whole life-cycle poverty was the lot of an increasing proportion of the population even in better times.¹⁰

But how much of the poverty problem did the old poor law really confront and alleviate? For communities in the mainly rural

south and east, the positive makeover of the old poor law seems apposite. While the Bedfordshire parishes analysed by David Thomson may have been unrepresentative in their generosity, providing up to 80 per cent of local wages rates to some welfare recipients, even critics such as Hunt do not question Thomson's central theme, that the poor law and yearly welfare had become synonymous for poor people in many southern and eastern communities.¹¹ Faced with the breakdown of the family economy, southern de-industrialisation, the loss of alternative earning opportunities from common land and fields, pressed by population increase in some places and population stagnation elsewhere, and forced to confront big changes in the economic position of women and children, the poor law in the rural south and east in particular may have had little option but to intervene in a major way to guarantee welfare and social stability. Even here, though, we have recently been urged to take a more holistic view of the welfare process.¹²

This call is even more relevant for other areas of the country. When the numbers of poor and the amount spent on them by the poor law started to be systematically recorded from the early nineteenth century there were very wide regional differences. It was Lancashire and surrounding counties that had the lowest levels of per capita poor relief spending. The picture is not uniform – Richard Smith shows, for instance, that the Lancashire township of Woodplumpton was incredibly generous to its poor¹³ – but on balance the argument that Lancashire, the West Riding and Cumberland and Westmorland relieved fewer people and at lower levels of relief than, say, Surrey or Essex, is compelling. So how might we explain these sorts of regional difference, and indeed sub-regional variation in the role and scope of the poor law? Variation may reflect differences in the scope or character of the underlying poverty problem between different counties and communities. Or it may reflect the fact that some places had much tougher poor law criteria for relief than others. Certainly Midwinter, talking of early nineteenth-century Lancashire, believed that the poor were actually better off under the new poor law than the old because of the 'chilly appraisal of misfortune' which had underlain administration of the old poor law in this county.¹⁴ Or regional and sub-regional differences in the scale and scope of poor law expenditure might reflect the fact that some places were substantially under-resourced compared to the money available for poor law administrators elsewhere. The cost of basic

foodstuffs, clothing and rent may also have been somewhat lower in some regions than in others, necessitating a less central role for poor relief in the everyday needs of poor people. Yet an alternative explanation might be the strength and variety of alternative welfare networks in some counties, and some communities in those counties, than in others.

Deciding between these different explanations involves conducting more regional studies, and then comparing them. This chapter aims to make a contribution to this process. For the rural and rural industrial north-west in the period 1750–1834, and using both aggregative analysis and a detailed community study, it will address four themes. First, what alternative welfare strategies were available to families and communities in a low poor law expenditure regime? Second, how did exploration of those strategies change over time? Third, how did these strategies interact with the poor law, taking the holistic view that John Broad appeals for? Finally what sort of living could welfare strategies yield in totum? Answering these questions should allow us to begin writing regional histories of the economy of makeshifts, much as we have written regional histories of the poor law, and allow us to begin the complex task of reconstructing welfare as it might have looked to contemporaries rather than welfare as it looks to the historian. Initially, though, we must be precise about the role of the poor law in welfare in the north-west.

The character of the poor law in the north-west

That aggregate poor relief bills rose across the north-west in common with other areas of the country is not to be doubted. But in many communities this reflected more an increase in the number getting relief than a sustained increase in generosity.¹⁵ Figure 8.1 aggregates individual monthly *pension* payments during the period 1806–9 for seven randomly chosen north-western townships.¹⁶ The bulk of pension payments were very low indeed, and crude estimation of wage rates suggests that regular relief amounted to no more than between one-seventh and one-fifth of the adult wage in the areas concerned. Of course, there was a willingness on the part of some poor law administrators to provide ‘extra’ payments in cash or kind for things like fuel, clothing or for sickness, hence adding to overall income from the communal

Figure 8.1 Monthly pension payments in seven north-west townships

pot, but even the most generous system in this sample did not do much to supplement pensions *consistently* in this way. Other communities were more generous, but even in generous places such as Woodplumpton in Lancashire or Troutbeck in Westmorland we can detect periodic and sometimes more sustained drives to cut the extent of relief lists and the payments of those who could not be thrown off altogether. Steve Hindle found that in Frampton the vestry policed communal and poor law resources in order to identify and get rid of ‘foreigners’ but even in relatively generous north-western communities, vestries and overseers stringently policed those entitled to poor relief rather than just those who were not. This sort of experience is by no means unique to the north-west, but its prevalence suggests no central role in welfare for the poor law, as Margaret Hanly has suggested elsewhere in this volume. Clearly, many of those in receipt of regular relief in the north-west must have been obtaining substantial welfare supplements from elsewhere, even if we accept that poor law payments were meant mainly for individuals rather than families.

We should also remember that not only were relief levels relatively low, but many people were turned down for relief and do not therefore figure in surviving poor law accounts. We can begin to explore this issue, though not as systematically as might be

Figure 8.2 Vestry decision-making in three north-western townships

Number of decision in totum: 614

desirable, by looking at vestry records. These survive for around 8 per cent of north-western communities, and Figure 8.2 records the aggregate outcome of the decision-making process in three such places between 1790 and 1812.¹⁷ It suggests that in some years upwards of one half of all people who applied for relief were turned down. Some were denied because they were not considered poor enough, others because they had kin on whom to draw, others because they had some moral failing in the eyes of the vestry. A few examples are illuminating. Thus, in Colne in June 1793, the vestry decided not to relieve James Foulds, but that, ‘Jas Foulds is to be allowed 2s. a week by his son for another month, he being at present very sick.’¹⁸ This vestry might also monitor the way in which previous relief was used by the applicant as one of the criteria for granting further help. In March 1794, for instance,

The wife of Wilson Hargreaves of Watershead applied for relief but was refused because she had ... sold clothing and other things given to her by ye contribution to ye late fund for the benefit of the individual poor.¹⁹

Similar themes can be detected in other sets of vestry records. Thus in the Lancashire township of Garstang (already mentioned by Margaret Hanly in this volume) in 1815, Molly Crossley

made application for something towards buying coals. At the meeting of the 1st of August she said she could go on with 6 shillings allowed her towards her rent. The committee think that she should not so soon trouble the town again after the former promise.²⁰

In November of the same year, the vestry balanced the circumstances of John Pedder and found them satisfactory, despite the fact that his income was well below the norm in the town. They noted,

Jno Pedder attended and wanted some relief. He admits being in constant employ ... earning 6s a week plus meat. He has only a wife and 3 children. Resolved that he is to have no further relief.²¹

Even being abandoned by one's spouse was no necessary cause for relief to be granted, as Alice Wakefield found out,

Alice Wakefield, the wife of John Wakefield who has run away with another woman, attended wanting relief. Her goods have been seized hold for rent. She has had a series of ill health which has brought her to her present distress – she has only 1 daughter 16 years of age a weaver at home to support her at present. Resolved nothing to be done. To have a ticket for Brindle if dissatisfied.²²

Other applications were turned down in a more cursory manner. William Kendall was denied relief because he, 'keeps 2 or 3 dogs and which are a great annoyance to the children going to school'.²³ Of course, it is difficult to establish just how poor these people were, but even if we accept that half of applicants who were turned down were simply trying their luck, this would still leave a substantial core of poverty not addressed by the poor law, and one perhaps complemented by a core of those who were poor but too proud to apply for relief in the first place.

Moreover, we might also remember that even where people were granted relief, it did not always come in the form in which they asked for it. Widow Varley went to the Colne vestry asking for her rent to be paid. The vestry resolved that, 'Widow Varley's rent to be paid and the same is to be stopped out of her allowance.'²⁴ Widow Etherington came to the Halliwell vestry in 1797 looking for a pension of two shillings per week and came away instead with a bag of potatoes.²⁵ Nor was decision-making 'consistent' when viewed from the modern perspective. In Garstang some recent widows coming to the vestry were granted (small) pensions without comment; others who came with equal need and family circumstances were denied altogether, presumably because

of some moral failings or other parameters of judgement (appearance, dress, or the way a pauper approached the vestry) which necessarily remain closed to us. The texture of the vestry records as a whole – showing often repeated applications on the part of people judged unworthy of relief – does much to suggest even to a casual reader that there really was a poverty problem being brushed under the carpet in these townships.

Of course, there are powerful reasons for thinking that any community keeping good vestry records might be atypical. Such communities certainly demonstrated the interest in tight administration which the Webbs thought to be absent and we might thus expect them to be vigorous in their application of relief only to those with severe and demonstrable need. Typical or not, it is important to acknowledge that this sample of vestry decisions are drawn from a period when the old poor law was often said to be in crisis, and hence vestries might have had a particular interest in rate-saving. Nor were harsh vestries a phenomenon confined to the north-west, as Steve Hindle shows. Yet pauper letters for other north-western townships where vestry minutes do not survive or effective vestries were never called demonstrate very clearly that overseers prevaricated on payment of relief, paid less than was needed, and regularly turned people down, prompting them to write more and more earnestly of their plight. Overseers could thus be as effective a police force as the vestry where they chose to fill this role, a point which those studying letter-writing to southern communities have also noted.²⁶ In short, notwithstanding rising poor law expenditure and increasing numbers on relief in the north-west there was a substantial core of people in most communities, perhaps up to 40 per cent, who were tied up in the day-to-day struggle of exploiting multiple welfare strategies at individual and family level. The competition for resources that these figures imply is a matter that we shall return to at the end of this chapter.

The economy of makeshifts at aggregate level

Let us initially take an overview of these multiple welfare strategies using data from a variety of north-western communities. Contemporary commentators were well aware of the potential richness of the economy of makeshifts in the early modern north-west.

Frederick Eden noted that 'here [Ainstable] and in most parts of Cumberland, an extensive common right is attached to most arable land'.²⁷ Of Bromfield in Cumberland he noted,

there are no box clubs or friendly societies in the parish, and above all no bequests or regular annual charities bequeathed to the poor, a circumstance which, it has been observed in other districts, always has a considerable influence on the Poor Rate.²⁸

A review of some of its individual parts in survey form is long overdue, and forms the bedrock of this section.

One of the most obvious responses to life-cycle need was to vary household size or structure, a point raised in the conclusion to this volume. While most census-type listings confirm that the small nuclear family and its servants has consistently lain at the heart of English household structure, these snapshot pictures tell only a partial story.²⁹ Over the life-cycle of a family, periods of short-term complexity were more common than census listings allow, and this observation has particular resonance when we look at the household structures of the poor. Thomas Sokoll in his 1993 book on the household sizes of paupers in Essex reconsidered the idea that the pauper household was small and simple. He was able to show that the average pauper household was quite large (4.2) and that pauper families and households were the *most*, not least, complex.³⁰ Eighteenth-century data for the north-west also highlights considerable diversity. The 1787 population survey of Westmorland shows that in the constablewick of Little Strickland in Morland parish, all people labelled 'poor' headed their own households. They formed 22 per cent of all households and these households were small and simple households – average 2.76 persons – of the sort which Sokoll disclaims for Essex.³¹ Yet in Crosby Ravensworth just a few miles away the average pauper household was considerably larger (4.1 people) and much more likely to be complex (26 per cent). Overall, almost one quarter of all households in the Westmorland census where we find poor people (recognised and unrecognised by the poor law) were 'complex' compared to 'background levels' in the wider population excluding paupers of just 8 per cent.³²

Spatial variation of this sort should not surprise us. Considerations of nuclear hardship, availability of servants, local variations in architecture and the degree of proximate residence amongst kin could operate in different ways on communities separated only

nominally on the map.³³ The attitude of poor law administrators was also an important influence. Where they were active – as seems to be the case in many north-western communities – in engineering fluid household arrangements as part of their relief strategy, accepted generalisations about household structure must be discarded. The story of Edmund Leatherbarrow (an old handloom weaver, and someone already encountered in Margaret Hanly's contribution to this volume) from Garstang is particularly illuminating. In 1816, 'The overseer to enquire what Jno Leatherbarrow will keep his father for',³⁴ Whether Edmund Leatherbarrow had any say in this sort of bargain is unclear. The bargain for co-residence was made but then,

Mr John Leatherbarrow attended to say he could not afford to keep his father for the 2s a week any longer; he hopes that this committee considering his situation and the age of his father will not think 3s too much to be allowed him for tending his father. Allowed 3s per week.³⁵

At the census of the poor of Garstang in 1817, Edmund Leatherbarrow was recorded in his own right as a recipient of three shillings per week, with no indication that this was to pay for houseroom with his son. By 1820 the stresses of co-residence were clearly beginning to show, with the vestry minutes noting that, 'Agreed that Edward Leatherbarrow shall have 4/ per week to himself and 1/ lodging to be paid'.³⁶ This sort of detailed bargaining is rarely elaborated in the discussion over residential patterns of the old for any area. It could be repeated both for other old people and for those facing crisis at other stages of the life-cycle, and one is left with a clear sense that variation of household arrangements was an intuitively attractive part of the potential welfare mechanism to both administrators and paupers in many localities. Lack of coinage in the north-west may have given a particular urgency to the attempts of overseers to foster cashless welfare options, of which varying household structure was just one.³⁷

Charitable provision was potentially a second major strand of welfare, as several chapters in this book show, and the rural and rural industrial north-west had a rich vein of such resources.³⁸ There were four separate but potentially overlapping forms of charity which must concern us in this context. First, formal charitable endowments. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century communities benefited from a considerable overhang of charitable

Figure 8.3 Charity and poor law expenditure in four north-western communities

endowments. Poor management, limited returns on invested capital, limited renewal of capital as it became usual to settle resources in wills on immediate kin, and the growing tide of poverty which washed over late eighteenth-century England may have served to compromise the role of charity in overall welfare over time,³⁹ but even by 1820 charitable provision could still make a substantial contribution to welfare in many north-western communities. Figure 8.3 relates endowed charitable expenditure⁴⁰ to poor relief expenditure in four north-western communities where records from both institutions survive side-by-side.⁴¹ The aggregate figures are interesting, suggesting that charity significantly augmented local welfare resources in these rural communities. At individual level, access to endowed charities could be very significant for annual welfare. In Cartmel in 1750 the average pension stood at 1s. 6d. per week and yet the recipients of such pensions, as well as others not on relief, were granted the equivalent of three months of poor relief income from local endowed charities at the same date.

Of course, not all places were so well endowed, but there were also other forms of charity which might contribute to an economy of makeshifts. A second strand of philanthropy, for instance, was the charitable activity of nonconformist groups. The Quakers have attracted particular attention in north-east Lancashire, for instance,

and many diarists refer to charity sermons.⁴² Perhaps a more important contribution to welfare was provided by a third charitable form – the rich patchwork of irregular charitable funds which stemmed from collections by local elites to meet pressing needs associated with depression, high food prices or peculiar local circumstances. Such charitable goodwill was a vital component of welfare in the urban and rural north-west, outweighing the amount of money given out by the poor law in the years when collections took place.⁴³ The tendency to donate to irregular collections of this sort can be seen in most places. In Foulshaw, Westmorland, for instance, an initial extraordinary collection to help the poor at a time of high prices became a permanent accompaniment to the poor law, paying out 3d. per week to recipients (many of whom were already getting poor relief) by 1825.⁴⁴ Small money perhaps, but nonetheless a regular source of alternative welfare for those excluded from the relief process or given less than they thought they needed.

Moreover, we should also remember that much charity took the form of the occasional dispensation of money or gifts to the needy by middling people, neighbours, clergy and friends. Saints days, weddings, funerals or other local events were often an occasion for the dispensation of charity, but more significant were regular ongoing, if small, payments. These are usually closed to the historian, but the Browne family of Troutbeck fastidiously kept accounts recording in some detail the dispensation of informal charity during the early to mid-eighteenth century to those perceived to be in need. Correlating these records with overlapping poor law accounts reveals that the family recognised a circle of need some 70 per cent larger than that recognised by the overseers, and that in aggregate terms the charitable activity of this one family augmented the resources available from the poor law by between 16 and 23 per cent depending upon the year in question.⁴⁵ Few such detailed accounts survive elsewhere, but for south-west Lancashire the records of the Scarisbrick family allow us to take a different angle on this issue. Charles Scarisbrick made pension payments to his longest serving former employees of up to 6s. per month, such that his yearly expenditure on direct monetary charity by the early nineteenth century was of the order of £100. Of course, these sums acted to keep people off the relief lists in the first place, but Scarisbrick also granted more indirect forms of charity, bargaining with local poor law authorities, for instance,

that widows of his former workers would be allowed to live rent free in his cottages if the poor law made monetary provision for their welfare.⁴⁶ Scarisbrick was not alone in seeing a charitable duty, as the family collections of other south-west Lancashire elites show.⁴⁷

For those on the outside of the charity processes, and even for some recipients, other welfare avenues also beckoned. As Peter King, Sarah Horrell and Jane Humphries, and a range of other commentators have pointed out, gleaning and foraging on the wastes and commons may have made a substantial contribution to monthly or yearly welfare.⁴⁸ Such 'rights' had been under pressure in most areas for many years by the late eighteenth century, but in many north-western communities farm or industrial land was still in the 1790s located within the midst of large tracts of waste and common, where customary access to 'communal' resources had considerable longevity. Inter-community disputes over the rights of access to waste land in the north-west provides ample testimony to the perceived value of these communal resources. We should not overstate this point of course. Surveys of waste land during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries suggest very clearly that in some communities the prime sites on waste land had been colonised by encroachers. Thus a survey of the waste lands around Blackburn in 1824 pointed to thatched cow-houses, coal houses, coal pits and the enclosure of land around the key water supplies, leaving 'the waste' of little use to either person or beast.⁴⁹ Such experiences find reflection in Westmorland, where most of the major landowners were, by the mid-eighteenth century, conducting surveys to find out exactly how much waste land had fallen under encroachments.⁵⁰ Even where land remained nominally open to customary rights, we should not forget that major landowners were progressively attempting to seal off access to all sorts of game, from rabbits to fish, by the later years of the eighteenth century.⁵¹ Yet, while we are unable to place an aggregate monetary value on access to waste and common, in the psychology of the economy of makeshifts, this particular avenue may have loomed large.

In certain cases of life-cycle poverty, work continued to be a big part of welfare, as Margaret Hanly has also suggested elsewhere in this volume. Overseers' handbooks instructed them to make efforts to secure work for applicants to the community as a precursor to giving pension or other payments.⁵² This may partly

explain why so many pauper letters are prefaced with a detailed story of how the applicant had exhausted all avenues for ensuring welfare through work. Overseers may have been more favourably disposed to this sort of application, or to those which asked for relief at times of life-cycle crisis to supplement resources acquired through labour. Thus in July 1806 Bernard Hughes applied to the overseer of the de-industrialising township of Kirkham in the Fylde of Lancashire. The overseer noted that he,

hath a wife and four children, wife pregnant again, is a cotton weaver and gets 13/ per week, children aged 7, 5, 3, and 1 year. Applies for some money, 1 pound 13s which he owes for rent. Allowed 1 pound 1 shilling.⁵³

Work seems to have provided Hughes with the bulk of his day-to-day welfare, but not extraordinary lump sum payments such as rent. William Taylor, living in Warrington but with a settlement in Barnacre-with-Bonds near Preston, found himself in a similar predicament. He wrote to the overseers in Barnacre on 19 December 1822 in the following terms,

Worthy gentlemen, I ham sorry that necessity obliges me in troubling you at this seasons of the year. If your own goodness still continues to me I must still trouble you as long as I ham in this life how long that will be god only knows as both me and my wife are far advanced in years and we are troubled with my infirmitys. I ham now working what I can for 3s per week and this is the only sum we have to subsist upon, what must become of us if provisions was not reasonable my work is very laborors to me for 6d per day – I ham so infirm I hope your honours will be pleased to send me. My rent is raised to 5 pounds and 5s and at the time we first came to the house the rent was not more than 2 pounds and 15s my rent is now due and I hope your goodness will be pleased to send it as yu will still oblige your obedient servant.⁵⁴

Confirmation that there was a connection between wages and relief even in the extremities of old age is provided by the case of Martin Holmes of Garstang who was, ‘aged 73; earns from 3–4/ per week. Has 2/ allowance and rent paid’.⁵⁵ Even where old age was equated with incapacity at the individual level, there might still be a role for wages in the economy of makeshifts of the residential unit. Thomas Lingart and his wife applied to the overseer of Kirkham in April 1808, and the overseer noted that,

He is 76 years of age – she is about 50, and gets 3/ or 4/ per week when employed. Have 6 children. The oldest son Michael is married,

was apprenticed and belongs to Horwich. The second son, James, is also married, was apprentice to Blackrod and belongs there. The third son – John is apprentice in Blackrod and belongs there – 14 yr old bound September 1807. The eldest daughter, Ellen is not employed – 9 years old. The second daughter – Mary is 6yr old. The youngest daughter, Margaret, aged 5 yrs. Allowed 20/ till midsummer, and to be informed that they must not expect anything further.⁵⁶

For younger people facing different life-cycle problems there is also a need to account for the family economy of makeshifts and the place of wages within it. In June 1822 Jane Atkinson applied to the vestry of Garstang for aid, and they concluded that the

Overseer shall have the discretionary power of affording such temporary relief to the widow of James Atkinson as shall be necessary and that he shall make enquiry as to the amount of earning of her son employed at Catterall.⁵⁷

Similarly, the vestry of Halliwell, an industrial township near Bolton, judged an application in December 1814 along the following lines,

Molly Moscrop, the widow of the late Saml Moscrop applies for relief and says she has six children and the eldest is 7 years of age and the youngest is 7 months, she says she can get 3/6 per week and her eldest has had 3/6 a week as a tear boy at Kirkalls print works, so that she only has 7/ per week for the support of herself and six children.⁵⁸

The vestry granted her an allowance to augment her wage income but later reduced her allowance as she undertook less paid work! Meanwhile, for those with illegitimate children, work and wage earning were probably integral parts of being seen as deserving of relief. In a survey of the poor of Garstang in 1817 we find, 'Mary Taylor, 34 years old earns 20d a week by winding and can weave. Has one bastard child, a boy 3 years old. 4/.'⁵⁹ No attempt to work might bring short shrift from a vestry. Such was the attitude of the Garstang vestry to a later application, 'Margaret Cundliffe wants relief for herself and her bastard – she is a young woman in health and has only one child. Refused.'⁶⁰

For some, the connection between wages and relief at the heart of the economy of makeshifts could be a very long-term experience. Molly Moscrop provides one example of a long-term connection and Frederick Eden provides others. In the gunpowder making community of Warwick, Cumberland, he noted the case of,

M. B, a widow aged 45 has received parochial aid about 10 years, her allowance is 2 pounds a year, which added to her earnings by spinning and working for farmers is sufficient to maintain her and her children.⁶¹

Moreover, at about the time Eden was writing, the vestry of Colne was recording the case of Widow Stewart who,

has been these last years in receipt of an allowance of 2/ per week, but now wants 1/6 or at least 1/ more. She has 3/ per week from her work with Messrs Elliot, bleachers, and 2/ from her work with James Mghie, spinner. In consideration of her good history with the vestry, a further allowance of 1/ per week is to be granted.⁶²

The day-to-day activity of the poor law itself also placed work at the heart of the economy of makeshifts in many north-western communities. For instance, overseers frequently paid for items to support work, rather than simply doling out relief. This included expenditure on things like coals for blacksmiths, looms, potatoes for seeding and cloth for selling. In terms of overall poor law budgets, these sorts of expenditure were usually small but the effect may have been disproportionate. In the Lancashire parish of Longton, for instance, the poor law authorities entered into agreement with a local merchant partnership that the parish would pay loom rents for local textile workers, keeping a whole range of people off relief who might have been otherwise dependent.⁶³ This group of marginal poor could also be supported in work by the creative use of poor law spending on goods given in kind. Thus, in Birkdale during the relief years 1812/13 and 1813/14, over one third (by value) of specified non-administrative expenditure in the town accounts was directed towards payments in kind, which encompassed expenditure on board and lodgings, clothing, the making of clothing, medicine, rent, coal, potatoes, turf, shoes and shoe mending, and a subvention to the local charity.⁶⁴ Where the demand created by this pattern of payments was met by awarding large money-saving contracts to a restricted range of suppliers, the externalities of expenditure in kind were limited, but with imagination the work flowing from payment in kind could be spread around individuals who were either poor themselves or might be dependent upon communal relief otherwise.

And the poor law could also be more proactive in finding work for poor people in the north-west. The strongest evidence of this comes from Lancashire, where vestry books regularly record

overseers being directed to negotiate with employers for employment of people who were in, or looked like sinking into, poverty. In Garstang, for instance, the overseers had a regular dialogue with the owners of the local calico printing factory and the 1817 survey of the poor (and the decision-making process leading up to it) shows that considerable numbers of those on relief were in some form of employment.⁶⁵ In Cowpe, there was a more direct connection in the sense that mill-owners and their relatives were the biggest contributors to the local rates, owned most of the debts run up by a constant tendency for the poor law to overspend, and were the most active people in the administration of relief. There was thus a close inverse connection between net poor law expenditure in the township and levels of wages and employment.

The range of other potential coping strategies in the north-west was considerable, and there is not the space to review them here.⁶⁶ It is appropriate, however, to round off this section with a discussion of a category of welfare which we might broadly label self-help. In particular, we must make some allowance for the impact of friendly societies since it is now clear that all but the most casual or lowest paid occupations might contribute to friendly societies in the north-west.⁶⁷ Such societies were not renowned for their longevity, but some of their rules are important for this general appreciation of the economy of makeshifts. The Caldbeck (Cumberland) friendly society identified by Eden can stand for many. This society (incorporating perhaps one third of the population) promised members 4–6s. per week during bouts of sickness, with the actual level dependent on the state of the society reserves. For those who were old (defined as 70+) there was a guarantee of 4s. per week irrespective of whether the person was still working. This was at a time when Caldbeck pensioners not linked to a friendly society were receiving less than 2s. per week on average. Such entitlement was not a bar to application for relief. In Cumrew (Cumberland), Eden recorded the case of

A. D a labourer receives occasional relief from the parish to the amount of about 10s. He belongs to a friendly society, from which he receives 4s a week. He has been long sick and has a small family of children to maintain.⁶⁸

Such small sums would not have guaranteed subsistence for a family, but the connection between friendly society and poor relief is important. This connection is repeated in Lancashire; of the

76 people who deposited friendly society membership certificates with the overseers of Great Bolton between 1799 and 1834, 52 needed to apply for relief in addition to their friendly society benefits, and of these 17 became regular pensioners at levels of under 2s.⁶⁹ This is the sort of holistic approach to welfare strategies suggested by John Broad.

The economy of makeshifts: a community and individual view

This sort of aggregate view is a useful advance for the historiography of north-western welfare patterns. To really understand the economy of makeshifts, however, we need to pin down how the different alternative strategies were explored over time, and the exact nature of the relationship between the resources offered by these strands and those deployed by the poor law. For this, we need a detailed local study, and one concerned particularly with the key period of pressure on the old poor law (and hence the wider economy of makeshifts) in the first three decades of the nineteenth century.

The community of Cowpe (along with the hamlets of Hall Carr, Lenches and Newhallhey) was situated in the Rossendale area of Lancashire and can provide this sort of overview. Combining limited agriculture with outwork in the cotton and woollen industries, factory weaving and the finishing trades, the complex economy of the township supported a small population of 797 by 1801.⁷⁰ On the face of it, the poverty problem in the township would appear to have been substantial. The mean number of people relieved in each year 1806–30 was 73 (9.1 per cent of the entire population)⁷¹ and in most years the poor law expenditure account was substantially overdrawn despite the raising of several extra assessments in some years. Gross expenditure which had stood at £254 in 1806 had risen to £422 by 1817 and peaked at £504 in 1826. Periodic trade crises could throw large numbers out of work in these isolated mills and finishing shops, as could extraordinary events such as the machine breaking and mill burning episodes which racked Rossendale in 1826. Moreover, there was a seasonality to employment which one does not find in lower-lying industrial areas. Snow, torrential rain and heath fires were a constant threat to communication links, and a bad

Figure 8.4 Pension payments in early nineteenth-century Cowpe

winter could upset employment patterns. And Cowpe, like other industrial communities, had a substantial core of those afflicted by life-cycle poverty problems associated with too many children, spousal death, old age and sickness or occupational accident and disease.

The role of the communal welfare system in ameliorating these needs was strictly limited. Figure 8.4 shows that the majority of all pension payments were less than 3 shillings per week by the early nineteenth century.⁷² In turn, pensions accounted for between 50 and 70 per cent of all communal expenditure depending on the year, with the rest expended on payment in kind and a series of small doles to meet immediate need. The latter are particularly important. Mill-owners and their relatives were the biggest contributors to the local rates, owned most of the debts run up by a constant tendency for the poor law to overspend, and were the most active people in the administration of relief. There is thus a sense in which small and irregular money payments were used to keep the core of the local population (and hence a potential labour force in this remote area of Lancashire) in place through seasonal fluctuations, periods of falling piece and time rates, and episodes of life-cycle crises. There is more to be said about the operation and inclusivity of the poor law in Cowpe, but the key point is that the area must have witnessed a complex economy of makeshifts at both community and individual level.

Figure 8.5 Community-level economy of makeshifts in Cowpe

In this sense, it is important that in Cowpe we can do more than simply concentrate on the poor law and narratives springing from its operation to understand the economy of makeshifts. Figure 8.5 attempts a crude reconstruction of the resources available to poor people at community level. It requires explanation and clarification of the underlying assumptions. Thus for the period 1806–30 the graph identifies ‘poor’ people in three sources – poor law records, the records of formal charity disbursed by the churchwardens, and the records of informal charity. The distinct individuals from these three sources (tallied against reconstitution data) form the basis for further linkage through other potential welfare sources.⁷³ Figure 8.5 thus takes all of the traceable income for all people classified as poor in at least one of these basic sources and aggregates it to produce a nominal township economy of makeshifts. The exercise has many drawbacks, but may nonetheless be instructive.

Within the aggregated data, ‘Parish work’ refers to the wages or monetary value of payment in kind, given to poor individuals by parish officers other than the overseer. The churchwarden, for instance, employed poor people to clear graveyards, ring bells or police the congregation, while the surveyors employed poor people to keep the roads open in bad weather, or to repair the roads year round.⁷⁴ For the purposes of Figure 8.5 the poor law accounts have, as far as possible, been stripped of all payments made to

'poor' people for providing services to other poor people, including allowances for nursing, care of children, making clothing, or providing board and lodging, and these have been included in this 'Parish work' category. 'Informal charity' refers to the proceeds of local collections for the poor as long as these collections resulted in local expenditure, distributions at church recorded by the churchwardens, and also the charity expenditure of local elites. The owners of Waterfoot Mill in Cowpe – the Whiteheads – kept records of the amounts of money disbursed at their door or at the mill to poor people in the locality between 1817 and 1821. While David Whitehead suggested that,

workpeople are very poor economists when trade is good and then when trade becomes bad, having nothing beforehand, are hard up and soon in deep poverty. They blame everything but themselves.⁷⁵

He still gave out charity, noting that 'my wife felt a great interest in the welfare of the people, particularly to the females'.⁷⁶ The graph makes two assumptions about this part of the informal charity category. First (and most reasonably) that the mean level of disbursement by the Whitehead family can also be applied to the years 1806–17 and 1822–30. Second (and less defensibly), that the two other major mill-owning families in the locality gave the same amounts in informal charity. The size of this category is small and the charity of local families just one part of it, so changing these assumptions would not change this part of the graph dramatically.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, 'Wages' refers to the waged income of 'poor' people derived from two sources: first (and least significantly), the wage account books of Hareholme Mill;⁷⁸ second (and most importantly), the 1799–1800, 1800–4, 1820, 1816 and 1826–30 accounts of 'work put out by Rossendale mills'. These record the recipients of wages paid for tasks such as spinning, weaving, repairing faulty cloth, combing and carrying which can then be linked back to the list of those nominally poor to obtain some perspective on the work of poor people.⁷⁹ Of course, outwork of this sort was just one potential source of wages, and can thus only provide a minimal picture of the role of work in the welfare process, but they are nonetheless a useful proxy.⁸⁰

There are also two other components of Figure 8.5. 'Credit' refers to year end debts recorded by people classed as 'poor' in the Waterfoot Mill Shop account book running from 1817–26.⁸¹

This shop appears to have catered not just for mill employees, but for the whole locality, not surprising in the light of the lack of a market and the fact that no shopkeepers were recorded in the rate books for the town. Indeed, David Whitehead noted in his diary that the site of his first mill

was a small place and had no shop to sell any food. The workpeople complained of having so far to go to buy their food. So I began to sell flour and meal, and other grocery.⁸²

Again, using this data involves deploying some assumptions. Most importantly, the mill shop came into existence with the firm in 1816/17, but Figure 8.5 assumes that the levels of credit found after this date also apply to the earlier period. This may be pulling the evidence too far, but such assumptions fit well with the wider culture of credit that we can observe in nineteenth-century Lancashire, and with Keith Wrightson's siting of credit at the heart of the generalised economy of makeshifts.⁸³ Finally, 'Other' in this framework refers to miscellaneous small sources of welfare income for the poor, such as the £3 disbursed by Colonel Dawson when he stayed in the town on his way to Manchester in 1820.

Clearly, even if one accepts the validity and usefulness of this sort of approach in the first place, key parts of Figure 8.5 are built upon a raft of assumptions. And even if those assumptions are accurate, the graph at best uncovers only part of the aggregate welfare spectrum. A range of other welfare avenues undoubtedly existed but we have inadequate records. There are also completely unquantifiable benefits which cannot be incorporated into the analysis. On 24 March 1816, for instance, the poor law authorities employed a loom master to repair the looms of local people who might otherwise be obliged to interrupt work and claim poor relief. Similarly, the overseers lent, outside the framework of the poor law accounts, money to buy looms. Moreover, the life story of David Whitehead suggests a very ingrained culture of barter in this part of Lancashire. Recalling his time as a hawker (one of a plethora of jobs he undertook before establishing his firm), he noted,

I found it very difficult to sell for ready money. People wanted to take goods and pay so much per month ... I found a many of weavers in the country places ... who would often ask me if I took any white iron. By this they meant would I exchange my goods with them for weft which they had pilfered from their masters. I found one

shopkeeper, a grocer, who wished to exchange with me some of this kind of weft for some of my goods. He had exchanged his groceries with the weavers for this kind of weft.⁸⁴

With these caveats in mind, it seems clear that even if this approach is only partially right we must accept that poor relief (corrected for outparish relief) was a significant source of welfare, but nonetheless a minority player in the overall resources available to the economy of makeshifts at township level during some years. In fact for Cowpe there seems little scope for placing the poor law at the centre of the welfare web in terms of its direct payments to poor people. This conclusion is interesting and goes a little way to substantiating what welfare historians have always known to be true about historical communities.

Conclusion: the state of the poor again

We might conclude with a question. If there was a complex economy of makeshifts operating in the north-west, in which ordinary people combined multiple strategies in the day-to-day business of making ends meet, what sort of living did this economy of makeshifts provide? Housing surveys of poor people in different areas of the north-west during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries provide one way into this question. The survey of housing in Birkdale tells us much about the conditions of those trying to piece together a living from a variety of sources which offered neither generous or stable income flows. 'Little Common' in the township was largely owned by the Blundell family, who rented plots to several tenants.⁸⁵ It is here that we find the 'town cottages' for poor people. A report on these cottages in 1815 suggests that none of the inhabitants (a mixture of large families, the old and widows) were receiving direct relief from the poor law, and it highlighted a litany of poor conditions, for instance,

The walls are nearly without plaster and almost as black as soot through the chimney smoke ... The windows are nearly all out and broken. The roof or thatch is bad and rains in.⁸⁶

Of the last cottage that the surveyor saw, he noted,

The chamber is filled with a pair of looms and lumber. The bedding wet when I saw it by the rain coming through the roof. They enlarge the bed at night by placing stools and chairs on 2 sides of it.⁸⁷

These perspectives must be set within the context of generally bad housing in south-west Lancashire, and perhaps within the context of a surveyor with a point to make to the township, but the survey is nonetheless a significant one. It shows the experiences of those people who were excluded, or excluded themselves, from the process of poor relief in the township, and it is clear that such conditions would have matched those of the poorest labourers in the rural south at the same time. The domestic environment was no less compromised for those turned down for relief or for those getting inadequate relief in other areas. In the Lancashire townships of Garstang, Nether Wyersdale, Ulmes Walton, Chorley and Broughton the poor law authorities actively managed the concentration of poor people into the worst township housing during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by capping the amount of rent that they would reimburse to landlords.⁸⁸ Just how bad this sort of housing was likely to have been can be seen in the scheme to divide up the common lands of Cockerham in March 1790, where the indifferent state of the (mainly town) cottages in one parcel of land used in the allocation process attracted the comment of the surveyor and resulted in the application of a very low notional value for the acreage concerned.⁸⁹

More stories of this sort could be deployed to illustrate the precarious domestic state of those who were engaged in the economy of makeshifts in northern and north-western communities. Harsh poor law decision-making exacerbated demand for the resources offered by alternative welfare avenues, resulting in limited weekly incomes and poor living conditions. The complex economy of makeshifts yielded, probably after much time-consuming searching, limited and potentially very unstable extra income. If we write into this equation periodic trade fluctuations which could throw whole regions on to relief, degrading such alternative welfare strategies, then one can see that endemic poverty was alive and well in the north-west. Where Eden thought of the economy of makeshifts in the eighteenth-century north-west in positive terms, this analysis suggests that in terms of resource yield, if not in terms of the symbolism of semi-independence, the economy of makeshifts was more an expression of despair and communal failure than the triumph of individual ingenuity over the forces of increasing risk and uncertainty marshalled by agrarian and industrial capitalism.

Notes

- 1 The data for this chapter were collected with the generous support of the Scoloudie Foundation and British Academy, and much of the writing was undertaken during my time as visiting professor at the University of Trier in 1998. I am grateful to the foundation and to Professor Dr Dietrich Ebeling of the University of Trier for their support. I am also grateful to Alannah Tomkins, for her perceptive commentary on earlier drafts of this chapter.
- 2 D. Thomson, 'The welfare of the elderly in the past: a family or community responsibility?', in M. Pelling and R. M. Smith (eds), *Life, Death and the Elderly: Historical Perspectives* (London, Routledge, 1991) and M. Daunt, *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain 1700–1850* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995).
- 3 See T. Wales, 'Poverty, poor relief and the life-cycle: some evidence from seventeenth century Norfolk' in R. M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life Cycle* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984), and P. Thane, 'Government and society in England and Wales 1750–1914', in F. M. L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750–1950* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990).
- 4 R. M. Smith, 'Ageing and well being in early modern England: pension trends and gender preferences under the English Old Poor Law 1650–1800', in P. Johnson and P. Thane (eds), *Old Age From Antiquity to Post Modernity* (London, Routledge, 1998).
- 5 P. King, 'Pauper inventories and the material lives of the poor in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', in T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor 1640–1840* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997).
- 6 S. Hindle, 'Power, poor relief and social relations in Holland Fen, c. 1600–1800', *Historical Journal*, 41 (1998).
- 7 This chapter is particularly concerned with responses to life-cycle poverty problems.
- 8 For an early example, see Cumbria Record Office, Kendal (hereafter KRO) uncatalogued, 'The great end book of Ravenstonedale'. My thanks to Professor R. W. Hoyle for bringing this source to my attention in 1995.
- 9 K. Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 270–313.
- 10 B. Stapleton, 'Inherited poverty and life-cycle poverty: Odiham, Hampshire, 1650–1850' *Social History*, 18 (1993).
- 11 E. H. Hunt, 'Paupers and pensioners past and present', *Ageing and Society*, 9 (1990).
- 12 J. Broad, 'Parish economies of welfare, 1650–1834', *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999).

- 13 Smith, 'Pension trends'.
- 14 E. C. Midwinter, *Social Administration in Lancashire* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1969), p. 62.
- 15 See S. A. King, *Poverty and Welfare, 1700–1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000).
- 16 The sources for this figure are Rawtenstall Library (hereafter RL), Rc 352 RAW, 'The poor law accounts of Cowpe 1806–1831', Lancashire Record Office (hereafter LRO) PR2095, 'Account book of Aughton, 1784–1838', LRO DDX 1852/4, 'Ulmes Walton poor law accounts 1800–36', LRO PR795 and 796, 'Accounts of Greenhalgh 1741–1838', LRO DDLi (uncatalogued), 'Poor law accounts of Warrington', KRO WPR/81, 'Overseer account book for Temple Sowerby, 1765–1837' and WPR/89/01, 'Old poor law accounts for Cartmel, 1761–1832'. The years chosen for analysis are deliberately located within the supposed crisis of the old poor law. This chapter eschews a discussion of the socio-economic, topographical or institutional structures of these communities because its aim is to highlight similarities of welfare experience at the individual and aggregate level.
- 17 These years were chosen because they encompass a sustained upsurge in national relief expenditure. The communities are KRO WPR/9/VI, 'Orton vestry minutes 1790–1902', LRO MBCO/7/1, 'Colne rate-payers minutes', and Bolton Local Studies library (hereafter BL) HTB 1/2, 'Halliwell township minutes'.
- 18 LRO MBCO/7/1, 'Colne ratepayers minutes'.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 LRO DDX 386/3, 'Garstang vestry minutes'.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 LRO MBCO/7/1, 'Colne ratepayers minutes'.
- 25 BL HTB 1/2, 'Halliwell'.
- 26 See J. S. Taylor, 'Voices in the crowd: the Kirby Lonsdale township letters 1809–1834' in Hitchcock *et al.*, *Chronicling Poverty*, pp. 109–26. The best Lancashire collections are LRO PR2391/2–46, 'Overseers letters for Billington' and LRO DDNw 9/8–12, 'Petitions for relief in Newton with Scales'.
- 27 F. M. Eden, *The State of the Poor*, vol. 2 (London, 1797), p. 46.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 49.
- 29 P. Laslett, *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972).
- 30 T. Sokoll, *Household and Family Among the Poor: The Case of Two Essex Communities in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Bochum, Verlaag fur Regionalgeschichte, 1993). We should beware of focusing exclusively on co-residence. Where kin lived nearby there may have been little need to vary household structure.

- 31 Small household sizes do not reflect source weaknesses. Richard Wall's discussion of regional differences in household size has highlighted consistently low figures from the late eighteenth century to the time of the first census: see R. Wall, 'Regional and temporal variations in English household structure from 1650', in J. Hobcraft and P. Rees (eds), *Regional Demographic Development* (London, Croom Helm, 1979); R. Wall, 'Characteristics of European family and household systems', *Historical Social Research*, 23 (1998).
- 32 See L. Ashcroft (ed.), *Vital Statistics: The Westmorland Census of 1787* (Berwick, Curwen Archives Trust, 1992). No general guidelines were issued by the justices other than the order that constables should 'Make returns of the names and number of inhabitants within their different constablewicks distinguishing their occupation, sex and of what each family severally consists'. Interestingly, most places make a distinction between those who were poor and those who were poor and supported or partly supported by the poor law. The latter group were always a small minority of the former group, adding weight to the contention that there was a considerable level of 'background' poverty.
- 33 See R. M. Smith, 'Charity, self-interest and welfare: reflections from demography and family history', in M. Daunt (ed.), *Charity, Self Interest and Welfare in the English Past* (London, UCL Press, 1996) and P. Laslett, 'Family, kinship and collectivity as systems of support in pre-industrial Europe: a consideration of the nuclear hardship hypothesis', *Continuity and Change*, 3 (1988).
- 34 LRO DDX 386/3, 'Garstang vestry minutes', June 1816.
- 35 *Ibid.*, August 1816.
- 36 *Ibid.*, September 1820. By July 1821, the allowance had risen to 6s. 6d.
- 37 See S. A. King and J. C. Muldrew, 'Cash, wages and the economy of makeshifts in England, 1650–1800', in P. Scholliers and L. D. Schwarz (eds), *Worlds of Wages* (Oxford, Berghahn, 2003). Payment of relief in kind rather than cash is a similar example.
- 38 For the most recent survey see H. Cunningham and J. Innes (eds), *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform From the 1690s to 1850* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1998).
- 39 See J. A. Johnston, 'Family, kin and community in eight Lincolnshire parishes 1567–1800', *Rural History*, 6 (1995), and W. Coster, *Kinship and Inheritance in Early Modern England: Three Yorkshire Parishes* (York, Borthwick Institute, 1993). The trend was least marked in the distant rural counties such as Westmorland and Cumberland. In the Westmorland communities of Undermilkbeck and Applethwaite, for instance, Thomas Dixon left 20s. per annum to the poor in 1730, James Satherwaite left the interest on 100 pounds to the poor in 1785, and Margaret Williams left the interest on 67 pounds to the poor in 1789. If we combine these with existing historical legacies,

we can see that the capital for these two townships amounted to over 1,500 pounds by the later eighteenth century. At 5 per cent interest, this would eclipse the formal poor relief bill for the townships at this date.

- 40 Using the records only of endowed charities that gave out cash or made other provision that might be considered part of a practical economy of makeshifts.
- 41 The communities are Cartmel, Crosby Ravensworth, Whalley, and Treales. See LRO PR 2777/5, 'Whalley St George's day charity', KRO WPC/11/4, 'Ed Thwaite's charity, Crosby Ravensworth, 1751–1840', KRO WPC/12, 'Crosby Ravensworth charity book', KRO WPR 17/4, 'Overseers accounts for Crosby Ravensworth', KRO WPR 14, 'Charity accounts for Cartmel', KRO WPR 89/01, 'Old Poor Law accounts for Cartmel 1761–1832', KRO WPR/Chapelwardens 3, 'Accounts for Cartmel 1721–98' and LRO DDX/1910/1–2, 'Accounts of Boultons charity, Treales'. The graph deals with poor relief expenditure net of administration costs and excludes charity money which was administered by the parish and included in records of poor relief expenditure.
- 42 See R. Watson, 'Poverty in north-east Lancashire in 1843: evidence from quaker charity records', *Local Population Studies*, 55 (1995).
- 43 Midwinter, *Social Administration*.
- 44 KRO WD/D/D6/68, 'Donations to the poor in Foulshaw'.
- 45 KRO Wd/Te/8/3, 'The diary of Benjamin Browne', KRO WD/Te/16/4, 'Account book', KRO WD/Te/24, 'Poor law accounts for Troutbeck', and KRO WPR/62/W2, 'Overseers accounts'.
- 46 LRO DDSc/24/10, 'Bargain'.
- 47 See, for instance, LRO DDHe/104/9, 'Accounts of Thomas Hesketh re poor'.
- 48 S. Horrell and J. Humphries, 'Old questions, new data and alternative perspectives: families' living standards in the industrial revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, 52 (1992), and J. Humphries, 'Enclosure, common rights and women: the proletarianisation of families in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', *Journal of Economic History*, 50 (1990). Also P. King, 'Customary right and women's earnings: the importance of gleaning to the rural labouring poor 1750–1850', *Economic History Review*, 44 (1991).
- 49 LRO DDCm/2/177, 'Particulars of tenants of the waste lands of the township of Blackburn, April 1824'.
- 50 See, for instance CRO WD/Big/1/64/36, 'Plan of encroachments in Beetham'.
- 51 See, for instance, LRO DDGa/17/88–89, 'Correspondence regarding trespassing', LRO DDHe/82/18, 'Correspondence on the taking of game, 1804', LRO DDHe/79/104a, 'Memorandum regarding trespassing in Hesketh fisheries, 1821', and LRO DDB/acc 6685/Box 176, 'Game preservation, 1818–1819'.

- 52 See R. Wall, 'Work, welfare and the family: an illustration of the adaptive economy' in L. Bonfield, R. M. Smith and K. Wrightson (eds), *The World We Have Gained* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986).
- 53 LRO PR810, 'Kirkham order book'.
- 54 LRO PR1332–1334, 'Accounts of Barnacre with Bonds'.
- 55 LRO DDX 386/3, 'Garstang vestry minutes'.
- 56 LRO PR810, 'Kirkham order book'.
- 57 LRO DDX 386/3, 'Garstang vestry minutes'.
- 58 BL HTB 1/2, 'Halliwell'. For an instructive view on the role of work in the household economies of widows, see E. Musgrave, 'Women and craft guilds in eighteenth century Nantes', in G. Crossick (ed.), *The Artisan and the European town* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 1997).
- 59 LRO DDX 386/3, 'Garstang vestry minutes'.
- 60 *Ibid.*
- 61 Eden, *The State*, p. 92.
- 62 LRO MBC0/7/1, 'Colne ratepayers minutes'.
- 63 LRO DDHe/83/84, 'Cottage and loom rents'. In 1820 the overseers spent £16 hiring looms for 27 people.
- 64 LRO DDIn/63/37, 'Accounts of Birkdale township'.
- 65 Overseers and recipients sometimes conflicted over the relationship between work and welfare where there were moves forcibly to apprentice the children of poor families, undermining the fragile household economies of paupers. Resistance was strong and women seem to have been adept in northern communities at moving their children around households in communities to avoid the scrutiny of the overseer.
- 66 One potentially important avenue was to run up rent arrears. In the Lancashire township of Longton, pauper cottages with a nominal annual rental of £365 18s. in 1820 had accrued rent arrears of £209 18s. 6d. See LRO DDHe/83/84, 'Cottage and loom rents'.
- 67 Though this is a perspective which seems to escape the most recent contribution to the debate: see M. Gorsky, 'The growth and distribution of English friendly societies in the early nineteenth century', *Economic History Review*, 51 (1998).
- 68 Eden, *The State*, p. 69. See also LRO DDX/28/51, 'The rules and regulations of the Chatburn friendly society'.
- 69 BL PGB/2/1–76, 'Friendly society membership certificates', and LRO DDX/153, 'Friendly society membership certificates'.
- 70 Manchester Central Reference Library (hereafter MCL) L 75/8/1, 'Parish records 1790–1830'.
- 71 However, the accounts conflate those receiving relief from the township itself, those who were sent their relief whilst living away in other townships (but who are still listed in the accounts), and those who received relief from other townships while living in Cowpe (and who are also listed in the accounts). In the overseer records

out-township and in-township relief recipients are distinguished and stripping the former group from the relief lists suggests that no more than 4 per cent of the population were likely to have been dependent on relief in any one year.

72 RL Rc 352 Raw, 'The poor law accounts of Cowpe'.

73 This procedure biases the reading of the graph in two ways. First, those struggling to maintain independence on the margins of economy and society will be missed if they do not appear in these sources. Second, all of those who appear in the three sources are treated as nominally poor, no matter how many or how few times they appear. On record linkage procedures, see S. A. King, 'Power, representation and the self: problems with sources for record linkage', *Local Historian*, 27 (1997), and *idem*, 'Historical demography, life-cycle reconstruction and family reconstitution: new perspectives', *History and Computing*, 8 (1996).

74 For these records, see RL uncatalogued, 'Accounts'.

75 RL RC 921 WHI, 'Diary of David Whitehead'.

76 *Ibid.*

77 See RL RC 921, 'Family papers' and RL RC 942 CRA, 'Diary'.

78 RL RC 677 CLO, 'Mill accounts, with wages and medical certificates'.

79 RL RC 677, 'Wage account book for outworkers 1799–1800', RL RC Ros, 'Sale and subcontracting book 1826–30', RL RC Ros, 'Cash account book 1800–1804', and RL RC Clo, 'Outworker account book 1820'.

80 Figure 8.5 incorporates an important assumption about the contribution of work – that the mean figure for outwork by value to poor people in the years of detailed accounts can be applied to the years during the period 1806–30 where we do not have detailed breakdowns.

81 The category is misleading in a number of senses. Most importantly, it records debts only at year end when the shop formally balanced accounts – a sort of net credit. An alternative option would have been to aggregate the monthly debts and apply them. See RL RC 658, 'Accounts'.

82 RL RC 921 WHI, 'The diary of David Whitehead'.

83 S. A. King and J. G. Timmins, *Making Sense of the Industrial Revolution* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000); Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*.

84 RL RC 921 WHI, 'The diary of David Whitehead'.

85 LRO DDIn/66/30, 'Birkdale rental 1814'.

86 LRO DDIn/45/14, 'Report on the town cottages of Birkdale'.

87 *Ibid.*

88 King, *Poverty*.

89 LRO DDCm/13/3, 'Scheme'.