

Chapter 1 : Act for the Relief of the Poor - Wikipedia

English Poor Laws: Historical Precedents of Tax-Supported Relief for the Poor In , England was experiencing a severe economic depression, with large scale unemployment and widespread famine. Queen Elizabeth proclaimed a set of laws designed to maintain order and contribute to the general good of the kingdom: the English Poor Laws.

In a new Poor Law was introduced. Some people welcomed it because they believed it would: Children who entered the workhouse would receive some schooling. In return for this care, all workhouse paupers would have to work for several hours each day. However, not all Victorians shared this point of view. The poor themselves hated and feared the threat of the workhouse so much that there were riots in northern towns. Click on this extract from an anti-Poor Law Poster drawn in How desperate are the people trying to get into the workhouse? What is the response of the workhouse master? Click on this extract from the poster. What work are these paupers doing? The paupers believe they are treated much worse than slaves in the West Indies. Why would this statement have shocked people at this time? What is he going to do with it? What does this part of the poster tell you about the treatment of the old? Why do you think that the government was keen to make sure that people in workhouses worked? According to the poster how long were inmates expected to work each day? How many hours sleep were they allowed? What punishments can you see in the poster? What does the artist think about the new Poor Law? What are the problems of using this poster as evidence of what the workhouses were like? Background Before , the cost of looking after the poor was growing more expensive every year. This cost was paid for by the middle and upper classes in each town through their local taxes. There was a real suspicion amongst the middle and upper classes that they were paying the poor to be lazy and avoid work. After years of complaint, a new Poor Law was introduced in The new Poor Law was meant to reduce the cost of looking after the poor and impose a system which would be the same all over the country. Under the new Poor Law, parishes were grouped into unions and each union had to build a workhouse if they did not already have one. Except in special circumstances, poor people could now only get help if they were prepared to leave their homes and go into a workhouse. Conditions inside the workhouse were deliberately harsh, so that only those who desperately needed help would ask for it. Families were split up and housed in different parts of the workhouse. The poor were made to wear a uniform and the diet was monotonous. There were also strict rules and regulations to follow. Inmates, male and female, young and old were made to work hard, often doing unpleasant jobs such as picking oakum or breaking stones. Children could also find themselves hired out to work in factories or mines. Shortly after the new Poor Law was introduced, a number of scandals hit the headlines. The most famous was Andover Workhouse, where it was reported that half-starved inmates were found eating the rotting flesh from bones. In response to these scandals the government introduced stricter rules for those who ran the workhouses and they also set up a system of regular inspections. However, inmates were still at the mercy of unscrupulous masters and matrons who treated the poor with contempt and abused the rules. Although most people did not have to go to the workhouse, it was always threatening if a worker became unemployed, sick or old. Increasingly, workhouses contained only orphans, the old, the sick and the insane. Not surprisingly the new Poor Law was very unpopular. It seemed to punish people who were poor through no fault of their own. One way of encouraging pupils to analyse this rich source is by helping them to see that the poster is really made up of smaller pictures. By dealing with one small picture at a time, commenting on and analysing the poster can become more manageable. To extend their work, pupils can create their own new Poor Law poster, either for or against the law. Or they can be asked to write to the government complaining about the harshness of the new Poor Law. They could also work in groups to create an alternative plan to deal with the problem of the rising cost of looking after the poor. The lesson can also be used as a starting point for investigating the new Poor Law in more depth and discussing attitudes to the poor in 19th century Britain.

Chapter 2 : The English Poor Law, by Paul Slack

A History of the English Poor Law From to the Present Time; Being a Supplementary Volume to "a History of the English Poor Law" By Sir George Nicholls, K. C. B., Poor Law Commissioner and Secretary to the Poor Law Board by Thomas Mackay.

The information may however be there just waiting to be discovered. The poor law records described below were some of the most important a parish would keep and in many cases have survived, especially in rural communities, when registers may have been lost. Most indices refer only to the main party but often other people, friends and neighbors are mentioned, or you may find an ancestor with a parish office. Be sure to read the account books of the overseers and constables and even if you fail to find your family I feel sure that the exercise of reading all the documents will fascinate you as it has me and give you a valuable insight into the community your family served and lived in. This tradition was as much necessity as compassion, the open field system of farming was very much a communal way of life depending on mutual co-operation and the preservation of a labour force. This was a fact of life as much for the Lord of the Manor as for the ordinary village population as the villagers would work the manorial lands as part of their tenancy agreement. Throughout the 14th to 16th centuries the wealth of Britain was underwritten by the wool trade and in the quest for this wealth large tracts of land were turned over to sheep farming. This eventually led to an underclass of dispossessed poor wandering the countryside seeking work, settlement and charity. This posed a threat to the stability of the realm and with this view a series Elizabethan poor law acts were passed in , , , and . In the poor were categorized for the first time into deserving, the elderly and the very young, the infirm, and families who occasionally found themselves in financial difficulties due to a change in circumstance , they were considered deserving of social support and the undeserving, these were people who often turned to crime to make a living such as highwaymen or pickpockets, migrant workers who roamed the country looking for work, and individuals who begged for a living , who were to be treated harshly. The act of introduced the first compulsory poor local poor law tax, an important step acknowledging that alleviating poverty was the responsibility of local communities, in the concept of the workhouse was born and in the post of overseer of the poor was created. They signaled an important progression from private charity to welfare state, where the care and supervision of the poor was embodied in law and integral to the management of each town, village and hamlet. Another sign of their success was that the disorder and disturbance which had been feared by Parliament failed to materialize. There is no doubt that the laws helped the destitute by guaranteeing a minimum level of subsistence, but those who were scraping a living did not qualify for help and continued to struggle. And, as the years wore on and the population continued to increase, the provisions made to care for the poor became stretched to the limit. It is, however, a tribute to their lasting success that two of the Acts, from and , endured until well into the nineteenth Century. Poor law - The unit of local government was an always had been the parish but within an ecclesiastical parish there could be more than one poor law parish usually reflecting ancient Manors or Chapelries. Everyone would have a parish of legal settlement an if relief was required it would be the responsibility of that parish to provide it. Following all this changed as parliament denigrated the system bit by bit in response to the growth of the large industrial towns and their very different problems. Legal settlement was the overlying principle of poor relief, the qualifications for which were as follows: After you could be thrown out within 40 days and after you had to give 40 days notice before moving in. Holding a Parish Office. Being hired by a legally settled inhabitant for a continuous period of days. By the time you were married, had proved your worth and gained experience then longer hirings were possible therefore changing legal settlement. Having served a full apprenticeship to a legally settled man for the full 7 years. Having previously been granted poor relief. This condition implied that you had previously been accepted as being legally settled and was usually only referred to in settlement examinations. Females changed their legal settlement on marriage, adopting their husbands legal place of settlement. If a girl married a certificate man in her own parish and he died, she would automatically be removed to his place of legal settlement along with any issue from the marriage. This was virtually a form of indemnity issued by your

home parish stating that you and your family and future issue belonged to them and they would take you all back at their expense if you became chargeable to the parish. A settlement certificate was only valid if it bore the seals of the overseers of both parishes and that of the local Justices and was not transferable. Removal If you or your family became or threatened to become reliant on parish relief and you could not satisfy the strict guidelines for legal settlement then you were liable to be removed to the place of your last legal settlement. If you were a certificate man the you would be carted back to your old parish at their expense but if no settlement certificate was in force then a removal order was applied for from the local Justices of the Peace. This would usually involve an Examination as to Settlement carried out before the local justice, overseers and another ratepayer in order to ascertain your place of last legal settlement. In tenuous cases others may have to be examined also, parents, grandparents and siblings, these examinations could run into many pages virtually the life story of the individuals family. This was a way of disposing of possible future problems by altering their legal settlement status. If they served their full term of seven years then their legal settlement would be at the place of their masters settlement. Girls were usually apprenticed until they attained 21 or got married, problem solved, and boys till they were This extra three years gave the master a bit more cheap labour as an incentive. Although many of these apprenticeships were just an excuse for cheap labour some were meaningful, I have found many a parish apprentice prospering at his new home and in fact taking apprentices from his old parish later on. The Parish Indentures were important documents and sworn before the local Justice by the overseers and the churchwardens, Two copies were made one for the master and one for the parish. The master had a legal obligation to feed cloth and impart the mysteries of his trade for the duration of the contract. Illegitimacy Illegitimacy during this period was no big deal, it was accepted it happened and did not appear to be any bar to future marriage to the girl in question. Where it was a problem was with the poorer class of labourer who lived on the brink of poverty. When a girl from this class reached 13 or even earlier she would be placed in service some ware, so decreasing the financial burden on the household, if she became pregnant she would invariably lose her job and be thrown back on her family for support. The home parish would naturally become concerned that this would force the family into relief and if she died in childbirth, a real risk, there would be an orphan to support. With this in mind there was a necessity to try to find out who the father was. Issued by the church wardens and overseers of the poor this order would be implemented by the parish constable and in default a warrant was frequently issued and his possessions could be sold towards the debt. These orders were commonly called filiation orders or bastardy bonds. A labourer would have a smaller sum fixed say 2s a week and a master or farmer up to 3s 6d. Parish Relief The forms parish relief would take are varied. Where they survive, the overseers account books give a remarkable insight into village life, listing not only the rate payers but the recipients and the reasons for their relief. Money was not the only form of out relief, most parishes had houses set aside for the old or destitute. These could be either owned by the village, given as a charitable donation, alms houses , or rented specifically for the purpose. Orphans could be boarded out to local families and clothes or material to make clothes were provided as was the provision of medical care either by the local nurse! The money came from the poor rate, set annually by the overseers and various charities. The charities could be quite ancient and often held and administered by the Rector or Patron , these were often the source of litigation and to this end many churches had charity boards in the vestry or tower listing them. Many other charities specified bread or ale on certain days or bibles for the poor children. Other sources of income would come from ratepayers who were pressured into accepting those on relief as temporary labourers and the income from letting the lanes of the village for grazing and hay making. The poor would often be put to work by the parish surveyor repairing the roads and lanes. Details of these activities are usually found in the parish constables accounts book. These list the property and possessions of someone receiving parish relief with a view to ascertaining his wealth. After The poor law was radically following the great reform act of The main difference was that the relief of the poor was changed from a local responsibility into a group one. Groups of parishes were consolidated into Poor Law Unions so removing the local community responsibility. Out relief was discouraged and the workhouses, which had been in existence for the previous two centuries, became the primary source of relief. Throughout the remainder of the 19th century the laws were tightened and modified until the administration was transferred to the Ministry of Health in It was

not until that the poor laws were finally abolished.

Chapter 3 : English Poor Laws

The English Poor Laws were a system of poor relief which existed in England and Wales that developed out of late-medieval and Tudor-era laws being codified in The Poor Law system was in existence until the emergence of the modern welfare state after the Second World War.

History[edit] Medieval Poor Laws[edit] The Poor Laws in the aftermath of the Black Death pictured , when labour was in short supply, were concerned with making the able bodied work. Wages for labourers rose, and this forced up prices across the economy as goods became more expensive to produce. Vagabonds and Beggars Act and Act for the Relief of the Poor The origins of the English Poor Law system can be traced back to late medieval statutes dealing with beggars and vagrancy but it was only during the Tudor period that the Poor Law system became codified. Prior to the Dissolution of the Monasteries during the Tudors Reformation , monasteries had been the primary source of poor relief, but their dissolution resulted in poor relief moving from a largely voluntary basis to a compulsory tax that was collected at a parish level. Tudor attempts to tackle the problem originate during the reign of Henry VII. In , Parliament passed the Vagabonds and Beggars Act ordering that "vagabonds, idle and suspected persons shall be set in the stocks for three days and three nights and have none other sustenance but bread and water and then shall be put out of Town. Every beggar suitable to work shall resort to the Hundred where he last dwelled, is best known, or was born and there remain upon the pain aforesaid. Moreover, no distinction was made between vagrants and the jobless; both were simply categorised as " sturdy beggars ", to be punished and moved on. This change was confirmed in the Vagabonds Act the following year, with one important change: Generally, the licences to beg for the impotent poor were limited to the disabled, sick, and elderly. An able-bodied beggar was to be whipped, and sworn to return to the place where he was born, or last dwelt for the space of three years, and there put himself to labour. Still no provision was made, though, for the healthy man simply unable to find work. All able-bodied unemployed were put into the same category. Those unable to find work had a stark choice: In , a bill was drawn up calling for the creation of a system of public works to deal with the problem of unemployment , to be funded by a tax on income and capital. A law passed a year later allowed vagabonds to be whipped. In , the Vagabonds Act was passed that subjected vagrants to some of the more extreme provisions of the criminal law, namely two years servitude and branding with a "V" as the penalty for the first offence and death for the second. Justices of the Peace were reluctant to apply the full penalty. Under the assumption that parish collections would now relieve all poor, begging was completely prohibited. An Act passed in called for offenders to be burned through the ear for a first offence and that persistent beggars should be hanged. However, the Act also made the first clear distinction between the "professional beggar" and those unemployed through no fault of their own. Early in her reign, Elizabeth I also passed laws directly aimed at providing relief for the poor. For example, in , her Act for the Relief of the Poor required all parish residents with ability to pay to contribute to poor collections. The more immediate origins of the Elizabethan Poor Law system were deteriorating economic circumstances in sixteenth-century England. Historian George Boyer has stated that England suffered rapid inflation at this time caused by population growth, the debasement of coinage and the inflow of American silver. Hakluyt also broadens the scope and additionally recommends to empty the prisons and send them off to the New World. Old Poor Law[edit] Further information: The Elizabethan Poor Law [17] of formalized earlier practices of poor relief contained in the Act for the Relief of the Poor yet is often cited as the beginning of the Old Poor Law system. Some aged people might be accommodated in parish alms houses , though these were usually private charitable institutions. Meanwhile, able-bodied beggars who had refused work were often placed in Houses of Correction or even subjected to beatings to mend their attitudes. Provision for the many able-bodied poor in the workhouse, was relatively unusual, and most workhouses developed later. The Law said that parents and children were responsible for each other, elderly parents would live with their children. The system allowed for despotic behavior from the Overseers of the Poor [42] but as Overseers of the Poor would know their paupers they were considered able to differentiate between the deserving and undeserving poor making the system both more humane and initially more efficient. The system

provided social stability yet by needed to be adapted to cope with population increases, [43] greater mobility and regional price variations. Neither method of relief was at this time in history seen as harsh. The act was supposed to deal with beggars who were considered a threat to civil order. The Act was passed at a time when poverty was considered necessary as fear of poverty made people work. In a House of Correction was set up in each county. There was much variation in the application of the law and there was a tendency for the destitute to migrate towards the more generous parishes, usually situated in the towns. Unfortunately the laws reduced the mobility of labour and discouraged paupers from leaving their parish to find work. If they could not they were removed to the parish that was nearest to their place of birth, or where they might prove some connection; some paupers were moved hundreds of miles. Although the parishes they passed through en route had no responsibility for them, they were supposed to supply food and drink and shelter for at least one night. In an act was passed requiring those who begged to wear a "badge" of red or blue cloth on the right shoulder with an embroidered letter "P" and the initial of their parish. Following the example of Bristol , some twelve further towns and cities established similar corporations in the next two decades. As these corporations required a private Act, they were not suitable for smaller towns and individual parishes. Starting with the parish of Olney , Buckinghamshire in several dozen small towns and individual parishes established their own institutions without any specific legal authorization. These were concentrated in the South Midlands and in the county of Essex. From the late s the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge began to promote the idea of parochial workhouses. The Society published several pamphlets on the subject, and supported Sir Edward Knatchbull in his successful efforts to steer the Workhouse Test Act through parliament in More importantly, the Act helped to publicise the idea of establishing workhouses to a national audience. By some 1, parish and corporation workhouses had been established in England and Wales, housing almost , paupers. Perhaps one million people were receiving some kind of parish poor relief by the end of the century. The demands, needs and expectations of the poor also ensured that workhouses came to take on the character of general social policy institutions, combining the functions of creche, and night shelter, geriatric ward and orphanage. In , Thomas Gilbert finally succeeded in passing an Act [50] that established poor houses solely for the aged and infirm and introduced a system of outdoor relief for the able-bodied. This was the basis for the development of the Speenhamland system , which made financial provision for low-paid workers. Settlement Laws were altered by the Removal Act which prevented non-settled persons from being moved on unless they had applied for relief. Advertisement for builders to build a new Workhouse in north Wales , During the Napoleonic Wars it became difficult to import cheap grain into Britain which resulted in the price of bread increasing. Following peace in , the Tory government of Lord Liverpool [51] passed the Corn Laws [52] to keep the price of grain artificially high. Social attitudes to poverty began to change after and overhauls of the system were considered. The Poor Law system was criticized as distorting the free market and in a Parliamentary Select Committee looked into altering the system [55] which resulted in the Sturges-Bourne Acts being passed. The Royal Commission into the Operation of the Poor Laws [58] was set up following the widespread destruction and machine breaking of the Swing Riots. When the Act was introduced however it had been partly watered down. The report recommended separate workhouses for the aged, infirm, children, able-bodied females and able-bodied males. The report also stated that parishes should be grouped into unions in order to spread the cost of workhouses and a central authority should be established in order to enforce these measures. The Poor Law Commission set up by Earl Grey took a year to write its report, the recommendations passed easily through Parliament support by both main parties the Whigs and the Tories. The bill gained Royal Assent in The few who opposed the Bill were more concerned about the centralisation which it would bring rather than the underpinning philosophy of utilitarianism. Despite being labelled an "amendment act" it completely overhauled the existing system [55] and established a Poor Law Commission to oversee the national operation of the system. Although the aim of the legislation was to reduce costs to rate payers, one area not reformed was the method of financing of the Poor Law system which continued to be paid for by levying a "poor rate" [73] on the property owning middle classes. Although the Poor Law Amendment Act did not ban all forms of outdoor relief , [74] it stated that no able-bodied person was to receive money or other help from the Poor Law authorities except in a workhouse. Conditions in workhouses were to be made

harsh to discourage people from claiming. Workhouses were to be built in every parish and, if parishes were too small, parishes could group together to form Workhouse Unions. The Poor Law Commissioners were to be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Act. For various reasons it was impossible to apply some of the terms of the Act. Less eligibility was in some cases impossible without starving paupers and the high cost of building workhouses incurred by rate payers meant that outdoor relief continued to be a popular alternative. Despite efforts to ban outdoor relief, parishes continued to offer it as a more cost-effective method of dealing with pauperism. The Outdoor Labour Test Order [75] and Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order [76] were both issued to try to prevent people receiving relief outside of the workhouse. Nottingham also was allowed an exemption from the law and continued to provide outdoor relief [77] The abuses and shortcomings of the system are documented in the novels of Charles Dickens and Frances Trollope and later in *People of the Abyss* [1] by Jack London. Despite the aspirations of the reformers, the New Poor Law was unable to make the Workhouse as bad as life outside. The primary problem was that in order to make the diet of the Workhouse inmates "less eligible" than what they could expect outside, it would be necessary to starve the inmates beyond an acceptable level. In , the Andover workhouse scandal , [78] where conditions in the Andover Union Workhouse were found to be inhumane and dangerous, prompted a government review and the abolition of the Poor Law Commission which was replaced with a Poor Law Board which meant that a Committee of Parliament was to administer the Poor Law, with a cabinet minister as head. Despite this another scandal occurred over inhumane treatment of paupers in the Huddersfield workhouse. The Poor Law had been altered in because of increasing costs. The Workhouse Visiting Society which formed in highlighted conditions in workhouses [80] and led to workhouses being inspected more often. Most Boards of Guardians were middle class and committed to keeping Poor Rates as low as possible. After the Reform Act there was increasing welfare legislation. This meant that public housing, unlike health and income maintenance, developed outside the scope of the Poor Law. Poor Law policy after the New Poor Law concerning the elderly, the sick and mentally ill and children became more humane. Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress , Liberal welfare reforms , and Interwar poverty in Britain David Lloyd George, architect of the Liberal welfare reforms which were implemented outside of the Poor Law system and paved the way for the eventual abolition of the Poor Law. The Poor Law system began to decline with the availability of other forms of assistance. The growth of friendly societies provided help for its members without recourse to the Poor Law system. Some trade unions also provided help for their members. The Medical Relief Disqualification Removal Act meant that people who had accessed medical care funded by the poor rate were no longer disqualified from voting in elections. In the Chamberlain Circular encouraged the Local Government Board to set up work projects when unemployment rates were high rather than use workhouses. In the Conservatives passed the Unemployed Workman Act which provided for temporary employment for workers in times of unemployment. The welfare reforms of the Liberal Government [88] made several provisions to provide social services without the stigma of the Poor Law, including Old age pensions and National Insurance , and from that period fewer people were covered by the system. According to Lees by slowly dismantling the system the Poor Law was "to die by attrition and surgical removals of essential organs". One aspect of the Poor Law that continued to cause resentment was that the burden of poor relief was not shared equally by rich and poor areas but, rather, fell most heavily on those areas in which poverty was at its worst. The Unemployment Assistance Board was set up in to deal with those not covered by the earlier National Insurance Act passed by the Liberals, and by the able-bodied poor had been absorbed into this scheme.

Chapter 4 : English Poor Laws - Wikipedia

A History of the English Poor Law: In Connexion with the Legislation and Other Circumstances Affecting the Condition of the People, A History of the English Poor Law: In Connexion with the Legislation and Other Circumstances Affecting the Condition of the People.

Send email to admin eh. Although the role played by poor relief was significantly modified by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, the Crusade Against Outrelief of the 1840s, and the adoption of various social insurance programs in the early twentieth century, the Poor Law continued to assist the poor until it was replaced by the welfare state in 1948. This essay will outline the changing role played by the Poor Law, focusing on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The parish had been the basic unit of local government since at least the fourteenth century, although Parliament imposed few if any civic functions on parishes before the sixteenth century. Parliament adopted several other statutes relating to the poor in the next sixty years, culminating with the Acts of 1597 and 43 Eliz. These Acts laid the groundwork for the system of poor relief up to the adoption of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834. Deteriorating economic conditions and loss of traditional forms of charity in the sixteenth century. The Elizabethan Poor Law was adopted largely in response to a serious deterioration in economic circumstances, combined with a decline in more traditional forms of charitable assistance. Sixteenth century England experienced rapid inflation, caused by rapid population growth, the debasement of the coinage in 1543 and 1548, and the inflow of American silver. Grain prices more than tripled from 1540 to 1550, and then increased by an additional 73 percent from 1550 to 1560. The prices of other commodities increased nearly as rapidly – the Phelps Brown and Hopkins price index rose by 72 percent from 1540 to 1560. Nominal wages increased at a much slower rate than did prices; as a result, real wages of agricultural and building laborers and of skilled craftsmen declined by about 60 percent over the course of the sixteenth century. This decline in purchasing power led to severe hardship for a large share of the population. Conditions were especially bad in 1549, when four consecutive poor harvests led to famine conditions. At the same time that the number of workers living in poverty increased, the supply of charitable assistance declined. Given the circumstances, the Acts of 1597 and 43 Eliz. can be seen as an attempt by Parliament both to prevent starvation and to control public order. Paul Slack contends that in a third or more of parishes regularly were collecting poor rates, and that by 1600 poor rates were universal. These suggest that, during the seventeenth century, the bulk of relief recipients were elderly, orphans, or widows with young children. Female pensioners outnumbered males by as much as three to one. On average, the payment of weekly pensions made up about two-thirds of relief spending in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; the remainder went to casual benefits, often to able-bodied males in need of short-term relief because of sickness or unemployment. Settlement Act of 1662. One of the issues that arose in the administration of relief was that of entitlement: While Adam Smith, and some historians, argued that the Settlement Law put a serious brake on labor mobility, available evidence suggests that parishes used it selectively, to keep out economically undesirable migrants such as single women, older workers, and men with large families. Relief expenditures increased sharply in the first half of the eighteenth century, as can be seen in Table 1. Nominal expenditures increased by 72 percent from 1660 to 1750 despite the fact that prices were falling and population was growing slowly; real expenditures per capita increased by 84 percent. A large part of this rise was due to increasing pension benefits, especially for the elderly. Some areas also experienced an increase in the number of able-bodied relief recipients. In an attempt to deter some of the poor from applying for relief, Parliament in 1722 adopted the Workhouse Test Act, which empowered parishes to deny relief to any applicant who refused to enter a workhouse. While many parishes established workhouses as a result of the Act, these were often short-lived, and the vast majority of paupers continued to receive outdoor relief that is, relief in their own homes. The Poor Law, The period from 1722 to 1834 witnessed an explosion in relief expenditures. Real per capita expenditures more than doubled from 1722 to 1834, and remained at a high level until the Poor Law was amended in 1834. See Table 1. Relief expenditures increased from 1. The demographic characteristics of the pauper host changed considerably in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, especially in the rural south and east of England. There was a sharp increase in numbers receiving casual benefits, as opposed to regular weekly pensions. The age

distribution of those on relief became younger – the share of paupers who were prime-aged 59 increased significantly, and the share aged 60 and over declined. Finally, the share of relief recipients in the south and east who were male increased from about a third in to nearly two-thirds in . In the north and west there also were shifts toward prime-age males and casual relief, but the magnitude of these changes was far smaller than elsewhere King . The Act stated that only the impotent poor should be relieved in workhouses; the able-bodied should either be found work or granted outdoor relief. The other major piece of legislation was the Removal Act of , which amended the Settlement Law so that no non-settled person could be removed from a parish unless he or she applied for relief. Speenhamland System and other forms of poor relief During this period, relief for the able-bodied took various forms, the most important of which were: The system of allowances-in-aid-of-wages was adopted by magistrates and parish overseers throughout large parts of southern England to assist the poor during crisis periods. The most famous allowance scale, though by no means the first, was that adopted by Berkshire magistrates at Speenhamland on May 6, . Under the allowance system, a household head whether employed or unemployed was guaranteed a minimum weekly income, the level of which was determined by the price of bread and by the size of his or her family. Such scales typically were instituted only during years of high food prices, such as and , and removed when prices declined. The typical parish paid a small weekly sum to laborers with four or more children under age 10 or . Seasonal unemployment had been a problem for agricultural laborers long before , but the extent of seasonality increased in the second half of the eighteenth century as farmers in southern and eastern England responded to the sharp increase in grain prices by increasing their specialization in grain production. The increase in seasonal unemployment, combined with the decline in other sources of income, forced many agricultural laborers to apply for poor relief during the winter. Regional differences in relief expenditures and recipients Table 2 reports data for fifteen counties located throughout England on per capita relief expenditures for the years ending in March , , , and , and on relief recipients in . Per capita expenditures were higher on average in agricultural counties than in more industrial counties, and were especially high in the grain-producing southern counties – Oxford, Berkshire, Essex, Suffolk, and Sussex. The share of the population receiving poor relief in varied significantly across counties, being 15 to 23 percent in the grain-producing south and less than 10 percent in the north. The demographic characteristics of those relieved also differed across regions. In particular, the share of relief recipients who were elderly or disabled was higher in the north and west than it was in the south; by implication, the share that were able-bodied was higher in the south and east than elsewhere. Economic historians typically have concluded that these regional differences in relief expenditures and numbers on relief were caused by differences in economic circumstances; that is, poverty was more of a problem in the agricultural south and east than it was in the pastoral southwest or in the more industrial north Blaug ; Boyer . In the second half of the eighteenth century, a large share of rural households in southern England suffered significant declines in real income. County-level cross-sectional data suggest that, on average, real wages for day laborers in agriculture declined by 19 percent from to in fifteen southern grain-producing counties, then remained roughly constant from to , before increasing to a level in about 10 percent above that of Bowley . Farm-level time-series data yield a similar result – real wages in the southeast declined by 13 percent from to , and remained low until the s Clark . Enclosures Some historians contend that the Parliamentary enclosure movement, and the plowing over of commons and waste land, reduced the access of rural households to land for growing food, grazing animals, and gathering fuel, and led to the immiseration of large numbers of agricultural laborers and their families Hammond and Hammond ; Humphries . More recent research, however, suggests that only a relatively small share of agricultural laborers had common rights, and that there was little open access common land in southeastern England by Shaw-Taylor ; Clark and Clark . Declining cottage industry Finally, in some parts of the south and east, women and children were employed in wool spinning, lace making, straw plaiting, and other cottage industries. Employment opportunities in wool spinning, the largest cottage industry, declined in the late eighteenth century, and employment in the other cottage industries declined in the early nineteenth century Pinchbeck ; Boyer . The decline of cottage industry reduced the ability of women and children to contribute to household income. North and Midlands The situation was different in the north and midlands. The real wages of day laborers in

agriculture remained roughly constant from to , and then increased sharply, so that by the s wages were about 50 percent higher than they were in Clark Moreover, while some parts of the north and midlands experienced a decline in cottage industry, in Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire the concentration of textile production led to increased employment opportunities for women and children. The Political Economy of the Poor Law, A comparison of English poor relief with poor relief on the European continent reveals a puzzle: However, differences in spending between England and the continent were relatively small before and after Lindert Simple economic explanations cannot account for the different patterns of English and continental relief. Labor-hiring farmers take advantage of the poor relief system The increase in relief spending in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries was partly a result of politically-dominant farmers taking advantage of the poor relief system to shift some of their labor costs onto other taxpayers Boyer Relief expenditures were financed by a tax levied on all parishioners whose property value exceeded some minimum level. In grain-producing areas, where there were large seasonal variations in the demand for labor, labor-hiring farmers anxious to secure an adequate peak season labor force were able to reduce costs by laying off unneeded workers during slack seasons and having them collect poor relief. Large farmers used their political power to tailor the administration of poor relief so as to lower their labor costs. Thus, some share of the increase in relief spending in the early nineteenth century represented a subsidy to labor-hiring farmers rather than a transfer from farmers and other taxpayers to agricultural laborers and their families. The Poor Law Amendment Act of reduced the political power of labor-hiring farmers, which helps to account for the decline in relief expenditures after that date. The report, described by historian R. By the vast majority of rural parishes had been grouped into poor law unions, and most of these had built or were building workhouses. On the other hand, the Commission met with strong opposition when it attempted in to set up unions in the industrial north, and the implementation of the New Poor Law was delayed in several industrial cities. In an attempt to regulate the granting of relief to able-bodied males, the Commission, and its replacement in , the Poor Law Board, issued several orders to selected Poor Law Unions. The Outdoor Labour Test Order of , sent to unions without workhouses or where the workhouse test was deemed unenforceable, stated that able-bodied males could be given outdoor relief only if they were set to work by the union. Historical debate about the effect of the New Poor Law Historians do not agree on the effect of the New Poor Law on the local administration of relief. Some contend that the orders regulating outdoor relief largely were evaded by both rural and urban unions, many of whom continued to grant outdoor relief to unemployed and underemployed males Rose ; Digby Others point to the falling numbers of able-bodied males receiving relief in the national statistics and the widespread construction of union workhouses, and conclude that the New Poor Law succeeded in abolishing outdoor relief for the able-bodied by Williams A recent study by Lees found that in three London parishes and six provincial towns in the years around large numbers of prime-age males continued to apply for relief, and that a majority of those assisted were granted outdoor relief. The Poor Law also played an important role in assisting the unemployed in industrial cities during the cyclical downturns of and and the Lancashire cotton famine of Boot ; Boyer There is no doubt, however, that spending on poor relief declined after see Table 1. Real per capita relief expenditures fell by 43 percent from to , and increased slowly thereafter. Studies conducted by Poor Law administrators indicate that the number recorded in the day counts was less than half the number assisted during the year. Given the temporary nature of most spells of relief, over a three year period as much as 25 percent of the population made use of the Poor Law Lees This change in policy, known as the Crusade Against Outrelief, was not a result of new government regulations, although it was encouraged by the newly formed Local Government Board LGB. The Board was aided in convincing the public of the need for reform by the propaganda of the Charity Organization Society COS , founded in The COS went on to argue that the shift from outdoor to workhouse relief would significantly reduce the demand for assistance, since most applicants would refuse to enter workhouses, and therefore reduce Poor Law expenditures. A policy that promised to raise the morals of the poor and reduce taxes was hard for most Poor Law unions to resist MacKinnon The effect of the Crusade can be seen in Table 1. The deterrent effect associated with the workhouse led to a sharp fall in numbers on relief “ from to , the number of paupers receiving outdoor relief fell by 33 percent. The share of paupers relieved in workhouses increased

from percent in to 22 percent in , and it continued to rise to 35 percent in . The extent of the crusade varied considerably across poor law unions. Urban unions typically relieved a much larger share of their paupers in workhouses than did rural unions, but there were significant differences in practice across cities. In , over 70 percent of the paupers in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and in many London Poor Law unions received indoor relief; however, in Leeds, Bradford, Newcastle, Nottingham and several other industrial and mining cities the majority of paupers continued to receive outdoor relief Booth . Change in the attitude of the poor toward relief . The last third of the nineteenth century also witnessed a change in the attitude of the poor towards relief. Prior to , a large share of the working class regarded access to public relief as an entitlement, although they rejected the workhouse as a form of relief. Their opinions changed over time, however, and by the end of the century most workers viewed poor relief as stigmatizing Lees . This change in perceptions led many poor people to go to great lengths to avoid applying for relief, and available evidence suggests that there were large differences between poverty rates and pauperism rates in late Victorian Britain.

Chapter 5 : Poor Law - The National Archives

*A history of the English poor law: in connection with the state of the country and the condition of the people. Volume 2 of 3 [George Nicholls] on blog.quintoapp.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers.*

Origins of the Poor Law system The origins of the Old Poor Law extend back into the 15th century with the decline of the monasteries and the breakdown of the medieval social structure. Charity was gradually replaced with a compulsory land tax levied at parish level. The law offered relief to people who were unable to work: The able-bodied poor were to be set to work in a House of Industry. Materials were to be provided for the poor to be set to work. Description[edit] Relief under the Old Poor Law could take on one of two forms [10] – indoor relief , relief inside a workhouse, or outdoor relief , relief in a form outside a workhouse. This could come in the form of money, food or even clothing. As the cost of building the different workhouses was great, outdoor relief continued to be the main form of relief in this period. Some aged people might be accommodated in parish alms houses , though these were usually private charitable institutions. Meanwhile, able-bodied beggars who had refused work were often placed in Houses of Correction indoor relief. However, provision for the many able-bodied poor in the workhouse, which provided accommodation at the same time as work, was relatively unusual, and most workhouses developed later. The Law said that poor parents and children were responsible for each other – elderly parents would live with their children[citation needed]. The Poor Law could be described as " parochial " as the administrative unit of the system was the parish. There were around 1, such parishes based upon the area around a parish church. This system allowed greater sensitivity towards paupers, but also made tyrannical behavior from overseers possible. Overseers of the Poor would know their paupers and so be able to differentiate between the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor. The act levied a poor rate on each parish which Overseers of the Poor were able to collect. Those who had to pay this rate were property owners, or rather, in most cases, occupiers including tenants. Neither method of relief was at this time in history seen as harsh[citation needed]. The act was supposed to deal with beggars who were considered a threat to civil order. The act was passed at a time when poverty was considered necessary as it was thought that only fear of poverty made people work[citation needed]. In a House of Correction was set up in each county. However, this system was separate from the system which distinguished between the settled poor and "vagrants". There was wide variation in the amount of poor relief given out. As the parish was the administrative unit of the system there was great diversity in the system. Since there were no administrative standards, parishes were able to interpret the law as they wished. Some cities, such as Bristol , Exeter and Liverpool were able to obtain by-laws which established their control onto several of the urban parishes within their jurisdiction. Outdoor relief Outdoor relief continued to be the most popular form of relief for the able-bodied poor even though the law described that "the poor should be set to work". In the Speenhamland system was introduced as a system of outdoor relief. Again, there was variation within the system with some parishes subsidising with food and others with money. Some parishes were more generous than others so there was no uniformity to the system. The Speenhamland system was popular in the south of England. Elsewhere the Roundsman and Labour rate were used. The system was designed for a pre-industrial society, industrialisation , a mobile population, a series of bad harvests during the s and the Napoleonic Wars tested the old poor law to the breaking point. If unable to, they were removed to the next parish that was nearest to the place of their birth, or where they might prove some connection. Some paupers were moved hundreds of miles. Although each parish that they passed through was not responsible for them, they were supposed to supply food and drink and shelter for at least one night. Individual parishes were keen to keep costs of poor relief as low as possible and there are examples of paupers in some cases being shunted back and forth between parishes. The Settlement Laws allowed strangers to a parish to be removed after 40 days if they were not working, but the cost of removing such people meant that they were often left until they tried to claim poor relief. In Settlement Laws were tightened when people could be barred from entering a parish unless they produced a Settlement certificate. Another criticism of the Act was that it applied to rated land not personal or movable wealth, therefore benefiting commercial and business interests. The Workhouse Act of

allowed parishes to combine and apply for a workhouse test , where conditions were made worse than those outside. The Act stated that workhouses, poorhouses and houses of correction should be built for the different types of pauper. However, it was not cost effective to build these different types of buildings. For this reason parishes such as Bristol combined these institutions so that the profits paupers made were plunged back into the maintenance of the system. It could be argued it made the system more humane and sensitive, but a local crisis such as a poor harvest could be a great burden on the local poor rate. Variation from the system[edit] The 18th-century workhouse movement began at the end of the 17th century with the establishment of the Bristol Corporation of the Poor , founded by act of parliament in 1723. The corporation established a workhouse which combined housing and care of the poor with a house of correction for petty offenders. Following the example of Bristol, twelve more towns and cities established similar corporations in the next two decades. Because these corporations required a private act, they were not suitable for smaller towns and individual parishes. Starting with the parish of Olney , Buckinghamshire in 1726, several dozen small towns and individual parishes established their own institutions without any specific legal authorization. These were concentrated in the South Midlands and in the county of Essex. From the late 18th century the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge began to promote the idea of parochial workhouses. The act gave legislative authority for the establishment of parochial workhouses, by both single parishes and as joint ventures between two or more parishes. More importantly, the Act helped to publicise the idea of establishing workhouses to a national audience. The Workhouse Test Act made workhouses a deterrent as conditions were to be regulated to make them worse than outside of the workhouse. However, during this period outdoor relief was still the most popular method of poor relief as it was easier to administer. By some 1, parish and corporation workhouses had been established in England and Wales, housing almost 1, paupers. Although many parishes and pamphlet writers expected to earn money from the labour of the poor in workhouses, the vast majority of people obliged to take up residence in workhouses were ill, elderly, or children whose labour proved largely unprofitable.

Chapter 6 : A Short Explanation of the English Poor Law

The book challenges many commonly held beliefs about the Poor Law and concludes that the adoption of outdoor relief for able-bodied paupers was a rational response by politically dominant farmers to changes in the rural economic environment.

During the reign of Elizabeth I, a spate of legislation was passed to deal with the increasing problem of raising and administering poor relief. They were to be given help either through outdoor relief or by being given work in return for a wage. They were to be whipped through the streets, publicly, until they learned the error of their ways. They were to be looked after in almshouses, hospitals, orphanages or poor houses. Orphans and children of the poor were to be given a trade apprenticeship so that they would have a trade to pursue when they grew up. The Elizabethan Poor Law were appropriate for the society of the time. The duties of the Overseers were to work out how much money would be needed for the relief of the poor and set the poor rate accordingly collect the poor rate from property owners relieve the poor by dispensing either food or money supervise the parish poor-house Two types of relief were available Outdoor relief: This was the norm. However, everyone in need was looked after at the expense of the parish, which was the basic unit of poor law administration. There were 15, parishes throughout England and Wales, each based on a parish church. However, no mechanism was introduced to enforce any of the measures stated by the Act and the operation of the poor law was inconsistent. The legislation did not set down any administrative standards so parishes were at liberty to interpret the law in any way they wished. There were great differences between parishes which varied between extreme laxity and extreme stringency in the interpretation of the law. Some towns, such as Bristol, Exeter and Liverpool, obtained local by-laws that established corporations of the poor: It was assumed that these people would accept whatever work or relief the parish offered, whether that was indoor or outdoor relief. Neither method of assistance was seen as punitive or harsh. The increase in the numbers of beggars was probably the historical background to the nursery rhyme Hark! The dogs do bark! The beggars are coming to town: Some in rags, some in tags And one in a velvet gown The first adaptation of the Act came in and provided for the setting up of Houses of Correction in each county. Here, work was provided for the unemployed at local rates of pay; work could be forced on the idle and on vagabonds. This meant that the idle poor were known as such and would be given short shrift at the hands of the Overseers of the poor. One of the later complaints about the Act was that the basis of the law was that it rated land and buildings but not personal or movable wealth. Consequently it benefited the industrial and commercial groups in society who did not fall within the parameters of the legislation and so did not pay into the poor rates unless they also happened to own landed property.

Chapter 7 : A History of the English Poor Law: Volume I, 1st Edition (Hardback) - Routledge

A History of the English Poor Law In Connexion With the Legislation and Other Circumstances Affecting the Condition of the People by George Nicholls Volume 1 of 2.

Chapter 8 : A History of the English Poor Law

A History of the English Poor Law, in Connexion with the Legislation and Other Circumstances Affecting the Condition of the People. WITH: A History of the Scotch Poor Law, in Connexion with the Condition of the People.

Chapter 9 : The Elizabethan Poor Law

A History of the English Poor Law: In Connexion with the Legislation and Other Circumstances Affecting the Condition of the People, Volume 3 A History of the English Poor Law: In Connexion with the Legislation and Other Circumstances Affecting the Condition of the People, Sir George Nicholls.