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The Fraternity of Female Friendly Societies

Daniel Weinbren

In this chapter, the structured reciprocity of female friendly societies, even those with overt patrons, is presented as a categorization which is also applicable to men's societies. The first part addresses the notion of independence, then the focus is on the financial aspect of the Southill Female Friendly Society, SFFS, which existed between 1844 and 1948 for women of that Bedfordshire village in England who were of 'a good and honest character', in good health and aged between 14 and 45 when they joined. Members had few other opportunities to reduce the risks associated with illness other than accept the uneven reciprocity of the SFFS. The patrons may also have seen the SFFS as an investment opportunity. Then the attractions of Southill, with its healthy housing and relatively liberal interpretation of relief legislation, are presented as evidence of another important attribute of successful friendly societies, their centrality to social networking. Next is considered how far mutual-ity and philanthropy were interwoven within the SFFS and elsewhere. An assessment of the roles of civil engagement and moral regulation within friendly societies follows and the final section suggests that a notion of fraternity which emphasizes flexible reciprocity can net together both vast international brotherhoods and tiny village societies in a way which illuminate understandings of nineteenth-century society.

Many accounts of friendly societies stress how, in order to try and secure pooled funds for members unable to work, or for their widows in the event of a member's death, they developed trust through rituals, drinking, feasting, parading and visiting the sick. It is also well-established that the societies' mutual aid enhanced the respectability and independence of members. Crossick and Gray conceptualized the friendly societies in terms of the development of class-consciousness.¹ Thompson, Chase and Cordery found a commonality between the friendly societies

and the trade unions.² Best suggested friendly societies were an expression of independence,³ a view echoed by Cronin, Neave, Kirk and Kidd.⁴ Friendly societies often have been portrayed as distinctive from charities.⁵ Garrard concluded that charities 'produced deference amongst some recipients', while friendly societies were 'likely to enhance the independence of their members.'⁶ These approaches focus on men's friendly societies and echo the friendly societies' self-presentation as independent (as in the name of what was the largest friendly society: the Independent Order of Oddfellows, Manchester Unity).⁷

However, as Davidoff and Hall argued, 'public was not really public and private not really private despite the potent imagery of separate spheres'. During a period when there was a 'permeation downwards of the ideology of the separate spheres, independence and interdependence had different meanings often associated with discourses about masculinity and femininity'.⁸ Broadly speaking, in the early eighteenth century the notion of independence conveyed political interference, presumption and insubordination among the poor. By the mid-nineteenth it signified those moral qualities that induced a male labourer to support himself and his family while remaining submissive and available for hire. Cordery has demonstrated that in the later nineteenth century, friendly societies helped to shape notions of independent manly self-help.⁹ For some male societies independence was from women: interdependence involved drinking with men. The charter of the Merthyr lodge of the Ancient Order of Britons aimed 'to provide for sickness', but only after indicating that it sought to 'raise our nation to note in the world by teaching men to act as men, husbands as husbands, fathers as fathers and to make all those who unite with us better members of society.'¹⁰ The Oddfellows claimed that it 'had made men, strong self-reliant men'.¹¹ On those friendly societies' banners which featured women they often symbolized the spouse, widow or the abstract (for example, Charity).¹² Considering another fraternal body Durr also stressed gender divisions when he argued that the Freemasons' 'ideology of interdependence, its practical manifestation being giving and receiving' could be conceptualized as 'fraternal charity'.¹³ Bohstedt made the differences explicit. He referred to men's societies as 'often proto-trade unions' while women's ones offered 'collective mutual aid to defend household security – or perhaps even to substitute for household security among employed single women'. Although the returns made following a survey of friendly societies in 1803–04 are inaccurate in regard to women's societies (which were not always distinguished from those for men) Bohstedt noted that 6000 of the 9000 women in female friendly societies in 1803 lived in towns where riots occurred. He

concluded that while the men were turning to more quiescent political activities, the female societies may have served as 'a source for cohesion in riots'.¹⁴ It is within contested notions of independence that the fraternity of the female societies needs to be placed.

There is little evidence of conventional independence within the SFFS. It was supported financially by two local landowners (Colonel Shuttleworth and the MP and brewing magnate Samuel Whitbread) and their wives.¹⁵ The cover of the SFFS's printed rule book states 'Patron: Samuel Whitbread'.¹⁶ The doctor who attended members of the SFFS also contributed to the society.¹⁷ Among the female patrons were several members of a local milling family who owned 50 acres and three women from local farming families whose husbands were Poor Law Guardians. These traits indicate that the SFFS was similar to other female societies. Workington coal owner and MP, J. C. Curwen, founded two friendly societies for men while his wife ran both the Female Society and the Sisterly Society.¹⁸ In Hanley, Staffordshire, members of the Female Provident Society (Etruria) paid 1s. 1d [5½p] a month into their society in 1813 and received up to 12 shillings [60p] a week in benefits.¹⁹ These were relatively generous terms, perhaps because the society had the support of patrons. While the day-to-day running of the society was in the hands of elected women members, the trustees of the society, subject to annual election, had to be 'three Gentlemen of known respectability' and the treasurer also had to be male. The Newcastle-under-Lyme Female Society had female honorary members.²⁰ In Somerset there were women's friendly societies with patrons in Nether Stowey, Stoke-under-Ham and Ashbourne.²¹ In Ashbourne the local clerics and gentry played significant roles in the running of the female friendly society. Lady Louisa Cavendish was one of a number of patrons who helped to found the Ashford Female Friendly Society.²² In Shropshire, the Countess of Powis supported the Bishop's Castle and Lydbury North Female Friendly Society which existed between 1840 and 1900.²³ In Derbyshire, Henry Okeover founded female societies in his villages in Ilam, Okeover, Mappleton and Rosliston.²⁴ Elsewhere in the county the Middleton-by-Wirksworth Female Friendly Society was supported by Mrs Wood of Wirksworth Hall, Lady Hatherton, the vicar's wife and other patrons.²⁵ In Norwich, the Friendly Society for the Benefit of Poor Women was dominated by the wealthy as was the Friendly Female Society at York, while in Honiton the procession of the lacemakers' society was headed by its fashionable patronesses.²⁶ There were similar societies in Leeds, Huddesfield, Wakefield and elsewhere.²⁷ In 1856 five of Warwickshire's eight recorded female societies met in church school-rooms and were largely run by Christian men.²⁸ Barton-in-Fabis Friendly

Society, Nottinghamshire allowed open decision-making votes among the women members but still had men in control of finance from its foundation in 1821 until its closure in 1955.²⁹

The similarities between the SFFS and these other societies do not mean that it should be dismissed as a typical female friendly society dominated by a backward-looking paternalism because independence was a contested notion. Moreover, female friendly societies varied in their structures. The 1874 commissioners classified friendly societies into 11 categories with the 'Societies of Females' forming Class 11. However, these, as William Beveridge pointed out in 1948, 'must all in fact have belonged to one of the other classes as well'.³⁰ Evelyn Lord was also sceptical about such a taxonomy, referring to 'misconceptions inherent in feminist narratives' which emphasize that women were excluded. She has challenged the categorization of female societies as pale reflections of a male norm.³¹ Women were active within mixed-sex societies and formed their own independent friendly societies in a number of areas.³² Their rule books indicate that officials were elected and new members admitted by those who came frequently to meetings.³³ The Women's Box Society at the Sign of the Hawk, Gateshead and the Friendly Society of Women in Easington Lane were among a number of women's friendly societies which apparently addressed the idea of independence in similar terms to those of men.³⁴ The United Sisters of Tobacco Pipe Makers (registered in 1805) and the Female Friendly Bookbinders (1815) were among those societies which made payments to members who were unable to work, and included in this work for their husbands.³⁵ In terms of sociability and refreshment some women's societies took on what might have been perceived as male attributes. Edward Derrington noted in his journal in 1843 that a priest had told him of a network of 'female lodges where mothers and single females go to drink ale till twelve or one o'clock'.³⁶ There were female affiliated orders such as the Female Foresters, the Odd Women, the Odd Females and the Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherdesses. Most were established in the 1830s and 1840s. The 1874 Royal Commission on Friendly and Benefit Societies reported that Shepherdesses and Odd-sisters were apt to be 'greatly given to liquor' and that members of the Oddwomen's Club smoked pipes.

Joining the SFFS can be presented as a pragmatic business decision. In 1844, when the SFFS was created, straw plaiting – which employed half the women in the parish – was experiencing a revival.³⁷ Straw plaiting had grown rapidly in Bedfordshire after 1815.³⁸ There were 253 plaiters in Southill in 1851. Moreover, agricultural labourers' wages were falling in the county. Bedfordshire spent at least 15s. [75p] per capita on poor relief

in the 1831–32 period but between 1834 and 1847 a considerable decrease in Bedfordshire's expenditure on poor relief was achieved through a reduction in relief paid to low-waged, able-bodied men.³⁹ In the seven winters of the years 1840 to 1846 almost all those in Bedfordshire in receipt of aid on account of 'insufficiency of earnings', were widows or deserted wives with dependent children.⁴⁰ As Williams noted of Bedfordshire villages the 'withdrawal of outdoor relief to the able-bodied after 1834 meant that self-provisioning, by-employments, and other forms of "self-help" became *more* important to labouring families to ensure their survival'.⁴¹ In the 1860s tariffs were abolished and imports of cheaper plaits from Japan and China which were better suited to the machine stitching process reduced the price of British plait.⁴² Despite this women continued to plait in Bedfordshire. In 1871, around one in three of 10- to 15-year-old females in the county were plaiters.⁴³ In the SFFS all those in work were recorded as plaiters, the landladies of the two pubs being the only exceptions. Plaiting was sufficiently well-paid that it was noted by the Registrar General of Friendly Societies in 1874 as being conducive to the formation of female friendly societies.

The importance of plaiting can be gauged from the 1881 census which recorded that of the 248 women in paid work in the village, 139 were plaiters, 48 were servants, 13 dressmakers and no more than five women were engaged in any other single occupation.⁴⁴ In addition, 24 of the members' children and siblings were straw plaiters, 48 were labourers or gardeners and there was also a market gardener, an under-gamekeeper and a servant.⁴⁵ There was not much other work for children. In 1881, of the 38 servants employed by 12 of Southill's elite households only four were local girls.⁴⁶ Southill's school log books reveal that although children were kept from school in order to engage in gleaning, field work, acorn picking and other tasks, the head recorded that 'the farmers of the neighbourhood are exceptionally good with regard to refusing to give employment to children unless they are qualified to leave.' Market gardening had spread to the area in recent years and 61 of the 71 husbands of SFFS members about whom information is available were agricultural labourers, labourers or gardeners. There was also a gamekeeper, a woodman, a shepherd, a cowman and a groom.⁴⁷ Many would have been badly paid. In 1868 wages in Northumberland were 50 per cent above those of Bedfordshire and in 1904, when real wages were higher than they had been since 1850, in Ridgemount, Bedfordshire 38.5 per cent of the working families had such low incomes that they lived in primary poverty.⁴⁸ There is not necessarily a correlation between women's employment opportunities and membership of female friendly societies as studies of Preston

and Nottinghamshire indicate.⁴⁹ In some areas women's pay contributed to support for their families rather than to insurance.⁵⁰ Although it is difficult to 'catch' women within many sources for economic history, in Southill the female friendly society played a similar role to many men's societies, being an important part of the overall familial survival strategy.⁵¹

The alternatives to the SFFS looked meagre in comparison. Many friendly societies failed through lack of funds or actuarial acumen. Possibly the high level of illiteracy among rural women led to the accounts frequently being kept by educated men.⁵² In 1813 the Black Horse Female Friendly Society of Nottingham had a male clerk, perhaps because only two of the 27 members could sign their names.⁵³ The SFFS treasurer was always the vicar. Numerous societies failed through lack of financial ability. The collapse of the agricultural labourers' trade union in the late nineteenth century was hastened through its involvement in the provision of friendly society services.⁵⁴ Women found it difficult to join national friendly societies for although they were permitted to join the Independent Order of Rechabites and the Sons of Temperance, they were barred from the Oddfellows and the Ancient Order of Foresters, the two largest affiliated societies, until the 1890s.⁵⁵ In 1892 the Ancient Order of Foresters allowed women to join, the Oddfellows when it formally recognized female lodges in 1893 and the Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds followed in 1895. Even then, recruitment was slow for, as Gertrude Tuckwell, Honorable Secretary of the Women's Trade Union League told the Select Committee on the Aged Deserving Poor in 1899, women's wages were so low that many were unable to afford to join a friendly society.⁵⁶ However, some men were barred from friendly society membership for similar reasons: the perception that they were in dangerous trades or because they could not keep up the payments. Until the Married Women's Property Act of 1882, wives had no right to their benefits – which belonged to their husbands. They were perceived to be a higher insurance risk and unable to run their own societies. The Oddfellows held that women tended to be paid less than men and to make more claims.⁵⁷

The women could have put any savings they had in the Post Office Savings Bank. However, during the period between the first branch opening in 1861 and the final payment made into the SFFS in 1914, the Post Office Savings Bank put its money into consolidated annuities which paid a fixed rate from which savers received an annual rate of interest of only 2.5 per cent. In effect, for many years, savers subsidized the government. Moreover, in order to prevent impulse purchasing, a delay of several days was enforced on withdrawals made by Post Office

Savings Bank depositors. While there were restrictions on payments from the SFFS, membership of the SFFS enabled women to draw on collaborative reserves, not just their own resources.

If husbands joined different friendly societies then families could spread their risks but the options were limited and comparable to those of the women. Four societies were recorded in neighbouring Shefford in 1803 which appear to have survived until the 1830s.⁵⁸ There was no gentry-dominated countywide friendly society and the Southill Estate Benefit Club was sponsored by Whitbread, while Shuttleworth was President of the District Branch of the National Deposit Friendly Society, in Biggleswade (adjacent to Southill).⁵⁹ Three of the patrons of the SFFS were also members of the Biggleswade Loyal Dreadnought Lodge of OddFellows.⁶⁰

The SFFS received money from the local elite as well as the women, some of its patrons giving as much as 60s. per annum [£3]. In addition to their ordinary payments (1s. entry fee and 1s. 5d. a week) [5p and 7p] all members contributed 6d. [2½ p] on the death of a member (whose family received 30s. [£1.50]). There were few obligations placed upon members as a local woman, usually the wife of the church clerk, was paid 30 shillings [£1.50] a year to collect and administer funds. In order to claim benefits (10s. 6d. [52½ p] for a confinement, 3s. 6d. [17½ p] for sickness for four weeks, less after that) a member had to produce a Medical Certificate and to have paid a year's worth of subscriptions. In the 1890s, when over £200 a year was being given to the society, there was a membership of 60 women, around 15 per cent of those eligible to join. The sums donated then fell and following the death of Whitbread and his wife, ceased. In 1948, the remaining members, who had joined between 1892 and 1914, were repaid their subscription money, less any benefits they had received. The approximately £750 remaining went to the Church and the 'Living of Southill', a decision made by the churchwardens, one of whom was local landowner Simon Whitbread and the other his estate manager.⁶¹ The latter noted, 'It is not generally known that there is a large balance in hand and I do not propose to disclose the fact.'⁶²

As Clark argued, in regard to Hanoverian England, the 'landscape' of friendly societies 'was determined both by upper-class involvement and by the fluctuating character of demand [...] club activity was further shaped and constrained by the extent of alternative forms of sociability and relief, and by local perceptions and rhythms of community'.⁶³

The Whitbread Brewery, insured against fire through a mutual insurance company, reflected these widespread rhythms.⁶⁴ The SFFS's Rule 14, 'Any person ceasing to be a member from non-residence in Southill parish will receive back one third of her yearly payments to the fund

and forfeit the remainder', also indicated the importance attached to continuity as an element of conventional inter-class interdependence. Relatively few members moved far from the parish. The birthplaces of 65 members of the SFFS have been traced: 49 of them were born in the parish of Southill and the remaining 13 were born in nearby villages or towns. Between 1851 and 1911 the population of Southill fell by 29 per cent. In 1881, 1191 people were recorded as having been born in Southill and still resident in Britain. Sixty-five per cent of these still lived in the parish and over half of those who had left still lived within walking distance. This reflects the common pattern of rural migration, being frequently over short distances.⁶⁵ In general, men were more likely to make economic gains from travel whereas women who travelled most frequently become domestic servants, often in London which was work restricted to the unmarried.⁶⁶ In comparison with other counties relatively few migrated from Bedfordshire to the Empire and women in particular were very reluctant to emigrate.⁶⁷ Staying near to kin made economic sense and women had the opportunity for employment as straw plaiters, which was not the case in other areas. Studies indicate that the least migratory people were those with local specializations, such as straw plaiters, and that the second group most likely to remain *in situ* were farm workers.⁶⁸ The majority of men in Southill were agricultural labourers. Through work and marriage, women tied households to one another and to the locality.⁶⁹ Domestic self-provisioning and inter-household exchanges were of themselves probably not reasons for remaining in Southill, but sharing often provided security and impeded social or geographical mobility.⁷⁰ Moreover, between 1834 and 1914, a woman could only make a claim for parish relief where she was 'settled' – that is, in the parish of her birth or of her husband's birth. This regulation was not applied in some areas and by 1865 'settled' had come to mean being resident for one year. Nevertheless, the perception that moving to another parish might endanger the possibility of making a claim on parish relief persisted.⁷¹ Some employers preferred to take on local people, who would otherwise be a burden on the rates, rather than those from outside the parish who would otherwise be the responsibility of another parish. The larger friendly societies offered support to travelling brothers.⁷² This would have been less of an attraction to women. The continuum, in terms of what societies offered to members, was between village friendly societies and the affiliated Orders, not between men's and women's societies.

Women also may have wished to remain in Southill because it was a relatively healthy place. Southill parish subscribed to the Bedford General Infirmary (erected in 1803 largely due to Whitbread's £4000 endowment)

and for many years contracted a member of the Royal College of Surgeons to take responsibility for the poor.⁷³ In addition, the Whitbreads built many of the houses (marked, for example, 'SW 1815', 'WHW 1855' and 'WHW 1864') in Southill. The properties were also likely to be insured, given the Whitbreads' 'patronage' of Sun Insurance, a stock company rather than a mutual insurance scheme.⁷⁴ An investigation by the Biggleswade Board of Guardians concluded that cottages in Southill 'may fairly be considered as model dwellings'.⁷⁵ Lloyd argued that such cottages played comparable roles to the friendly society in that they symbolized and reinforced ideas about the importance of stability, hierarchy, duty, male authority and female sexual virtue in the overcoming of poverty. Those who dwelt in cottages were felt to display 'the traits and habits necessary for participation in friendly societies'.⁷⁶ The common ground shared by the SFFS and other friendly societies was that membership was perceived as aiding stability and self-reliance during a period of social fragmentation and change.

For Southill's elite the alternatives to maintaining the SFFS may have appeared to be of limited value. Thirty-five miles away in Brixworth, Northamptonshire, the principal landowner withdrew his annual subscriptions to local burial, sickness, coal and clothing clubs, encouraged labourers to leave the area and provided charity only to local men who did not apply for outdoor relief. There was a rise in agricultural trade unionism, a population fall, and outdoor relief became a key issue in Board of Guardians' elections.⁷⁷ Friendly societies shared plenty of attributes with trade unions but the mutuality in Southill appears to have been broader, despite the disparities of power. Just as the Foresters and Odd-fellows were seen as supportive of respectability and quiescence, so the SFFS could be perceived as an aid to the transcendence of competitive relations and political and social inequalities.⁷⁸

The SFFS, in common with many friendly societies, may have been perceived as an aid to political continuity.⁷⁹ On his election as a Liberal MP in 1892, Whitbread remitted 20 per cent on the half-year's rents due from his tenants in Southill and that year 2100 excursion tickets were issued for his annual picnic, which featured music, performances and racing.⁸⁰ Their Liberal traditions did not stop Samuel Whitbread, his wife Isabella and their son Samuel Howard supporting the creation in 1913 of a Bedford branch of the National League for Opposing Women's Suffrage. Samuel Howard went on to support the Conservatives in both of the general elections of 1910.⁸¹ The other main patron of the SFFS, Colonel Shuttleworth, was an active Conservative. Having, like the Whitbreads, made his money in trade, he used his benevolence to confer status and

legitimacy upon a political career. His engagement with the SFFS is comparable to the activities of Sir George Bowyer whose 1873 parliamentary election campaign included parading under a banner that he had donated to the Loyal Bowyer Union Lodge of Oddfellows.⁸²

From the late eighteenth century agricultural improvement societies encouraged the establishment of village friendly societies for men. The gentry often ran such societies.⁸³ In Ashdon, Essex, in the early nineteenth century, the vicar dominated the club and in there were also patronized friendly societies in Tendring and Aldham.⁸⁴ In the 1860s and 1870s the Dowager Lady Tollemache started and sponsored a coal club, a children's clothing club, a children's boot club and an adults' clothing club in Suffolk villages while Mary Ann Dixon ran similar schemes in Lincolnshire.⁸⁵ In 1874 Lady Stradbroke made clear the strategic importance of maintaining class links as a means of managing social tensions within rural areas:

[She enumerated the farm labourers'] many Benefit Clubs, clothing, coal, and shoe clubs, etc subscribed to unanimously and chiefly supported by their employers; their cottage garden shows and prizes; their dinners and treats and Christmas and harvest; schools for their children, which until the passing of the late [Education] Act [of 1871] were kept up entirely, and many are still, by their employers and landlords. All these are benefits and comforts which are not thought of, and would not be feasible in large manufacturing districts, but which add materially to the happiness and unity of the two classes employers – and labourers.⁸⁶

In Southill a charity which distributed coal and money to the aged poor was under the control of Samuel Whitbread until his death whereupon the two churchwardens took it over, one of whom was Colonel Isitt of the Southill Park Estate Office. Across the county women were less likely than men to enter the workhouse and more likely to enter an almshouse.⁸⁷ At least four former SFFS members became tenants of the Southill almshouses. The vicar and the churchwardens distributed money from another local charity, Smyth's, among the poor of the parish. Recipients included members of the SFFS such as Mrs Hatton who was an almshouse resident and a widow with two children.⁸⁸ The local upper classes through the state, local charities, their control over employment and distribution and the SFFS, controlled the incomes of many local women.⁸⁹ Although the men controlled the finances, engaged in politics and had a higher public profile, there were twice as many women as men

among the SFFS's honorary subscribers. These women supported local schools and the local nursing association. Elizabeth King, daughter of one of them, recalled spending happy hours as a child with one of the SFFS members, Nellie Boud, a servant and later almshouse resident in Southill, and that her mother's charitable acts included driving local children to the hospital.⁹⁰ The school log books record frequent visits and help from patrons of the SFFS: Mrs and Miss Bailey, the Reverend Lambarde, Lady Isabella Whitbread and her daughter, Maud (1859–1898). On the occasion of a royal wedding John King provided a van to take local children to and from Southill Park for a day-long treat with the Whitbreads. In 1911, Lady Isabella and Samuel Whitbread provided £100 each as a 4 per cent loan for a girls' training home.⁹¹ The ways in which the SFFS was treated like a charity are comparable to the roles assigned to other friendly societies. In the 1880s the Oxford Charity Organization Society was central to the creation and subsequent development of the Oxford Working Women's Benefit Society.⁹² By the 1890s there were 20,000 paid female officials in philanthropic societies, often performing similar roles to women in friendly societies while the Bristol-based Female Friendly Clothing Society employed visitors as if it were a charity.⁹³

In the latter half of the nineteenth century some of the men's 'democratically managed insurance clubs' began to move away from middle-class supervision. By the 1870s of the two million registered friendly society members in England and Wales only 43,417 were in societies controlled by honorary members.⁹⁴ Indeed some wealthy men overtly courted the societies. However, among the male societies, patronage continued within both workplace-based societies and overt trade unions such as the Friendly Society of Ironfounders.⁹⁵ The North Staffordshire Coal and Ironstone Workers' Permanent Relief Society, for example, was dominated by the colliery proprietors and in 1870 there were around 80 railway company friendly societies.⁹⁶ There was also internal charity for, after detailed surveillance of their circumstances, the Foresters and Oddfellows provided charity for needy members. As Howkins' argued, although 'friendly societies were never simply agencies of paternalism, most of them took on that aspect at different times'.⁹⁷

That the SFFS was closely associated with the Church of England makes it typical of many friendly societies. In the latter part of the nineteenth century there were examples of such support in Berkshire, Hertfordshire, Nottinghamshire, Surrey, Yorkshire and elsewhere while the Oddfellows and the Foresters 'openly courted the Anglican church'.⁹⁸ When a member of the Isle of Man Sisterly Society (instituted in 1816) fell ill she had to have a certificate signed by two churchwardens and a minister and

only then 'the surgeon (if to be had)'.⁹⁹ The popular Anglican-dominated Girls' Friendly Society, for unmarried women of a 'virtuous character', had patrons but also an elected council, quasi-autonomous branches and motto ('Bear ye one another's burden') identical to many men's friendly societies.¹⁰⁰ It had over 150,000 members within 25 years of its foundation in 1875, its object being 'to create a bond of union between ladies and working girls [...] forming a Society, a kind of Freemasonry among women, of which the sign manual shall be Purity and the hand held out shall be Fellowship'.¹⁰¹ It can be classified as an element of the emphasis on 'the gift' within Anglicanism's 'new paternalism' which highlighted the importance of aid between the classes.¹⁰² It was also in accord with an important tenet of the Church, for 'bringing the masses into the church had been an important goal for all factions of Anglicans throughout the nineteenth century'.¹⁰³ Numerous friendly societies were associated with Sunday schools many of which were dominated by clerics and the middle class.¹⁰⁴ The near ubiquitous philanthropic Anglican mothers' meetings often had savings banks and friendly sick benefit clubs attached and 'saturated the poor with a mix of benevolence and self-help'.¹⁰⁵ To friendly societies large and small, male and female, clerics played many administrative, organizational and supportive roles. In some cases they acted as pastors in the sense of that Foucault used the notion of pastorship, to denote the means by which modernizing societies provided guidance for individuals inside and outside the state.¹⁰⁶

Despite the concern in the mid-nineteenth century, frequently expressed by clerics and others, about the number of illegitimate births to Bedfordshire straw plaiters, the SFFS's rules did not focus on this matter.¹⁰⁷ Rule 10 simply stated that 'any person losing her character for morality or otherwise shall be expelled from the society'. There is no evidence to suggest either that there was anything other than mutual acceptance of this rule by members, or that the definition of loss of character was a matter on which members could make a judgement. What the rule reflects is the familiarity with social institutions which was necessary for the inter-class mutuality to be maintained. Legislation in 1793 encouraged friendly societies to lodge copies of their rules with government authorities. Many did not, but about 10 per cent of the female societies which provided rule books made childbirth payments only to married mothers. Many subsequent societies followed this pattern.¹⁰⁸ Such regulations may reflect the views of members as well as patrons. A female friendly society in Ashford, Derbyshire, which had no patrons provided for the first illegitimate child, but, and this may indicate economic considerations, it would not pay out for illegitimate twins.¹⁰⁹ A Birmingham female society had a

rule banning adulterous members.¹¹⁰ It was not only female societies which regulated probity. There were echoes of such regulations in the rule books of numerous other societies.

Between 1870 and 1890 state expenditure on the aged in England and Wales fell by two thirds. The number of women paupers in receipt of outdoor relief fell from 166,000 to 53,000.¹¹¹ However, in Southill in 1892 the cost of outdoor relief per hundred inhabitants was relatively high (£15 in 1892 compared to between £8 and £18 in surrounding villages). Donations to the SFFS peaked in the 1890s when patrons, particularly the magistrate and the vice chair of the Parish Council, may have seen this largesse as a means of alleviating the rates bill.¹¹² In these capacities these two men, Whitbread and King, would have dealt with a number of members as two members were in receipt of poor relief for two years, one for three years, nine for an average of five years each, three more for nine years, two for 11 years, one for 12 years and one for 16 years. The SFFS was like other friendly societies in that many of those in positions of authority saw friendly societies as a means of regulating the poor. This was made clear by an official estimate made in 1874 that ratepayers were saved not less than £2 million by friendly societies. Furthermore, the legislative framework initiated with the 1793 Friendly Societies Act which aimed at 'diminishing the Publick Burdens' treated them more like local authorities than banks or insurance companies.¹¹³

The economic capital of Southill's elite, gained through marriage or in the engineering, brewing and agricultural markets, was symbiotically linked to control of the administration of Poor Law legislation and to charitable activity. For the patrons' mutuality, without participatory structures, was one of a number of different regulative systems, part of a shifting dynamic to be seen in the context of ideas about gender roles, housing, the Poor Law and overt charities. Through encouraging poor women to invest in their own welfare provision, within strict guidelines, and to be less reliant upon state provision, which was paid for and administered locally, the elite helped to ensure that the selective alleviation of local distress remained within its control. Threats to the norms of beneficence, deference and patronage, such as the rise of the women's suffrage campaign, were countered through campaigns for the preservation of the status quo. Everyday activity, community ties and civilities in the locality were shaped to consolidate the position, encourage hierarchy and order, maintain the ideal of self-governing individuals and families unified through Christian and civic community and weaken alternative intra-class contacts. Consideration of village life in the round indicates the dynamics of the friendly society. Providing charity to the deserving poor,

that is those who exhibited moral probity, enhanced the status of the benefactors without challenging the inequalities between donors and recipients.¹¹⁴

In addition to any ideological attachment to mutuality, women in Southill who wished to save benefited from joining the friendly society in that they were rewarded for doing that which they were already doing, which was straying neither from conventional morality nor from the village. Migrants left behind employment opportunities and networks based upon the pervasive parish or near-parish endogamy while investment in an independent village friendly society (if one had existed), one of the national friendly societies or in the Post Office, carried a higher risk or the likelihood of a smaller reward. SFFS membership was compatible with making claims upon charities or the state (and may indeed have improved the chances of success) and was unremarkable.

To see women's friendly societies as evidence of a structured yet fluid system of reciprocity built where community, civility, charity and commerce intersect, is not to marginalize gender or employ an ahistoric taxonomy. Rather, it is to recognize that membership involved generic economic considerations and transactions. In the case of Southill it imposed a twofold relationship with the market. The women had to engage in their own economic activity and through their nurturing of their families in the home, enhance the economic activity of men and children. The importance of the charitable element is demonstrated by the close correlation between membership and donations. As the latter fell, so did the numbers joining. In other friendly societies the importance of economic benefits and patronage were different, but were still facets of those societies. What the regulated civility of the SFFS's reciprocal obligation and the associational culture of the Oddfellows had in common was that both, in different ways, helped to maintain communities. The degree of civic engagement and conviviality may have differed, but the components were comparable. Durr distinguished the Oddfellows and the other affiliated orders from village societies arguing that to the former 'self-help was secondary and the primary purpose was to spread among their members ideas of benevolence, love and charity. The Oddfellows had more in common with the masons than with the county or village friendly society.'¹¹⁵ However, although the balance was different in the Oddfellows and the Foresters compared to the smaller societies, similar concerns about sentiment, political economy, prosperity and morality as well as gender can be found and by making this connection the widespread significance of fraternity can be better appreciated.

The following chapter looks at how female familial imagery manipulated by a socialist feminist impacted on fraternal proselytism.

Notes

- 1 Geoffrey Crossick, *An Artisan Elite in Victorian Society: Kentish London, 1840–1880* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1978); Robert Q. Gray, *The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) pp. 33, 40, 122–6.
- 2 Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, rev. edn, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), pp. 375–83, 401, 457; Malcolm Chase, *Early Trade Unionism, Fraternity, Skill and the Politics of Labour* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 66; Simon Cordery, *British Friendly Societies: 1750–1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003).
- 3 Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain 1851–75* (London: Fontana, 1979), pp. 291–2.
- 4 James E. Cronin, *The Politics of State Expansion: War, State and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 25; David Neave, *Mutual Aid in the Victorian Countryside: Friendly Societies in the Rural East Riding, 1830–1914* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1991), p. 86; Neville Kirk, *Change, Continuity and Class: Labour in British Society, 1850–1920* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 29–31, 49–50, 60; Alan J. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), p. 112.
- 5 This taxonomy is assessed in Daniel Weinbren, ‘Supporting Self-Help: Charity, Mutuality and Reciprocity in Nineteenth-Century Britain’, in *Charity and Mutual Aid in Europe and North America since 1800*, ed. by Bernard Harris and Paul Bridgen (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 101–32.
- 6 John Garrard, *Democratisation in Britain: Elites, Civil Society and Reform since 1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 277, 282–3.
- 7 The term Oddfellows here and subsequently refers to this body and not to one of the other 35 or more organizations which had the word in their names.
- 8 Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850*, rev. edn (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 33; Kidd, p. 129.
- 9 Cordery, *British Friendly Societies*, pp. 102–4.
- 10 Dowlais and Merthyr Unity of the Ancient Order of Britons, 1860 Lodge Charter. Copy in the Museum of Welsh Life, Cardiff, cited in S. L. Evans, ‘A Study of the Socio-economic Changes in Merthyr Tydfil that Contributed to the Development and Perpetuation of the Friendly Societies’ (unpublished master’s thesis, University of Wales, 1994), p. 45. Similar words were used at a Society dinner in 1874. The speaker hoped that ‘the Order would continue to extend its influence of making men provident and happy, better husbands and better fathers’. See *Kentish Mercury* (21 February 1874) cited in Crossick, p. 193.
- 11 *Oddfellows’ Magazine*, 414 (June 1909) in Cordery, *British Friendly Societies*, p. 166.

- 12 See Daniel Weinbren, 'Beneath the All-Seeing Eye: Fraternal Order and Friendly Societies' Banners in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain', *Journal of Social and Cultural History*, 3 (2006).
- 13 Andrew Durr, 'Chicken and Egg – the Emblem Book and Freemasonry: The Visual and Material Culture of Associated Life', *Transactions of Quatour Coronati Lodge* (February 2005), pp. 8–10.
- 14 John Bohstedt, 'Gender, Household and Community Politics: Women in English Riots 1790–1810', *Past and Present*, 120 (1988), 88–122 (pp. 98–9). The survey results can be found in P.P. *Abstract of the Answers and Returns under 43 Geo. 3 Relative to the Expense and Maintenance of the Poor in England*, (1803–04), p. xiii.
- 15 Colonel Frank Shuttleworth (1845–1913) retired from engineering to Old Warden which adjoins Southill. He became a Conservative county councillor, High Sheriff and a justice of the peace. Involved in numerous local societies he was called by the *Biggleswade Chronicle*, 1 January 1913, 'quite the ideal squire'. During the life of the SFFS, Samuel Whitbread (1830–1915) was the Liberal MP for Bedford from 1852 to 1895. He was married to Lady Isabella (1836–1916). Their son Samuel Howard Whitbread (1858–1944) was Liberal MP for Luton from 1892 to 1895 and then Lord Lieutenant from 1912 to 1936. An earlier family member, Samuel Whitbread (1764–1815) enclosed Southill in 1797.
- 16 There is no record of the formation of the society or of its original structure. When he came to wind it up, the Whitbread estate manager and churchwarden for 40 years, Colonel Samuel Gilbert Isitt (1882–1964), wrote a note, held in Bedfordshire County Record Office (hereafter BCRO), indicating that he considered that it dated from 1844.
- 17 On the difficulties for female friendly societies in locating doctors see Evelyn Lord, 'Weighed in the Balance and Found Wanting': Female Friendly Societies, Self-Help and Economic Virtue in the East Midlands in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Midland History*, 22 (1997), 100–12 (p. 101).
- 18 Cordery, *British Friendly Societies*, p. 48.
- 19 The figures in square brackets are literal conversions to decimal currency from the old shillings and pence: not direct modern equivalents but provided to make comparisons within the chapter more straightforward.
- 20 Clive Bradbury, 'The Impact of Friendly Societies in North Staffordshire', *Staffordshire Studies*, 13 (2001), 127–44 (pp. 130, 134).
- 21 Lord, 'Weighed', pp. 105–6; Margaret D. Fuller, *West Country Friendly Societies: An Account of Village Benefit Clubs and their Brass Pole Heads* (Reading: Oakwood Press, 1964), pp. 154–5.
- 22 C. Hurt, 'Women in Action: Female Friendly Societies, 1770–1915' (unpublished Certificate in Higher Education dissertation, University of Nottingham, 2006), p. 10 cites FS15/98.
- 23 Ivy Evans, 'Bishop's Castle and Lydbury North Female Friendly Society', *South West Shropshire Historical and Archaeological Society Journal*, 1 (1989), 19–28 (pp. 19–20).
- 24 Lord, 'Weighed', p. 105.
- 25 Hurt, p. 4.
- 26 Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580–1800: The Origins of an Associational World*, Oxford Studies in Social History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 358.

- 27 Sarah Lloyd, 'Pleasing Spectacles and Elegant Dinners: Conviviality, Benevolence and Charity Anniversaries in Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of British Studies*, 41 (2002), 23–57 (pp. 54–5); Caroline O. Reid, 'Middle-Class Values and Working-Class Culture in Nineteenth-Century Sheffield' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 1976), pp. 515, 539; Hilary Marland, *Medicine and Society in Wakefield and Huddersfield 1780–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) pp. 25, 190, 198–9.
- 28 Peter Terry Weller, 'Self Help and Provident Friendly Societies in Coventry in the Nineteenth Century' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Warwick, 1990), pp. 40, 105.
- 29 Rules of the Barton-in-Fabis Friendly Society, reprinted in *Friendly Societies: Seven Pamphlets* (New Hampshire: Ayer Publishing, 1972). See also Susan Andrews, 'The Barton-in-Fabis Female Friendly Society', *East Midland Historian*, 3 (1993), 15–23.
- 30 William Henry Beveridge, *Voluntary Action: A Report on Methods of Social Advance* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1948), p. 25.
- 31 Lord, 'Weighed', p. 101.
- 32 Jim Turner, 'The Frontier Revisited: Thrift and Fellowship in the New Industrial Town, c. 1830–1914', in *Middlesbrough: Town and Community 1830–1950*, ed. by Anthony James Pollard (Stroud: Sutton, 1996), pp. 81–102 (p. 91); Lord, 'Weighed', pp. 100–12; *Female Foresters: A Century of Landmarks*, ed. by Audrey Fisk and Roger Logan (Southampton: Ancient Order of Foresters, 1992); Dot Jones, 'Self-Help in Nineteenth-Century Wales: The Rise and Fall of the Female Friendly Society', *Llafur*, 4 (1984), 14–26; Julie O'Neill, *'In the Club': Female Friendly Societies in Nottinghamshire 1792–1913* (Nottingham: Trent Valley History Group, 2001); Pat Thane, *The Foundation of the Modern Welfare State* (London: Longman, 1982), p. 21; Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); p. 37 notes that of the London friendly societies registered under the 1793 legislation, 15 per cent were female and in Stockport between 1794 and 1823, 33 per cent of the friendly societies were for women. In 1824 the proportion was 16 per cent in Nottinghamshire, 27 per cent in Cheshire, 18 per cent in Lancashire and 35 per cent in Leicester.
- 33 Sheila Lewenhak, *Women and Trade Unions* (London: Benn, 1977) p. 20; Clark, *The Struggle*, p. 35.
- 34 Robert Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield: Work Culture and Protest 1790–1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987) pp. 261–2.
- 35 Clark, *The Struggle*, p. 37.
- 36 Journal of Edward Derrington, 23 February 1843, cited in Clive Behagg, 'Secrecy, Ritual and Folk Violence: The Opacity of the Workplace in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', in *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth-Century England*, ed. by Robert D. Storch (London: Croom Helm; New York: St Martin's Press, 1982), pp. 154–79 (p. 157).
- 37 William Apfel and Peter Dunkley, 'English Rural Society and the New Poor Law: Bedfordshire, 1834–47', *Social History*, 10 (1985), 37–68 (p. 62). On the buoyancy of plaiting and the depression of female wages see Keith D. M. Snell, 'Agricultural Seasonal Unemployment, the Standard of Living, and Women's Work in the South and East, 1690–1860', *Economic History Review*, 34 (1981), 407–37 (p. 431).

- 38 Plaiting straw for hats dates back to at least 1630. The trade grew rapidly in Britain in the early nineteenth century following the cessation of imports of plait from Italy in 1804, a series of import controls, and the invention of a device for splitting straw lengthwise which, by 1815 cost only 6d. [2¹/₂p]. In 1851 there were over 10,000 straw plaiters in Bedfordshire, 14.9 per cent of the total female population of the county, and this figure was 15.5 per cent a decade later. On the role of straw plaiting in village life in Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire see László L. Gróf, *Children of Straw: The Story of a Vanished Craft and Industry in Bucks, Herts, Beds and Essex* (Buckingham: Barracuda Books, 1988); Edwin Grey, *Cottage Life in a Hertfordshire Village: How the Agricultural Labourer Lived and Fared in the Late Sixties and Early Seventies* (Chesham: Barracuda Books, 1935) pp. 68–9; and Pamela L. R. Horn, 'The Buckinghamshire Straw Plait Trade in Victorian England', *Records of Buckinghamshire*, 19 (1971), 42–54.
- 39 George R. Boyer, *Economic History of the English Poor Law, 1750–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 111.
- 40 Apfel and Dunkley, pp. 40, 44.
- 41 Samantha Williams, 'Earnings, Poor Relief and the Economy of Makeshifts: Bedfordshire in the Early Years of the New Poor Law', *Rural History*, 16 (2005), 21–52 (p. 46) (Her emphasis).
- 42 Judy Lown, *Women and Industrialisation: Gender at Work in Nineteenth-Century ENGLAND* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), p. 48.
- 43 As plaiting was seasonal and many plaiters were part time the census information is probably an underestimate.
- 44 A decade later, 36 of the 580 working women were plaiters and 18 were former straw plaiters.
- 45 On child straw plaiters see Jennie Kittingham, 'Country Work Girls in Nineteenth-Century England', in *Village Life and Labour*, ed. by Raphael Elkan Samuel (London: Routledge, 1975), pp. 73–138 (pp. 120–5); Gróf, p. 80; Pamela L. R. Horn, 'Child Workers in the Pillow Lace and Straw Plait Trades of Victorian Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire', *Historical Journal*, 17 (1974), 779–96 (p. 789); Hugh Cunningham, 'The Employment and Unemployment of Children in England, c. 1680–1851', *Past and Present*, 126 (1990), 115–50 (pp. 144–5).
- 46 It was typically the case that rural girls' service began in small, middle-class homes: see Jessica Anne Gerard, 'Family and Servants in the Country-House Community in England and Wales, 1815–1914' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1982), pp. 95–7.
- 47 The others were a platelayer on the Midland Railway (the Midland Railway came to Southill in 1857), a fitter at Woolwich Arsenal, and a licensed victualler. On the growth of market gardening in the area see Frank Beavington, 'The Development of Market Gardening in Bedfordshire, 1799–1939', *Agricultural History Review*, 23 (1975), 23–47 (pp. 27, 32).
- 48 George Culley, an assistant commissioner, cited in *The Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture*, PP 1867/68 XVIII First Report p. xxviii; Harold Hart Mann, 'Life in an Agricultural Village in England', *Sociological Papers*, 1 (1904), 163–93 (p. 161), cited in Eddie H. Hunt, 'Labour productivity in English agriculture, 1850–1914', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 20 (1967) 280–92 (p. 287).

- 49 Julie O'Neill, "'The Spirit of Independence': Friendly Societies in Nottinghamshire 1724–1913' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Nottingham Polytechnic, 1992), p. 98; Shani D'Cruze and Jean Turnbull, 'Fellowship and Family: Oddfellows' Lodges in Preston and Lancaster c. 1830–c. 1890', *Urban History*, 22 (1995), 25–47. On the relationship between wages and friendly society membership see Evelyn Lord, 'Derbyshire Friendly Societies and the Paradox of Thrift', *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 16 (1996), 11–17.
- 50 Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*, 17 vols (London: Macmillan, 1902–03), I (1902), pp. 37–49; IV (1902), pp. 300–1, 310–11, 322–3; B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1922), p. 56.
- 51 Pamela Sharpe, 'Continuity and Change: Women's History and Economic History in Britain', *Economic History Review*, 48 (1995), 353–69 (p. 354).
- 52 Clark, *British Clubs*, pp. 364, 380.
- 53 Hurt, p. 3. One exception is the Crail Sea Box Society (which helped seamen and their families during periods of distress). The account book held in Crail Museum indicates that in the 1770s the club administrator was a woman.
- 54 Quoted in Malcolm Bee, 'A Friendly Society Case Study: The Compton Pilgrims Benefit Society', *Southern History*, 11 (1989), 68–9 (p. 86); Nigel Scotland, *Methodism and the Revolt of the Field. A Study of the Methodist Contribution to Agricultural Trade Unionism in East Anglia 1872–1896* (Gloucester: Sutton, 1981), p. 170.
- 55 Richardson Campbell, *Provident and Industrial Institutions* (Manchester: Board of Directors, Independent Order of Rechabites, 1923), p. 244.
- 56 Report from the Select Committee on the Aged Deserving Poor 1899, p. 95, cited in John Macnicol, *The Politics of Retirement in Britain, 1878–1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 31.
- 57 A. W. Watson, *Friendly Societies for Women, with Special Consideration of the Sickness Risk from the Actuarial Point of View* (Manchester, Independent Order of Oddfellows, Manchester Unity, 1897), pp. 1–4.
- 58 Samantha Williams, 'Poor Relief, Labourers' Households and Living Standards in Rural England c. 1770–1834: A Bedfordshire Case Study', *Economic History Review*, 58 (2005), 485–519 (p. 514).
- 59 County societies existed wholly or partially in 20 counties: see Malcolm Bee, 'Providence with Patronage: The Royal Berkshire Friendly Society 1872–1972', *Southern History*, 16 (1994), 100–21 (p. 118). On the Estate Benefit Club see W3977, BCRO; on Shuttleworth's role see *Biggleswade Chronicle* (21 November 1891). The National Deposit was a model for at least one friendly society sponsored by a railway company: see Simon Cordery, 'Mutualism, Friendly Societies and the Genesis of Railway Trade Unionism', *Labour History Review*, 67 (2002), 263–79 (p. 268). Whitbread, as a brewer, benefited from the fact that many friendly societies met in pubs: see Peter Mathias, *The Brewing Industry in England 1700–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), pp. 264, 277–8.
- 60 *Biggleswade Chronicle* (28 May 1892).
- 61 Simon Whitbread (1904–1985) was the son of Samuel Howard Whitbread and grandson of Samuel Whitbread.
- 62 Note in SFFS file, BCRO.
- 63 Clark, *British Clubs*, p. 383.

- 64 Hugh Anthony Lewis Cockerell and Edwin Green, *The British Insurance Business 1547–1970: An Introduction and Guide to Historical Records in the UK* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1976), p. 28.
- 65 Dennis R. Mills and Kevin Schürer, 'Migration and Population Turnover', in *Local Communities in the Victorian Census Enumerators' Books*, ed. by Dennis R. Mills and Kevin Schürer (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press Limited, 1996), pp. 218–28. On rural migration see also George R. Boyer and Timothy J. Hatton, 'Migration and Labour Market Integration in Late Nineteenth-Century England and Wales', *Economic History Review*, 50 (1997), 697–734.
- 66 Snell, 'Agricultural', p. 431. For evidence that rural women were preferred for domestic service and found it difficult to get mill work in, for example, Preston, see Wendy M. Gordon, *Mill Girls and Strangers: Single Women's Independent Migration in England, Scotland and the United States, 1850–1881* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002).
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- 68 E. Abbott, 'Straw Plaiting in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, 1871–1881: Some Factors affecting Straw Plaiting Families, their Residential Persistence, Work and Education', in *Project Reports in Family and Community History*, CD-ROM (CDR0008), ed. by L. Faulkner and R. Finnegan (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 1997).
- 69 Ruth L. Smith and Deborah M. Valenze, 'Mutuality and Marginality: Liberal Moral Theory and Working-Class Women in Nineteenth-Century England', *Signs: Journal of Women, Culture and Society*, 13 (1988), 277–98 (p. 288).
- 70 The case that for poor urban women there was more promise in the resources of neighbours and kin than in individual mobility is made by Ellen Ross, 'Survival Networks: Women's Neighbourhood Sharing in LONDON before World War One', *History Workshop Journal*, 15 (1983), 4–27.
- 71 Michael E. Rose, 'Settlement, Removal and the new Poor Law', in *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Derek Fraser (London: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 25–43 (p. 36).
- 72 On travelling brothers see Daniel Weinbren, 'The Good Samaritan, Friendly Societies and the Gift Economy', *Social History*, 31 (2006), 319–36.
- 73 Samantha Williams, 'Practitioners' Income and Provision for the Poor: Parish Doctors in the late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', *Social History of Medicine*, 18 (2005), 159–86.
- 74 Robin Pearson, *Insuring the Industrial Revolution: Fire Insurance in Great Britain, 1700–1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 117.
- 75 *Biggleswade Chronicle*, 27 August 1892.
- 76 Sarah Lloyd, 'Cottage Conversations: Poverty and Manly Independence in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, 184 (2004), 69–108 (p. 94).

- 77 Elizabeth T. Hurren, 'Welfare-to-Work Schemes and a Crusade against Outdoor Relief in the Brixworth Union, Northamptonshire in the 1880s', *Family and Community History*, 4 (2001), 19–30.
- 78 The importance of supporting bodies which performed such roles is discussed in Lauren M. E. Goodlad, "'Making the Working Man like Me': Charity, Pastorship and Middle-Class Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain; Thomas Chalmers and Dr James Phillips Kay', *Victorian Studies*, 43 (Summer 2001), 591–617 (pp. 594–5).
- 79 Andrew Philips, 'Four Colchester Elections: Voting Behaviour in a Victorian Market Town', in *An Essex Tribute: Essays Presented to Frederick G. Emmison as a Tribute to his Life and Work for Essex History and Archives*, ed. by Kenneth Neale (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press, 1987), pp. 199–227 (p. 217); Garrard, p. 166; Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People 1880–1935* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp. 155–6; Mary Bliss and Mary Day, *Cirencester Benefit Society 1890–1990* (Cirencester: Cirencester Benefit Society, 1990), pp. 41–3.
- 80 *Biggleswade Chronicle*, 16 July 1892 and 6 August 1892.
- 81 *Biggleswade Chronicle*, 29 April 1910.
- 82 *Abingdon Herald*, 3 July 1875.
- 83 Bee, 'A Friendly Society', p. 75. For an account of two Christian sisters who sought to promote schools, religious services and women's clubs among the poor in an area near Bristol, see Martha More, *Mendip Annals, or a Narrative of the Charitable Labours of Hannah and Martha More* (London: James Nisbet, 1859). For accounts of such societies in other parts of the country see Daniel Weinbren, "'Imagined families": Research on Friendly Societies', *Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für die Geschichte de sozialen Bewegungen*, 27 (2002), 117–36 (p. 130).
- 84 1854 Report quoted in David J. Appleby, 'Combination and Control: Cultural Politics in the Management of Friendly Societies in Nineteenth-Century Essex and Suffolk', *Essex Archaeology and History*, 33 (2002), 323–32.
- 85 Jessica Anne Gerard, 'Lady Bountiful: Women of the Landed Classes and Rural Philanthropy', *Victorian Studies*, 30 (1987), 183–210 (p. 198).
- 86 Letter in *The Times*, 16 April 1874.
- 87 David Thomson, 'The Welfare of the Elderly in the Past: A Family or Community Responsibility?', in *Life, Death and the Elderly: Historical Perspectives*, ed. by Margaret Pelling and Richard M. Smith (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 194–221 (pp. 203–4).
- 88 *Biggleswade Chronicle*, 26 April 1912.
- 89 Southill males were not ignored by the elite who also supported the Choral Society, the Scouts and Southill Park Cricket Club: see *Biggleswade Chronicle*, 3 March 1911, 22 March 1912, and 4 April 1913; *Southill Park Cricket Club, 100 Years of Cricket 1884–1984* (Southill: Southill Park Cricket Club, 1984).
- 90 E-mail to the author from Elizabeth King, 19 February 2000.
- 91 W3976, BCRO; *Biggleswade Chronicle*, 17 January 1913 and 24 December 1892. The Whitbreads had provided for local women in the past: for example, in 1764, Samuel Whitbread I made an endowment to a charity school, stipulating that some of the money be spent on straw hats for poorer female pupils: Gróf, p. 19.
- 92 Robert Humphreys, *Sin, Organised Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England* (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 94.

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- 94 Simon Cordery, 'Friendly Societies and the Discourse of Respectability in Britain, 1825–1875', *Journal of British Studies*, 34 (1995), 35–58; Alun Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History 1850–1925* (London: Harper Collins Academic, 1991), p. 80.
- 95 Cordery, 'Mutualism', pp. 263–79; J. Benson, 'Coalowners, Coalminers and Compulsion: pit clubs in England, 1860–80', *Business History*, 44 (2002), 47–60; Friendly Society of Ironfounders, records, Modern Record Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.41/FSIF/4/4.
- 96 Bradbury, pp. 130, 134; Cordery, 'Mutualism', pp. 265–7.
- 97 Howkins, p. 81.
- 98 Bee, 'Providence', p. 106; David Neave, 'Anglican Clergy and the Affiliated Order Friendly Societies', in *Regional Studies in the History of Religion in Britain since the Later Middle Ages*, ed. by Edward Royle (Hull: Humberside, 1984), pp. 184–9; Evelyn Lord, 'The Friendly Society Movement and the Respectability of the Rural Working Class', *Rural History*, 8 (1997), 165–74 (pp. 170–1); James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey, 1825–1875* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 88; Diary entry of the Revd G. D. Newbolt of Souldrop (1856–1895) in 'Some Bedfordshire diaries', *The Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Records Society*, 40 (1959), pp. 206–21; Alan Armstrong, *Farmworkers: A Social and Economic History, 1770–1980* (London: Batsford, 1988), p. 108; A. James, 'Religion – the Extent of its Influence on the Community of Weobley, Herefordshire during the Decade 1850–1860', in *Project Reports* CD-ROM.
- 99 Rules and Orders to be observed by the Isle of Man Sisterly Society, Manx Heritage Museum D126/3(b). Thanks to Alan Franklin for a copy of these rules.
- 100 Brian Harrison, 'For Church, Queen and Family: The Girls' Friendly Society 1874–1920', *Past and Present*, 61 (1973), 106–38. See also Patricia Mitchell, *The Girls' Friendly Society, 1875–1900*, unpublished doctoral thesis, Open University (2003).
- 101 Anon., *The Girls' Friendly Society* (London: Girls' Friendly Society, 1877), p. 2.
- 102 Howkins, pp. 74–7, 159–60.
- 103 Cheryl Walsh, 'The Incarnation and the Christian Socialist Conscience in the Victorian Church of England', *Journal of British Studies*, 34 (1995), 359–74 (p. 374).
- 104 Alfred P. Wadsworth, 'The First Manchester Sunday Schools', in *Essays in Social History*, ed. by Michael W. Flinn and Thomas Christopher Smout (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 100–22 (pp. 101, 117, 119); P. H. J. H. Gosden, *The Friendly Societies in England, 1815–1875* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961), pp. 20–1; Keith D. M. Snell, 'The Sunday School Movement in England and Wales: Child Labour, Denominational Control and Working-Class Culture', *Past and Present*, 164 (1999), 122–68 (pp. 130–1).
- 105 Frank K. Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse: Philanthropy in Modern Britain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), pp. 55, 62, 74.
- 106 Michael Foucault, 'Governmentality', in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: With Two Lectures By and an Interview With Michel Foucault*, ed. by

- Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 87–104.
- 107 The illegitimacy rate among straw plaiters and other women is examined in Horn, 'Child workers', p. 791; Gróf, *Children*; M. Borgars, 'Straw Plaiters of Maulden: A Study of Bastardy in a Nineteenth-Century Bedfordshire Community, Education', in *Project reports* CD-ROM; and Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Virago, 1983), p. 194. A study of an adjacent plaiting area found no significant differences in illegitimacy rates in plaiting and non-plaiting areas. See Nigel Goose, 'How Saucy did it Make the Poor? The Straw Plait and Hat Trades, Illegitimate Fertility and the Family in Nineteenth-Century Hertfordshire', *History*, 91, 304 (2006), 530–56.
- 108 Fuller, pp. 153–4; O'Neill, 'The Spirit of Independence', p. 94; Clark, *British Clubs*, pp. 376–7.
- 109 Quoted in Lord, 'Weighed', p. 110.
- 110 Dorothy Thompson, *Outsiders: Class, Gender, and Nation* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 81; see also Clark, *British Clubs*, pp. 38, 54, 69.
- 111 Pat Thane, 'Women and the Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England', *History Workshop Journal*, 6 (1978), 29–51 (p. 39).
- 112 *Biggleswade Chronicle*, 27 August 1892; on King's and Whitbread's positions, see *Biggleswade Chronicle*, 26 April 1912.
- 113 John Richard Edwards and Roy A. Chandler, 'Contextualising the Process of Accounting Regulation: A Study of Nineteenth-Century British Friendly Societies', *Abacus: A Journal of Accounting, Finance and Business Studies*, 37 (2001), 188–216. See also John R. Edwards, Roy A. Chandler and Malcolm Anderson, 'The "Public Auditor": An Experiment in Effective Accountability', *Accounting and Business Research*, 29 (1999), 183–98.
- 114 Alan J. Kidd, 'Philanthropy and the "Social History Paradigm"', *Social History*, 21 (1996), 180–92 (pp. 183, 186–7).
- 115 Andrew Durr, 'Ritual of association and the organisations of the common people', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum, Transactions of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No 2076*, 100, (1987), 88–108; James Burn, *An Historical Sketch of the Independent Order of Oddfellows MU* (Manchester: A. Heywood, 1845), p. 12, referred to the 'ennobling principle of fraternal charity and brotherly love'. The term 'affiliated societies' appears to have originated in the Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies, 1858.