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# ‘THIS MAN IS REALLY AN INTOLERABLE PEST’: PERCEPTIONS AND TREATMENT OF THE DISABLED IN THE WORKHOUSE, 1834–1900

BY CAROL BEARDMORE

*Peter Higginbottom has argued that historians have failed to hear, find and listen to the voices of workhouse inmates. Using the recent research undertaken by the AHRC project ‘In Their Own Write’ the focus of this article will be on the letters and statements made by disabled and infirm inmates. By using a range of the correspondence, it will explore the voice of the disabled in the workhouse and consider how those with impairments exhibited agency and fought for their perceived rights and correct treatment and will explore negotiations around poor nursing care, the removal of personal liberties, invasion of privacy surrounding issues with the mail, poor food and expectations of the type of work they should be given. At the centre of the argument and particularly for those with sensory problems it will argue that poverty was the main problem rather than individual impairments. Finally, it will examine how individuals took a bullish approach to challenging those in authority at the local and central level to ensure that obligations of aid and relief were met, albeit often unsuccessfully.*

KEYWORDS: *Impairment; workhouse; pauper; disability; agency; nursing; cleanliness*

## *Introduction*

The formation of the New Poor Law union workhouse and its associated Infirmary created new institutions through which the labouring classes needed to negotiate relief from poverty, sickness, and infirmity. Initially the workhouse was intended for the able-bodied but sick inmates quickly became a substantial group within the inmate population, this, however, still does not make finding the voice of the disabled easy. This is exacerbated because poor law statistics are notorious in their failure to distinguish between the different types of paupers.<sup>1</sup> There remains a gap, for example, in our understanding around the relief provision for the elderly, ill and infirm once they entered the workhouse. Samantha Shave argues that because much of the guardians time was taken up with the young and

able bodied it is these groups that appear most in the records.<sup>2</sup> This is not surprising and is highlighted by Michael Rose who stated that in the early years of the New Poor the central authorities were more interested in collecting statistics around how much was spent on poor relief rather than who received it.<sup>3</sup> Most unions regarded all paupers between the age of seventeen and seventy as being able-bodied unless permanently incapacitated. It meant that a young man of twenty admitted to the workhouse with some form of injury, for example, a broken bone could be classed as able bodied.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, an old man of, 75 capable of work might be registered as non-able-bodied.

Those who would today be classed disabled were identified as infirm and placed amongst the aged and sick thus making it difficult to distinguish them from others within the workhouse. Within the census the disabled poor were frequently categorised with either mental infirmities (lunatic, imbecile or idiot) or with physical and sensory problems including deaf, dumb, blind or occasionally crippled.<sup>5</sup> It is the intention here to concentrate on those inmates who suffered physical rather than mental health issues, for it is these men and women whose complaints, requests for help and appeals appeared in the correspondence and statements sent to the Poor Law Commissioners in London. In the absence of a pauper disabled voice it is has been assumed that inmates with sensory, physical and mental impairments were treated in a similar way to those regarded as the 'deserving poor' a concept that will be challenged here.<sup>6</sup> Workhouse infirmaries had not been intended to act in place of hospitals for the long-term sick poor but instead to provide temporary medical provision for the able-bodied inmates who became ill. The sick wards of the New Poor Law workhouse, however, rapidly became the main source of medical help for all type of illness amongst the poor. Consequently, the workhouse quickly filled with sick and infirm paupers rather than the able-bodied men who were the prime target of the legislation.<sup>7</sup> Alistair Rich estimated that the proportion of those who were sick in the workhouse population rose from 10 per cent in 1843 to between 34 and 48 per cent in the mid to late 1860s.<sup>8</sup> Understanding that the workhouse contained large numbers of infirm paupers does not, however, give them a voice within the narrative of the New Poor Law; nor does it consider the agency which they used to negotiate their treatment and living conditions.

David Englander argues that pauper inmates were and are frequently seen as 'helpless, hapless, and hopeless'. It might be supposed that those who suffered some form of infirmity would have demonstrated even less agency than their able-bodied contemporaries.<sup>9</sup> Thus not only has the voice of the disabled, impaired or infirm aged been missing from the discourse but increasingly according to Christoph Conrad health care for the old was marginalised and even neglected in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>10</sup> As such the historiography has not been able to give more than a generalised sense of the way in which the old and infirm were treated. Yet these men, women and children were some of the most vulnerable groups within the workhouse, they relied on others

to provide care and oversee their needs. Consequently, it meant that they were the groups most at risk from poor and untrained nursing care. The AHRC funded 'In Their Own Write' (hereon in ITOW) explored 104 union across England and Wales and unearthed numerous letters written from the physically infirm complaining about the treatment they received. The research undertaken for this project has opened a new narrative and discourse for those who found themselves forced into the workhouse because family and friends were no longer able to undertake their care or because out-relief was stopped. It has expanded the historical understanding of how the disabled perceived and navigated their way through a system which was designed for the able-bodied. Their correspondence and witness statements often portray a clear sense of their perceived rights and the way they believed these should be executed. The opening quote of the title related to Thomas Cox at the Great Yarmouth union, a serial letter writer alongside his wife who sought to negotiate the terms of the relief he was offered. It would seem the guardians found his frequent missives irritating, but above all despite his paralysis he was not seen as being part of the 'deserving poor' nor did he gain the empathy of either the local union or central officers. Indeed, the opposite might be the case, but it did not stop him trying to improve his lot. Using the correspondence of the disabled themselves, this article will, explore how infirm paupers expected to be treated, examine the complaints they made and question whether these fitted into the wider landscape of less eligibility. It will examine the quality of nursing care they received and finally investigate how the agency of the disabled in the workhouse was used to navigate their way through the system. Overall, a case study approach will be taken which puts the voice of the poor who were sensory, physical or mentally impaired at the centre of the debate.

### *Treatment in the workhouse*

The New Poor Law workhouse was meant to represent the new mantra of less eligibility, and this applied to the impaired as much as the able bodied. According to Norman Longmate few workhouse infirmaries attempted to make the accommodation for the sick any more welcoming than the rest of the house.<sup>11</sup> Campaigns by Louisa Twining and the Workhouse Visiting Society had emphasised the poor quality and inadequacy of the care of sick or disabled paupers and these found support in the investigations carried out by the *Lancet* in to London workhouses and an inquiry into provincial conditions by Poor Law Inspectors.<sup>12</sup> Overall, they found there was little attempt to classify those who were sick or suffered from some form of impairment, there was wide spread overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, those with infectious diseases were not quarantined and there was a lack of trained medical staff with the majority of care being carried out by nurses who came from the pauper population.<sup>13</sup> Although there was a rising number of charitably funded voluntary hospitals those who ended in the workhouse would have been refused admittance. Ruth Richardson argues that charitably

funded institutions were reliant on 'high cure-rates' and most of the paupers would have been classed as hopeless or incurable cases.<sup>14</sup> Not all paupers with sensory, physical or mental impairment were admitted to the workhouse infirmary, and often, despite obvious signs of some form of disability, individuals were housed with the able-bodied and put to work in much the same way, thus emphasising less eligibility for all. Patients might originally have been admitted to the infirmary and then moved to the body of the house, for example, George Leech at Crumpsall workhouse in Manchester in 1866. He wrote to the Poor Law Board, alleging that once moved from the hospital he was put to pick oakum at the rate of four pounds per day but because his hands were paralysed it was an impossible task. Consequently, the punishment for failing to complete the allotted rate resulted in the reduction of his food allowance. The surgeon ordered the amount of oakum be reduced to two pounds, but Leech was unable to complete even the lowered daily amount.<sup>15</sup> This case brings into question how the impairments of those admitted to the workhouse were assessed and who decided what capability they might have for work.

Leech demonstrated how constructing disability under the New Poor Law presented considerable difficulties not least because of the problems of classification discussed above. The problem was exacerbated by the type of information collected by the government. There was an attempt in the 1851 census to count those who were considered by their families or local communities as deaf, dumb or blind and from 1871 householders were asked to indicate if members of the household were imbeciles, idiots or lunatics.<sup>16</sup> The term from birth was to be added where appropriate. Although householders were given a set of questions much of the interpretation was left to the individuals interpreting impairment through their own personal definitions.<sup>17</sup> After the 1851 census, the reports compiled included in-depth discussions around the numbers of both the deaf and blind with a growing focus on how to make the disabled useful.<sup>18</sup> As the blind often could not support themselves many were sent to the workhouse.<sup>19</sup> Yet Beardmore et al. argue that throughout most of the nineteenth century blindness or a lack of sight was not necessarily seen as a 'disability'.<sup>20</sup> For ten year old Lewis Jones of the Bala union being short sighted, for example, was not enough of an impediment to stop the officials finding him an apprenticeship.<sup>21</sup> Neither did those who considered themselves to be of 'defective sight' necessarily believe they were unfit for work. Hannah Berry Pearson an inmate of the Dorking union wrote to the Local Government Board in 1891 that she was desirous of obtaining work. Despite having problems with her vision in the past her employment had included a 'great deal of housework also needlework and other duties'.<sup>22</sup> Even the loss of sight in one eye (the result of an accident while breaking stones in the workhouse) was not sufficient to halt the work of a seventy-four-year-old man in the Kidderminster workhouse. Nor were any extra allowances made for his age in terms of extra food, beer, butter or tobacco as allowed under the central rules.<sup>23</sup>

In fact, being totally blind was less of a barrier to employment than total poverty. Thus Peter [Shan] who was twenty-one and 'afflicted with blindness' found himself

an inmate of Huddersfield workhouse in December 1858. For the previous 7 years he had been educated and taught the trade of mat maker at the asylum for the blind in York. The only thing stopping Shan leaving the workhouse and being gainfully employed was the lack of sufficient finances to purchase a loom.<sup>24</sup> Likewise Samuel Bolton, in 1854, on leaving the blind school in Liverpool found himself denied help by the Poor Law Commissioners who refused to sanction the purchase of tools so that he might set himself up in the trade of basket making. On this occasion James Corder the clerk to the guardians had taken up the case and advocated on Bolton's behalf stating, 'that the pauper [Bolton] on being blind and to a certain extent permanently disabled cannot be considered in the light of an able-bodied person'.<sup>25</sup> Corder's argument centred on the idea that Bolton's visual impairment meant that he fell outside the Labour Test and his case should be considered on its individual merit. Ultimately Corder argued to the Poor Law Commissioners that if they were not prepared to provide the monies then Bolton should be relieved without setting him to work, this could be achieved either as relief by way of a loan or otherwise.<sup>26</sup> There is some empathy here as to Bolton's situation and a sense that his visual impairment meant that he fell into the category of the deserving poor even though he was perfectly able to maintain himself. Despite both of these men having the ability to be independent of the State the central authorities were not prepared to expend relatively small sums to support them outside of the workhouse even when local officials advocated on their behalf. In other words, less eligibility applied to the young and impaired as much as it did to the able bodied.

Deafness like blindness, was not seen as a significant reason for exclusion from the workhouse. It is hard to assess just what percentage of the population was deaf in the nineteenth century. The 1861 census, for example, recorded 12,236 deaf mutes, but the number was probably just the tip of the iceberg given that the term 'idiot' was likely to include those who were deaf or hard of hearing from birth.<sup>27</sup> Hearing problems often translated into speech problems and could lead to multi-layered exclusion from the socio-cultural life of the community. In a period when literacy was far from universal and without special teaching those who were deaf could find themselves totally voiceless. Ordinarily deaf people share the same physical space as those who can hear but are still often excluded from the hearing world.<sup>28</sup> One such person was Sydney Smart who was an inmate of Basford workhouse. A letter was sent to the Poor Law Commissioners allegedly from George/Sydney Smart (most likely a close relative although this is not clear), and even more confusing it tends to move from the third to the first person throughout. The letter stated that Smart was 'an imbecile' who was 'partially deaf and dumb Blind with one eye and almost unable to speak for himself'.<sup>29</sup> He had, however, still been able to work for at least part of his life in a private shop and lace factory although he struggled to survive. The correspondent wrote to ask the Poor Law Commissioners to intervene, as a rumour was being spread, around the workhouse that Smart was to be moved from the workhouse to the asylum. Throughout the letter the problems of sharing the workhouse with a hearing

population was evident as he stated, 'They always interfere with one another about a deaf man because they cannot know how to make sign of interpretation to a deaf man'.<sup>30</sup> In turn the inability to communicate had other consequences for those with hearing issues. Bullying and favouritism as expressed by Anne Crowther are possible in any institution but the way in which the workhouse was run and managed further encouraged such behaviour.<sup>31</sup> In most cases historians have explored this phenomenon by examining the bullying behaviour of the staff towards the inmates. The above comments made by Sydney Smart and picked up again in the inquest of Joseph Cooper's death at Horton workhouse in 1894 suggested that unsurprisingly inmates bullied each other and may even have been encouraged to do so, as a means of controlling an unruly and ill-disciplined inmate population.<sup>32</sup> That such behaviour occurred is further emphasised in the evidence given by Arthur Herne at the inquest into Cooper's death, he told the coroner that he heard the deceased and Patrick Scanlon quarrelling on the steps leading from the bedroom to the day room. He claimed that the dead man had said to Scanlon 'you must not touch Dummy again' at which point Scanlon kicked him in the stomach. The person referred to as 'Dummy' was a deaf and dumb inmate by the name of James Killerby and Cooper would often take his 'part' presumably against those who picked on him because of his disability.<sup>33</sup> Both Sydney Smart and Killerby would have been soft targets unable to pick up audio trigger signals and this would have made them more vulnerable.

Not all inmates were admitted because of permanent hearing loss as demonstrated by John Moore who entered the Manchester workhouse in 1879 for a temporary condition. He had originally caught a cold and consequently ended up deaf, so much so that he was forced to leave his employment. Being unable to provide for himself he applied to the workhouse for admission. His letter to the Local Government Board complained that all of his pension had been taken to pay for the costs of being in the workhouse despite his working 10 hours a day breaking up stones. Moore was incensed and wrote that there should be a difference between those who were in the workhouse long-term, and men like himself who were admitted for a short while, that is, until his temporary disability had improved and allowed him back into the community to earn his own living.<sup>34</sup> As we have already seen with the blind or partially sighted those with such impairments did not see themselves as helpless or incapable of work nor indeed did the New Poor Law.

While the workhouse dealt with the blind and deaf as able-bodied other physical disabilities across a range of ages also presented challenges. ITOW's close examination of the union correspondence hidden within MH12, has brought to the forefront of the discourse the disabled and infirm and starts to investigate how they considered their treatment. It widens out the discussion to include their views on its quality, the type of complaints they made and the extra considerations that they expected as part of their care. One man who was not happy with the workhouse experience was 58-year-old Henry Jones (ex-sailor) an inmate of Pwllheli workhouse. He wrote to the Poor Law Commissioners in April 1868

stating that he was infirm because of a fall on board ship when he had 'broken both of his feet' which had left him disabled for the past 2 years. During this period, he had been unable to earn a living, and the situation was exacerbated by his encroaching old age. On admission to the workhouse Jones the doctor had only allowed him the most 'ordinary diet' which had left him in a weakened state and thus he questioned why he 'should live on less diet than any other man in the union'. The reply came back that the dietary allowance was exactly what the board allowed. To make matters worse during the summer Jones argued 'the breakfast and supper is full of black beetles And earwigs and all kind of filth enough to turn the stomach of a strong man'. Other issues arose around the lack of straw in the bed which made his bones ache and the presence of vermin with which every man was 'crawling'. At the beginning of his stay their inmate clothing had been washed clean every fortnight but now they seldom got clean clothes. Despite the difficulties with his feet, Jones was still set to work picking oakum and his letter suggested that he was treated no differently to the other men within the house. Indeed, his letter does not ask for special treatment, but encompasses all the men he was housed with. He leaves his petition with the Commissioners stating, 'I do not wish to be too tiresome To you that was to tire your patience to Listen to me to mention about every trifle I leave you to judge and consider for us if we are properly treated here or not'.<sup>35</sup>

Written complaints to the Poor Law Commissioners could cover any aspect of life in the workhouse such as the letter from Sarah Pemmell a long-term inmate of Bethnal Green workhouse who was 'heavily afflicted of paralazes'. She wrote in June 1869 complaining:

I have been accustomed to sit in the Aged Woman's day room since I have been in the house which is 9 years the 12<sup>th</sup> of last march and now they hunt me about from one place to the other that I am nearly drove out of my sense they wish me to sit in one of the able bodied wards which is the draughtys room in the house being a complete throughfare being so heavy afflicted it would be very much against my health.<sup>36</sup>

Taking matters into her own hands and using her disability to add weight to the request she applied to the doctor stating that she wanted 'to be warded'. He refused and told her to write to the 'poor board or the rich board as he did not care'. Taking him thus at his word, Pemmell did exactly that, asking the Poor Law Commissioners to intercede on her behalf stating, 'they treat me a great deal worse than they do the strong able-Bodied Women'.<sup>37</sup> Her letter suggested that she differentiated herself from this latter group and expected the treatment provided to reflect the state of her health.

On occasion it is necessary to read the letters of third parties to obtain an understanding of conditions for the disabled in the workhouse. Frances Land an inmate of the Great Yarmouth workhouse was a serial letter writer and feisty malcontent who was a constant source of annoyance to the guardians of the union. She wrote to the Poor Law Commissioners in 1853, about a dispute which occurred between an able-bodied woman and a 'poor infirm cripple' who had been placed in the able-bodied ward. As a consequence of the dispute, the disabled woman had been confined in a cell in the ward for the insane although

Land claimed she was 'in full possession of her senses'.<sup>38</sup> Land, throughout her time in Great Yarmouth workhouse, denigrated the Master and his tyrannical management methods and she saw his behaviour as part of the problem. It appears that the disabled woman was excluded because of her condition while the able-bodied woman escaped without punishment.

This article has already discussed the bullying of those who were sensory or auditory impaired but bullying also occurred amongst others who were physically disabled. Such behaviour in the enclosed world of the workhouse could easily be swept under the carpet and hidden from official records, or in the case of H. French's allegations, used to bring the character of the Master into disrepute. He suggested that in December 1865 the Master was responsible for two attacks on Thomas Ferrock 'a cripple on two crutches' the first beating him with a stick at his bedside and the second dragging the man about the floor of the 'Governor's office by his hair'. Although charges were brought before the Board, Ferrock's evidence had been disallowed and the matter closed. French's letter attempted to persuade the Poor Law Commissioners to instigate a wider inquiry into the way in which the Master ran the workhouse but does not seem to have been successful.<sup>39</sup>

The extent to which bullying of 'invalid' inmates occurred can never be fully assessed. Those who were worried about the consequences, too frightened or terrorised by events might write anonymously but unnamed correspondence might be ignored. Such an anonymous letter was sent from Newcastle upon Tyne in 1868 and claimed 'Alarming, awful, Horrible and wilful Torture of the inmates ... for nearly 15 years by the Master'. The writer alleged that when the dying were received into the workhouse the Master sent for three or four imbeciles who hoisted their victim in a chair. They were sometimes hoisted shoulder high or alternatively carried so low their feet dragged on the ground, with some of the poorer invalids suffering broken legs. The letter was simply signed 'Humanity'.<sup>40</sup> It was of course possible that the letter came from was a disgruntled inmate seeking to create tension between the Master and the Poor Law Commissioners, but we shall never know because in London the advice was to send a copy to the guardians but without asking for their remarks and the comment made 'I have no faith in these anonymous + sensational complaints'.<sup>41</sup> For those with some form of disability negotiating life in the workhouse could be considerably more difficult. At the same time, it should not be assumed that all those who suffered some loss of physical function classed themselves as totally disabled or unable to work. There is a complex dividing line between able-bodied and infirm which was played out throughout the various phases of the New Poor Law. For those who faced long-term rehabilitation or degeneration the knowledge, skill, compassion and empathy of the medical staff was important and the skills of the nursing staff increasingly important.

### *Poor quality nursing*

For much of the period between 1834 and the early 1870s the vast majority of nursing care carried out in the workhouse was undertaken by untrained paupers.

Those who undertook the role were usually those who were willing to take up what was often a thankless and unpaid role. The reward was frequently extra rations of food, beer or gin, not surprising therefore that they had reputation of being drunkards as well as being unreliable, incompetent, sometimes cruel and known to steal both food and medication.<sup>42</sup> Across the nineteenth century, however, nursing practice underwent albeit as argued by Sue Hawkins slow but major reforms.<sup>43</sup> Consequently in the latter part of the nineteenth century trained nurses were appointed as matrons and the use of pauper nurses disappeared.<sup>44</sup> For those employed by the workhouse to care for the sick, infirm, elderly and young children no specific rules or duties had been set by the Poor Law Commissioners. Even when paid nurses were employed, the hours were long and the work heavy, most had no separate accommodation and so they slept and ate with the patients at least until the late nineteenth century.<sup>45</sup> By 1898, there had been considerable change and the Local Government Board refused to authorise the appointment of any untrained person as either a nurse or assistant in the workhouse infirmary even temporarily.<sup>46</sup> In 1847, however, the Consolidated Orders had simply stated that the duties of the nurse were 'To attend the sick in the sick and lying in wards and to administer to them all medicine and medical applications, according to the directions of the Medical Officer'. The only other responsibilities were to report to the Medical Officer any defects observed in the ward and to take care that a light was kept lit in the sick ward overnight.<sup>47</sup> Essentially, they were employed to provide the most basic of care, such as, cleaning and washing the patients. The pressures that poor law nurses faced were amply illustrated by an inquiry at Bethnal Green workhouse in September 1866. John Humphreys was picked up while in a 'fit' in the street and taken to the workhouse. Although stimulants were ordered the unfortunate man did not rally and shortly afterwards died. It transpired that there were only two nurses engaged in the sick ward which held 133 patients. To try and lighten the workload the nurses had induced an infirm male pauper of sixty-three years of age to act in a nursing capacity. He in turn appointed another pauper to share his workload. The coroner and jury remarked in the strongest possible terms over the shortage of nursing staff and the imposition of duties they could never hope to fulfil.<sup>48</sup>

Inquests and coroner's reports can often reveal the inadequacy of nursing practice as at Bradford in March 1894. Ann Brown aged 79 had died as the result of a fall in the Bradford Workhouse. Her granddaughter alleged that the deceased had told her that one of the nurses had pushed her off her chair on Friday 23 February. At the time she had not taken a great deal of notice as her grandmother 'talked a bit queer sometimes'. The nurse stated that the patient had fallen and broken her arm. Emily Brandon another nurse argued that the deceased was very infirm and told her that 'while sitting on a chair she had slipped between it at the bed' adding 'No one is to blame it was an accident'. The Medical Officer claimed that the patient had died from exhaustion due to debility from old age, a verdict the jury upheld.<sup>49</sup> When faced with patients who were particularly infirm with

wandering minds any cruelty or frustration taken out on the elderly person would have gone unnoticed leaving this group open to bullying, neglect and abuse in much the same way as those who had sensory problems. Given the number of patients under their care nurses could not be everywhere and accidents were likely to happen especially when falls in the frail and elderly are commonplace. In the end Brandon's old age was seen to have been the cause of her death.

Part of the role of the modern nurse is to communicate between members of the medical team, but workhouse nurses without any formal training could fail to pass on important information to the detriment of the pauper. Before exploring the next case, it is important to consider how epilepsy was often associated with some form of mental disease with the assumption made that if it occurred early in life, it was inevitably caused by some form of mental defect.<sup>50</sup> The overall view existed that those affected would in later life inevitably become mentally impaired with a loss of memory.<sup>51</sup> Given our modern understanding of the disease the prevailing attitude and diagnosis was not surprising as prolonged and uncontrolled seizures can cause severe brain damage over time. Here epilepsy was classed as a physical disability rather than a mental health issue as will be seen in the following case study.

Mary Ann Scott was a known epileptic and admitted to the epileptic ward in Liverpool workhouse c. May 1858.<sup>52</sup> At the inquest into her death Margaret Scully a pauper inmate and nurse for the female epileptic ward stated that the patient was brought into the ward on a chair carried by three men. On arrival because of her dirty condition, she was put into bed on her own and because it was late was neither washed nor her clothes changed and therefore not fully examined until the next morning when she was found to be in a deplorable and filthy condition.<sup>53</sup> It seemed that the nurse in charge of the ward (Miss Grant) was informed that the patient had bedsores, but there was considerable confusion within the inquiry report as to whether the patient had ever been seen and fully examined by the medical officers.<sup>54</sup> According to the testimony of Mary Morris a pauper inmate employed as a nurse in the female epileptic ward, Scott was washed the morning after admission and her bed changed every morning. There was no evidence during her stay in the workhouse that she had any seizures, but she was very weak and could not walk, having to be lifted in and out of bed. Morris stated that while Scott was present in the ward, she was not examined by any doctor either for her weakness or her bed sores. Likewise, Morris admitted that she had not informed the doctor, the matron or indeed the master of the sores. Another woman had told the medical officer about the state of the patient at which point he finally inspected Scott, but no formal treatment plan seems to have been in place and the dressing of the sores had been left entirely to the pauper nurses.<sup>55</sup> Although the statements given are somewhat muddled it appears that the Commissioners inspecting those classed as lunatics picked up the case and ordered the inquiry. Without the in-depth knowledge usually gained by nurses through observing the patients when washing and cleaning, the medical officers

were unlikely to have even noticed or examined the patient. Of the four statements given in the case of Mary Ann Scott, three are signed and one had the mark of Mary Morris, consequently, it must be questioned as to level of their literacy. Without being able to both read and write well it would have been impossible to leave adequate notes for the doctor to read. Likewise, following written instructions would have been difficult if not impossible.

While some of the instances of poor nursing are outlined above, the vast majority of the nurses employed under the New Poor Law were simply out of their depth. Baldwyn Fleming wrote to the Local Government Board regarding the treatment of Millicent Goodyear (who was suffering from infantile paralysis) at Pewsey workhouse in 1892.<sup>56</sup> The medical officer Dr Coleman had written to the guardians stating that there was no known treatment for the condition and indeed the child was making good progress. The author of the letter was keen for Goodyear to be sent to Scio House Children's Hospital at Shanklin on the Isle of Wight. He maintained that 'knowing as I do the resources usually available at the Pewsey Workhouse I cannot understand how the girl can have the same opportunities as she would have in an Institution where the care of such cases is a special feature'.<sup>57</sup> The main complaint was that no nurse at Pewsey had specific experience in the treatment of patients where massage and electricity may be of advantage and thus the child would not receive the same level of care as she would in a specialist institution. A sense of the standard of nurses at the Isle of Wight hospital, came in the recommendation given to the nurse in charge who had been decorated by the Queen and in charge of Stafford House during the Egyptian Campaign.<sup>58</sup> Ultimately, Dr Coleman was advocating for a method of treatment which might vastly improve the quality of life of the child and thus make her a useful member of society. On occasion the treatment itself could have a disabling effect.

One such case where both nursing care and medical attention came into question was that of Ann Hobson at Barnsley workhouse in October 1869. An inquiry was instigated by the guardians who were perturbed by the possibility of alleged neglect. Hobson had been admitted to the workhouse on 18 August with 'a bad leg', which turned out to be so severe that the leg required amputation below the knee. A second operation to remove more of the leg was carried out on 10 September 1869. Other doctors called in at the inquest suggested that the surgeon had carried out his duties competently during both surgeries. The second amputation was tricky and creating a flap for the stump difficult. Dr Sadler visiting the patient on the 25 September reported that:

the end of the bone was visible through a large ulcer in the front flap and a few inches higher was an interrupted ring of deep ulcers, several of them passing through the skin.

On admission Hobson had been diagnosed as syphilitic and to add to her health problems it now appeared that she had the symptoms of tetanus. The nurse Eliza Ripley was called to give evidence not least because the tourniquet had been left

on the amputated limb and it was argued that it should never have been tightened. Ripley, however, emphasised that Hobson's care had been of the highest quality. She stated that she had tightened and loosened the tourniquet in response to episodes of excessive bleeding. The patient although asked had always stated that it was not too tight. Ripley claimed the patient was checked three or four times an hour which highlighted the high level of care provided. At the inquiry the nursing staff were not classed as being at fault or responsible for Hobson's death. Had she survived the patient would have been permanently disabled. The aim in this section has been to highlight that nursing care in the workhouse was basic and certainly during the early part of the New Poor Law few nurses were trained. Both male and female paupers were employed within the single sex wards and were often overworked with many more patients than they could hope to help. Physical disability did not affect the mental capacity of many of those who ended up in the workhouse and they exhibited agency in the same way as many of the able-bodied paupers. It is to the letters they wrote we now turn.

### *Agency of the disabled*

Peter Higginbotham argues that there has been a failure to both find and listen to the voices of workhouse inmates and, consequently, the idea of the 'oppressed pauper' has been created.<sup>59</sup> In reality those who entered the workhouse continued to think of themselves as people with rights and agency.<sup>60</sup> This was equally true of those who were physically, sensory or mentally impaired and although technically they were classed as the deserving poor the letter writers used here often felt their disability was not taken into account. Complaints varied according to place and locality but included grievances around being forced into unsuitable work, not fed the right amount of rations, forced to share accommodation or even a bed with unsuitable inmates or faced neglect through lack of clean clothes or washing facilities. From the correspondence examined by ITOW the reader is able to view disabled pauper inmates through a different lens. Despite their health issues admission to the workhouse could be transient as much part of trade-cycles as those who were able-bodied.<sup>61</sup> Peter Jones and Steven King have recently concurred that inmates had a strong idea of the standard of care they could expect to receive and they were often prepared able-bodied or not to fight with great determination.<sup>62</sup> The voice of the disabled can be found in witness statements at inquiries and in the letters they wrote to the Poor Law Commissioners. Some individuals appear singly while others wrote or gave more than one statement.

One of the most vociferous was Thomas Cox who has already been mentioned. He complained in his own right, as did his wife on his behalf. The first letters came from him but when these seemed to have little effect, she wrote two further letters. The first was dated 27 December 1851. The opening sentence read, 'With tearful eye and heavy heart I humbly approach to lay before you my forlorn and melancholy state', this was clearly an attempt to encourage empathy from the

Poor Law Commissioners.<sup>63</sup> It further contends that despite his paralysis her husband had been put to work with the able-bodied picking oakum and when he refused was put on a diet of bread and water.<sup>64</sup> The second letter some fourteen months later was more forceful in its opening, with Juliana Cox writing 'Truth Mercy and Justice is becoming all men especially one vested with so much power as you my Lord'. Her husband had now become 'a poor afflicted Paralatic and Rhumatic case and because he differ in religious and political opinion to those Minions in power these Men called Guardians turn oppressors'.<sup>65</sup> At the same time she protested that Cox was made to share a bed with Edward Staff who was very afflicted and had to wear a body belt to walk erect and yet both men had been placed in the able-bodied ward. There is a sense of her frustration in these letters as she tried to force the Poor Law Commissioners into some form of intervention. Interestingly Juliana Cox had begun by protesting that as a disabled man her husband should not have been made to work but when this had little effect, she twisted the argument so that it became his religious difference that was the root cause of the problem not his impairment.

The wider issue surrounding the treatment of Thomas Cox links with maintaining discipline within the workhouse and despite his disability there is no doubt he was an unruly element. As David Green has argued opportunism, personal frustration and a simple desire to disrupt the daily administrative practice of the workhouse played a part in the resistance to the rules and regulations of the New Poor Law and Cox certainly was not compliant. Inmates as such did not undertake rule-breaking for the sake of it, and these episodes should be seen as a wider attempt to maintain individualism while maintaining working-class respectability and self-esteem.<sup>66</sup> Thomas Cox was seen as a troublemaker at a time when workhouse discipline at Great Yarmouth was under threat. In fact, the Master of Great Yarmouth workhouse was in fear of his life if Frances Land is to be believed. In February 1851 she wrote to the Poor Law Commissioners that the Governor of the workhouse paraded around the wards armed with a 'Life preserver' and 'pistols secreted about him'.<sup>67</sup> In the week Land's letter was written, six young men had been sent to prison for causing problems in the workhouse.<sup>68</sup> Cox had a specific idea of his rights and sought to negotiate these through his letter writing. Although the continued correspondence suggests that Cox was unsuccessful in his attempts to gain the level of care to which he felt entitled, his behaviour falls into Green's premise that inmates conduct could be used tactically in order to question the legitimacy of authority. The fact that Cox was disabled did not dim his fight or his opposition to those who laid out the rules and regulations.

For Thomas Cox the workhouse was a bleak and hostile place. Although rules were centrally made the extent to which these were implemented relied on the attitude of the local guardians and their officers.<sup>69</sup> The voice of the poor still had an important role to play though in the way that assistance and aid was negotiated.<sup>70</sup> The English Poor Law according to David Green conferred a set of rights and obligations on those who both received and provided relief.<sup>71</sup> The rules and regulations

thus set impacted upon the relationship between the poor and union officials. The poor and impaired, therefore, had certain expectations and were prepared to use their agency to influence the treatment they received. Those who fell into the temporary disabled status were no different and the extent to which the disabled, like the able-bodied, tried to manipulate the rules are demonstrated by James Ashworth in the Manchester workhouse. In December 1863 he was suffering from bronchitis, pleurisy, influenza and paralysis of the epiglottis which prevented him sleeping. His letter begun by stating approval for the New Poor Law claiming it was the 'very best means the Legislature could devise, economy and cleanliness, and the separation of the sexes & children from their dirty unwashed parents'.<sup>72</sup> As a patient in the workhouse the situation was somewhat different. Ashworth's complaint revolved around Mrs Hunter a paid servant in the 'old men's helpless ward' who he claimed, 'compelled me to go every morning, noon and night through frost, wet and cold for the milk'.<sup>73</sup> It was insinuated that her influence and control extended to the doctor, and as a result no-one was given access to a medical consultation without her permission. Ashworth stated that 'Mrs Hunter always remains with the doctor as I am order[ed] to retire and falsifies all my statements'.<sup>74</sup> In the end, he was forced to leave the house allegedly to save his life.

Leaving the workhouse was not overly risky as paupers understood that officials had an obligation to readmit them. Failure to do so, particularly for those in need, would bring the union officials to the attention of the magistrates or the focus of an investigation instigated by the Poor Law Commissioners.<sup>75</sup> At the core of Ashworth's letter was a plea for help but to emphasise his request Ashworth quoted the 93<sup>rd</sup> clause of the New Poor Law Act and argued that this provided protection for the inmate of a workhouse from the violence of the Master and those officials whom the Master appointed.<sup>76</sup> There is no doubt that Ashworth understood the provision and level of care provided within the law, and which included access to suitable, and appropriate medical care. There was an expectation that these would be met and when they were not, he wrote to the Commissioners in London citing their own rules at them. The bargain which David Green argued of deference from the poor and empathy from the officials had in Ashworth's mind at least been broken.<sup>77</sup> Thus he felt justified in going beyond the workhouse to seek reparation and assistance in gaining what he believed was his by right.

Ashworth was not the only disabled pauper who used his agency to highlight the paucity of care within the workhouse. William Major was a serial letter writer from St Thomas Poor Law union in Devon and sent to the Poor Law Commissioners at least nine letters between February 1866 and April 1871. He described himself as a working man of about seventy-one years of age who had always lived by his own industry until he had been disabled by a severe form of rheumatism. As a result, he was unable to work and had thus entered the workhouse on 4 January 1863. There is no doubt from the content of his letters that Major fitted the category of 'feisty pauper' and one who was prepared to fight what he considered to be the injustices of the system. In terms of literacy Major

could write sufficiently to keep a series of memoranda from his admission to which he would refer in his later letters. His first contained a catalogue of supposed problems. Major argued that when he initially entered the workhouse, he was perfectly clean in person and apparel. The Matron had refused to issue clean bedding and insisted he used that already in the receiving ward. It appeared this was seldom or never washed 'the stench was horrible'. Although he managed to get the sheets changed the smell came from the blanket which had been in the use of a man called Saunders who was incontinent of urine. Although the staff swapped the offending item the replacement had 'a shameful amount of excrement on it'. The clothes delivered by the porter contained the same quantity of 'disgusting matter as the blanket'. Toilet facilities were a bucket, and the same utensil was used to bring water in for washing purposes. Further complaints surrounded the irregularity of meals, the lack of eating utensils and around his stockings which were never washed or mended.<sup>78</sup>

A sense of how the Poor Law Commissioners viewed William Major is attached to a further letter sent in August 1866. Major had complained the Master was going through the paupers' mail. The evidence for his claim it was suggested was the apparent failure of Mr Gulson the Poor Law Inspector at Exmouth to receive his letter. As further proof of the Master's behaviour he alleged that when in business none of his letters had ever gone missing.<sup>79</sup> In response Gulson wrote 'The writer of this letter is a dangerous & troublesome & unworthy man'.<sup>80</sup> It is worth noting the similarity of language as that used towards Thomas Cox at Great Yarmouth. To counteract the accusations made against the Master, Gulson argued that he was 'an excellent officer & may safely be entrusted to do that which is correct'. He suggested that the letter should be ignored.<sup>81</sup> In 1870 Major had managed to read a newspaper account of the 'Lambeth Casual Ward' which was at the time making 'a sensation'. Consequently because of past dealings with the editor who had 'in times long gone by 'given him a copper' Major had sent him a copy of his original letter to the Poor Law Commissioners.<sup>82</sup> Mr Gulson uncovered the action undertaken by Major and it was this act that had led to the suppression of letters sent to him and a scene in the Board Room when reporters had arrived and been refused admittance.<sup>83</sup> Major does suggest, however, the magistrates hinted to him after the meeting that in future he need not fear about the safety of his mail.

Like Thomas Cox at Great Yarmouth, William Major was a thorn in both the local and central authority's side. Despite his claims to be disabled with rheumatism and being a long-term inmate of St Thomas's workhouse, he fully understood the power of making a complaint both to the press and the Commissioners.<sup>84</sup> Major exhibited that neither being poor nor disabled affected his agency. Despite his age and poverty, he understood that it was possible to protest against a system which was stacked in favour of the central and local authorities in a way that challenged their right to rule over the paupers. For those who through age and disability were no longer able to work their observations act as both a lens to examine not only how the disabled were treated but the way they perceived their place within the hierarchy.

*Conclusion*

Through the words and letters of the disabled within the workhouse we can understand that their experience is little different to that of the able-bodied. Using the lens provided by the correspondence of Thomas and Juliana Cox and William Major to the officials in London, it might be concluded that the feisty disabled were seen as pests in much the same way as their able-bodied contemporaries. Letter writing kept their cases at the forefront of local union officers and if they could provoke an inquiry this made them even more of an annoying irritant. It ensured that all those who set the rules and regulations could not ignore their voice. William Major despite being crippled by rheumatism and being elderly found that few concessions were made for his age. Neither Cox nor Major from their treatment could be classed as 'deserving poor' instead coming under the same rules as the able-bodied helped to enforce discipline and ensure that less eligibility was the case throughout. Both men were seen as troublesome pests who caused extra work for local officials as they sought to negotiate their way through the Poor Law system.

Even those who were blind and deaf were expected to earn a living, their disability was not seen as a hindrance to their ability to support themselves and their families. In fact, Peter [Shan] and Samuel Bolton who were both blind, had been given specific training to allow them to be successfully employed. In both these instances it is poverty and not their disability which had caused them to be pauper inmates. Both studies of the deaf men Sydney Smart and James Killerby raise new questions around bullying in the workhouse not from the staff but other inmates. Anne Crowther argues that the way in which the workhouse was run encouraged such behaviour. It is only now, however, through the enormous amount of data that has arisen from the ITOW project that it is possible to begin to trace this behaviour amongst the pauper inmates. Bullying fits into the wider landscape of maintaining discipline by staff and inmates, although it was likely to affect those who were the most vulnerable to a greater extent. Turning a blind eye to such behaviour may well have been an important factor in creating an environment of fear which kept the inmate population pliant to authority. It a topic for which there is not sufficient room here to explore in any further detail, but merits much more focused research.

Those who needed extra care often found themselves at the mercy of pauper nurses who were untrained and illiterate until at least the latter part of the nineteenth century. Yet they were expected to cope with a huge range of infirmities and disease for which they were ill-equipped. Issues also arose over staffing levels, the shortage of which was apparent at Bethnal Green. The lack of professionalism around Poor Law nurses was emphasised by the request by Dr Coleman at Pewsey to move his young patient with infantile paralysis to a specialist institution where the nursing staff had the expertise to make a difference. As to the death of Ann Hobson at Barnsley workhouse the skills of the nursing staff are called into question when queries were made into their understanding of how to use a tourniquet to staunch bleeding post amputation. A skilled procedure which required precision in its execution, and an understanding of the damage that poor judgement

or incorrect usage could wrought on stump preservation. Although the inquiry did not lay the blame on the care provided by the pauper inmate nurses.

While Peter Higginbotham argues that historians have failed to both find and listen to the voice of workhouse inmates, it is not the case with ITOW where the pauper takes central stage. At the core of this article are the letters and words of the physical, sensory and mentally impaired poor. It is their voice which has been used to explore their experience within the workhouse. There is no doubt that like many other able-bodied inmates they were not quiet but used every means at their disposal to ensure that their case was heard and acted upon by both local and central authorities. For most of the individuals explored here they demonstrated a bullish approach to navigating the New Poor Law to gain what they thought was their rightful treatment. The disabled inmates demonstrated an agency which was individualistic with no sign that they were prepared to simply accept their place within the workhouse's hierarchical structure. It is only through the meticulous research of 104 unions carried out by ITOW that we can start to build a wider picture of the way the disabled poor negotiated their way through the system. With more analysis it may be possible to pick out more nuanced differences between rural and urban unions and between regions. It is fair to conclude here though that the impaired poor not only had a voice but that they are shouting at us across both time and space.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Mary Mackinnon, "The Use and Misuse of Poor Law Statistics, 1857 to 1912," *Historical Methods* 21, no. 1 (1988): 6.
- <sup>2</sup> S. Shave, *Pauper Policies: Poor Law Practice in England, 1780-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 88.
- <sup>3</sup> M. E. Rose, *The Relief of Poverty 1834-1914* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1972), 13.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.
- <sup>5</sup> A. Negrine, "Medicine and Poverty: A Study of the Poor Law Medical Services of the Leicester Union, 1867-1914" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2008), 134.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.
- <sup>7</sup> A. Negrine, "Practitioners and Paupers: Medicine at the Leicester Union Workhouse, 1867-1905," in *Medicine and the Workhouse*, ed. J. Reinartz and L. Schwarz (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 365.
- <sup>8</sup> A. Ritch, *Sickness in the Workhouse: Poor Law Medical Care in Provincial England, 1834-1914* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2019), 29.
- <sup>9</sup> D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in Nineteenth-Century Britain, 1834-1914: From Chadwick to Booth* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1998), 90-1.
- <sup>10</sup> C. Conrad, "Old Age and the Health Care System in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Old Age from Antiquity to Post-Modernity: From Antiquity to Post-Modernity*, ed. P. Thomson and P. Thane (London: Taylor and Francis, 1998), 132.
- <sup>11</sup> Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 196.
- <sup>12</sup> See, N. Deakin, C. Jones-Finer, and B. Matthews, eds., *Welfare and the State: Critical Concepts in Political Science* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004).
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup> R. Richardson, "The Art of Medicine: A Dismal Prospect: Workhouse Health Care," *The Lancet* 382 (2013): 20-1.
- <sup>15</sup> TNA: MH12/6058, 11529/1866/E, Letter from George Leech to the Poor Law Board, 2 April 1866.

- <sup>16</sup> E. Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census Revisited: Census Records for England and Wales 1801-1901* (London: University of London, 2005), 92.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> K. Levitan, *A Cultural History of the British Census: Envisioning the Multitude in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 63.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> C. Beardmore, S. King, and G. Monks, *Disability Matters* (Rutland: Call of Crows, 2018), 19.
- <sup>21</sup> TNA: MH12/16479, 37796/1852, Letter to the Poor Law Board from R. W. Price, 11 October 1852.
- <sup>22</sup> TNA: MH12/12232, 52297/1891, Letter to the Local Government Board from Hannah Pearson Price, 8 June 1891.
- <sup>23</sup> TNA: MH12/14022 folio 194, 50350/1858, Letter to the Poor Law Board, from William Crow, 27 December 1858.
- <sup>24</sup> TNA: MH12/15073, 25312/1854, Letter to the Poor Law Board from the Assistant Clerk of Huddersfield union, 5 July 1854.
- <sup>25</sup> TNA: MH12/13297, 38420/1851, Letter to the Poor Law Board from James Corder, Clerk to the guardians, Birmingham, 27 September 1851.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>27</sup> Beardmore, King, and Monks, *Disability Matters* (Rutland: Call of Crows, 2018), 20.
- <sup>28</sup> M. E. Kitzel, "Creating a Deaf Place: The Development of the Asylum for Deaf and Dumb Poor Children in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 34, no. 2 (2017): 151.
- <sup>29</sup> It is possible that Smart's hearing impairment had left to problems with his speech.
- <sup>30</sup> TNA: MH12/9250/241, folios 306-308, 32117/1864, Letter to the Poor Law Commissioners from George/Sydney Smart, 18 August 1865.
- <sup>31</sup> M. A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System 1824-1929: The History of an English Social Institution* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1981), 133.
- <sup>32</sup> TNA: MH12/14762, 103902/1894.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, Witness statement given by Arthur Herne into the death of Joseph Cooper, 28 August 1894.
- <sup>34</sup> TNA: MH12/6069, 77416/1879, Letter to the Local Government Board by John Moore, 15 October 1879.
- <sup>35</sup> TNA: MH12/16063, 20527/1868, Letter to the Poor Law Commissioners from Henry Jones, 8 April 1868.
- <sup>36</sup> TNA: MH12/6858, 32198/1869, Letter to the Poor Law Commissioners from Sarah Pemmell, 24 June 1869.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>38</sup> TNA: MH12/8635, 7233/1853, Letter to the Poor Law Commissioners from Frances Land, 26 February 1853.
- <sup>39</sup> TNA: MH12/5978, 47719/1865, Letter to the Poor Law Commissioners from H. French, 18 December 1865.
- <sup>40</sup> TNA: MH12/9105, 8510/1868, Letter to the Poor Law Commissioners, Anonymous, 7 March 1868.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> Ritch, *Sickness in the Workhouse*, 189.
- <sup>43</sup> S. Hawkins, *Nursing and Women's Labour in the Nineteenth Century: The Quest for Independence* (London: Routledge, 2010), 90.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> See Reinartz and Schwarz, *Medicine and the Workhouse*.
- <sup>47</sup> Consolidated General Order 1847.
- <sup>48</sup> TNA: MH12/6853, 38023/1866, Report on the nurses at Bethnal Green, 27 September 1866.
- <sup>49</sup> TNA: MH12/14761, 28693/1894, Report from the inquest into the death of Ann Brown, March 1894.
- <sup>50</sup> Ritch, *Sickness in the Workhouse*, 111.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>52</sup> TNA: MH12/5971, 11970/1858 Witness statement into the death of Mary Ann Scott, May 1858.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, Witness statement by Elizabeth Colley at the inquest into the death of Mary Ann Scott, May 1858.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, Witness statements at the inquest into the death of Mary Ann Scott, May 1858.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>56</sup> More commonly known now as poliomyelitis or polio.
- <sup>57</sup> TNA; MH12/13841, 81732/1892, Letter from Baldwin Fleming to the Local Government Board, 31 December 1892.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

- <sup>59</sup> See P. Higginbotham, *Voices from the Workhouse* (London: History Press, 2012).
- <sup>60</sup> D. Englander, "From the Abyss: Pauper Petitions and Correspondence in Victorian London," *The London Journal* 25, no. 1 (2013): 81.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>62</sup> P. Jones and Steven King, *Pauper Voices, Public Opinion and Workhouse Reform in Mid-Victorian England: Bearing Witness* (Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2020), 76.
- <sup>63</sup> TNA: MH12/8634, 14017/1851, Letter to the Poor Law Commissioners from Juliana Cox, 27 December 1851.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>65</sup> TNA: MH12/8635, 1007/1853, Letter to the Poor Law Commissioners from Juliana Cox, 11 February 1853.
- <sup>66</sup> D. Green, "Pauper Protests: Power and Resistance in Early Nineteenth-Century London Workhouses," *Social History* 31, no. 2 (2006): 138–9.
- <sup>67</sup> TNA; MH12/8634, 9485/2841/1851, Letter to the Poor Law Commissioners from Frances Land, 10 February 1851.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>69</sup> Crowther, *The Workhouse System 1824-1929*, 165.
- <sup>70</sup> D. Green, *Pauper Capital and the Poor Law, 1790-1870* (Garnham: Ashgate, 2010), 157.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>72</sup> TNA: MH12/47828/1863, Letter to the Poor Law Commissioners from James Ashworth, 11 December 1863.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>75</sup> Green, "Pauper Protests," 139.
- <sup>76</sup> TNA: MH12/47828/1863, Letter to the Poor Law Commissioners from James Ashworth, 11 December 1863.
- <sup>77</sup> Green, "Pauper Protests," 139.
- <sup>78</sup> TNA: MH12/2580, 7129/1866, Letter to the Poor Law Commissioners from William Major, 19 February 1866.
- <sup>79</sup> TNA: MH12/2580, 32572/1866, Letter to the Poor Law Commissioners from William Major, August 1866.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>82</sup> TNA: MH12/2582, 11946/1870, Letter to the Poor Law Commissioners from William Major, 10 March 1870.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>84</sup> See for example, P. Jones and S. King, *Pauper Voices, Public Opinion and Workhouse Reform in Mid-Victorian England: Bearing Witness* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

### *Disclosure statement*

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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