The Economic Survival Strategies of the Hastings Fishing Community, 1830-1880:
The Intersection of Communal Welfare and the Domestic Economy

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Abstract

One of the chief tenets underlying the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1834, was the cessation of out-relief to the able-bodied. It would be expected that the detrimental impact of such legislation would be experienced most harshly by members of impoverished communities dependent on a precarious wage, such as the Hastings inshore fisher families. However, it has been argued that significant regional variation in the implementation of out-relief restrictions continued across the nineteenth century. Thus, by drawing on family earnings, poor relief, and resources available at the local community and kin-based level, families endeavoured to construct a domestic economy, an ‘economy of makeshifts’, potentially more reliable and resilient than dependence on waged labour alone.

This dissertation contributes to research into the regional variations in the use of out-relief, post 1834, and into the composition of the domestic economy as developed by different communities. Focussing on the experiences of an occupational group, the Hastings inshore fishers, it discusses the challenge of earning a ‘breadwinner’ wage in an occupation subject to a range of local and national challenges. Both the paid and unpaid labour of wives and children are examined to assess their contribution to the household economy. Acknowledging historiographical discussions regarding the depth and functionality of kinship in the nineteenth century, this dissertation examines the significant role played by kin in the fisher domestic economy. The extent to which families were able to access out-relief is explored and their use of resources from charitable and philanthropic ventures, recognising that such sources were shaped by the motivations and values of benefactors.

Through an examination of the economic survival strategies of the Hastings fisher families, this dissertation demonstrates that subject to regional variation and local negotiation, out-relief did continue to play a role in the domestic economy of impoverished communities. However, it also deconstructs the household economy, evidencing the interplay between the constituent elements and the way in which the culture and context of a community impacted on its economic survival.
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<td>Hastings and St Leonards Observer</td>
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**Personal Statement**

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work and that I have not submitted it, or any part of it, for a degree at The Open University or at any other university or institution. Parts of this dissertation are built on work I submitted for assessment as part of A825.

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank all the tutors who have supported me throughout my studies at the Open University, with special thanks to Dr Richard Marsden, Dr Catherine Lee and Dr Lucy Faire.

Thank you also to Dr Tom Bradburn for his patient and constructive criticism, and to Steve Peak and Nona Jackson for allowing me to draw on their wealth of local knowledge.

Huge thanks to my children, Blair and Oissin, for believing in me.
Introduction

In 1834, one year after a Select Committee described the ‘very depressed’ state of the British Channel fisheries, The Royal Commission into the Operation of the Poor Laws asserted that the ‘most improvident’ Hastings fishermen made the greatest use of poor relief locally.¹ Indeed, Hindle has suggested that in some circumstances the poor developed greater security of livelihood through an ‘economy of diversified resources’, rather than relying on waged labour.² Tomkins and King, highlighting the paucity of research into the economy of makeshifts, have called for greater exploration of income sources beyond those traceable through official poor relief documentation.³ Prompted by such calls, this dissertation will draw on the themes of family and kinship, and poverty and welfare, to examine the economic survival strategies employed by the Hastings fishing community during the mid-nineteenth century.

Considering the period 1830-1880, this study will focus on the impact of the New Poor Law (NPL) on an occupational group dependent on a precarious breadwinner wage. It will consider the residents of All Saints Parish, which was the location of the Hastings fishermen’s beach and, during the nineteenth century, the area where the majority of Hastings fisher families lived (Fig. 1.1).⁴ For the purposes of this dissertation, the fisher community will include all those who personally, or through

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¹ Report from the Select Committee on British Channel Fisheries, PP. 1833, XIV.67, p. 3; Royal Commission of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of Poor Laws, PP. 1834, (44) p. 195A.
³ King and Tomkins, pp. 14-15.
their spouse or parent, were involved in a fisher trade, including fishing, fish-selling and boat-building.

A micro-historical approach has been adopted, drawing on a broad range of primary sources, to research the composition of the fisher domestic economy, including the use of relief. The online version of Census Enumerators’ Books (CEBs) has been utilized throughout the dissertation to identify fisher families, their location, household structure, and possible kinship links. As the original plan to identify all fisher residents of All Saints recorded in each decennial census, 1841-1881, was over ambitious, the 1851 CEBs, the first to include relationship to household head, were scrutinised to locate every fisher household and, thus, the key areas of fisher housing.

Fig. 1:1 All Saints Parish, 1870, demonstrating the approximate Parish boundary. To the east is All Saints, location of the Fisherman’s Beach and chief area of fisher housing. (Emma Cochrane ‘Hastings’, jpeg map, scale1:2500, 1870, using Digimap Historic Roam Collection, created 8 January 2023. © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited (2023). All rights reserved. (1870).
housing in All Saints (Fig.1.1). Specific streets, therefore, became the focus when researching the fisher community through subsequent CEBs (Appendix 2). This sampling technique could fail to identify residential movements and in-migration and, indeed, with the reconfiguration of some streets during the latter half of the nineteenth century, it became necessary to amend the group of streets studied.⁵

Caution was also required when researching employment in the nineteenth-century CEBs, due to inconsistencies in occupational categorisation and definition, particularly regarding the employment of women and children, seasonal and casual work.⁶ Wilkinson argues that much of the criticism of the record of female employment in the nineteenth-century census derives from small-scale, regional studies. Her research in East Anglia and London indicates a clear correlation between census records and other documentation detailing female employment.⁷ Nevertheless, the CEBs for All Saints, 1851-81, provide a very limited record of female occupation, no record of unpaid labour and even the classification of ‘fisherman’s wife’, indicating that a wife was expected to participate in her ‘husbands’ business’, appears to have been used predominantly when the husband was absent.⁸

The Minutes of the Hastings Board of Guardians, correspondence with the PLC, and relief lists, together with online versions of parliamentary reports on the poor laws

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⁸ Higgs, p. 102.
and on British fisheries, provide valuable information concerning the fishers’ use of relief. Details of fishermen’s losses and injuries, and the regularity and extent of their claims have been found in the Minutes of the Hastings Fishermen’s Society. Local and regional newspapers have been studied, online, to identify periods of economic hardship and possible sources of support, including charities and philanthropic ventures.

As Himmelfarb notes, the voices of the poor are rarely represented within nineteenth-century research and, disappointingly, no first-hand accounts of daily life in the mid-nineteenth-century Hastings fisher community have been located. However, valuable visual sources have been identified, including the George Woods photograph collection, and postcards and paintings at the Fishermen’s Museum. Consideration has been given to the provenance and purpose of these images, questioning the impression which Woods was endeavouring to create through photographs of, for example, white-bloused fisherwomen and, apparently, relaxed fishermen mending nets. Fishermen’s descriptions of their childhood in the early twentieth century provide an impression of family life for a Hastings fisherman’s son. However, due to the advent of compulsory education, welfare changes and the impact of the World Wars, these experiences may have been quite different from those of a nineteenth-century fisher child.

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Focusing on the composition of the fisher families’ domestic economy, this dissertation will examine the continuity of out-relief following the enactment of the NPL. Both Snell and King emphasise that despite the PLC’s stated intention to terminate out-relief to the able-bodied, it continued at a level comparable to that under the OPL, at least until the 1870s, and regional variations in expenditure continued.\(^{11}\) King highlights the relevance of regional research, evidencing the impact of local culture, and differing ideas, opinions and beliefs about poverty, poor relief and the household economy.\(^{12}\) He suggests these ideas became apparent through variations in the application of both the Old and New Poor Laws, in the composition of the economy of makeshifts and in the ‘structure of poverty and welfare’.\(^{13}\) Snell argues that due to the parochial nature of out-relief and its local implementation, where it was subject to local knowledge, attitudes and experience, it may have heightened the sense of community, irrespective of attempts to centralise the administration of the NPL.\(^{14}\)

However, in her exploration of welfare provision for the elderly, Thane emphasises the importance of unpicking the constituent elements of the economy of makeshifts, to look beyond those evident through documented sources, specifically, poor relief.\(^{15}\) Indeed, King’s study of early nineteenth-century Cowpe reveals that relief constituted only forty to sixty per cent of the income of the poor, while Barrett’s research into the impact of kinship within the West Riding woollen district, suggests

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\(^{12}\) King, p. 10.

\(^{13}\) King, pp. 7, 10.

\(^{14}\) Snell, p. 211.

that poor relief was a short-term response to crises, creating time for longer-term support to be sourced through kinship networks.\textsuperscript{16} However, historians such as Macfarlane, have promoted the nineteenth-century nuclear family model, characterised by weak kinship.\textsuperscript{17} This dissertation will, therefore, question the contribution of family and kinship networks within the fisher domestic economy.

Peak’s detailed knowledge of the Hastings fishing industry has provided invaluable source material, while Thompson’s research serves as an outstanding exemplar of fisher history ‘from below’, contrasting the struggles of inshore and offshore fisher communities as they attempted to achieve a breadwinner wage. Highlighting the ‘diversity of economic organisation’ demonstrated by fisher communities, Thompson emphasises connections between a fishing community’s economy, its structure and needs, the environment, and the type of fishing undertaken.\textsuperscript{18}

This dissertation will locate the economic survival strategies of the Hastings fisher community within wider debates concerning the ongoing use of out-relief and the reality of the male breadwinner wage across the nineteenth century. In adopting an occupational focus, it will contribute to current research into regional variations in the application of the NPL and into the composition of the domestic economy of the poor.


To understand the context within which the fisher families were operating, this discussion will commence by considering the occupational challenges faced by the All Saints fishermen in their struggle to achieve a breadwinner wage and their recourse to relief. It will then consider the economic contribution of members of the nuclear family, exploring the paid and unpaid work of fisher-wives and children, before examining the role of functional kinship networks. Recognising that charitable and philanthropic ventures could be shaped by the motivations of benefactors, the extent to which fishers accessed such sources will be examined, before the composition of the fisher community’s domestic economy and the ongoing contribution of out-relief is evaluated.
Chapter 1: The Struggle to Achieve a Breadwinner Wage

As Griffin asserts, a male ‘breadwinner’ wage, sufficiently generous to provide for a family without the need for other members to work, was, for many nineteenth-century working-class households, an ‘aspiration’, not a reality.¹ Whether the Hastings fishermen were amongst the kindest and most ‘intelligent’ of British residents, as Nelling declared in 1833, or the feckless group, who spent their earnings on drink, leaving their families to ‘the parish’, as depicted in the Report on the Poor Laws, their employment was arduous and insecure.² This chapter will focus on the economic challenges which Hastings fishermen encountered, and the strategies they employed to satisfy the demands of the domestic economy. It will reflect on King and Tomkins’ query regarding the extent to which the economic survival strategies of the poor were an unplanned reaction to hardship or a ‘planned response’, modified by life stage and causes of poverty.³

The discussion will commence by examining the national and local context and the means by which the fishermen attempted to overcome challenges to the economically successful operation of their trade. It will discuss the extent to which the NPL was able to respond to the needs of an occupational community dependent on a fluctuating wage, and the relevance of self-help within the domestic economy.

National and Local Context: Occupational Challenges

Thompson, Wailey and Lummis suggest that fishing communities did not demonstrate the characteristics associated with industrialising societies due to the range of factors which impacted upon success, the relationships between workers, precarious income, and the wage structure based on shares in the catch.\(^4\)

Furthermore, Thompson highlights the way in which local context, comprising geography, fishing type and community organisation, shaped the nature and survival strategies of fishing communities.\(^5\) In common with the Marshside fishers, the All Saints community demonstrated a strong local identity, which contributed to the resilience of the Hastings fishers who, unlike neighbouring ‘amphibious communities’ in Kent, could not rely on alternative breadwinner employment.\(^6\)

In his evidence to the 1833 Select Committee on Channel Fisheries, fisherman William Breach described the Hastings fishery as being ‘very much on the decline’, noting the number of boats had fallen from approximately 104 in 1811 to 60 in 1830.\(^7\)

Across the nineteenth century, South Coast fishermen claimed French fishing vessels were challenging their livelihood.\(^8\) Indeed, Hastings fishers petitioned the government, demanding the French be prevented from sailing directly up the Thames and capturing the London market.\(^9\) Furthermore, fishermen complained to the Select Committee that their own ability to exploit lucrative markets, such as

\(^5\) Thompson and others, p. 6-7.
\(^6\) Thompson and others, p. 82, p. 13; Report from the Select Committee on British Channel Fisheries, PP. 1833, XIV.67, p. 72.
\(^7\) Select Committee, 1833, p. 72.
\(^8\) Steve Peak, Fishermen of Hastings (St.-Leonards-on-Sea: Newsbooks, 1985) p. 19.
\(^9\) Select Committee, 1833, pp. 73, p. 146.
London, was hampered by an ineffective road transport network and the additional cost of tolls. Breach also complained of interference by the French vessels at sea, criticising their aggressive tactics and explaining that, by taking even the smaller fish, they were denuding future fishing grounds. The fishermen’s campaign gained the support of naval journalists who urged the Admiralty to ensure the security of the South Coast herring fleet.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the lack of adequate sea defences threatened the survival of the Hastings fishing industry, and was the cause of ongoing friction between the fishers and the town authorities. In 1875, for example, severe gales were devastating for fishermen, who experienced loss of income and, potentially, of livelihood. They reportedly suffered the destruction of at least 12 of the stone-beach net-huts, one of which was said to have housed £500 worth of nets. This experience led the fishermen to take pre-emptive action prior to the gales of 1877. However, neither their determined occupational survival strategies, nor the funds made available by the Hastings Fishermen’s Society (HFS), could mitigate for the lack of safe harbour and effective sea defences. The link between the absence of a harbour and adequate sea defences, the hardship experienced by the fisher community and subsequent applications for relief, was highlighted by Alderman Ross, a Poor Law Guardian. At a public meeting on proposals for a harbour, in 1860, Ross spoke of a Hastings fisherman, with four children, who had applied for relief

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10 Select Committee, 1833, pp. 72, 76.
11 Naval and Military Gazette, 30 August 1845, p. 9.
12 Peak, pp. 33-38.
13 ‘Terrible Hurricane at Hastings’, HSLO, 20 November 1875, p. 6
14 HSLO, 20 November 1875.
15 ‘Terrific gale at Hastings and St Leonards’, HSLO, 6 January 1877, p. 6.
16 HSLO, 6 January 1877.
having earned only three shillings over the previous fortnight.\textsuperscript{17} He expressed his incredulity that the significant problems, caused by the lack of a safe harbour, had not been resolved, emphasising that two thousand residents depended on the fishery for their livelihood.\textsuperscript{18}

As Hastings fishers explained to the \textit{Royal Commission} in 1866, the absence of a harbour produced ‘very great injury indeed’.\textsuperscript{19} When sea defences were erected, the overriding aim appeared to be the preservation of the seafront for affluent visitors, despite the determined petitioning of fishermen.\textsuperscript{20} The Council’s apparent ambivalence towards the fishermen can be compared with the perspective adopted by Southport Corporation, which appeared more concerned about the needs of tourists, than those of the Marshside shrimpers.\textsuperscript{21} As explained in \textit{Melville’s Directory}, mid-nineteenth-century Hastings was frequented by ‘searchers after health and pleasure’, which may have provided fisher-wives with domestic employment, but also contributed to friction with the council over competing pressures on land.\textsuperscript{22}

Yet the significance of fishing to the economy of nineteenth-century Hastings is evident from the frequent references, within the local press, to the progress of the fishing seasons. An article in the \textit{Sussex Advertiser}, 1859, for example, expressed a hope for an improved herring season, following a disappointing mackerel season,

\textsuperscript{17} ‘The Proposed Harbour at Hastings’, \textit{Surrey Gazette}, 11 September 1860, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Surrey Gazette}, 11 September 1860.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Hastings News}, 26 October 1883; Peak, pp. 36-38.
\textsuperscript{21} Thompson and others, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Melville and Co.’s Directory and Gazetteer of Sussex} (London: Melville, 1858), p. 217.
while the *Hastings News* included six articles on the status of the herring season between September and December 1861. Such coverage highlights the fishers’ reliance on the annual fishing schedule, and the consequent impact on the domestic economy. As Hall emphasises, the characteristic fluctuations in a fisherman’s income provoked compulsive saving, while Thompson highlights the need for tight budgeting in the Marshside shrimping community, where, during the winter months, men ‘eked out a living’ taking casual work. Furthermore, as Hollen Lees explains, local economic and employment factors created a ‘seasonal cycle’ in relief applications. Such a cycle was evident, in a predominantly agricultural context, in Faversham Poor Law Union where, in the late 1850s, seventy per cent of relief applications were made between December and June.

Fishermen’s income was also impacted by revisions to the legislation on import duties, as prior to changes in trade tariffs in the 1830s, smuggling had provided a lucrative, if high-risk, additional income for many Sussex fishermen. As the viability of smuggling as a source of income declined, demands for rates from even poorer properties increased, to reduce the individual relief burden. Calls for additional rating were reflected in the questions posed by inspectors in the 1834 *Commission of Inquiry*, as they sought to discover which premises were previously exempted. This placed further pressure on the precarious domestic budget, and fishermen such as Samuel Hide, who were unable to afford this additional expenditure, declined to pay

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23 ‘Sussex and Kent Provincial News’, *Sussex Advertiser*, 23 August 1859, p. 6; *Hastings News* 13 September 1861, 11 October 1861, p. 3; 4 November 1861, p.2; 29 November 1861; 27 December 1861.
28 *Royal Commission of Inquiry*, PP. 1834, p. 228i.
the newly-assessed rates.\textsuperscript{29} While the intention of the PLC was to spread the relief burden and severely restrict out-relief, the poor themselves continued to perceive relief as a ‘social’ right.\textsuperscript{30} As Reay argues, the male wage was one aspect of a larger ‘economic picture’, which could include support through kinship networks, family members, and self-help, plus, when available, relief.\textsuperscript{31}

\textit{The extent to which the NPL was able to respond to fishers’ needs}

Whilst Dorothy Marshall’s reflection, that the impact of the Poor Laws was evident in the daily lives of both those claiming relief and of those likely to do so, was in reference to the OPL, it’s relevance is apparent across the nineteenth century as indicated by the case of fisherman, James Chatfield.\textsuperscript{32} His testimony, when summoned before the Hastings Borough Bench, in 1879, demonstrates the fragility of a fisher family’s domestic economy. Chatfield, who would have been sixty-six at the time of the summons, apparently incurred arrears for non-payment of the parental contribution towards the ‘Farm School for Boys’, a reformatory where his fifteen-year-old son was then living.\textsuperscript{33} He explained that between Christmas and late February he had earned only fourteen pence while his wife had earned a ‘pittance’ as a washerwoman.\textsuperscript{34} Chatfield emphasised that, due to his age, he could only secure employment during the fishing seasons, for in the quieter periods only younger fishermen found work. Apparently, the family’s options were to ‘linger’

\textsuperscript{29} DH/B 91/1 (The Keep), Hastings Poor Law Union: Letter-Book (1837-1841), 13 July 1838.
\textsuperscript{30} Hollen Lees, p. 163.
\textsuperscript{31} Reay, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{33} Census 1881, TNA RG11/1022.
\textsuperscript{34} HSLO, I March 1879, p.6.
hoping for food, to pawn their clothes, or to go into debt. It is revealing that as Chatfield left the courtroom, an onlooker urged him to plead for relief.35

Chatfield’s case demonstrates the lack of employment options available in nineteenth-century Hastings, the insecurity of the male wage, and limited opportunities to raise funds. Under the NPL, indoor relief in the workhouse became the option for the able-bodied poor, yet Snell’s research indicates this was an ineffective solution for those dependent on an erratic wage, such as Chatfield, who was attempting to secure his place on a boat.36 Snell argues that out-relief, as the more ‘dynamic’ form of aid, should become the focus of studies of the NPL, which, initially, appears paradoxical when considered in terms of legislation intended to severely restrict out-relief to the able-bodied.37 Therefore, the extent to which the Hastings fishers continued to rely on communal relief and the contribution this made to the domestic economy will be explored.

By cross-referencing Guardians’ Minutes with the decennial census, 1841-1881, several fishermen claiming relief have been identified. In June 1836, for example, forty-year-old fisherman, John Daniel applied for relief for himself, his wife and family. As Daniel’s three children were too young to contribute to the domestic economy, the family may have been experiencing a period of life-cycle poverty.38
Daniel’s family were admitted to the workhouse and under the NPL, as an able-bodied man, he too should have been admitted. When he refused to either comply, or to remove his family, Daniel was ordered before the justices. However, rather than reinforcing the NPL restrictions, the justices directed Daniel to pay five shillings per week towards his family’s upkeep while he was away on the herring voyage, which suggests that they applied local knowledge in making their judgement. In 1836 the Hastings Guardians signed a petition to the PLC, requesting that they rescind the requirement for the able-bodied male applicant as well as his family, be taken into the workhouse, perhaps in recognition of the importance of being available for the fishing seasons.

Fishermen also claimed relief for debility, including, in 1847, Henry Swain, who received out-relief payments for several months for a condition classified as ‘nerve affliction’, ‘debility’, or ‘infection of head’. Robert Adams, a thirty-eight-year-old fisherman with three young children including a baby, was receiving out-relief, in 1847, due to his rheumatism. Adams’ household may also have been experiencing life-cycle poverty.

During the first decade of the NPL, correspondence between Hastings Guardians and the PLC reveal occasions when the Hastings Union suspended out-relief

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39 R/C 18/1, Minutes, July-October 1836.
40 R/C 18/1, Minutes, November 1936.
41 R/C 18/1, Minutes, May 1836.
42 R/C 18/5 (The Keep), Minutes of the Board of Guardians of Hastings Union (Jul 1847-Feb 1850), July – December 1847.
43 R/C 18/5, Minutes, September 1847; Census 1851, TNA HO 107/1635.
restrictions due to the extreme hardship experienced by the fisher community.\textsuperscript{44} The pattern of seasonal poverty which emerges in this correspondence between 1837 and 1841 demonstrates the economic crises affecting fisher families during severe winter weather.\textsuperscript{45} In January 1838, the Guardians provided the PLC with lists of able-bodied fishermen to whom they had paid out-relief, as their families were starving due to the extreme conditions.\textsuperscript{46} This was repeated in February 1838, and in 1839, when the Guardians paid out-relief to fishermen as the ‘inclement weather’ was creating ‘extreme destitution’.\textsuperscript{47} The success of the fishermen’s demands suggests applications had a more favourable reception when they involved local knowledge and negotiation, as argued by Sharpe in the context of the OPL.\textsuperscript{48}

Fishermen’s demands appear to have met with success even later in the century, as evidenced by an incident in 1876 when up to thirty distressed fishermen called for assistance as their families were starving. Again, the Guardians agreed a payment.\textsuperscript{49} The Parochial Relief List of 1877 identifies elderly and infirm fishermen who received out-relief payments, presumably due to life-cycle poverty, including eighty-two-year-old Edward Haste, seventy-four-year-old fishmonger James Foster, and William Martin, a fisherman living with his wife, son and grandson on William’s Row.\textsuperscript{50}

In her exploration of the values behind the NPL, Himmelfarb describes the artificial boundary it propounded, between the poor labourer, impoverished, yet independent,\

\textsuperscript{44}RC 18/1, Minutes, 24 November 1835.
\textsuperscript{45}DH/B 91/1, Letter-Book, 19 January 1838.
\textsuperscript{46}DH/B 91/1, Letter-Book, 25 February 1838; 28 December 1839; 25 December 1840.
\textsuperscript{47}DH/B 91/1, Letter-Book, 28 December 1839.
\textsuperscript{48}Pamela Sharpe, ‘‘The Bowels of Compation’: A Labouring Family and the Law, c. 1790-1834’, in Hitchcock and others, eds, pp. 87-108 (p.87).
\textsuperscript{49}‘Hastings Board of Guardians: Distress Amongst the Fishing Population’, HSLO, 18 March 1876, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{50}PAR 361/38/17 (The Keep), Parochial List of Indoor and Outdoor Poor (25 March 1877).
and the indigent pauper, expecting to live upon relief. For the fisher community, subject to a raft of occupational challenges, the division between the indigent, and the self-respecting poor appears particularly inappropriate, and the direction to enter the workhouse, unhelpful. However, whilst fishermen challenged relief restrictions integral to the NPL, they did respond to the middle-class ideology of self-help, as evidenced by the establishment of the HFS.

Relevance of Self-Help to the Domestic Economy

Launched in 1831, at the height of poor law campaigning, the HFS provided a means to safeguard against losses. In the context of the domestic economy, the Society served as a form of insurance, and for an initial weekly membership fee of three pence, it provided financial assistance to members should they suffer loss or damage to their boat or nets, for example, or incur injury. Thompson and Wailey describe similar schemes, both national and local, including the Rechabite Society and Tontine Clubs, through which fishing communities endeavoured to achieve greater financial security. Parallels can be drawn between the HFS and the Fishermen’s Provident Association in Marshside. Both contributed to a sense of shared identity when confronted by threats to livelihood, and both were launched and organised primarily by the fishermen themselves, although an affluent London merchant and his associate provided initial support to HFS.

52 ACC 12320/18/12 (The Keep), Photocopy of Minutes of Meetings of the Society of Fishermen ([1831-1856]) Thompson and others, p.82-83.
53 Thompson and others, pp. 82-83; Peak, p.20.
Peak has discussed the challenge of establishing Unions amongst inshore fishers, who characteristically operate as small, competitive businesses.\textsuperscript{55} However, perhaps influenced by affluent backers and the middle-class ideology of self-help, the founder members of the HFS agreed a set of shared aspirational values, emphasising that in the event of loss or damage, loans, not gifts, were offered to fishermen.\textsuperscript{56} The Society promoted industry, sobriety and ‘manly independence’, thereby striving for ‘the temporal benefit and moral good of its members’.\textsuperscript{57} However, when membership was declined to fishermen who had participated in smuggling, presumably as this contravened the expectation of ‘moral good’, a significant proportion of attendees left the meeting.\textsuperscript{58} Initially the HFS focussed on the fishing-related issues and did not attempt the form of ‘welfare system’ provided by societies such as the Marshside Rechabite Club.\textsuperscript{59}

Nevertheless, the HFS made a significant contribution to the fisher domestic economy across the nineteenth century. The extensive use of the Society’s fund is testimony to the dangers of fishing and expenses incurred. At one meeting in July 1836, for example, the committee agreed payments to thirteen individual fishermen for loss or damage to fishing gear, plus a payment to John Sutton who had injured his thumb ‘at his lawful employment’.\textsuperscript{60} Under the restrictions imposed by the NPL, out-relief could not have been used to fund such losses.

\textsuperscript{55} Peak, p.20.
\textsuperscript{56} ACC 12320/18/12, Photocopied Minutes, 5 April 1831.
\textsuperscript{57} ACC 12320/18/12, Photocopied Minutes, 5 April 1831.
\textsuperscript{58} Hastings and Cinque Ports Iris, 9 April 1831, in Baines, p.135.
\textsuperscript{59} Thompson and others, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{60} ACC 12320/18/12, Photocopied Minutes, 8 July 1836.
Conclusion

During the nineteenth century, Hastings fishermen experienced challenges associated with beach-launching and landing on the poorly protected stone-beach. They adapted to the cycle of the fishing seasons, and the struggle to find alternative sources of income between seasons, and when severe weather prevented fishing, or produced losses. Life-cycle events placed additional demands on the domestic economy. Evidence suggests that fishermen were constantly struggling to maximise their income.

Furthermore, the fishermen were subject to the changes in out-relief encompassed in the NPL. In response to Snell’s call for a sharper focus on the use of out-relief, research indicates that out-relief provision, post 1834 was neither sufficiently flexible nor generous to meet the needs of an occupational group dependent on a fluctuating male wage. The requirement that the able-bodied applicant enter the workhouse prevented fishermen from being available to continue the trade on which they depended. Hastings Guardians appeared to recognise the failings of the out-relief system within a fishing-based community. Whilst apparently more ready to challenge the PLC in the first decade of the NPL, evidence suggests the Guardians did apply their local knowledge when continuing to make payments in response to specific occupational and life-cycle demands in the latter nineteenth century. In answer to Tomkins and King’s query regarding planned responses, evidence indicates that fisher families actively developed a range of economic survival strategies to manage
their precarious household economy. It is to the role of the nuclear family within this ‘economy of diversified resources’ that this discussion will now progress.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{61} Hindle, p. 65.
Chapter 2: The Contribution of Fisher-wives and Children

While fishermen undertook the higher-profile work, interviews recorded by Peter Frank, in his research into women’s role in the Yorkshire inshore fishing industry during the late nineteenth century, emphasise the significant contribution which fisher-wives made to the household economy.\(^1\) Hall explains that the inshore fishing communities of the North-East comprised ‘family based’ small businesses centred on the boats and the houses, which were ‘workplaces as well as dwellings’.\(^2\) This chapter will consider the description of inshore fishing as ‘family based’ through the lens of the Hastings fisher-wives and children and their contribution to the domestic economy.

Byron suggests that the ‘maritime household’, characterised by a specific set of challenges, should be regarded as a ‘distinct development’ distinguishable from working-class urban and peasant households.\(^3\) Fisher families contended with a fluctuating wage making ‘housekeeping impossibly difficult’ and local press reported that fisher families were living ‘hand to mouth’.\(^4\) Families had to adapt to a largely absentee father producing a constantly shifting power balance between man and wife.\(^5\) Moreover, the NPL’s proposed curtailment of out-relief and renewed requirement for families to contribute to the care of elderly members, decreased the

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funds available to already impoverished households, thereby increasing the need for additional income. To explore the contribution of family members to the fisher economy of makeshifts, wives’ unpaid and paid employment will be discussed before children’s roles within the domestic economy are considered.

_Fisher-wives: unpaid labour_

In his discussion of the role of women within the Scottish inshore fishing communities in the early twentieth century, Dyson emphasises the influence of the ‘petticoat government’, yet suggests that fisher-wives worked as virtual slaves. Thompson highlights women’s role in creating the next generation of fishers, by not only giving birth to them and attending to their physical welfare, but also by shaping their experience of the world. Large families were not uncommon in the nineteenth-century Hastings fisher community. Examples include the family of Louisa Bayley, wife of fisherman Samuel, who, in 1851, cared for seven children, all under fourteen years old. Fisherman’s widow Caroline Swaine, lived with her six children at 111, All Saints in 1861, and in 1881, Jane Wood lived with her husband John, a fish salesman, and their nine children, at East Well.

Dealing with frequent pregnancies, whilst maintaining the home and meeting the family’s daily demands on a fluctuating income was exhausting, especially with minimal sleep, as fisher-wives’ routines were dictated by the fishing schedules.

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8 Thompson, p.14.
9 Census of England and Wales (Census) 1851, TNA HO 107/1635.
10 Census 1861, TNA RG 9/562; Census 1881, TNA RG 11/1022.
Clover’s interviewees described their mothers, in the early twentieth century, operating a twenty-four-hour meal service, washing their husbands’ fishing clothes, and constantly striving to economise. One mother was so concerned about the family’s income that, whilst in labour, she completed a pair of trousers which could be sold to buy bread while she was incapacitated.  

The fisher-wife’s overriding responsibility for the domestic economy is highlighted by Hall’s reflection that to be a ‘good wife’ was to be a ‘good saver’; one interviewee described his wife as the ‘Chancellor of the Exchequer’. Tebbutt suggests that in response to the increasing problems of casual labour and a fluctuating wage, between 1820 and 1840 there was a significant growth in the number of pawnbrokers, largely in working-class urban areas. Local directories indicate that pawnbroker William Lowrey had premises on George Street in 1834, and in 1858 and 1865, pawnbrokers William Bourner and Henry Flynn were working on George Street and the High Street, respectively. Two further pawnbrokers have been identified in All Saints, through the 1851 CEBs. While the availability of local pawnbrokers is insufficient to prove that the fishing community utilised this form of credit, their ongoing presence suggests they received good business. Local newspaper articles also featured interactions between fisher families and pawnbrokers, including the dispute between fishermen John Timms and Edward Stonham, in 1874, when Stonham’s wife, Ann, was accused of pawning Timms’ shirt.

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12 Hall, p. 92.
15 Census 1851.
having been paid to do his laundry.\textsuperscript{16} Several of Clover’s interviewees describe their mothers using the pawnbroker to manage their weekly budget.\textsuperscript{17}

However, Hall argues the daily demands of fishing took priority over a fisherwoman’s exhausting domestic chores.\textsuperscript{18} Unfortunately little evidence of women’s role in Hastings’ fishing industry has been located, other than the photographs of Victorian photographer George Woods, and collections from Hastings Fishermen’s Museum.\textsuperscript{19} The provenance of the image of fisherwomen counting and sorting herring (Fig. 2.1) is unknown, but this clearly demonstrates the arduous nature of women’s significant onshore contribution to the family economy.

\textsuperscript{16} ‘Dispute over a Shirt’, \textit{HSLO}, 15 August 1874, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{17} Clover, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{18} Hall, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{19} ACC 12375 (The Keep), The John E Ray Collection of glass plate negatives by George Woods (1854-1934).
Accounts from different nineteenth-century fishing communities increase understanding of the unpaid contribution of fisherwomen. Longline fishing involved a series of time-consuming tasks, described as “hell on earth” by one of Hall’s respondents.\(^{20}\) Untangling, cleaning and baiting the many-hooked lines dominated the household space and shaped routines.\(^{21}\) Hastings fishermen undertook longline fishing for dogfish prior to the World Wars and it is probable that fisher-wives were responsible for the preparation of the lines.\(^{22}\) Additionally, Hastings fisherwomen may have gutted herring during the season, as the ‘herring girls’ who followed the shoals around the coast from Northern Scotland, terminated their annual southerly journey in the Lowestoft area.\(^{23}\)

**Fisher-wives: paid employment**

In the census 1851-1881, enumerators were directed to record the occupation of women who performed a non-domestic job within the home.\(^{24}\) However, the interpretation of guidance was inconsistent, and an under-reporting of paid female employment appears probable. In his discussion of the fishing community of Marshside, Thompson emphasises the family’s dependence on a woman’s income during the winter months, yet the Hastings CEBs reflect neither women’s domestic tasks, nor the range of paid or unpaid fishing-related roles.\(^{25}\) Nevertheless, the correspondence from Hastings Guardians to the PLC requesting that fisherman

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20 Hall, p. 86.
21 Byron, p. 278.
23 Dyson, p. 186.
William Carpenter’s pregnant wife, Ann and four children be permitted to stay in their home rather than enter the workhouse, evidences the significance of the female contribution. Although William was an ‘imbecile’, the Guardians recognised that ‘by her industry’ Ann would maintain her family.  

Hall notes that within the North-East fishing communities, fish-hawking, as a comparatively full-time task, was the only female fishing-related occupation featured in the early twentieth-century census. Hastings fish-hawkers included Sarah Martin, selling her husband’s shrimps and living in All Saints Street in 1861, and in 1871 fisherman’s wife, Mary Ann Timms, living on Tackleway. The impact of the fish-hawkers is evidenced by a letter, from the Fish-Market Clerk to Hastings Council’s Market Committee, requesting that hawking be restricted to the market.  

As Hastings grew in popularity as a tourist resort a significant proportion of fisher-wives became laundresses. The impact of the opening of the Old Town washhouse, in 1865, is reflected in female employment recorded in the CEBs. The percentage of fisher-wives recorded as in employment rose from under thirteen per cent in 1861, to twenty-five per cent, representing twenty-eight women, in 1871. Of this twenty-five per cent, over half were employed in laundry work. As the sample remains small, this cannot be considered to be a definitive causative relationship, but the correlation

26 DH/B/91 (The Keep), Hastings Poor Law Union Letter-Book: 1837-41, 13 August 1841; Census 1841, TNA HO 107/1107/01.  
27 Hall, p.90.  
28 Census 1861; Census 1871, TNA RG 10/1028.  
29 DH/B/19/13 (The Keep), Committee Minutes: Market Committee, 29 December 1874.  
30 Census 1871.  
31 Census 1861; Census 1871.
between the opening of the laundry and the increase in the number of laundresses appears clear.

Hop-picking, seasonal casual work predominantly undertaken by women and children, also provided an income for fisher families. Clover’s respondents explained that hop-picking paid for their winter boots as children, sharing memories of hopping from three years of age.\textsuperscript{32} Despite the absence of references to hopping in the nineteenth-century CEBs, its significance is evident from oral testimonies, Woods’ photos, and local press coverage of the detrimental impact of hop-picking on school attendance.\textsuperscript{33}

The provision of lodgings also appears to have been a valuable source of income, contributing to the workload of fisher-wives.\textsuperscript{34} Drawing on the CEBs, Fig. 2.2 demonstrates that during the mid-nineteenth century it was usual for over ten per cent of fisher households to include lodgers or boarders; ‘visitors’ are excluded as it is presumed they would not have contributed financially. Anderson estimates that approximately twenty-three per cent of the households in his sample population of nineteenth-century Preston included lodgers, perhaps due to rapid urbanisation.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{32} Clover, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{33} Clover, pp, 20-21; ACC 12375; HSLO, 18.10.79, p.3.
Hall emphasises that the income from ‘summer boarders’ was significant during periods of severe hardship.\textsuperscript{36} Yet caution is required when considering the provision of lodgings within impoverished communities. While the middle-classes disapproved of offering lodgings, due to the inability to effectively separate the public and the private, amongst the working-classes only those who could maintain an acceptable lifestyle could offer lodgings.\textsuperscript{37} Instances can be found of fishing families providing lodgings for other fishers, who may have been more accustomed to the household routines. In 1871, for example, Rachel Breeds, a charwoman and wife of fisherman Mark, living at Rock-a-Nore, provided lodgings for fisherman John Mann and his wife, and on Tackleway, Sarah and John Chatfield, fish-dealers, offered lodgings to fishermen Robert Foord and son.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{36} Hall, p. 91.
\textsuperscript{38} Census, 1871.
Female recipients of relief were predominantly women experiencing life-cycle poverty, including widows, and those who were pregnant or had illegitimate children. Entries in the Guardians’ Minute Books indicate that ‘confinement’ was a regular cause of out-payments.\(^39\) Furthermore, the Overseer’s Account Book for the neighbouring parish of St Clements, 1834-35, featured weekly payments to women for their ‘bastard child’, including Jane Breeds and Mary Swain, whose family-names suggest they may have been from fisher families.\(^40\) Interestingly, in 1840 the Hastings Guardians, perhaps attuned to the frequent loss of fisher-husbands at sea, requested that the PLC relax the restriction on out-relief to widows with illegitimate children, as they had, themselves, unanimously agreed to continue outpayments to such women.\(^41\)

Examples of out-relief payments made to infirm and widowed fisher-wives have been identified by cross-referencing the CEBs with the half-yearly Statement of Account for the Hastings Union, 1877.\(^42\) Mary Ann Adams, widow of fisherman George Adams, living at 12 Union Row with her seven children, received out-relief payments in addition to her own earnings from dressmaking, plus probable contributions from her two older children, a dressmaker and a fisherman.\(^43\) Catherine Adams, a fisherman’s widow in receipt of a weekly allowance in 1877, was employed as a mangling woman by 1881, living on All Saints Street with four children, one of whom was a fisherman, plus a female lodger.\(^44\)

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\(^{39}\) R/C 18/10 (The Keep), Minutes of the Board of Guardians of Hastings Union (Oct 1858-March 1860).

\(^{40}\) Appendix 2.

\(^{41}\) DH/B/91, Letter-Book, 18 October 1840.

\(^{42}\) PAR 361/38/17, Parochial List; Census 1871; Census 1881.

\(^{43}\) PAR 361/38/17, Parochial List; Census 1871.

\(^{44}\) Census 1881.
Mary and Catherine Adams provide examples of fisherwomen who constructed a precarious domestic economy, comprising income from waged employment, lodgers and from other family members plus poor relief payments. To explore the contribution of the nuclear family members in more detail, the role of fisher children will be considered.

Contribution of fisher children

Snell has argued that the cessation of ‘family allowances’ under the NPL, heightened the pressure on children to contribute to the domestic economy, and may have led to a rise in the age of sons leaving the parental home.\(^45\) As Griffin explains, a son’s earning potential was generally far greater than his sisters, thus determining the organisation of family duties.\(^46\) In examining fisher children’s contribution to the household economy, the gendering of sons’ and daughters’ roles will be explored.

In the 1866 sea fisheries report, an older Hastings fisherman explained he had been fishing since he had been old enough to ‘move’ his hands.\(^47\) Indeed, Thompson highlights the expectations placed on Marshside fisher children required to undertake time-consuming tasks, such as ‘shilling’ shrimps, both before and after school.\(^48\) Anderson’s suggestion, that children and parents had a tendency to be economically co-dependent in areas where there was limited separation between family and

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\(^46\) Griffin, p.68.
\(^47\) *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Sea Fisheries of the United Kingdom, Vol. 1. PP. 1866, XVII.571-XVIII.1*, p. 375
\(^48\) Thompson and others, p.80.
economic organisation, appears relevant to Hastings fisher families.\textsuperscript{49} In the short term, children may have depended on their parents for employment and an income, while longer-term dependence pertained to the inheritance of a home, business, or, in fisher families, a boat. Families, meanwhile, may have relied on the financial contribution of younger people, or on their unpaid labour to assist with the household or business.\textsuperscript{50} As Anderson notes, children were raised within a trade, gaining the expertise to continue in the family business, while economic, social and emotional ties may have precluded other employment options.\textsuperscript{51}

Fig. 2.3 demonstrates the significant proportion of fisher households which included sons and/or daughters in employment; further research is required to explain the apparent fall in employment in 1861, which could relate to administrative decisions taken by the enumerators. Highlighting the correlation between the general employment levels of children and employment in fishing, this suggests fishing was predominantly a family-based industry. In both 1851 and 1881 in approximately eighty per cent of those households in which children were recorded as employed, they were involved in fishing-related occupations. However, employment may have been significantly higher, as this chart is drawn from the CEBs in which under-reporting of employment was probable, as previously discussed.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{49} Anderson, p. 111.  
\textsuperscript{50} Anderson, p. 111.  
\textsuperscript{51} Anderson, p.113.  
\textsuperscript{52} Higgs, pp.103-106; Census 1851; Census 1861; Census 1871; Census 1881.
Griffin suggests that many boys were eager to leave school, gaining status by earning an independent wage and contributing to the household economy. Girls may have been more reluctant to sacrifice the opportunities which education could offer.  

**A) Daughters**

Clover’s older interviewees explained that, in the early twentieth century, fisher daughters were expected to contribute financially, for example, by selling fish, in addition to undertaking domestic duties, looking after younger siblings and assisting with fishing tasks. This gendering of children’s roles reflects the ‘framework of expectations’ discussed by Davidoff, in her exploration of daughters’ responsibilities within the home. Griffin examines the way in which young girls arranged their chores around the school day and even secured paid employment whilst at school,

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54 Clover, pp. 12-14.
55 Davidoff, p. 60.
as reported by a Hastings fisher woman who received payment for dairy-work when only ten years old.\textsuperscript{56}

For many working-class daughters leaving school led to increasing unpaid domestic work within their own homes or with relatives.\textsuperscript{57} Even if domestic labour was unpaid, by living with relatives, daughters were reducing the demands on the parental budget and creating space in an often overcrowded home.\textsuperscript{58} Photograph collections and Clover’s twentieth-century testimonies illustrate the unpaid tasks undertaken by daughters, from drying fish to guarding washing.\textsuperscript{59} Maud Hind’s description of her childhood in a Yorkshire inshore fishing community portrays the exhausting physical work undertaken by fisher girls, often in inappropriate clothing, as impoverished families could not afford protective clothing for female members.\textsuperscript{60}

The occupations recorded for fisher daughters in the CEBs, 1851-81, comprised largely domestic service, laundry-work and dressmaking, reflecting the limited waged opportunities available. The status of young women in domestic service remains unclear. In 1881, when fisherman John Gallop’s daughter, was recorded as ‘domestic at home’, for example, it is probable that she was working, unpaid, in her family home. Similarly, ‘housekeeper’ Rachel Phillips may have been working for her father, fisherman George Phillips, a widower, and her fisherman brother, at their

\textsuperscript{56} Griffin, p.20; Clover, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{57} Griffin, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{58} Clover, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{59} Clover, 10-12; ACC 12375, John E Ray collection.
\textsuperscript{60} Frank, p. 63.
home on Bourne Rd.61 The significance of a daughter’s contribution to the domestic economy is highlighted by one of Clover’s interviewees who describes her father smashing her wedding gifts, as he was enraged by the prospect of losing her income.62

B) Sons

A Hastings Sunday School inspector’s complaints, in 1848, that fisher boys preferred to assist with the family boat, rather than attend Sunday School, suggest it was customary for young sons to participate in the family business.63 Indeed, in an HSLO article in 1898, a fisherman explained that as fishers went to sea from ten years of age ‘in earlier days’, his sons ‘had no learning’, and simply remembered necessary information.64 Young sons were expected to contribute to, and subsequently enter, the family trade, gaining experience, initially, by assisting their fathers with onshore tasks. Mitchell, born in 1895, describes how, as a child, he collected driftwood on the beach to heat the family home and laundry ‘copper’, explaining that beachcombing produced a meagre, yet nonetheless useful income.65 Even in the mid-twentieth century, fisherman Brian Stent recalls undertaking shore-based tasks, such as organising the fish-boxes and relaying the fire, after school.66

61 Census 1881.
62 Clover, p. 28.
63 Hastings News, 16 June 1848, in Peak, p. 28.
64 ‘The Hastings Fishery, HSLO, 1 October 1898, p. 5.
CEBs indicate the ages at which sons started working as fishermen. In 1851, for example, widower and fisherman’s labourer Thomas Gibbs was living in Thwaite’s Cottages with his son John, a fifteen-year-old fisherman, and his thirteen-year-old, Daniel, who was a ‘fishing boy’.67 Shop-keeper, Eliza Riddle was living with her six children at East Well, in 1861, including her twelve-year-old, who was a fisherman.68 Indeed, boys under the age of fifteen were recorded as fisherman as late as the 1870s, including fourteen-year-old fishermen Stephen Bumstead and Henry Betts.69 However, sons in fisher families also contributed to the household economy through a limited range of alternative occupations, such as cordwainer and errand boy, recorded in 1851, gas fitter and general labourer in 1881.70

Relief could be paid in cases of family ‘neglect’. In 1877, for example, fish-hawker Edward Salmon of East Hill Passage received relief payments due to ‘neglect’ of his wife, Deborah, and five children. In 1871, Edward, Deborah and their twelve-year-old son were all working as fish-hawkers.71 In 1881, Deborah, apparently estranged from her husband, still worked as a fish-hawker, and lived with her seven children, plus a lodger, in Ore. Edward was boarding in the Black Horse public house and continued to sell fish.72

67 Census 1851.
68 Census 1861.
69 Census, 1871.
70 Census 1851, 1881.
71 PAR 361/38/17, Parochial List; Census 1871.
72 Census 1881.
Conclusion

The Salmon family demonstrate the way in which impoverished nineteenth-century families endeavoured to meet the demands of the domestic economy, even in the absence of the male wage. The economy of makeshifts included the waged and unwaged labour of fisher-wives, sons and daughters, the provision of lodgings and out-relief payments. Research has highlighted the wide range of domestic and fishing-related tasks undertaken by fisherwomen, supporting Thompson’s reflections on the over-lapping skill sets of fisher men and women.\(^73\) As Binkley emphasises, a fisherwoman’s life was ‘defined, confined and redefined’ by her partner’s occupation.\(^74\)

However, the contribution of fisher children should not be overlooked, for the apparent gendering of children’s roles, from an early age, dictated household organisation, and the prospects of young men and women in All Saints. Thompson highlights the significance of younger people in securing the future of the fishing industry, by quoting the Swedish fishermen who assert the need to ‘pull the youth with us’.\(^75\) The contribution of fisher-wives and children to the domestic economy through their labour both onshore and at sea, was clearly vital to the ongoing survival of the family and the family-business. However, inshore fishing families did not operate in isolation, but depended on the wider fishing community to crew the boats, sell their catch, and survive periods of life-cycle poverty. Thus, the role of the fisher

\(^{73}\) Thompson and others, p. 175.
\(^{75}\) Thompson and others, p. 221.
community and, specifically, the significance of kinship networks to families’ economic survival will now be explored.
Chapter 3: Kinship Networks

Questioning Laslett’s argument that in preindustrial England ‘effective’ kinship was limited to the ‘immediate’ nuclear family, Reay asserts that kinship was central to nineteenth-century working-class communities.¹ Chapter three will explore the ‘centrality’ of kinship in the context of the Hastings fisher community, looking beyond the nuclear family, to examine the significance of kinship networks within the domestic economy.

For the purposes of this discussion, Andrjs Plakans’ definition of kin will be adopted whereby all those who were related, either by descent or marriage, will be recognised as kin.² Reay and Barrett are amongst historians calling for further research into the complex relationship between kinship, the domestic economy, and the role of communal relief.³ Challenging the ‘orthodoxy’ of the nuclear family, Reay refers to Medick’s argument that urban ‘proletariat’ kinship networks served to dilute the poverty of the nuclear family, while those in rural labouring communities worked to support elderly members and safeguard property.⁴ Thus, consideration will be given to the extent to which the Hastings fishing community emulated Medick’s

proletariat and peasant models, by attempting, through kin networks, to share the burden of poverty whilst supporting its most vulnerable members.

Anderson’s research into the impact of industrialisation and urbanisation on family and kinship within nineteenth-century Lancashire, provides a model for an examination of kinship within the Hastings fishing community.\(^5\) His study focuses on four key areas: co-residence, intentional propinquity, opportunities for social and work-oriented contact, and ‘sentiment’.\(^6\) Additionally, drawing on Betts’ work on ‘assortative marriages’ in nineteenth-century farming communities, evidence of assortative couplings withing the fisher community will be researched, to explore the complexity of the fisher kinship network.\(^7\)

**Assortative Marriage**

In his study of nineteenth-century rural Kent, Betts refers to the prevalence of ‘assortative coupling’, whereby labourers married brides from a similar social and occupational background; marriage was an act of ‘social reproduction’.\(^8\) Robin argues that such partnerships may have served to consolidate family relationships.\(^9\) However, Dyson focuses on the value of a fisher bride’s skills, comparing a fisherman who married a bride from outside the community, to a boat without a sail.\(^10\) Moreover, Barrett suggests there was an inverse relationship between relief

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\(^6\) Anderson, p. 43.
\(^8\) Betts, p. 37.
spending and the prevalence of intra-community marriages, indicating, perhaps, that assortative coupling served as an economic survival strategy.\textsuperscript{11}

To explore the extent of intra-community marriage amongst fisher families, All Saints marriage records have been examined at ten-yearly intervals, from 1830. Drawing on lists of nineteenth-century Hastings fisher family-names collated by Peak (Appendix 1), attempts have been made to identify couples who appear to be from fisher families.\textsuperscript{12} Where possible, this has been confirmed by consulting CEBs to determine the occupation of each father. Whilst the 1841 CEBs have not previously been used in this dissertation due to the absence of relationship data, they have been drawn on to explore the probable genealogy of couples; as with other chapters, subsequent censuses have also been consulted.

In the absence of detailed census data, it has not been possible to confirm whether unions prior to 1841 involved fishing families. Nevertheless, the family names of Bridget Gallop and Robert Kent, married in 1829, Mary Gallop and George Kent, married in 1829 and James Mann and Mary Spice, married in 1832, suggest both bride and groom came from fishing families.\textsuperscript{13} In each case the groom can be identified, through a subsequent census, as a fisherman.\textsuperscript{14} Mary Ransom and William Swain married in 1831, were later living with twenty-three others, including what may have been William’s birth-family, in All Saints Street. Both William and

\textsuperscript{11} Barrett, p. 226.
\textsuperscript{13} For All Saints marriage records where no original document is listed online: Findmypast:\textlt{https://www.findmypast.co.uk} > [accessed 25.09.22].
\textsuperscript{14} Findmypast:\textlt{https://www.findmypast.co.uk} > [accessed 25.09.22]; Census 1841, TNA HO 107/1107/1; Census 1851, TNA HO 107/1635.
Zebulon Swain, William’s probable father, were fishermen.\(^{15}\) By 1841 William and Mary had four children, including baby Ann, suggesting this was an example of kin co-residence during a period of life-cycle poverty. In 1851, they were living in East Hill Passage, predominantly a fisher street, with four children including sixteen-year-old William, also a fisherman, plus a lodger whose rent presumably contributed to the domestic economy.\(^{16}\)

Examples of intra-community marriage may suggest a cultural expectation that fishers would marry within the fishing community. Subsequent examples include the 1852 marriage of Mary Ann Bumstead, daughter of fisherman Stephen Bumstead, to Edward Hook, whose father, George, is recorded as a ‘mariner’ in the 1841 CEBs; in the 1841 record, ‘fisherman’, ‘seaman’ and ‘mariner’ all appear to denote a fisherman.\(^{17}\) The complexity of the kinship network is exemplified by the 1871 second marriage of forty-four year old widow, Lucy Diton, to widower and fisherman Robert Foord.\(^{18}\) Lucy had been recorded as a ‘mariner’s wife’ in 1851, living with her one-year-old son and her father, ‘mariner’ Thomas Poole, providing a further example of kin-co-residence, possibly in response to life-cycle poverty.\(^{19}\) Such responsive family structures, bound together through a tradition of assortative marriage, evidence what Reay has described as ‘mutating households’ shaped by economic crises.\(^{20}\)

\(^{15}\) Findmypast: <https://www.findmypast.co.uk> [accessed 25.9.22]; Census 1841; Census 1851.

\(^{16}\) Census 1851.

\(^{17}\) Findmypast: <https://www.findmypast.co.uk> [accessed 25.9.22]; Census 1841.

\(^{18}\) Findmypast: <https://www.findmypast.co.uk> [accessed 25.9.22].

\(^{19}\) Census 1851.

\(^{20}\) Reay, p. 161.
Household Structure and Kin Co-residence.

Calculating that approximately ninety-five per cent of the resident population within his sample area of Preston was living with one or more individuals who would meet Plakans’ definition of kin, Anderson suggests this was a predominantly ‘familistic society’. Furthermore, his research indicates that for specific groups experiencing critical life situations, kin co-residence could be an important survival strategy, as evidenced by the families of Lucy Diton and William Swain. In his exploration of household ‘income-pooling’, Wall considers the contribution by adult children to the parental domestic economy and reciprocal arrangements whereby an older resident parent may have provided support with child-care or housework. Davidoff draws on the concept of the ‘malleable’ household in her discussion of boarders and lodgers, while Cooper and Donald’s study of ‘hidden’ kin living in suburban nineteenth-century Exeter, emphasises the potential complexity of ‘the household’. Research into specific household structures may indicate the significance of kin co-residence, and the pooling of resources, within the fisher economy of makeshifts.

Identifying the loss of a spouse as a critical life situation, Anderson explores the residential status of widows and widowers to investigate the incidence of kin support through co-residence. Drawing on Anderson’s premise to scrutinise CEBs, the composition of All Saints fisher households, 1851 to 1881, has been studied. In

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21 Anderson, p. 43.
23 Wall, p. 93.

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1851, for example, widower Joseph Gallop lived with his fisherman son and two lodgers, suggesting a domestic income comprising earnings from father and son, plus board from lodgers. In the same year, widower and fisherman, Samuel Hide shared his home, at 23 The Bourne, with his son, a net-mender, and his married daughter, plus her three children and, presumably, her husband. Thus, Hide’s domestic economy comprised pooled contributions enhanced by the economies of shared residence.26

Richard Sutton, a fisherman and widower in 1861, lived with Eliza, his nineteen-year-old daughter and ‘housekeeper’, at 119 All Saints Street, which he shared with two other families.27 In 1881, widower, fisherman Edward Wingfield lived at 15, Tamarisk with two daughters, two sons, both fishermen, plus a grandson.28 Such examples of co-residence suggest savings were made through the pooling of incomes, shared housing costs, and reciprocal support. While it cannot be assumed that complex co-residence arrangements were a direct response to poverty, Anderson identifies the economic advantages of sharing accommodation.29 For example, living with family could ensure savings on rent and furnishings, relatives could provide childcare enabling a woman to gain paid employment, and by accommodating nephews and nieces, kin could support siblings experiencing economic hardship.30

26 Wall, pp. 90-92.
27 Census 1861.
28 Census 1881, TNA RG11/1022.
29 Anderson, p. 141.
30 Anderson, p. 149.
Calculating the number of conjugal households plus additional kin within the All Saints samples, 1851 and 1881, provides a basic overview of the prevalence of extended households within the fisher community and possible changes over time.\(^{31}\) Nineteen per cent of the 121 fisher households sampled in 1851 presented as extended households. By 1881 this figure had fallen to sixteen per cent, possibly reflecting the reported reduction in rents, potentially making the pooling of resources less urgent, plus possible changes in demography, availability of housing, and in economic survival strategies.\(^{32}\)

Richard and Sarah Diton’s family, living amongst fishers at East Well in 1861, exemplifies the complexity of extended fisher households. Richard and his sons William and Henry were fishermen. Fourteen-year-old George was a boatbuilder. Living with the family were Sarah’s two brothers, both fishermen.\(^{33}\) Family members may have fished together, pooling resources to overcome economic hardship. In the same year, sixty-six-year-old unmarried fisherman Samuel Hide shared 20 Bourne Street with his two nephews, John Hide and Samuel Kent, both fishermen, and his niece, servant Elizabeth Hide. Anderson suggests that the presence of nephews, nieces or lone grandchildren in a house may have been due to adoption following parental bereavement.\(^{34}\) Thane discusses the mutual economic and psychological advantages, of an older person taking an orphaned relative into their home.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{31}\) Wall, p. 87; Census 1851; Census 1881.
\(^{32}\) Peak, p. 42.
\(^{33}\) Census 1861, TNA RG 9/562.
\(^{34}\) Anderson, p. 141.
Propinquity

In his study of nineteenth-century farming communities, Betts argues that non-resident kin may have made a significant contribution to the operation of a farm.\(^{36}\) The importance of residential proximity to kin is apparent within fishing communities such as Marshside, where households were dependent on the local 'extended family network' in addition to the 'family work unit'.\(^{37}\) Mitchell’s description of his uncle, a Hastings fisherman from a large fisher family, visiting his mother to reassure her before each fishing trip, provides a poignant example of the importance of kinship links.\(^{38}\) However, Thane argues that evidencing the assistance provided by ‘non-residential intergenerational support’ is challenging, in part because it was so widespread.\(^{39}\)

Anderson’s study of the family names and birthplaces of his sample population at a specific census point also indicates that incidences of kin propinquity were probably ‘legion’.\(^{40}\) He focusses on those born outside Preston, to identify the proportion of migrants who had taken up residence in close proximity to kin.\(^{41}\) The Hastings fisher community presents a characteristically static population and therefore, to gain a simplistic indication of the extent of residential propinquity, the proportion of adult fishers living in All Saints, in 1851 and 1881, who were also born in Hastings, has been estimated (Fig. 3.1).

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\(^{36}\) Betts, p. 49.
\(^{37}\) Thompson, p. 95.
\(^{39}\) Thane, p. 96.
\(^{40}\) Anderson, pp. 60.
\(^{41}\) Anderson, p. 61.
This analysis includes the household head and spouse and whilst attempting to highlight the significance of kinship, through researching the stability and extent of the local fisher population, such a technique exhibits weaknesses. In the 1851 and 1881 CEBs ‘birthplace’ was not consistently recorded at the parish level, and thus, for the purposes of this study, all births recorded as ‘Hastings’ are classified as local. Furthermore, where fisher widows, and wives whose husbands were absent, listed their own occupation, their connection to the fisher community was not apparent from the census. Thus, there may a degree of inaccuracy in fisher percentages.

Nevertheless, data indicates that in both 1851 and 1881 approximately seventy-eight per cent of the sampled group had been born in Hastings.\(^{42}\) It should not be assumed that individuals stayed in their place of birth to remain near kin, for proximity to the beach and to occupation were important. Furthermore, Snell has

\(^{42}\) Census 1851; Census 1881.
suggested that the ‘stay at home tendency’ within nineteenth-century rural communities, may have stemmed from settlement laws and inheritance concerns; perhaps for fishermen, family boat ownership was key. However, when compared with the equivalent figure for the non-fisher community, of approximately forty-two per cent, the ongoing disparity suggests that an established and extensive kin network contributed to the geographical stability of the fisher population.

Anderson suggests that huddling, the residential grouping of impoverished communities, was, in part, a response to poverty, and Thompson notes the characteristic huddling of fisher families in communities such as Marshside. Huddles of All Saints fisher cottages, including Adams Cottages, Kent Cottages, Swain’s passage, Wood’s Row, White’s Yard, recorded in the 1851 census, bear the names of fisher families. Thus, the huddling of fisher households, evident across the study period, appears to reflect both economic survival strategies and the relevance of kinship networks. In 1851, five of the six families living in Collins Passage were fisher households and all the families occupying the four Kent cottages were part of the fisher community. Nineteen fisher families lived on East Well, by the fisherman’s beach, in 1861. In 1871, all the households in the nine Meadow Cottages, seven Kent Cottages and in Lavendar lodging house, comprised fisher families. The tightly-knit kinship promoted by such huddling could prove advantageous in a work and social context.

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44 Anderson, p. 166-167; Thompson and others, p. 84.
45 Census 1851
46 Census 1851
47 Census 1861.
48 Census 1871, TNA RG 10/1028.
Work and Social Contact

Thompson discusses the resilience against economic changes provided by the traditional inshore fishing practices of ‘family boat’ ownership and payment by shares.\(^49\) Inshore fishing is reliant on the combined skills of those on board and onshore, and effective kinship networks were imperative. Indeed, Byron describes ‘elementary families’ in maritime communities creating a ‘joint extended household’ united by shared tasks and responsibilities.\(^50\) Wall has reflected on the interweaving of social and occupational relationships in rural labouring communities, extending this discussion to include domestic and childcare responsibilities.\(^51\)

The diversity of ways in which the fishing beach has traditionally been utilised, demonstrate that co-operative working was imperative. Fishers depended on the resources of both the nuclear family and kin network to crew the boats and, before the advent of the tractor-engines, to launch and draw-up vessels. The beach was a vital shared resource as evidenced by the postcard (Fig.3.2) demonstrating the characteristic way fisher-wives, many


\(^{51}\) Wall, pp. 93-94
working as laundresses, dried washing between the boats of kin, avoiding spaces where they assisted at ‘Dutch’ fish auctions.\textsuperscript{52}

Fishing-family ‘nicknames’ also emphasise the significance of kinship and identity within the fishing community. Mitchell was a ‘Wizel’ or ‘Weasel’ White, one of many nineteenth-century family nicknames.\textsuperscript{53} This tradition of family nicknames – ‘Gasser’, for Evans, ‘Hawky’ for Gallop, ‘Jamsy’ for Bumstead, ‘Bangers’ for Mann – demonstrates the connections between fisher-kin.\textsuperscript{54} In a 2012 interview, Hastings fishermen John ‘Tush’ Hamilton and Jimmy ‘Toller’ Adams discuss the derivation of their family nicknames, presenting them as part of their fishing inheritance.\textsuperscript{55} Such evidence suggests that kinship was, and is, a key aspect of fisher life and thus significant within the domestic economy.

\textit{Emotional Connection}

The consistent use of family nicknames could be perceived as evidence of family allegiance, providing support for Anderson’s argument for the functional role of ‘sentiment’.\textsuperscript{56} However, he acknowledges that intensive family reconstitution methods may be required to demonstrate the effectiveness of allegiance.\textsuperscript{57} Reay has utilised twentieth-century oral histories to highlight kin support in rural Kent, and certainly conversations between ‘Tush’ Hamilton and ‘Toller’ Adams, and between

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{52} Peak, pp. 62-63. \\
\textsuperscript{53} Mitchell, p. 3. \\
\textsuperscript{54} ‘The Hastings Fishery’, Hastings and St Leonards Observer, 1 October 1898, p. 5. \\
\textsuperscript{55} C1500/0319/01 (British Library), ‘Conversation Between Friends’, The Listening Project, University of Brighton, Hastings (2012), [accessed 25.9.22]. \\
\textsuperscript{56} Anderson, pp. 64-66. \\
\textsuperscript{57} Anderson, p. 65.
\end{flushleft}
fisherman Mick Barrow and his son, evidence the way lives and businesses are emotionally and practically intertwined. Discussions of a death at sea emphasise powerful family and community bonds.  

58 Personal histories recorded by the Hastings Fishermen’s Museum demonstrate the ongoing resilience of kinship networks.  

59 Charlie ‘Perkins’ Adams recalls fishing regularly, with his father, at the age of thirteen. It was to his father that Charlie owed his nickname, ‘Perkins’, and it was from him that he inherited his boat. Jimmy Adams discusses his experience of working on family boats from the age of fourteen. Such accounts highlight the importance of allegiance, which may have ensured vital support during periods of economic hardship.

Conclusion

Considering Hastings fisher families through the lens of Anderson’s study highlights the way extensive kinship networks were manifested and the role they played within the domestic economy. Assortative marriages, which consolidated work and social relationships, also enabled fishermen to ensure that their spouse had the necessary experience for life as a fisher-wife. Kin co-residence permitted savings on rent and furnishings, and the pooling of resources, while family members could provide reciprocal assistance. This supports Medick’s argument that kinship enabled communities to share the burden of poverty. Kin propinquity was integral to work and boat ownership. It facilitated the sharing of resources, practical and emotional

58 C1500/0319/01, Friends (2012); C1500/038/01 (British Library), Conversation between Father and Son, The Listening Project, University of Brighton, Hastings (2012), [accessed 25.9.22].


60 Broughton and others, eds, pp. 3-13, 15=31.
support, and the maintenance of community culture and expectations, amid changing demands. Through both kin propinquity and co-residence, the fishing community satisfies Medick’s argument that kinship served to support its most vulnerable members during periods of life-cycle poverty.⁶¹

Reay has referred to the ‘centrality’ of kin within the rural communities of nineteenth-century Kent.⁶² Evidence suggests that kinship was also central to the Hastings fishing community and integral to families’ economic survival strategies. Furthermore, Barrett has demonstrated that kinship networks could provide a useful link to alternative sources of income, such as charities, and it is the contribution of these philanthropic institutions within the fisher domestic economy which will now be considered.⁶³

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⁶¹ Medick, p. 265.
⁶² Reay, p. 172.
⁶³ Barrett, p. 215.
Chapter 4: Charity and Philanthropy

Having considered the contribution made to the domestic economy by members of the nuclear family and kinship networks, this chapter will explore the extent to which shortfalls may have been resolved through charitable giving and philanthropic donation. Lloyd’s research into the role of charity within the lives of the eighteenth-century poor, leads her to argue that the ‘map’ of charity did not equate to the ‘map’ of need.\(^1\) Consequently, the poor were required to modify their presentation of poverty to meet the priorities of benefactors. In examining charity in relation to the Hastings fisher community, the motivations of donors will also be considered, to explore possible divergence between donor and recipient. This chapter will, therefore, commence with a review of prevailing attitudes towards charity, before considering charitable campaigns focussing on the perceived needs of the fisher community, and local responses to hardship. More extensive philanthropic schemes will also be discussed, exploring how these may have contributed to the welfare of the fisher community.

*Prevailing attitudes towards charity*

Whilst late eighteenth-century commentators, such as Townsend and Burke, may have criticised the Poor Laws, they continued to emphasise the positive role of charitable intervention.\(^2\) Arguing for minimal government involvement, Burke

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indicated it was the Christian duty of charity to support the poor, a sentiment reflected by nineteenth-century charities, such as the Shipwrecked Fishermen and Mariners’ Benevolent Society (SFMBS).\(^3\) Furthermore, following his 1833 visit to Britain, Tocqueville criticised the belief of the poor that they had a right to relief, suggesting that this stripped them of their individual dignity, arguing charity would have a beneficial impact, building relationships between benefactor and recipient.\(^4\) However, Cunningham explains that some held philanthropists responsible for declining morality and increasing dependence.\(^5\) He describes benefactors surveying contentious challenges from a distance rather than becoming personally involved, comparing them to statesmen interested in high profile national and international issues.\(^6\) This philanthropic focus on the ‘big issue’ is, perhaps, reflected in philanthropists’ involvement in healthcare, housing and education in Hastings.

Studying the funding of London hospitals, Waddington discusses the nineteenth-century fundraisers’ approach to satisfying the motivations of benefactors, from making a lucrative financial investment, to gaining prestige.\(^7\) Hospitals relied on subscriptions, donations, bequests and gifts in kind, all of which were relevant in the context of Hastings. As Humphreys indicates, the social challenges produced by industrialisation and urbanisation increasingly led the state to draw the ‘private’

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\(^3\) Himmelfarb, p. 67.
\(^4\) Himmelfarb, pp. 149-150.
\(^6\) Cunningham, p. 108.
philanthropist into the ‘public’ domain of poor relief. By mid-century the promotion of self-reliance was being replaced by a recognition that some form of state or philanthropic intervention was required. The work of the Hastings Cottage Improvement Society (HCIS) serves as an example of a philanthropic undertaking apparently prompted by a belief that the relief of destitution lay beyond the responsibility of the individual. Yet, Lloyd describes charity as a ‘contested’ way in which benefactors endeavoured to shape the ‘terms of survival’ of the poor. Thus, in exploring the contribution of charity to the fisher domestic economy, apparent disparities between the needs of the fishers and expectations of donors, will be noted.

_Fisher-Focussed Charity_

Mayor Hayles’ appeal for funds for ‘widows and orphans’, in June 1860, following gales in which the _Endeavour_ was wrecked, provides an example of a local campaign focussing on the impact of a fishing tragedy. The deaths of ten fishermen left families bereft of their main breadwinner. The wife of boat-owner Edward Pomphrey, whose husband and older son were both drowned, explained that she had nets for the forthcoming herring fishery, but hoped to find an alternative income and terminate her economic dependence on the sea. At a meeting to discuss the

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11 Lloyd, p. 103.
12 DH/B/159/373 (The Keep), Notice from Edward Hayles, Mayor of Hastings (1860).
14 ‘Losses by the Late Gale’, _Surrey Gazette_, 12 June 1860, p. 5.
Mayor’s appeal, Mr Breach, the fishermen’s representative, emphasised the emotional and financial impact of the loss of a husband or a working son. Yet, before discussing a subscription scheme, which may have alleviated families’ immediate economic crises, the ‘influential’ audience members appeared determined to research the personal circumstances of the deceased, including alternative financial assistance available. Interestingly four of the fishermen had endeavoured to provide some financial security by joining a Friendly Society, Benevolent Society or a Burial Society.15

Nineteenth-century charities, such as the SFMBS, established in 1839, tended to highlight the needs of ‘deserving’ widows and orphans, now outside the nuclear family, demonstrating the concept of ‘nuclear hardship theory’, discussed by Laslett.16 In its Eighth Annual Report, the SFMBS stated that since its launch it had relieved 825 widows, 2,415 orphans and 441 dependent parents; in a Hastings example, seventeen pounds had been distributed amongst five widows and seven orphans of local fishermen.17 The focus of the SFMBS rhetoric appeared to shift over the nineteenth century. Whilst the Eighth Report proudly offered the shipwrecked ‘every requisite their destitution may require’, by 1867 a local agent was urging the public to donate to assist widows and children, rather than encourage ‘idlers’.18

15 Surrey Gazette, 12 June 1860.
18 ‘Provincial Intelligence’, Sussex Advertiser, 12 January 1867, p. 2.
The financial support offered to the ‘deserving’ poor, by the SFMBS, can be contrasted with the economic contribution provided by the HFS, which focused on compensating fishermen for loss or damage to nets, tackle and boats. Yet, the Hastings fishermen also looked for support from influential sponsors and, at its inaugural meeting, the Committee agreed to seek donations from more ‘opulent’ visitors and residents.\(^\text{19}\) Again, a divergence in perspectives between donor and recipient can, perhaps, be found in the responses of honorary member, Mr Johnson, when presented, in 1880, with an engraved cup to thank him for his support. Johnson emphasised the importance of involvement in local charitable projects, explaining he had brought his son with him to demonstrate, ‘by example’ the benefits of ‘mixing’.\(^\text{20}\)

Regular press accounts featured the plight of the Hastings fishery and included winter appeals highlighting the hardship experienced by fisher families. A Christmas article in the HSLO, 1874, declared it was the moral duty of Hastings residents to provide support to the fishers during the severe weather, acknowledging that political economists would resist such intervention.\(^\text{21}\) Local recognition of the needs of the fisher community is evident in annual dinners and events organised specifically for fisher families.\(^\text{22}\) From celebrations marking the coronation of King George IV, to the fishermen’s annual Easter tea, examples can be found of charitable fisher-focused events.\(^\text{23}\)

\(^{19}\) ACC 12320/18/20 (The Keep), Photocopy of Minutes of meetings of the Society of Fishermen of the Port and Town of Hastings (1831-1856), 5 April 1831.

\(^{20}\) HSLO, 27 March 1880, p. 10.

\(^{21}\) ‘Christmas Appeal’, HSLO, 26 December 1874, p. 4.


\(^{23}\) ‘Gleanings from the Past’, HSLO, 21 December 1878, p. 3; *Brighton Gazette*, 8 April 1847, p. 7.
Several philanthropists also favoured the Hastings fisher community, including the Duchess of Kent, who, in 1834, sent a letter of support and a donation to HFS.24 However, the chief ‘benefactress’ of the Hastings poor and specifically of the fisher community was Mrs Milward, later to become the Countess of Waldegrave. The Countess’ most significant contribution to the families’ domestic economy, was the Bourne Street wash-house, a ‘gift to the poor’ in 1865, which enabled local women to undertake their family’s washing and also to generate an income by working as laundresses.25 So important was the wash-house to families’ daily lives, that its final closure in the 1960s provoked protests from local residents arguing that it had been left in trust to Hastings fishers.26

Local responses to hardship

In her mid-century guide to Hastings, Mary Howard provided visitors with a comprehensive overview of charities offering support to the town’s ‘necessitous poor’.27 Many offered relief-in-kind which may have been accessed by struggling fisher families. Reduced price coal and potatoes could be sourced from the Hastings Relief Association, linen, a contribution towards food and an accoucheur from the Lying-in Society, clothing was available from the All Saints Clothing Society, and the Benevolent Society concentrated on the needs of the infirm.28 Without written accounts from these charities, it is impossible to assess their impact on the fisher

24 ACC 12320/18/20 Photocopy of Minutes, 5 December 1834.
26 C1500/0319/01, Conversation between friends, University of Brighton, Hastings (2012); Beatrice Clover; Loving the Fishing? (Hastings: Old Hastings Preservation Society, 2004), p. 11.
28 Howard, p. 215.
domestic economy, but due to NPL restrictions on out-relief, it might be assumed
that such charities were widely accessed.

Fisher families may also have benefitted from bequests by past residents of
Hastings. Thomas Lasher left the proceeds from his estate ‘for the use and benefit’
of the seven most impoverished Hastings inhabitants and thus, each Christmas,
seven men, ‘generally poor decayed fishermen’ received a donation.29 Proceeds
from the Magdalen Charity were distributed by Church Wardens and Overseers to
those ‘deemed deserving’ in All Saints and St Clements.30 Charity was shaped by
the priorities of those with influence and to access funds the poor were required to
meet a charity’s moral expectations.31 Thus, while impoverished Hastings women,
such as Jane Catt, Mary Swain and Jane Breeds, received a small out-relief
payment for their ‘bastard child’ in 1834, they would not have been eligible for
support from the Lying-in Society as they were unmarried.32

The mid-century middle classes did, however, value the personal responsibility
promoted by self-help, although, in providing such semi-paternalistic
encouragement, it could be argued that the privileged retained the power imbalance.
The HFS, for example, was established with the philanthropic support of London
merchant Leonard Coxe, and his associate.33 Additionally, Hastings boasted the

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30 Royal Commission, PP. 1835, p. 1004
31 Lloyd, p. 120
32 PAR 367/31/3/2 (The Keep), Overseer’s weekly account book giving weekly payments to paupers, 1st Quarter 1834 March 31-June 23.
33 ACC 12320/18/20, Photocopy of Minutes, 2 April 1831; 6 April 1832.
Victorian Lodge of Oddfellows, the Benevolent Society and the Derwent Lodge of Freemasons, established with a set of Regulations very much akin to those of a Friendly Society. Although the fee for joining the local Freemason lodge appears comparatively high, at £1 1 shilling 6 pence, two of the initial founding members were fishermen, James Mann and John Swaine, both of whom made a mark, in place of a signature.\textsuperscript{34} The Temperance Movement, with its focus on financial independence and close ties with religion, had a significant impact on many British fishing communities, enabling some fisher families to save for a boat, yet local newspaper reports demonstrated a lack of interest in Hastings.\textsuperscript{35}

\textit{Longer-term philanthropic schemes}

While the self-help movement promoted personal responsibility, philanthropic giving often targeted longer-term organisational projects. Waddington argues that hospitals served as a conduit between donor and recipient, providing a means to demonstrate ‘benevolent zeal’, while indirectly contributing to the domestic economy of the poor.\textsuperscript{36} The Dispensary in All Saints opened in 1830 to provide the poor with advice and medicine, while the Infirmary offered the ‘sick poor’ inpatient care.\textsuperscript{37} Both depended on donations and fund-raising events, such as public balls.\textsuperscript{38} Fishing was dangerous and physically demanding and, thus, it was vital for fishers to be able to access affordable healthcare. However, the Dispensary’s \textit{Annual Report, 1885}, indicates friction between the governors and those attempting to access its services. Having

\textsuperscript{36} Waddington, p. 135.  
\textsuperscript{37} Howard, pp. 214-215.  
\textsuperscript{38} ‘Gleanings from the Past’, \textit{HSLO}, 6 October 1877, p. 6.
been established to meet the health needs of those who were unable, or unwilling, to claim relief, the governors took exception to the Dispensary being used by those in receipt of ‘parochial relief’.\textsuperscript{39}

Furthermore, the health of fisher families was threatened by poor housing and sanitation.\textsuperscript{40} The Sanitary Committee Minutes, 1849, criticised the sanitation in the poorest areas, attributing the ‘filth’ to pig pounds, dung and ash deposits, the unacceptable state of the slaughterhouse, and over-flowing privvies.\textsuperscript{41} Therefore, the HCIS was established in 1857.\textsuperscript{42} Dr Greenhill, a founder member, informed the Royal Commission of Inquiry, 1884-5, that whilst the charity had been founded on religious principles, it was intended to be a financially successful investment.\textsuperscript{43} Greenhill explained that the HCIS bought and repaired cottages in very poor condition. This would, apparently, produce rapid returns, which would then be quickly re-invested, and would also fund the construction of basic accommodation. The impoverished community did not, according to Greenhill, have the skills to care for better-quality housing.\textsuperscript{44}

The HCIS focussed its operation on poorer area of the parish, often in fisher populated streets. In 1881, sixteen of the thirty families resident in Scriven’s Buildings, constructed by the HCIS, were from the fisher community.\textsuperscript{45} Thus, the

\textsuperscript{39} DH/B/13/1 (The Keep), Annual Report of Hastings Dispensary (Hastings: Chronicle, 1885).
\textsuperscript{40} Peake, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{41} DH/B/116/1 (The Keep), Sanatory Committee Minutes, 11 August 1849, 15 August 1849, 25 August 1849.
\textsuperscript{42} Peak, p.28.
\textsuperscript{43} Royal Commission for Inquiring into Housing of Working Classes, (England and Wales) PP. 1884-85, Cmd C.4402-C4402-11, pp. 441-442.
\textsuperscript{44} Royal Commission, PP. 1884-85, pp. 441-442.
\textsuperscript{45} Census of England and Wales 1881, TNA RG11/1022.
charity could be said to have made an indirect contribution to the domestic economy of the fisher population through providing accommodation and, thereby, impacting on health and wellbeing. However, reports in the *Hastings Observer* and the *Builder* suggest that overcrowding continued and the standard of improvements was disappointing.\(^4\) Clearly, the ‘social dynamics’ of charity, which Lloyd discusses in the context of education, were also evident in the philanthropy of housing and healthcare in the poorer areas of Hastings.\(^4\)

The education of fisher children has already been identified as a potentially contentious issue in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, when discussing seasonal work, and young fisher boys’ reluctance to attend Sunday School. Whilst education might be regarded as a means to a more financially secure future, it could also be perceived as a threat to children’s contribution to the domestic economy. Local middle-class perceptions of the resistance of the poor to education is demonstrated by the declaration that compulsory elementary education would ‘force’ the ‘waifs and strays’ into school.\(^4\) However, there is an indication that fishers did wish their children to attend school but were unable to pay the required contribution without assistance; as the Board Chairman remarked ‘theirs seemed to be a very precarious living’.\(^4\) Contention over the benefits of education for fisher families appears to have continued; an article in 1898 remarked that fisher attendance was improving as attendance officers were ‘looking them up’ more.\(^5\)

\(^4\) Peake, p. 42; ‘The Old Houses in All Saints Street’, *HSLO*, 5 June 1880, p. 5.
\(^4\) Lloyd, p. 102.
\(^4\) *HSLO*, 18 December 1875, p. 4.
\(^4\) ‘The Hastings School Board’, *HSLO*, 7 February 1874, p. 4.
\(^5\) ‘The Hastings Fishery’, *HSLO*, 1 October 1898, p. 5.
As Lloyd suggests, charitable projects such as education, housing and healthcare could bring longer-term benefits to the economy of makeshifts, very different from the immediate benefit of a soup kitchen, but their provision was not necessarily without problems.\(^{51}\)

**Conclusion**

Research has identified various forms of charity and philanthropy operating in the poorer parishes of Hastings across the mid-nineteenth century. Some were targeted specifically at the needs of the fisher community, particularly in response to tragedy, or extreme hardship. Others were aimed more widely at the town or parish poor, in the form of soup kitchens, clothing societies and Friendly Societies. Thus, it appears probable that charitable giving contributed to the domestic economy of the fisher community during periods of crisis, and as part of daily life through welfare charities and longer-term philanthropic projects. However, behind all forms of charity, were the underlying aspirations of benefactors which could stem from both altruistic and selfish motives.\(^{52}\) The agency of the fisher community in accessing charitable funds, and the extent to which they may have modified their needs to meet the priorities of a charity, have yet to be fully explored. Minutes from the meetings of charities and records of payments made, would facilitate a greater understanding of the role of philanthropy within the fisher domestic economy. In the fisher context, Lloyd’s argument that the relationship between donor and recipient is complex and that

\(^{51}\) Lloyd, p. 105.

\(^{52}\) Waddington, p. 137.
charity could extend beyond the immediate provision of resources, appears compelling.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{53} Lloyd, p. 130.
Conclusion

Summary

This dissertation sought to explore the economic survival strategies of the Hastings fisher community, across the mid-nineteenth century, by examining the constituent elements of the domestic economy and the fishers’ use of out-relief post 1834. Prompted by Hindle’s argument that in some contexts reliance on an ‘economy of diversified resources’, could be more effective than dependence on waged labour, Chapter One focussed on national and local challenges to the fishermen’s income.1 Responding to Tomkins and King’s question regarding the agency of the poor and the extent to which responses to poverty were planned, evidence indicated that fishermen strove to develop working practices and self-help mechanisms which would maximise earnings and mitigate losses.2 Primary sources demonstrated that, over the mid-nineteenth century, fishermen endeavoured to secure their businesses through active local and national campaigning, and challenging the restrictions of the NPL.

Chapter Two drew on Hall’s description of the ‘family based’ inshore fishing industry, to study the contribution of fisher-wives and children.3 Due to a lack of primary material pertaining to the experiences of Hastings fisher families in the nineteenth century, childhood memories dating from the early twentieth century were employed, highlighting the way in which the demands of inshore fishing and the need for

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1 Steve Hindle, ‘“Not by bread only”? Common Right, parish relief and endowed charity in a forest economy, c. 1600-1800’, in The Poor in England, ed. by Steven King and Alannah Tomkins (Manchester: MUP, 2003), pp. 39-75, (p. 65).
2 King and Tomkins, ‘Conclusion’, pp. 258-279, (p. 273).
constant budgeting dominated family life. Whilst acknowledging problems with the nineteenth-century CEBs, when used in conjunction with personal testimonies, newspaper accounts and visual sources, they effectively demonstrated the gendering of fisher children’s roles, and the consequent impact on young people’s prospects.

Reay’s comments, on the ‘centrality’ of kin in nineteenth-century labouring communities, underline questions posed in Chapter Three regarding household and community organisation, and the significance of kinship. The model devised by Anderson to explore kinship in nineteenth-century Preston, was adapted to interrogate primary sources relating to the fisher community. It became evident that functional kinship networks, as demonstrated by assortative marriages, kin co-residence and propinquity, and well-established social and working relationships, were integral to the fishers’ economic survival strategies.

Chapter four questioned the extent to which charity and philanthropy were both useful and accessible to the fisher community, drawing on Lloyd’s research to consider possible disparities between the needs of fisher families and the priorities of benefactors. In the absence of detailed records from local charities it was not possible to assess fishers’ use of the more generic charities, but evidence was found of fisher-specific appeals and donations. The discussion of the relevance to fishers

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of broader philanthropic projects highlighted areas of potential friction between donor and recipient, including standards of housing, access to healthcare and the perceived role of education.

Whilst the fishers’ use of out-relief has emerged as a theme throughout this dissertation, detailed family reconstitution would be necessary to identify possible correlations between access to kin support or charity, and a decline in the use of poor relief. However, evidence suggests the PLC’s determination to minimise, if not eradicate, outdoor relief to the able-bodied was challenged by both the fisher community and by the Hastings Guardians in the first decade of the NPL, and out-relief continued to be an element of the fisher domestic economy during periods of life-cycle poverty.

**Future Research**

This dissertation has produced an overview of key components of the fisher community’s domestic economy, yet questions remain, indicating three areas for further research. First, a study based on detailed family reconstitution which endeavoured to follow individual members of the Hastings fisher community and their families over the course of the nineteenth century, may not only provide a clearer understanding of the links between components of the domestic economy, but also heighten understanding of the local impact of poverty. Importantly, such a detailed study, attempting to explore the agency of individuals and fisher families, within the context of their own community and wider society, may start to reveal the experiences of the poor, so often obscured within the record. Secondly, to evaluate
the extent to which community structure and culture impacted on the fisher community’s economic survival strategies, it would be helpful to study the wider population of All Saints and of neighbouring parishes, examining responses to poverty and the use of charity and communal relief by the non-fisher communities, in order to draw comparisons. Finally, to further explore the concept of ‘social knowledge’ and its impact on the negotiation between relief applicant and Guardian, between donor and benefactor, it would be revealing to investigate different occupational groups, assessing their access to poor relief and use of charity, noting occupational and regional variations.7

**Overall conclusion**

This dissertation has contributed to the growing body of research focussing on regional and occupational variation in the constituent elements of the nineteenth-century domestic economy. It has highlighted that the intended prohibition on out-relief to the able-bodied, encompassed in the NPL, severely penalised families dependent on a precarious wage. However, evidence has indicated that local knowledge and negotiation could impact on the outcomes of relief applications, ensuring that out-relief remained relevant within impoverished communities. Building on the work of King and of Thompson, this study has demonstrated, through its focus on nineteenth-century families tightly bound by occupational demands and priorities, that the cultural expectations and social organisation of a community impacted on the composition of its domestic economy, resilience, and longer-term economic survival.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Hastings Fisher Family names

Steve Peak compiled the following lists of fisher family names from the Minutes of the Hastings Fishermen’s Society.¹

The 1831 list comprises the family names of all those fishermen who were on the Committee of the Fishermen’s Society.

The 1870 list appears to be the oldest surviving record of Society membership.

The figure after a name indicates the number of fishermen in the group with that name.

1831:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams, Apps</td>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boreham, Breach</td>
<td>Mann (2), Mills, Morfee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatfield, Cobby, Coppard</td>
<td>Noakes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diton</td>
<td>Peters, Phillips (3), Pompfrey, Putland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans</td>
<td>Richardson (2), Ridley, Roffe (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foord (2)</td>
<td>Spice, Sutton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallop (3), Guy</td>
<td>Tassell (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harman, Haste, Hinkley</td>
<td>White (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1870

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams (6)</td>
<td>Diton (3), Down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball, Betts (6), Boreham, Brazier, Breach</td>
<td>Edmunds, Evans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breeds (2), Brigden, Bumstead (9), Burton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark (2), Cobby (3), Coppard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1870 (contd)

Edmunds (2), Evans  
Ransom, Richardson, Riddle

Farrell, Fennings, Foord (3), Ford, Foster, Fullager  
Simmonds (2), Spice, Stace

Gallop (13), Grisbrook  
Stoneham (3), Sutton (8)

Harman (2), Haste (7), Hayward (2), Head  
Swain (4)

Hide (4), Hook (2)  
Tassell (3), Tayler, Timms

Kent (5)  
Veness (3)

Larkins  
Wakeford (2), Wheeler, White (9)

Mann (7), Martin (2), Mitchell (2), Moor, Morfee  
Willis, Wingfield, Wood (3)

Noakes

Page (6), Phillips (10), Piddlesden (2) Pumphrey (4)
Appendix 2: Key Streets Sampled. 1851-1881

List of streets or groups of cottages identified, through the CEBs 1851, as being predominantly fisher residential areas; these became the focus when studying subsequent CEBs, 1861-81.

Due to redevelopment of areas of All Saints during the nineteenth century, amendments were made to the original streets examined and additional streets are included on the list.

The Creek (nb appears only in 1851 and 1861 CEBs).

All Saints Street

Bourne Street/ Bourne Walk

Crown Lane /Crown Row / Crown Cottages 1881: new housing

Basom’s Square Scriven’s Building

East Hill

East Cliff

East Well

Tamarisk Steps

Tackleway

Meadow Row

Union Row

Kent Cottages

Fisher’s Cottages

Meadow Cottages

Rock-a-Nore Road

Vines Row

White’s Cottages
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