

◆ A comparison of poor relief in a Wealden parish and a South Downs parish in eastern Sussex c.1830–1860

by Mary Rudling

Regional studies of poor relief in the 19th century have identified contrasting welfare experiences. This study identifies variations in relief between two rural parishes in Sussex at the end of the Old Poor Law and during the first decades of the New Poor Law. Relief records from Chiddingfold in the Weald and Rottingdean on the South Downs reveal that there were much higher levels of relief in the Wealden parish both before and after the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act. Variations in farming conditions and land ownership between these two areas led to a different profile of relief recipients. Small scale farming and surplus labour in the Wealden parish resulted in a high demand for out-relief from male labourers. Relief officials were used to supporting this group of men under the Old Poor Law and were reluctant to change their practices under the New. In contrast more prosperous farmers were able to provide full-time employment for labourers on the South Downs where relief payments were traditionally reserved for the elderly and for widows with young children. Poor relief payments rarely reached subsistence levels, and access to alternative resources was important, including the employment of wives and children, benefit clubs, charities and allotments. There appears to have been a wider range of resources available in the downland parish which may also explain why fewer people were dependent on relief.

INTRODUCTION

Relief of the poor was the responsibility of parishes in the early 19th century. The relief system was based on a series of laws dating from the reign of Elizabeth I. Legislation in 1601 required parish vestries to provide for the poor by levying a ‘poor rate’ on property owners. Unpaid overseers were responsible for collecting the rates and distributing relief to the sick, widows and elderly. Poor children and orphans were to be apprenticed to a trade and the able-bodied who could not maintain themselves were to be given work. Poor houses were to be provided in the parish for the impotent poor. The local, parochial basis of the poor law was further strengthened in 1662 by the Act of Settlement which established that parishes need only relieve those people who could prove entitlement by settlement.¹

The poor relief system led to conflicting interests between ratepayers and recipients of relief. An upward trend in numbers receiving relief and the costs of relief by the early 18th century resulted in further legislation which aimed to curtail relief payments. The Workhouse Tests Act of 1723

empowered parishes to establish a communal workhouse and refuse relief to paupers who would not enter them. While there was an initial interest in opening workhouses following the Act, in the majority of parishes relief outside of a workhouse (out-relief) continued to be the main form of poor relief. Overseers’ returns published in 1777 indicated that as few as one in seven parishes had a workhouse.² In fact managing the number of paupers seeking relief in a workhouse (in-house relief) was increasingly unrealistic by the late 18th century. Demands on the relief system had continued to grow as a result of under-employment and unemployment, notably in the rural south and east where a concentration on arable farming led to scarcity of work in the winter. Furthermore enclosure of common land limited labourers’ access to essential resources such as fuel.

The problem of housing large numbers of paupers was recognised in the 1782 Act, known as the Gilbert Act after its promoter, which sanctioned relief to the able-bodied outside the workhouse. Only the impotent poor needed to be housed in workhouses. A parish could either provide a workhouse itself or join adjacent parishes

in a union to do so, with the aim of making relief provision more efficient. In the latter case relief was managed by a board of guardians appointed by the magistrates. When possible work was to be found for the unemployed and, if necessary, wages could be supplemented by the parish. Allowances could also be paid to families with several children, a practice criticised by the political economist Thomas Malthus who argued that the relief system was not helpful to the poor as it only encouraged them to have large families. Malthus's prediction of an inexorable increase in population was to have an important influence on poor law policy during the 19th century. About 80 Gilbert Unions were formed following the Act, together with a few individual parishes with guardians.³

The number of people requiring relief continued to increase during the early years of the 19th century following a series of bad harvests, high prices during the wars with France and subsequent demobilisation. Rising relief costs tested the sympathy of many ratepayers. The Sturges Bourne Act of 1819 enabled parishes to elect a select vestry of substantial householders to administer poor relief. A salaried overseer could be appointed to 'closely inspect claimants' circumstances'.⁴

However, while attempts were being made to tighten up the distribution of relief, many agricultural labourers were experiencing ever greater hardship following agricultural depression in the early 1820s and later between 1828 and 1830 following a series of wet harvests. In 1830 rural protests occurred, predominantly in the corn growing areas of the south and east. The uprisings became known as the Swing Riots due to threatening letters sent to farmers which were signed 'Captain Swing'. Unrest spread from Kent across the Sussex Weald and into West Sussex. Grievances included low wages and the introduction of portable threshing machines which threatened to add to the problems of surplus labour and under-employment. The protesters were also motivated by hatred of a demeaning poor relief system and hostility toward certain overseers.⁵

The Swing Riots fuelled concerns about social stability and helped pave the way for the reforms in 1834 which contemporaries referred to as the New Poor Law due to the significant changes proposed by the legislation.⁶ The Poor Law Amendment Act aimed to establish a stricter and more regulated relief system and in particular 'remedy the evils'

of offering out-relief to the able-bodied. Parishes were to be grouped together into unions run by guardians elected from each parish. The unions were now required to provide a workhouse, which was to be the only option for the able-bodied. The inmates were to be classified by age and sex, and families were to be separated. The concept of 'less eligibility' meant that the standard of welfare of paupers should be lower than that of the lowest paid worker.⁷

The New Poor Law has been regarded by many historians as a regressive measure which aimed to produce a submissive workforce. While relief bills fell, the new workhouses stigmatised the poor and pensions stagnated. However, it has also been argued that the revised system continued to offer a 'safety net' and that the union workhouses provided education and certain medical services.⁸ Some regional studies have identified a change in personnel and in the attitude of officials towards providing relief after the new legislation, while other studies have seen continuity and have argued that there were minimal changes in the experience of poor relief as parishes continued to provide out-relief to the able-bodied.⁹ It is certainly the case that despite attempts to regulate the system, regional variations in the provision of relief persisted and consequently discussions of poor relief tend to focus on local studies.

The aim of this study is to assess poor relief at a local level in Sussex at the end of the Old Poor Law and during the early years of the New Poor Law. Sussex was predominantly a rural county in this period with one of the highest levels of relief expenditure in the country.¹⁰ In 1832 parish officials were questioned about the provision of poor relief as part of a government inquiry into the administration and operation of the Poor Laws. Responses to the inquiries were later included in the 1834 Poor Law report. While not all parishes responded, the inquiries provided useful information on labourers' living conditions including wages, employment and the provision of indoor and out-relief. In general relief levels in Sussex appeared to be high: in many parishes allowances were paid to families with three or more children. Over half of the 82 rural parishes which responded said they had a workhouse, with the number of inmates ranging from 15 to 60.¹¹

However, the 1832 survey also revealed regional differences in relief provision within the county.

The respondents referred to far higher levels of poor relief in many Wealden parishes compared with downland parishes. For example, in the Wealden parish of Chiddingly there were reportedly 50 people unemployed, 240 people in receipt of out-relief and 22 people in the workhouse. In contrast in the downland parish of Rottingdean there were no unemployment, 12 people receiving out-relief and no-one in a workhouse.¹² It is this apparent difference on which this study will focus. The relief records for these two parishes have been studied to assess the evidence for variations in unemployment rates and poverty and to examine why there were higher levels of relief in the Weald than on the Downs. Chiddingly and Rottingdean are suitable for comparison as they were both agricultural communities with very similar populations: in 1841 census Chiddingly 930 and Rottingdean 935. They had similar acreages for farming: Chiddingly 3100 acres and Rottingdean 3000 acres. Relief records have survived for both parishes before and after the introduction of the Poor Law Amendment Act.¹³

Many more people received relief in Chiddingly than in Rottingdean and a high number of able-bodied labourers received out-relief in Chiddingly but not in Rottingdean. The Act specifically targeted able-bodied men in health.¹⁴ As there was a notable difference between the parishes in the number of able-bodied male labourers receiving relief, case studies have been compiled to examine why labourers were claiming out-relief. The approach of local officials towards providing relief is considered, and evidence for continuity or change in provision following the New Poor Law is discussed.

THE BACKGROUND TO CHIDDINGLY AND ROTTINGDEAN IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY

To understand why the provision of poor relief was so varied between the two parishes it is important to consider the economy of the region during the period studied. The Weald is largely a low-lying, wooded, heavy clay land bordered to the south by the chalklands of the South Downs. The soils and the location of these two environments determined the nature of farming and landownership: farming conditions, particularly for arable cultivation, were less favourable in the Weald than on the Downs. In 1834 the Wealden parish of Chiddingly consisted of 760 acres of woodland, 2400 acres of arable, and

900 acres of pasture mainly grazed by cattle with a few sheep. Several farms also included a small hop field. To the north of the parish were steep slopes and woodland, land in the south consisted of heavy, poorly drained soil with more favourable soils in the centre. Transport was difficult as narrow, winding, often muddy lanes had to be negotiated to access the main turnpike roads leading to markets in Lewes and Heathfield. In contrast the farms on the South Downs were described by the Revd Arthur Young as more extensive with superior management. Chalkland drains well and the lighter soils were easier to manage. In 1834 the downland parish of Rottingdean had 1800 acres of arable land and 1200 acres of pasture which was predominantly used for sheep grazing. The roads to the local town of Brighton and to Lewes market were far more accessible than the lanes in the Weald.¹⁵

Favourable farming conditions on the South Downs led to the consolidation of farms by capitalist farmers in the early 19th century.¹⁶ Wealthy landowners, such as the Abergavennys, who owned farming land in Rottingdean parish, were able to invest in improvements in their farms and were more likely to take up new and profitable developments in farming. By the mid-19th century downland farmers were able to grow more produce by using the four-course system growing root crops for feed instead of leaving the land fallow. They were also farming South Down sheep, which had been bred locally to produce high quality wool and mutton. However, wheat production in the Weald depended on maintaining fallow land as the clays were too heavy to use a four-course system.¹⁷

The 1838 tithe survey indicated that a few individuals owned or occupied most of the land in Rottingdean. Five people held over 400 acres; two held between 100 and 400 acres, and two held small parcels of land of 14 and 24 acres. In contrast in Chiddingly nine individuals owned or occupied between 200 and 377 acres; three held between 100 and 200 acres and 36 held between ten and 100 acres. The 1851 census provided information on farmers, the acreage they farmed and the number of people they employed. By 1851 Charles Beard had acquired 2010 acres of land in Rottingdean and employed 96 labourers. There were two other farmers with over 400 acres: William Saxby farmed land belonging to Lord Abergavenny and employed 21 labourers and John Lade employed 18 labourers. A fourth farmer employed nine labourers and a fifth

was listed but without information on the land he farmed or any employees. In Chiddingly 27 farmers were listed in the 1851 census, of whom over half had a very small workforce. Robert Reeves farmed 524 acres and employed the highest number of labourers, 24. There were eight other farmers who employed between nine and 20 men but 14 farmers employed fewer than four men. Four farmers appear to have worked alone or with family support.¹⁸

Farmers operating on a large scale who could make a profit and acquire liquid capital were able to provide regular, permanent employment. They were in a better position to weather periods of depression and maintain their workforce. This was borne out in the responses to the commissioners. Farmers in Rottingdean were able to offer employment to men throughout the year. In contrast in Chiddingly about 15 labourers had no work in the summer and 25 in the winter, yet the respondent felt that ‘all labourers could be profitably employed if farmers’ capital would admit of it’, suggesting that farmers could not afford to develop their farms.¹⁹

The responses also provided information on wages in both parishes and these were very similar, averaging 12s a week for agricultural labourers. Replies from other Sussex parishes indicate a fairly level weekly rate of pay across the county. The lowest return was 10s for a married man and 6s for a single man in Ringmer. The highest return was 12s to 18s for a married man and 9s to 12s for a single man in Berwick. In some parishes there was a slightly lower pay rate in winter and for some agricultural labourers beer was added to the pay in summer. However, the weekly wage quoted in the responses was a ‘standing wage’, labourers could often earn additional money during harvest time or for piece work. In Rottingdean wages increased from 12s 6d for general work to £1 2s for four weeks at harvest time. In Chiddingly labourers were paid 12s a week but an average of 14s over the year allowing for harvest and piece work. Non-agricultural labourers in parishes such as Newhaven received slightly higher weekly wages at 17s 6d.²⁰

The contribution of women and children to the family income was also covered in the inquiries. In lower wage agricultural regions such as Sussex the value of earnings from each family member could be important.²¹ In most of the Sussex parishes women and children’s work was seasonal, ranging from stone-picking in the winter, spring weeding, hay making and harvest work. In some of the Wealden

parishes women and children might also help with hop-picking. However, many of the parishes only offered summer work. Rottingdean was unusual in being able to ‘afford employment to almost all the Women and Children, which the Farmers are enabled to do in consequence of the land being of a light soil.’ This work was offered in ‘Summer and Winter’. In Chiddingly women and children could do hop picking, weeding and hay-making in the summer but there was no work for them in the winter. Payment for women’s work in Rottingdean was 10d a day rising to 2s a day at harvest. Children’s wages ranged from 4d to 10d depending on age. The respondent for Chiddingly implied that women and children received the same pay at 9d to 1s a day rising to 1s 6d during harvest. Without knowing how many days women and children worked, it is difficult to compare their wages with men. If women worked for five days at 10d a day, their wages would have been a third of the average male wage of 12s a week. The respondents for Rottingdean estimated that a mother and four children could contribute £12 12s a year to the family income. Rather unhelpfully the Chiddingly respondent answered the same question by giving the man’s annual income as ‘About £43 12s 6d’, which in itself seemed an overestimate if the male labourer’s income averaged 14s a week.²²

As explanation for the differences in relief levels between the Wealden and downland parishes, less secure employment seems to have been a more important factor than lower rates of pay. Seasonal employment in Chiddingly affected men, women and children. However, paid employment and poor relief combined were often not sufficient to enable families to live at subsistence level. The poor would have relied on a range of resources for survival. Historians often refer to the ‘economy of makeshifts’ to stress the disparate nature of income for poor households.²³ Gleaning, the gathering of fallen grain from farmers’ fields after harvest, was one such resource. Peter King has suggested that gleaning by women and children could be an important source of food for poor families in eastern and southern counties. Only a few of the responses to the inquiries referred to gleaning; it is not mentioned by the Chiddingly respondent but the Rottingdean respondent referred to ‘children gleaning’.²⁴

Access to a plot of land to grow food may have been another important resource. The use of

allotments developed in the rural south and east during the 1830s. In his study of the allotment movement in the 19th century Jeremy Burchardt identified at least 32 Sussex parishes which had allotment sites during this period. The Earl of Chichester and Viscount Gage were founder members of the Sussex Association for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes. Formed in 1831, it aimed to improve the lives of labourers who suffered from suppressed wages and under-employment by providing land at a 'fair' rent for allotments.²⁵

The Poor Law inquiries included questions on whether cottages had gardens and also whether labourers could rent land. Most of the cottages in Chiddingly and Rottingdean had gardens, although these were often small at some 12 perches (360 square yards). In Chiddingly no allotments were mentioned; however, the Rottingdean overseers said that labourers each had a potato plot rent free. Information on the size of the plots is not given. Burchardt estimates that an allotment of a quarter of an acre could increase the family income by 11%. While he makes a distinction between allotments where a range of crops were grown and potato plots, he notes that potato plots could produce high yields.²⁶

The economic condition of agricultural labourers in this period was very much influenced by wheat prices. Labourers were potentially in a no-win situation with regard to fluctuations in the agricultural economy: if wheat prices were high, employment levels might rise but so would the cost of bread which was a staple part of a labourer's diet. There were a series of bad harvests in the 1820s and a further period of agricultural depression in the late 1840s and early 1850s.²⁷ The records discussed below show that increased unemployment in both parishes in the late 1840s prompted different reactions from relief officials.

The population in the two parishes was similar in each census year, with increases between 1841 and 1861, from 935 to 1037 in Rottingdean and from 930 to 1117 in Chiddingly. The range of occupations in both parishes was very similar with agricultural labour being the main form of employment. But the location of the two parishes led to a slight variation in some occupations. For example, there were over 20 coastguards in the coastal parish of Rottingdean in each census year while there were more brick-makers in the Wealden parish. While there was a

similar number of labourers in each parish, there were more gentry in Rottingdean: 10 people in the 1851 *Post Office Directory* compared with only one in Chiddingly. It is therefore not surprising that more servants, mainly women and children, were recorded in Rottingdean than in Chiddingly. This again suggests that there may have been more opportunities for women and children to contribute towards the family income in Rottingdean.²⁸

SUPPORT UNDER THE OLD POOR LAW IN CHIDDINGLY AND ROTTINGDEAN

Prior to the Poor Law Amendment Act the poor relief provided by parish overseers was recorded in the minutes of vestry meetings. The vestry minutes for both parishes have been used to compare relief provision under the Old Poor Law. The Chiddingly vestry book 1831–6 contains the earliest surviving records of the Chiddingly vestry meetings. In 1831 up to 19 overseers attended most of the vestry meetings. They were mainly farmers but also included a miller and carpenter. Chiddingly therefore does not appear to have taken up the option to have a 'select vestry'. The overseers would certainly have known the people who were requesting relief and may well have employed many of them. William Guy was the vestry chairman; the Guy family were one of the relatively large landowners in the parish owning over 200 acres. They rented a number of cottages to parishioners.²⁹

The vestry book refers to both in-house and out-relief. In 1777 there was a workhouse for up to 25 people in Chiddingly. In 1833 Richard Gander was appointed warden of the 'poor house'. Prior to 1834 the terms poor house and workhouse were sometimes used interchangeably and this appears to be the case in Chiddingly. Gander's role was to 'lodge, wash, mend and clothe the said poor persons.' He would receive the earnings of the poor people whilst under his care which indicates that the occupants were to be employed. The parish officers would pay for medical care and funeral costs; they were to have free access to inspect the poor house. Gander was to teach the children, and other residents who were willing to learn, to read. In addition to a workhouse there were a number of parish houses owned by the parish and rented out at a subsidised rate.³⁰

The overseers also compiled monthly lists of people receiving out-relief. On average 20 recipients

were listed each month, several names were recorded regularly while others were only listed once or twice. A common reason for relief was illness of the claimant or of family members who were provided with a nurse. Often clothes, food or fuel were given. Cash payments were less frequent while regular pension payments were only occasionally mentioned. Those out of work were sent to work on one of the local farms. Surplus labour was a problem regularly discussed by the overseers. They considered purchasing land to provide work although this proposal was not followed up in the minutes. On occasions the unemployed were paid out-relief if work could not be found and there are references to the overseers helping with rent payments. Relief in Chiddingly was given to many people often of working age; however, it appeared to be temporary in nature and largely for illness or short-term unemployment. Surplus labour and uncertain employment were a feature of life under the Old Poor Law.³¹

The Rottingdean vestry minutes have survived for a far longer period between 1710 and 1828 although a number of years are missing. The information varies; some years only referred to the collection of poor rates, but several years included lists of people receiving out-relief. Weekly lists of payments indicate that the same people were receiving a regular pension, mainly elderly people. The pensions averaged 2s to 3s a week. Families in the parish were also paid to take in children. For example in 1758 Hannah Davey was paid £1 5s to keep Hannah Ashcroft. There was only an occasional mention of a younger widow receiving relief and a few referrals to a poor house. In 1749 an average of eight people received a pension; however, by 1781 this number had risen to 30 people. This increase in relief payments may explain the following somewhat abrupt entry in 1784: 'Sometime in November 1784 the Poor were removed to a workhouse...many chose to drop their pay sooner than go.'

Following this entry there are no further references to relief lists. However in response to the commissioners' inquiries in 1832, parish officials referred to '12 individuals, widows etc.' who were receiving relief pensions and were not in a workhouse. Therefore out-relief payments must have been reinstated at some point after 1784. It has not proved possible to find out further information on the Rottingdean poor house. Like Chiddingly,

the terms poor house and workhouse seem to apply to the same establishment. The reference above to the poor preferring to lose their pension rather than enter the workhouse suggests that parish residents had a poor opinion of the conditions there. The records also refer to 'parish houses', some of which were sold to help fund the new workhouse in 1836.³²

Unlike the Chiddingly vestry minutes, the surviving Rottingdean vestry minutes did not list the overseers present at the meeting. However, James Ingram was a signatory to some of the minutes in the 1820s; he was a farmer. Two overseers replied to the 1832 inquiries for Rottingdean and they were also farmers, Charles Beard and William Dumbrell.³³ Under the Old Poor Law the overseers focused on providing regular support to the elderly or children but not to the able bodied in Rottingdean. When the number of recipients increased, the overseers were reluctant to provide out-relief. This trend continued under the New Poor Law as evidenced by the records from the Newhaven Union which will be discussed below.

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW POOR LAW IN CHIDDINGLY AND ROTTINGDEAN

The organisation of poor relief in Sussex was quite varied by the final years of the Old Poor Law. There were six unions of rural parishes formed under Gilbert's Act in the west of Sussex and Petworth and Arundel were incorporated as single parishes under the act. Chichester and Brighton were each incorporated as a single parish under a Local Act. The remaining parishes provided relief as independent units; some with workhouses, some without. Following the Poor Law Amendment Act, Assistant Poor Law Commissioners were tasked with forming parishes into unions. In Sussex 18 new unions were formed between 1835 and 1836; Chichester and Brighton continued as corporations and two of the Gilbert Unions, Sutton and East Preston, were retained until 1869.³⁴

The Assistant Commissioner for the east of Sussex was W. Hawley; he arranged for eleven Wealden parishes, including Chiddingly, to be grouped together to form the Hailsham Union. One or two guardians were to be appointed from each parish to attend union meetings. Hawley was highly critical of the parishes which formed the union as they continued to distribute relief in 'the usual

lavish and indiscriminate manner.’ He noted that ‘pauperism is extensive’ and he was concerned by the amount of out-relief being paid. When Hawley arrived in Hailsham in the summer of 1835 to meet with the Board of Guardians he encountered considerable opposition to the new system. The chairman of the new union was Richard King Sampson, who was described by Salzmänn as ‘one of the leading men of the place and a great sportsman’. King Sampson was a member of Hailsham vestry. He opposed the amended legislation, in particular stricter regulations regarding out-relief. Hawley described him as ‘our greatest opponent’. The Hailsham guardians proposed to continue to use their own discretion regarding out-relief. Hawley noted that ‘they wish to interpret and twist their orders so as to suit their own views, and throw all into confusion.’³⁵

However, progress appears to have been made at the first meetings as arrangements were made to sell most of the poor houses in the parishes to help pay the cost of £3960 for building a new workhouse at Upper Horsebridge, which was referred to as the Central Hellingly House (Fig.1).

The old Hailsham and Herstmonceux workhouses were also retained for several years. The new workhouse was built to house up to 150 people with separate accommodation for men and women. It was an imposing and unwelcoming building. Hostility towards the new workhouse regime was expressed in 1836 as inmates protested in both the Hailsham workhouse, where paupers destroyed the hand-mills which they were ordered to use to grind corn for their own bread, and the Hellingly workhouse where food bowls, beds and windows were damaged in protest against a new dietary plan. Rioting, though, had also occurred on a number of occasions in the Hailsham workhouse prior to the New Poor Law.³⁶

In contrast to his experience in Hailsham, Hawley felt ‘the most cheering auspices’ when first meeting with the guardians of the Newhaven Union. This union was composed of 16 downland parishes including Rottingdean. The chairman of the Newhaven Union was Henry Thomas Pelham, 3rd Earl of Chichester, whose family seat was at Stanmer House. He supported the new legislation and his appointment was welcomed by Hawley



Fig. 1. Hailsham Union Central Workhouse, built in 1836 (by permission of Peter Higginbotham Collection/Mary Evans Picture Library)

who was impressed by ‘the Earl of Chichester’s great abilities and experience’. A letter from the Earl was included in the evidence for the Poor Law Report. He appeared to be agreeing with the Malthusian view that increasing allowances to the poor encouraged large families when he referred to labourers’ ‘total disregard of the obligation to maintain their offspring’. He supported ‘the establishment of workhouses under an improved and stricter regulation’. However, he argued that emigration would be cheaper. There is a reference in the Chiddingly vestry minutes to a scheme for families to emigrate which was ‘proposed by Mr Smith on behalf of the Earl of Chichester’. The Funnell family with nine children and the Roberts family with six together with two men, James Gower and Edwards Roberts, proceeded to emigrate from Chiddingly to America in April 1832. The costs of £8 for an adult and £5 for a child were met by the parish. This is the only reference found to the Earl’s involvement in an emigration scheme. However,

in Petworth the Earl of Egremont organised an emigration scheme in 1832 when 603 passengers from that area emigrated to Canada.³⁷

While the Earl of Chichester’s approach towards the poor appeared to be harsh he could also be described as paternalistic as he felt that the deserving poor, those willing to work, should be treated with ‘tenderness and compassion’. As has already been noted, he favoured allotments for all agricultural labourers and provided allotments for parishioners on his estate at Falmer. He also chaired the ‘education committee’ which was responsible for providing books for children in the new workhouse.³⁸

As in Hailsham, the first meetings of the Newhaven guardians dealt with plans to sell the poor houses and workhouses of the parishes in the union to help fund a new workhouse which would cost an estimated £3300 and house up to 150 people in separate male and female wards (Fig. 2). The Poor Law Commissioners had been informed in 1835 that



Fig. 2. Newhaven Union Workhouse, built in 1836 (by permission of Peter Higginbotham/workhouse.org.uk)

there were no able-bodied male paupers receiving relief in the parishes of the new union. However, while the new workhouse was being built, there was a temporary period when able-bodied paupers out of work were allowed relief payments, a third in money and two thirds in kind and in return they were to be given work in the parish. This provision of out-relief was very short-lived, for as soon as the new workhouse was available in January 1836 'The clerk [was] directed to inform the several paupers under 60 years of age that the workhouse will be offered to them on Thursday next instead of their being allowed out-door relief as heretofore.'³⁹

While the Newhaven guardians may have appeared to cooperate with the new regulations, the poor in the union's parishes shared the dislike of the new workhouses with their Wealden neighbours. The union clerk reported that the governor of the Newhaven workhouse was 'assailed with abusive language' whenever he walked through the streets.⁴⁰

There seems to have been some continuity in the personnel responsible for distributing relief prior to and following the New Poor Law in both Chiddingly and Rottingdean. Members of the Guy family acted as overseers and later guardians for Chiddingly. David Guy was the first guardian to represent Chiddingly; he owned 267 acres of land and employed eight labourers. Members of the Beard family were overseers and later guardians representing Rottingdean on the Newhaven Union. The Beard family owned and farmed over 400 acres of land. Members of the Saxby family were also guardians, they too farmed over 400 acres of land.⁴¹

However, the attitude of the overseers and later the guardians to relief requests were far stricter in the downland parish. In their replies to the commissioners' inquiries in the 1834 report, the overseers noted that 'minute attention was paid to the character and cause of distress of applicants'. The response to the same question from the Chiddingly overseer was that 'little attention was paid to the character or cause of distress', suggesting a much more relaxed, or under the difficult circumstances in that parish, possibly a more pragmatic approach.⁴² As will be seen below, a similar attitude was apparent in the minutes of the new unions as guardians scrutinised each application made by the poor in the Newhaven Union.

POOR RELIEF IN CHIDDINGLY UNDER THE NEW POOR LAW

The new unions kept records of people who received relief in the workhouse in the admission and discharge registers, including name, age, reason for admission, date and reason for discharge and sometimes 'conduct' whilst resident. Records on people receiving out-relief tended to be less comprehensive. Some guardian minutes referred to out-relief and named recipients, but many referred only to the costs of out-relief. The registers and minutes for the Hailsham and Newhaven unions have survived for most years between 1836 and 1861, although there are some gaps in years and some years are incomplete. The 21 years 1841–61 have been selected for study as the records included individuals receiving out-relief. After 1861 the minute books no longer referred to individuals. The local relieving officer's accounts of paupers receiving relief in Chiddingly which have survived for most years between 1841 and 1861 have also been consulted.⁴³

On in-house relief in the workhouse, data have been extracted from the Hailsham admission and discharge registers and the Chiddingly relieving officer's accounts to assess the number of people from Chiddingly who spent time in the workhouse each year (ADS Supplement Table 1). The total number of individuals ranged from 30 to 59. Men and women aged between 16 and 60 accounted for approximately half of the workhouse residents and in most years there were more men than women in this age group. Reasons for admission into the workhouse included illness, infirmity, giving birth to an illegitimate child and being out of work. However, the number of admissions 'due to having no work' were generally low; the highest number was eight men in 1848 and 1850 when there was a depression.⁴⁴ The unemployed were not always 'offered the house' but were also given out-relief (see below). It should be noted that the majority of men and women in this age group only stayed in the workhouse for a short period. In 1843, 41 of the 59 residents stayed for less than two months.⁴⁵

The absence of women aged over 60 receiving relief in the workhouse is notable; there was only one elderly woman resident in 1854 and two elderly women resident in 1860. There were more elderly men than women although the numbers were low in most years. Elderly women may have

had access to a wider range of makeshift resources than elderly men, including child care, taking in washing or having a lodger.⁴⁶ Children accounted for approximately one third of residents in some years. However, not all of the children were resident long term. For example in 1844 Mrs Jenner and her five children were in the house for only nine days while in 1847 William Deacon, his wife and five children spent only 10 days in the house.⁴⁷

The Hailsham board of guardian minutes and the Chiddingly relieving officer's accounts were used to record the number of people in Chiddingly receiving out-relief between 1841 and 1861 according to age and gender (ADS Supplement Table 2). Relief took the form of cash payments, food, clothes, medical and funeral costs. The total number of individuals receiving out-relief in a year ranged between 50 and 93, but only heads of households were counted, so if family members had been included the number would have been considerably higher. A high proportion of those receiving out-relief were men aged between 16 and 60: in several years over 50% of recipients were men of working age.⁴⁸ Chiddingly appears to have been unusual in having this high proportion. Steven King's study of eight rural parishes in the New Forest in Hampshire found that in 1848 while 50% of those on out-relief were aged between 20 and 59, 51% were female.⁴⁹ To understand why there might have been a high proportion of working age men in receipt of out-relief, reasons for seeking relief were extracted and grouped into the following categories: infirmity/partly disabled, self-ill or injured, wife ill/confined, child ill, widow, idiot, no work, other (ADS Supplement Table 3). In general those described as infirm or partly disabled were over 60, although there were a few younger people with a permanent disability, such as bad vision. 'Other' included having a husband in prison or transported, being given clothes on leaving the workhouse and those for whom no reason was given.⁵⁰

In many years illness was the most common reason for receiving out-relief. Working age men needed relief either because they were ill or their wives and children were ill. The 1844 Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order enabled guardians to offer out-relief in certain circumstances such as sickness of the claimant or 'of his or her family'.⁵¹ Historians have debated whether payments for illness were always genuine. Out-door relief was cheaper than in-house relief and in parishes where there was a labour surplus

out-relief may have been a more attractive option for guardians. Anne Digby describes payments being made 'ostensibly for sickness' by guardians in rural Norfolk, and King suggests that officials 'suddenly discovered immense amounts of sickness' in rural New Forest parishes.⁵² However, in Chiddingly the guardians do not seem to have been using sickness as an excuse to relieve labourers during periods of unemployment as they were openly making relief payments, albeit small and temporary, to able-bodied labourers when they had no work during most of the 1840s. In 1841 the minutes recorded that several men were given relief as they were unable to work due to bad weather. In 1849 the parish accounts listed 18 men who were given relief for a longer period due to no work. On these occasions the guardians requested and received permission from the Poor Law Commissioners to give out-relief. The Prohibitory Order also allowed out-relief 'on account of sudden and urgent necessity'. It is possible that short periods of unemployment were regarded as 'urgent necessity'.⁵³

To assess further whether sickness payments were genuine and also to consider whether relief was given on a temporary or permanent basis, relief payments to individuals have been extracted and four case studies have been made. Out of a total of 351 individuals who received out-relief between 1841 and 1861, 67 people (19%) received relief during five or more different years. This group was of most interest in terms of considering the pattern of their relief payments.

Several people from the group were described as infirm or disabled and were given a regular payment which amounted to 2s or 3s a week. A number were widows with children who also received more regular payments. However, half of those receiving relief over several years were given irregular payments for a variety of reasons, including sickness of themselves or family members. The majority of this group were men aged between 16 and 60, most with families; four of these men have been studied in more depth. All of them were described as agricultural labourers in one or more of the censuses, although one was at different times an agricultural labourer and a bricklayer.⁵⁴

The four men were paid in kind, which included flour, mutton and porter, and in cash, a few shillings at a time and usually for one or two weeks. Two men, John French, aged 35 in 1841 and Henry Gurr, aged 29 in 1843, accessed temporary relief during

most years in the 1840s and 1850s. John French was given relief for a sick daughter and a sick son, payments for a doctor for his wife's confinement on two occasions, and relief for his own health problems including influenza and scrofula on several occasions and for a sprained foot. Henry Gurr had a wife and children. He received out-relief in most years between 1843 and 1855 and also spent two spells in the workhouse of two to three weeks at a time. The second was in 1855 with his wife and their seven children. Out-relief was paid due to illness on several occasions and also lack of work on two separate occasions. The fact that Gurr was openly given relief when out of work suggests that the payments for illness were genuine.⁵⁵

The other two men, William White and George French, received payments less regularly but still over an extended period. White received out-relief for illness in the family in 1843 and his family also went into the workhouse that year. He then received out-relief on two occasions in 1845, two occasions in 1847 and once in each of 1848, 1850, 1856, 1858 and 1860. Reasons for relief included lack of work due to snow, a cut foot, ill children, his wife's confinement and his own ill health (influenza). French received small payments in eight different years for himself and his family and he also received relief prior to the New Poor Law, in 1835 when he spent time in the 'poor house' at the age of 17. French died in 1889 at the age of 72, it is possible that he continued to receive relief beyond 1860.⁵⁶

These studies suggest that in Chiddingly the guardians were not making payments for fictitious illness but were instead responding to the very difficult economic conditions in the parish. Many labourers experienced permanently uncertain employment prospects and existed on or beneath subsistence levels. Two of the men, White and Gurr, were sharing a house with two other families in 1841. June Sheppard has identified 20 houses in Chiddingly which families may have shared in this period.⁵⁷ There were frequent references in the records to relief payments for a doctor's bill which would probably not have been met by the low agricultural labourers' wages discussed above.

POOR RELIEF IN ROTTINGDEAN UNDER THE NEW POOR LAW

The admission and discharge registers for the Newhaven Union have been used to record the

number of people from Rottingdean who spent time in the workhouse (ADS Supplement Table 4). Numbers were low each year for all age categories, as totals ranged from 9 to 17 in any one year. The small number of people overall means that no one age group or gender stands out, unlike the high number of men aged 16–60 in Chiddingly.⁵⁸ Reasons for being given in-house relief were similar to those for Chiddingly. The Newhaven registers have not survived for the depression years of 1849 and 1850; however, the minutes referred to 13 men aged between 16 and 60 being offered the 'house' due to 'no work' in 1849 and seven men in 1850, although there is no way of knowing whether the men accepted.⁵⁹

The Newhaven board of guardian minutes referred to out-relief payments. These included payments in cash and kind including food, clothes and occasionally fuel for widows. Medical and funeral costs were sometimes paid. The number of people receiving out-relief in Rottingdean each year was fairly consistent throughout the period, averaging between 22 and 33 (not including family members), most were elderly or widowed (ADS Supplement Table 5). These figures were again much lower than those for Chiddingly; in some years there were four times as many people receiving out-relief in Chiddingly. The number of men aged 16–60 receiving out-relief was far lower in Rottingdean, averaging six to eight men a year.⁶⁰ When comparing the reasons for receiving out-relief in the two parishes, using the same categories, two points are very noticeable: in Rottingdean there were no people receiving out-relief due to having no work and there were very few payments made due to family members being ill (ADS Supplement Table 6).

The most likely explanation for the different treatment of men out of work in the Weald and on the South Downs based on available evidence seems to rest with the attitude of the guardians towards supporting unemployment. Under the Old Poor Law the pattern in Rottingdean was for only the elderly and widows to receive relief and the responses to the Poor Law inquiries suggested that the overseers were not used to dealing with unemployment.⁶¹ The responses also indicated that a thorough assessment of individuals was made before deciding to offer relief. This is further supported by the level of detail provided in the Newhaven minutes when assessing claimants' requests for out-relief. Information was obtained on the relief recipient's family, the reason

for relief, their wages when working, any wages of their children, occasionally the rent they were paying or the rent they received from lodgers and whether they belonged to a benefit club, suggesting a rigorous assessment of claimants.

The small number of relief payments to aid family members when they were ill seems surprising as the exemptions to the Prohibitory Order meant the guardians were able to support wives and children. As the guardians appeared to check for all possible sources of income, claimants may have only made a claim when other sources had been exhausted. It is also possible that there were more resources available to the poor in Rottingdean than in Chiddingly. Charities were a source of support in some parishes. The only charity in Chiddingly recorded by the Charity Commissioners between 1819 and 1837 was an almshouse which was in ruins by 1824. The commissioners did not record any charities for Rottingdean.⁶² However, it is possible that donations in other forms were made to villagers by wealthy residents including members of the gentry who lived in the parish. In 1818 a school for village children was established by Dr Hooker, the vicar, and funded by church collections and voluntary contributions.⁶³

Membership of a benefit club was another source of income referred to in the records for Rottingdean but not for Chiddingly. Benefit clubs, or friendly societies, were formed to insure against illness or death; they were more common in urban and industrial areas than agrarian regions. Contemporaries believed that benefit clubs encouraged thrift, hoping that there would be a correlation between membership of a club and a reduction in poor rates.⁶⁴ The Newhaven minutes referred to a number of men who were members of a benefit club which paid out money when they were ill. Payments to the men ranged from 2s to 15s a week; the payments were reduced after several weeks. The Rottingdean Benefit Society was established in 1823. The rulebook survives for the 1880s when membership was 2s 3d a month and payments for illness were 10s for the first six months dropping to 5s for the following six months.⁶⁵ Clearly club members had to be able to pay the membership fee and, as discussed, wages in Rottingdean did not appear to be higher than in Chiddingly. However, if work was more regular and there was less unemployment then membership of a benefit club may have enabled more labourers

to support themselves when ill. The absence of references to benefit clubs in the Hailsham minutes does not mean that they did not exist in Chiddingly, but there are no records of any such in ESRO.

A further explanation for the smaller number of people receiving relief for illness or family illness in Rottingdean may have been that more women and children were working and contributing towards the family budget, so that medical costs could be met. Responses to the commissioners' inquiries indicated that women and children had more regular agricultural employment in Rottingdean than in Chiddingly. The census records can also be a useful source of information but need to be treated with caution. The censuses during the Victorian period rarely referred to married women working; women were often placed in the same occupational category as their husband such as 'farmer's wife'. Furthermore, householders were asked what members of the household 'called themselves' and part-time work was often not considered worthy of an occupational designation, thus the work of women and children could be under-recorded.⁶⁶ However, the censuses for 1841, 1851 and 1861 referred to occupations other than farm work such as servant, housekeeper and dressmaker. The censuses for Rottingdean and Chiddingly show that the number of married women and children listed as working was similar in both parishes. However, there were more single women working in Rottingdean than in Chiddingly. They were mostly in their teens or early twenties and working as servants. In the 1851 census for Rottingdean 55 single women were recorded as servants and seven were working in other occupations, such as dressmaking, compared with 30 single women working as servants and four in other occupations in Chiddingly (ADS Supplement Table 7). Several of the young women either lived in the family home or had local surnames and it is possible that their wages helped more families in Rottingdean to avoid poor relief.⁶⁷

Finding case studies of men who received relief regularly proved more difficult in Rottingdean. Out of a total of 147 individuals who were listed in the minutes as receiving out-relief between 1841 and 1861, only 28 people (18%) received relief for more than five years. Fifteen of those people were aged over 60 and described as being on the 'permanent list'. Seven were widows under 60 with children and two were women under 60 with long term health

conditions, all received regular relief payments. The final four were men under 60 and these were selected for the case studies. One of the men, William Cornford, was described as an ‘idiot.’ However, Cornford managed to obtain some employment and has therefore been included.⁶⁸

Henry Mockford was the only man in the case studies who accessed relief on and off throughout the period studied. In 1842 he was 41, married with four children. He received 2s in kind and 2s in cash for two weeks due to illness. In 1843 he had an accident when he fell from a wagon while working for Mr Saxby and from that time onwards he was described as partly disabled. He received out-relief, including medical costs, for one month following his accident. By this time he had six children, two were earning 3s a week, and he also claimed £10 from a benefit club. There was then a gap until 1847 when he received relief payments for two weeks as he was partly disabled. In 1848 and 1849 he was one of a number of men who were offered the ‘house’ due to no work. In 1850 Mockford appeared to receive relief on a more regular basis due to disability and his relief payments were increased as his club money was reduced. In the 1861 census Mockford was a widower but his elder daughter, who worked as a charwoman, had returned to live with him.⁶⁹

John Bishop appears to have also had a disability. Between 1846 and 1849 he accessed relief due either to illness or ‘lameness’. Like Mockford, Bishop suffered an accident, in Bishop’s case a fall from a ladder. He spent time as an out-patient at the hospital in Brighton. When he was fit, Bishop worked for Mr Saxby, earning 12s a week. He had five children under 16 in 1846. He did not appear in the census for 1851 and possibly moved out of Rottingdean. John Hide was single when he first accessed relief in 1841 at the age of 21. He was described as having a fever. Hide received 3s in kind and 3s in cash for four weeks. The following year Hide had a wife and baby. He was given out-relief for short periods of time for the following five years due to a leg wound and lameness. Hide was not mentioned in the minutes during the 1850s. In the 1861 census two of his children were living at home and working, his daughter was a servant.⁷⁰ Hide may have relied on his children’s income to avoid relief.

The final case study is William Cornford. He lived as a lodger with the Welfare family, who were initially shoemiths and later publicans,

throughout the 1840s and 1850s. He sometimes had work as a ‘water carrier,’ earning between 3s and 5s a week. Cornford was mentioned in the minutes for every year when there was a record except for 1847, 1850 and 1853. On different occasions he had a bad leg, bad eye and an injured thumb. He sometimes received small cash payments but often his relief took the form of clothes including half boots and a cord jacket.⁷¹ He occasionally went into the workhouse but not for long. Of all the case studies Cornford received relief most regularly but it was minimal and probably part of an overall package which included support from locals, including the people that he lodged with, otherwise it is hard to understand how he survived.

These case studies suggest that on the few occasions when men aged 16–60 received out-relief in Rottingdean on a more regular basis, it was due to some form of injury or disability. There were not the frequent references to relief being given due to illnesses, such as influenza or consumption, as in Chiddingly.

CONCLUSION

Between two and three times more people were receiving relief in the 1840s and 1850s in Chiddingly than in Rottingdean. This finding broadly supports the discrepancies between the parishes indicated by respondents to the Poor Law Commissioners in 1832, suggesting that intra-regional differences persisted under the New Poor Law. The different farming conditions and landownership of the two parishes was an important factor in determining the variations in levels of relief. On the South Downs farmers could afford to offer full-time employment. In the Weald farming conditions were more difficult resulting in temporary employment and frequent labour surplus. There appear to have been more resources available to labourers in Rottingdean including land for growing potatoes, access to benefit clubs and more employment opportunities for family members.

Evidence from the commissioners’ inquiries and communication between commissioners and overseers/guardians suggests that there was a different attitude from local officials towards poor relief in each parish. Approaches were based on longstanding traditions evident under the Old Poor Law and resulted in different groups of people receiving relief in each parish. The ubiquity of

uncertain employment in the Weald led to a more relaxed attitude towards providing out-relief to able-bodied labourers. On the South Downs poor relief had traditionally taken the form of out-relief payments to the elderly and widows and this trend continued under the New Poor Law. Given the differences identified between the parishes, it is not surprising that people received relief for different reasons in each parish. In Chiddingly both in-house and more significantly out-relief were given to men when they were out of work. Relief was also given when men and their families were unwell or needed medical attention. In Rottingdean fewer labourers received out-relief for illness; often when they were supported they were described as ‘disabled’. There are only occasional references to support for family members.

Under the New Poor Law more detailed records were kept and it is possible to obtain reasonably accurate data on relief recipients. Less comprehensive records were kept under the Old Poor Law and it is therefore difficult to assess whether the number of people receiving relief increased or decreased under the New Poor Law and also whether conditions for the poor deteriorated. We do know that total spending went down in Sussex in the years immediately following the new legislation from £262,739 in the year ending March 1835 to £205,335 in the year ending March 1836.⁷² Other local studies have also found that relief bills fell in the early years of the New Poor Law.⁷³ The records for Chiddingly and Rottingdean suggest that actual pensions were fairly static before and after the New Poor Law, remaining at 2s or 3s during the 1840s and 1850s. However, attempts by the Poor Law Commissioners to bring an end to the provision of out-relief to the able-bodied were not successful in Chiddingly. This is perhaps not surprising as exemptions for sickness enabled guardians to continue to support labourers and their families. While guardians in some regions may not have examined claims for illness too closely, the Chiddingly records suggest that ill health was common in an area where there were high levels of poverty. In Rottingdean out-relief for the able-bodied was not apparent in the Old Poor Law records; indeed the new union clerk made a point of informing the commissioners that there were no able-bodied men receiving out-relief in 1835. There was little evidence that this situation changed following the New Poor Law.

The new deterrent workhouses introduced under the New Poor Law are often cited by those who argue that conditions for the poor deteriorated after 1834.⁷⁴ Records for Rottingdean and Hailsham indicate that the workhouses pre-1834 were unpopular. However, the size and structure of the new workhouses, their location further from home, and enforced segregation in wards, must have made an ‘order for the house’ an even more daunting prospect under the New Poor Law. Fortunately, in both of these rural unions the majority of paupers only spent a short time in the workhouse.

These findings suggest that, throughout the period covered, differences in levels of poor relief and in the attitude of officials towards the poor between regions such as the Weald and the South Downs were actually more significant than temporal changes in relief provision resulting from the Poor Law Amendment Act. Continuity in relief provision after 1834 has been noted in other areas, including King’s study of New Forest parishes in Hampshire and Digby’s work in rural Norfolk.⁷⁵

However, studies of rural parishes in the south-east and eastern counties have identified varying situations. Apfel and Dunkley describe an ‘increasingly adversary relationship between the propertied and the able-bodied poor’ in Bedfordshire and argue against continuity following the New Poor Law. While King and Digby found that guardians continued to provide out-relief to labourers, Williams found that ‘outdoor relief was withdrawn from almost all labouring families’ in rural Bedfordshire parishes where unemployment and under-employment was widespread.⁷⁶

While findings from local studies highlight regional differences, they can also enable us to gain a better understanding of individual experiences of poverty. Our knowledge of poor relief must by necessity depend on building up a picture of relief in different regions and it is hoped that this work will contribute not only to the picture in Sussex but also to a broader understanding of poverty nationally during this crucial period of poor law history in the early to mid-19th century.

Acknowledgements

This paper originated as an MA Dissertation for the Open University. I would like to thank my supervisor, Stuart Mitchell, for his support. I would also like to thank all of the staff at East Sussex Record Office for their help and the Editorial Advisory Board for their advice and support.

Author: Mary Rudling, 26 North End, Ditchling, Hassocks, BN6 8TF; M.Rudling@sussex.ac.uk

NOTES

- ¹ S. Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle under the English Poor Law 1760–1834* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2011), 2.
- ² A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700–1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 12; P. Higginbotham, *The Workhouse Encyclopedia* (Stroud: History Press, 2012), 298.
- ³ Brundage, 32–3; Higginbotham, 116.
- ⁴ R. Wells, ‘Poor-law Reform in the Rural South-east; the Impact of the ‘Sturges Bourne Acts’ during the Agricultural Depression, 1815–1835’, *Southern History* **23** (2001), 57.
- ⁵ E. J. Hobsbawm and G. Rude, *Captain Swing* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1969), 104–6.
- ⁶ M. Rose, *The English Poor Law 1780–1930* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971), 13.
- ⁷ S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700–1850, A regional perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 29.
- ⁸ S. King, 68–70.
- ⁹ W. Apfel and P. Dunkley, ‘English Rural Society and the New Poor Laws: Bedfordshire, 1834–47’, *Social History*, **10** (1985), 57; A. Digby, ‘The Rural Poor law’, in D. Fraser (ed.), *The new poor law in the nineteenth century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1976), 158.
- ¹⁰ Brundage, 40.
- ¹¹ *Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws*, HCPP 1834 (44), Appendix B, 489–536 (hereafter *Poor Law Report*).
- ¹² *Poor Law Report*, 498a, 498b, 522b.
- ¹³ The originals in The National Archives (hereafter TNA) of the decennial censuses have been consulted on microfilm at East Sussex Record Office (hereafter ESRO) and are cited below by parish and year. Chiddingly census, 1841; Rottingdean census, 1841; *Poor Law Report*, 515a; 522a.
- ¹⁴ K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 68.
- ¹⁵ *Poor Law Report*, 498a, 522a; J. Sheppard, ‘Small Farms in a Sussex Weald Parish, 1800–60’, *Agricultural History Review* **40** (1992), 128–9; A. Young, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Sussex*, 2nd edn (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1813), 23.
- ¹⁶ P. Brandon, *The South Downs* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1998), 103.
- ¹⁷ Brandon, 104; *Report from the Select Committee on the Distressed State of Agriculture of the United Kingdom*, HCPP 1821 (165), 111.
- ¹⁸ ESRO, PAR 466/21/1/3, Rottingdean tithe apportionment, 1838; PAR 292/21/2, Chiddingly tithe apportionment, 1843; Rottingdean census, 1851; Chiddingly census, 1851. *Poor Law Report*, 498a; 522a.
- ¹⁹ *Poor Law Report*, 490–530.
- ²⁰ S. Horrell and J. Humphries, ‘Women’s labour force participation and the transition to the male breadwinner family’, *Economic History Review* **48** (1995), 102–3.
- ²¹ *Poor Law Report*, 498a; 522a.
- ²² S. King and A. Tomkins (eds), *The Poor in England 1700–1850: An economy of makeshifts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 1.
- ²³ P. King, ‘Customary Rights and Women’s Earnings: The Importance of Gleaning to the Rural Labouring Poor, 1750–1850’, *Economic History Review* **44** (1991), 474; *Poor Law Report*, 522a.
- ²⁴ *Quarterly Report of the Sussex Association for improving the condition of the labouring classes* **1** (Lindfield, 1831) refers to a farming project on the Gravely Estate in Lindfield where labourers were housed in cottages with an acre and a quarter of land. The labourers managed to gain 2s a week throughout the year by growing potatoes and corn on their allotments; J. Burchard, *The Allotment Movement in England, 1793–1873* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2002), 61.
- ²⁵ *Poor Law Report*, 498a; 522a; Burchard, 157.
- ²⁶ G. Boyer, *An Economic History of the English Poor Law, 1750–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 226.
- ²⁷ *Post Office Directory of the Six Home Counties, 1851*, (London: W. Kelly, 1851), 751, 807; Rottingdean census, 1841–61; Chiddingly census, 1841–61.
- ²⁸ ESRO, PAR 292/12/1, Chiddingly vestry book, 1831–61; PAR 292/21/2.
- ²⁹ ESRO, PAR 292/12/1; *Report from the Committee appointed to inspect and consider the Returns made by the Overseers of the Poor*, HCPP, 15 May 1777.
- ³⁰ ESRO, PAR 292/12/1.
- ³¹ ESRO, PAR 466/12/1/2, Rottingdean vestry minutes, 1710–1828.
- ³² ESRO, PAR 466/12/1/2; *Poor Law Report*.
- ³³ J. Coleman, *Sussex Poor Law Records* (Chichester, West Sussex County Council, 1960), xix – xxi. The six Gilbert Unions of rural parishes were centred on Easebourne, East Preston, Sutton, Thakeham, Westhampnett and Yapton.
- ³⁴ TNA, MH12/12931, Assistant Commissioner’s Correspondence with Sussex Poor Law Unions (Hailsham), 26 Mar. 1835; L. F. Salzmann, *The History of Hailsham* (Lewes: Farncombe, 1901), 140.
- ³⁵ ESRO, G/5/1a/1, Hailsham Union minute books of the board of guardians, 1836–8; C. Choomwattana, ‘The Opposition to the New Poor Law in Sussex, 1834–1837’ (unpub. PhD thesis, Cornell University, 1986), 175–6; C. Robertson, *Hailsham and its Environs* (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1982).
- ³⁶ TNA, MH12/13046, Assistant Commissioner’s Correspondence with Sussex Poor Law Unions (Newhaven), 29 Jun. 1835; *Poor Law Report*, 327c–330c; ESRO, PAR292/12/1; Royal Pavilion Museums and Libraries, BHSR 104, letters from Sussex emigrants.
- ³⁷ *Poor Law Report*, 327c–330c; ESRO, G/7/8, Newhaven Union letter book, 1835–7.
- ³⁸ ESRO, G/7/8.
- ³⁹ ESRO, G/7/8.
- ⁴⁰ ESRO, PAR 292/12/1; *Post Office Directory 1851*, 751; Chiddingly census, 1841; ESRO, G/7/1a/3, Newhaven Union minute books of the board of guardians, 1838–40; PAR 466/21/1/3; *Poor Law Report*.
- ⁴¹ *Poor Law Report*, 522b, 498b.

- ⁴³ ESRO, G/5/14/2, Hailsham Union admission and discharge registers, Herstmonceux House, 1836–41; G/5/14/10–16, Hellingly House, 1841–61; G/5/1a/3–8, Hailsham Union minute books of the board of guardians, 1841–61; G/7/14/1–4, Newhaven Union admission and discharge registers, 1841–61; G/7/1a/3–10, Newhaven Union minute books of the board of guardians, 1841–61; P 292/20/2, Chiddingly parish accounts of paupers relieved, 1836–63.
- ⁴⁴ ESRO, G/5/14/2; G/5/14/10–16; P 292/20/2.
- ⁴⁵ ESRO, G/5/14/10.
- ⁴⁶ L. H. Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700–1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 209.
- ⁴⁷ ESRO, G/5/14/10.
- ⁴⁸ ESRO, G/5/1a/3–8; P 292/20/2.
- ⁴⁹ S. King, 67.
- ⁵⁰ ESRO, G/5/1a/3–8; P 292/20/2.
- ⁵¹ Rose, 143.
- ⁵² A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 113; S. King, 248.
- ⁵³ ESRO, G/5/1a/3; P 292/20/2.; Rose, 143.
- ⁵⁴ ESRO, G/5/1a/3–8; Chiddingly census, 1841–61.
- ⁵⁵ ESRO, G/5/1a/3–8; G/5/14/12; G/5/14/14.
- ⁵⁶ ESRO, P 292/20/2; PAR 292/12/1, Chiddingly parish registers.
- ⁵⁷ J. Sheppard, 'Housing the Agricultural Worker in nineteenth-century Sussex,' *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **131** (1993), 186.
- ⁵⁸ ESRO, G/7/14/1–4.
- ⁵⁹ ESRO, G/7/1a/7; G/7/1a/8.
- ⁶⁰ ESRO, G/7/1a/3–10.
- ⁶¹ *Poor Law Report*, 522a.
- ⁶² *Thirtieth report of the Commissioners for Inquiring concerning charities in England and Wales*, HCPP, November 1836, Paper No. 101.
- ⁶³ D. Heater, *The Remarkable History of Rottingdean* (Brighton: Dyke Publications, 1993), 38–9.
- ⁶⁴ M. Gorsky, 'The Growth and Distribution of English Friendly Societies in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Economic History Review* **51** (1998), 499–503.
- ⁶⁵ ESRO, G/7/1a/3–10; AMS 5694, Articles, rules and orders of the Rottingdean Benefit Society, 1889.
- ⁶⁶ E. Higgs, 'Occupational Censuses and the Agricultural Workforce in Victorian England and Wales', *Economic History Review* **48** (1995), 702–4.
- ⁶⁷ Chiddingly census, 1841–61; Rottingdean census, 1841–61.
- ⁶⁸ ESRO, G/7/1a/3–10.
- ⁶⁹ ESRO, G/7/1a/3–10; Rottingdean census, 1861.
- ⁷⁰ ESRO, G/7/1a/3–8; Rottingdean census, 1861.
- ⁷¹ Rottingdean census, 1841–61; ESRO, G/7/1a/3–10; G/7/14/1.
- ⁷² Coleman, xxi.
- ⁷³ Williams, 17.
- ⁷⁴ K. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 134–5.
- ⁷⁵ S. King, 251; Digby, 10.
- ⁷⁶ Apfel and Dunkley, 55; S. Williams, 'Earnings, Poor Relief and the Economy of Makeshifts: Bedfordshire in the Early Years of the New Poor Law,' *Rural History*, **16** (2005), 46.

APPENDICES IN THE ADS SUPPLEMENT

Supplementary information to this article may be found on the website of the Archaeological Data Service, <http://archaeologicaldataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/sac>.

Table 1. Number of people from Chiddingly receiving relief in the workhouse, 1841–61.

Table 2. Number of people in Chiddingly receiving out-relief, 1841–61.

Table 3. Reasons for receiving out-relief in Chiddingly, 1841–61.

Table 4. Number of people from Rottingdean receiving relief in the workhouse, 1841–61.

Table 5. Number of people in Rottingdean receiving out-relief, 1841–61.

Table 6. Reasons for receiving out-relief in Rottingdean, 1841–61.

Table 7. The number of wives, children and single women working in each census year in each parish, 1841–61.