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THE SELLING UNION: A CASE STUDY IN INSTITUTIONAL RELIEF UNDER THE OLD POOR LAW, 1750-1835

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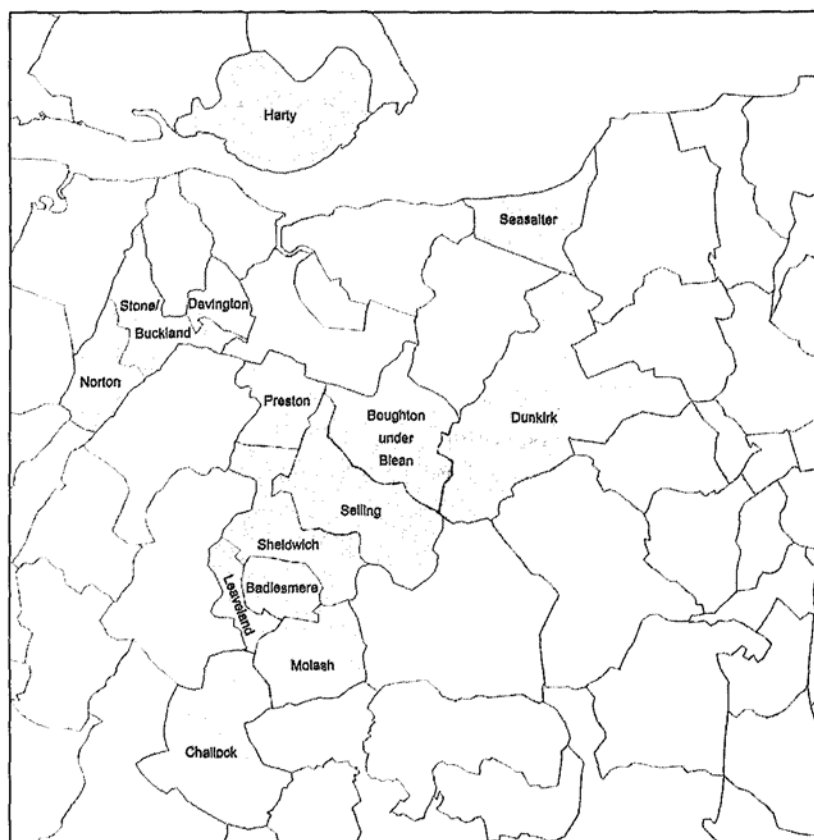
Today, the old workhouse in Selling exudes an air of calm and respectability. There is no stigma attached to living in one of its smartly converted apartments, tastefully renamed *The Square*, and the present residents have little to remind them of the building's original function. Two hundred years ago, it was the epicentre of institutional relief for the most disadvantaged members of society over a wide area of East Kent. The feelings of its multifarious inmates will never be known, for they left no records, but this study will examine the administrative archives which do remain, in an attempt to describe one community's efforts to resolve the perennial problem of how best to accommodate poverty as it existed from the mid eighteenth century until 1835. The study will conclude with an assessment of the success of the adopted system, within the wider context of poor relief.

The historiography of the Poor Law is vast, but comparatively little has been published concerning the 'unreformed' workhouse. Most works are mainly concerned with the 'heyday' of the institution in the Victorian period, and discussion of the earlier and, particularly, rural workhouses is often confined to an introductory chapter.¹ Furthermore, it is only in the last forty years or so that the 'traditional' view of the Old Poor Law has been questioned by several revisionist critiques.² These works will be referred to where appropriate, but the methodology employed here is based primarily on the few surviving local archives, reinforced by other primary sources, including relevant Parliamentary Returns. Such publications bear the stamp of authority, but, as with all sources, caution is necessary in their interpretation, since they contain many anomalies and discrepancies.

Selling offers scope for an interesting study. Between the mid eighteenth century and the compulsory submission to the Faversham Union established under the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834,³ the parish experimented with a variety of workhouse systems, involving an

early connection with the parishes of Boughton and Ospringe following Knatchbull's Act 1723,⁴ a period of 'going it alone', and finally, the establishment of a Union under Gilbert's Act 1782,⁵ which expanded to include fourteen other parishes. These associations add a broader dimension to the study, enhancing the validity of its conclusions, which might otherwise suffer from the constraint of a more restricted parochial investigation.

In one essential respect, the several parishes shared one common feature: farming dominated life. The plight of the poor in the Selling Union, as elsewhere in rural Kent, was directly linked to the state of agriculture. However, the local physical geography dictated a wide variety of agricultural practices, complicating the economic consequences of agricultural fluctuations. The parishes that form the focal point of this study are shown on **Map 1**. Those to the south are situated on the elevated



Map 1 The Parishes comprising the Selling Union.

dip slope of the North Downs, generally with thin chalky soils, in contrast to which, those in the north lie in low unhealthy marshland. Between the two is the fertile North Kent fruit belt, terminating in the east with the heavy clays of the Blean. In 1801, the combined population of the fifteen parishes amounted to 3,930, mainly settled in scattered hamlets and farmsteads. Boughton was the only substantial village. Most of the land was arable, but Boughton and Selling had considerable acreages of hops, a labour intensive but fickle crop. Elsewhere there were orchards, sheep and extensive tracts of woodland, notably in the Blean. Communication with the market town of Faversham was greatly improved by the turnpiking of two roads in 1730 and 1762, running south-east via Selling to Chilham, and south to Ashford. The other main highway is the old Roman Watling Street linking Canterbury to the east, and Rochester to the west.

At the outset, a note on terminology is appropriate. The term 'workhouse' is vague. It originally meant simply a house where work was performed, but it subsequently came to include any habitation where paupers were housed and supported under a regimen, whether work was carried out or not. However, the word became a generic term, used loosely and interchangeably with 'poorhouse' and many other expressions. This imprecision created confusion. For example, parishes were uncertain as to whether their accommodation should be included or excluded in the Parliamentary Returns of 1776.⁶ In 1790, Selling resolved that their new institution should be called 'The Union Hospital', but the instruction failed in its purpose, and it was soon referred to by the generic term again.⁷

Whatever terminology is used, the exact date of Selling's earliest designated pauper accommodation will probably never be determined. Quite possibly, in common with some other rural parishes, it might have consisted of modest cottages, more akin to almshouses, which gradually evolved into workhouses. Oxley cites eighteenth-century examples outside Kent where, as an alternative to assisting the poor with a housing allowance, it was sometimes expedient for parishes to convert such cottages into their own poorhouse.⁸ It may be that the original Selling poorhouse at Hogben's Hill developed from such a habitation.⁹ The first formal record of Selling parish resorting to the use of a workhouse is a document dated 8 April 1754, titled *Articles of Agreement between the parishes of Boughton under Blean Selling and Ospringe abt a Workhouse*.¹⁰ To understand the background to this innovation requires a brief resumé of the earlier history of poor relief and the evolution of the workhouse system.

In the extensive list of legislation governing the Old Poor Law, two Acts stand out in importance, namely those of 1601,¹¹ and 1622.¹² These established the framework for all subsequent legislation, and placed the

'ownership' of the poor, and responsibility for raising the local taxes to meet the costs of relieving them, firmly with the parish. By the mid eighteenth century, this pattern was ingrained in parish life. The history of institutional relief reflects both the *local* responses to meeting the needs of the various classes of the poor, and also the continual adaptation and refinement necessary to accommodate changing circumstances and attitudes of society. The requirement to accommodate the 'impotent', essentially the elderly, infirm and orphaned, remained unquestioned, but the problems associated with the unemployed and underemployed labouring poor were apparently intractable.

The idea of workhouses as a means of putting the able-bodied poor to work, as well as housing the impotent, developed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. By the early 1720s, several workhouses had appeared in Kent, mainly in the larger towns.¹³ However, the real impetus to their establishment followed the passing of Knatchbull's Act, 1723. Sir Edward Knatchbull was MP for the county of Kent, and several parishes in the county rapidly adopted his enabling legislation. Precisely when, and how many did so, is impossible to quantify, due to the lack of surviving records.¹⁴ By 1776, there were 132 workhouses in Kent, and only 29 of 392 parishes did not *use* workhouses.¹⁵ The Union between Selling, Boughton and Ospringe in 1754 emulated other Kentish parishes.

It was the interplay of changing social, economic and demographic conditions that prompted the establishment of these institutions. Although there are difficulties in quantifying population growth before 1801, few would argue with Dobson's general assessment that 'the period of slow growth and stagnation of the 17th and early 18th century was succeeded by an era of very rapid and unprecedented population growth'.¹⁶ This expanded the labour force at a faster rate than agriculture could absorb it, causing economic pressure on Poor Law rates. It is significant that the first Parliamentary enquiry on poor expenditure was in 1748-50. The situation is summarised by Slack, who concludes that between 1696 and 1750 expenditure on the poor doubled in real terms; it was the need 'to keep costs down' which motivated reform of the law.¹⁷

Such pressures were accompanied by a shift in social attitudes towards the poor. The 1601 Act had stipulated that the able-bodied poor were to be 'set on work'. By the early 1700s, critics argued that this section of the Act should be more strictly enforced, and the means to do so was by way of institutional relief, whereby paupers could be kept 'off the streets', gainfully employed, and contributing to their own material and moral needs within a disciplined regime, thereby reducing the burden on the rates. Knatchbull's Act reflected the prevailing opinion, which was to deal stringently with the able-bodied poor and grant them relief only within the confines of a formal workhouse. It introduced the principle of

'less eligibility' and hence became known as the 'Workhouse Test Act'. In short, the pauper either entered the workhouse and received relief, or he stayed out and received nowt.

However, there was no obligation to adopt this enabling legislation, and it took Selling, Boughton and Ospringe over thirty years to do so, emphasizing the essentially local nature of Poor Law relief down to 1835. The parish administrators implemented and interpreted the law as they saw it, resulting in wide spatial variations. In the case of the three parishes considered here, the opening lines of their 1754 Agreement set out the practical reason for coming together. They were simply 'to [*sic*] small to hire a house for the poor of their own parish only, so they jointly acquired premises in Boughton 'for the lodging and keeping of the poor'. The Act provided an option to farm out responsibility for running the workhouse to a contractor and this became the most common form of eighteenth-century workhouse management, and was the method adopted by the three parishes. The task was assigned to a Thos. Brougham (?), who was to receive from each parish 1s. 9d. per week per person, plus all earnings and profits from the pauper's work.¹⁸ The Agreement instructed the contractor to perform specific duties for the spiritual and physical welfare of the paupers. He was charged with providing specified food and victuals; keeping all bedding and furniture in good repair; receiving all poor sent to him; employing them in the house and not elsewhere, and not letting them be idle or disorderly or wander about. He was to provide at his own expense looms, tools, wheels and other implements; allow inspection by parishes; exhibit rules; read prayers before breakfast and supper; to accompany with his wife, paupers to Boughton Church on Sunday; wash the poor by 8.00 am or 9.00 am; if a properly qualified person was present in the house, teach the poor children reading and writing; keep the poor neat and tidy; not to damage the fabric; carefully nurse the sick and lame; and dispense correct victuals as any attending apothecary or surgeon requires.

The Agreement contains two meticulous Schedules, detailing the inmates' diets and the contents of the rooms. The diet consisted mainly of porridge, broth, bread, cheese, beef, mutton or pork, suet pudding, and beans or peas in season. If rations were adhered to, it would support contemporary complaints that such diets were more wholesome than those that the outside labourer could afford. The frugality of the furnishings indicate the austerity of the regime, but were probably not dissimilar from those of the pauper's own abode. Apart from the master's chamber, there appeared to be three other chambers. Selling's contribution to the furnishings was detailed at £4 4s. 4d., but there is no inventory for Ospringe.

Unfortunately, the management records of this arrangement, as with several others of its type, have been lost, and therefore the conditions

within this specific workhouse are unknown. The Agreement tells us what should have occurred; what actually happened must be speculative. The document states that the 'shop', where the manufacturing was carried out, contained '6 woolen [*sic*] wheels, 3 old chairs and a deal chest etc.', and is a clue to the intended industry. The 1776 Returns for Canterbury workhouse show that their able-bodied inmates were employed in 'weaving, hop-bagging, making their own cloaths [*sic*], and beating hemp; the infant in knitting, sewing and spinning linen and hop-bagging'. Boughton workhouse probably adopted a similar pattern, but allowing for the limited numbers of fit inmates, and the meagre facilities, it is unlikely that production amounted to much. Exactly how many paupers were accommodated is not known. The 1776 Returns show the capacity as 40.

The absence of records also frustrates research into the success or failure of this workhouse, and the study is obliged to turn to wider observations of the Knatchbull system. Clearly, the three parishes saw merit in attempting to expand their Poor Law facilities beyond the constraints of their own parochial boundaries, but elsewhere such supra-parochial bodies were generally regarded as unsuccessful. The fact that the Boughton contract was almost certainly not renewed, suggests that this comparatively short lived experiment failed on humanitarian grounds, or in terms of cost effectiveness, or both. The principal cause of the general failure lay in the method of funding. As the contractor took the proceeds of the paupers' labour, there was little incentive towards meeting the humanitarian needs of the inmates, and there was considerable opportunity for abuse by unscrupulous contractors. Numerous instances of such malpractice were noted, and by the 1770s, there was widespread condemnation of the contracting method of 'farming the poor'. The prevailing mood was encapsulated in the preamble to Gilbert's Act 1782:

Whereas, not withstanding the many laws now in being for the relief and employment of the poor, and the great sums of money raised for those purposes, their sufferings and distresses are nevertheless very grievous; and, by the incapacity, negligence or misconduct of the overseers, the money raised for the relief of the poor is frequently misapplied.....from want of proper regulations and management in the poor houses or workhouses that have been purchased or hired under the authority of the said Act, and for want of due inspection and control over the persons who have engaged in those contracts, have not had the desired effect, but the poor in many places, instead of finding protection and relief, have been much oppressed thereby.

Precisely when the union between the three parishes ceased to function is not known. The 1754 Agreement was for 12½ years, but given the prevailing climate, it seems unlikely that it was renewed. A possible scenario is that for an indeterminate period from 1754, the use of the old

Selling poorhouse at Hogben's Hill was temporarily suspended whilst the 'Knatchbull' experiment was tried at Boughton, and when that ceased, the old poorhouse was brought back into commission. The earliest surviving 'Selling Poor Book' dated 1779, shows the payment of a half year's land tax for the workhouse of 6s. 0d., from 10 October 1779 to Easter Day 1780.¹⁹ This verifies that the old building was in use by then, and it continued to function as the parish workhouse until it was replaced by the new 'Union Hospital' in January 1790, from which date the old building became the mortuary or 'deadhouse'.²⁰

Whatever the uncertainty for the early period, from Easter Day 1779 until January 1790, the 'Selling Poor Book' provides a valuable insight into the actual workings of the parish poor relief for the last years of the pre-Gilbert regime. The purpose of the book was simply to set down the income and expenditure arising from the assessment 'for ye Realeif of ye Poor', although it is not always easy to distinguish between the provision of indoor and out-relief, because only occasionally is this specifically quantified. It is apparent that, by 1779, the overseers had already developed a pragmatic approach to the diverse needs of their poor, and recourse to the workhouse facility was but one of several methods employed to alleviate the wide variety of distress. The entry: 'an Account of Thos. Neame and Giles Morgan, Overseers. Michaelmas 1789 - January 26th 1790' shows the range of relief being offered at the end of the pre-Gilbert period, including payments for an individual's doctor's bill; washing a pauper's 'things'; making clothes; an individual's rent; burial expenses; and nursing assistance for a pregnant woman. Elsewhere the book records financial assistance towards food, fuel, beer, bedding, and even the cost of a cow. Many of the entries relate to the payment of regular sums to widows. Thus in 1786 widow Norham received for 25 weeks 'out of the house' 2s. 6d. per week, and then for a further 25 weeks 'at the workhouse' 2s. 0d. per week. This is an example of several individual case histories, which can be reconstructed. She appears in and out of the workhouse from 1782 until 1786, but dies sometime between Michaelmas 1787 and Easter 1788, and is buried at parish expense.

The workhouse that contained widow Norham and her contemporaries has been described by Neame. The old single-storey building:

... consisted of a brick shell with wooden uprights, measuring some 80 by 40 feet, plastered outside and in with the traditional mixture of cow-dung and chopped straw for insulation, and lime washed for disinfection... At the north end was a lean-to wash-house with two coppers... The roof was thatched and frequently needed attention... The workhouse would seem to have consisted of two wards of equal size.²¹

This simple structure accommodated a motley array of inmates, but at times the overseers were obliged to seek specialist help elsewhere.

Hence an entry in 1783 recording that the parish paid £3 5s. 0d. to admit John Butler to London's Bethlem hospital, plus the costs of carrying him there by horse and cart. In 1785-6, he cost the parish a substantial £10 17s. 2d. for 6 months board at a private 'mad house', but there are no further entries for him, so perhaps the unfortunate fellow died, no doubt to the enormous relief of the ratepayers. Medical expenses were a regular feature of parish expense. Apart from the payments arising from *lying in*, the parish retained the services of a doctor at a salary of £2 12s. 6d. However, during the 1780s, there were three major outbreaks of smallpox, necessitating additional payments to the doctor 'for the noculation', the majority apparently successful, but others not so. In the event of a pauper's death, the cost of burial was invariably borne by the parish. Some entries record specific items, such as a 'shroud for dame Jull 3s. 6d', but generally there is simply the repetitive item 'gave the Rev. Haulke for burying the poor'.

The Selling Poor Book is an account book. It records payments made, not applications which were declined. There is, therefore, no way of judging the generosity of the overseers, but entry after entry bears witness to the humanitarian ethos of the period. The impression gained is that the parish was intent on relieving distress wherever and whenever a justifiable situation arose. Slack refers to it as 'face-to-face management by overseers amongst their neighbours'.²² This is perfectly exemplified in the entry of 1788-9 by Mr Kennett Packman, the overseer: 'for a man, and myself, to be with Mr. Pain all night' during his distress. This is not to say that the overseers were spendthrifts. Measures were taken to mitigate costs by, for example, securing removal orders, but entries in this vein are comparatively few compared with the bulk of the transactions that dispense relief.

The New Union

In January 1790, Selling abandoned the system that had served its exclusive needs for many years, and embarked on a radical new venture, which in the course of the next 45 years extended to embrace fifteen parishes. Why it chose to take this dramatic step is not apparent from the available records. The core archive for the last decade of the eighteenth century is the *Minute Book of the Selling Union* which describes the setting up of the Union under Gilbert's Act, the subsequent joining of other parishes, and the regular activity of the Guardians. But like so many of the surviving records, it offers no indication of the underlying reasons for important decisions, and the historian is obliged to consult alternative sources for an explanation.²³ It is not known why Selling was chosen as the location of the Union. The availability of suitable land adjacent to the old poorhouse may have been the deciding factor.

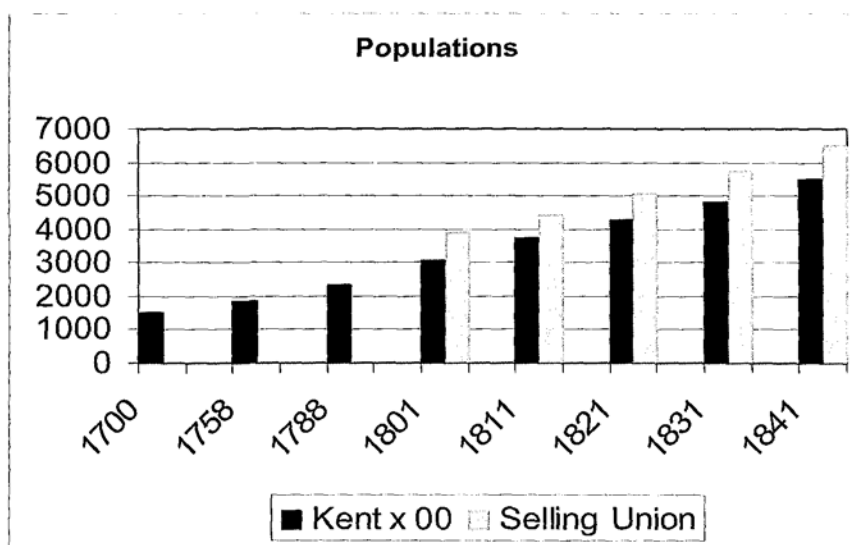


Fig. 1 Population Growth 1700-1841.

Sources. For Kent: M. Dobson, *Population, 1640-1831*, and A. Armstrong, *Population 1834-1914*, Tables 1 (p. 11) and 3 (p. 31) respectively, both in *The Economy of Kent 1640-1914*, ed. A. Armstrong. For the 15 combined parishes of the Selling Union: PP Census Returns 1801-1841.

Population continued to rise. **Fig. 1** illustrates the extent of growth. This masks variations at parish level, but the aggregate figures (after 1801) mirror the County in general, and suggest that both experienced similar population pressures. It is unlikely that demographic changes alone were a spur to adopting a new workhouse system, but contemporaries recognized the inextricable inter-relationship between population and poverty, Malthus being the best known.²⁴ Modern historians have emphasized the complexity of the relationship between population growth and rising poor law expenditure, but nevertheless, these pressures no doubt contributed towards the impetus for a more efficient cost-effective workhouse.

Indeed, economic considerations were always at the forefront of overseers' minds. Hastings has summarised the overall increase in the cost of relief in Kent. Expenditure averaged £41,997 between 1748-50, increased to £80,150 by 1775-6, and reached £106,606 by 1783-5.²⁵ In 1779 and 1793 the Selling Poor Rate was 1s. 0d. in the pound, but between these two dates it had peaked at 2s. 0d. At the time, therefore, that the overseers must have been reconsidering their workhouse arrangements, there was no doubt concern over increased expenditure,



Selling Gilbert Union workhouse, now known as 'The Square' (April 2001)

although the main overheads in running the old workhouse remained constant, with the annual rent of £6 and land tax at 8*s.* 0*d.*²⁶ Allied to this real or potential pressure of escalating rates, the Selling overseers were no doubt alert to the advantages of the economy of scale, for as Oxley suggests, 'The workhouse movement only thrived in rural areas if parishes joined together in unions to give their institutions a financial base similar to that enjoyed by their urban counterparts'.²⁷

The general shift in social attitudes towards the poor from the early years of the century has already been noted, and Gilbert's Act embodied the new spirit of humanity, decisively reversing the policy of 1722. The fact that the Selling overseers were apparently already adopting a fundamentally humanitarian and pragmatic approach to outdoor and in-relief well before 1790, suggests that the adoption of the Act by Selling merely served to endorse an existing practice. Legislation that reinforced existing practice was in itself a good reason to adopt it. Incidentally, it supports one of the characteristics of the Old Poor Law, namely 'the tendency to rationalise, repeatedly, what had already been done in practice for a number of years, in localities or generally'.²⁸ However,

generalizations always require caution, and it is evident that certain parishes were still invoking the workhouse test as late as 1780.²⁹

Apart from these factors, perhaps the most compelling reason for Selling forming a Gilbert Union was simply one of administrative expediency. Notwithstanding local diversity, Selling and its neighbouring parishes did not exist in a vacuum. They were subject to the same general influences as the rest of the County, and the establishment of their Union was part of a wider movement towards combination, which is evidenced in the Register of Workhouse Agreements under Gilbert's Act 1789-1829.³⁰ Newman observes that: 'in the latter 18th century, rural parishes seem to have found their workhouses increasingly effective, and they turned to alternative administrative arrangements to revitalise the concept'.³¹ It should also be remembered that the stated reason for Selling courting Boughton and Ospringe in 1754, was that the individual parish was too small to maintain its own workhouse, and if it was too small in 1754, it remained so in 1790.

TABLE 1. THE PARISHES OF THE SELLING UNION

Parish	Date joined Union	Date quit Union
Selling	1790	1835
Sheldwich	1790	1835
Preston ^a	1790	1835
Challock	1790	1835
Badlesmere	1790	1835
Boughton ^b	1790	1835
Norton	1792	1835
Seasalter	1792	[By] 1813
Molash	[By] 1813	1835
Dunkirk	[By] 1823	1835
Stone	[By] 1823	1835
Leaveland	[By] 1823	1830
Goodnestone	1828	1835
Harty (Sheppey)	1829	1835
Davington	1831	1835

Notes

^a In the 'Register of Workhouse Agreements: Gilbert's Act 1789-1829 (Q/RSP 1/2) there is an agreement dated 11.07.1813 between several of the parishes. Inexplicably, Preston is not mentioned, although it re-appears in the 'Treasurer's Book' of 1823.

^b Boughton's old Knatchbull workhouse, used by Selling in 1754, must have become defunct.

The administrative arrangements for the new Union are recorded in the *Minute Book*, and follow the customary procedure whereby workhouses

were controlled by a Board of Guardians, supervised by visitors, all appointed by the local magistracy. Initially, three parishes formed the Union: Selling, Sheldwich and Preston. These were soon joined by Challock, Badlesmere and Boughton, and other parishes followed. The sequence, in so far as it can be reconstructed, is shown in **Table 1**. Outdoor relief for each parish was also administered by the Guardian for that parish. Not surprisingly, the administrators were on a 'learning curve', and after many disputes regarding the initial agreement, new rules were adopted in May 1791, to tighten up auditing procedures and determine the respective contributions from each parish.

Fortunately, arrangements had been sorted out in time to meet the series of particularly bad harvests which occurred in the 1790s. How the Guardians managed these contingencies, and controlled the conditions within the new building, is evident from an examination of the Minute Book. It is important to dispense with the clichéd images of workhouses that dominate historiography for the later Victorian period. Parishes set up their workhouses within the overall framework of legislation, but their operation was a purely local affair, inevitably resulting in considerable diversification. In short, no two workhouses were the same. They reflected several factors, which changed with the passage of time, including the attitude of Guardians, the aptitude of the master and mistress, the nature and character of the inmates, and the suitability of the building itself. The Minute Book provides some insight into each of these factors.

The Guardians' acknowledgement of humanitarian principles is immediately apparent from an addendum to the 'Rules & Regulations':

... humanity to the Poor and a particular regard to their treatment and comfortable accommodation both in sickness and in health ought ever to distinguish the conduct of the managers of all such establishments. That the committee...will at all times support the master...but they will discountenance to the utmost of their power all improper or cruel treatment of the poor at any time whatever.

At the same time, no nonsense would be tolerated. A Resolution was promptly passed thanking Mr Henry Creed, an overseer at Ashford, for his valuable assistance and guidance in establishing the Union. Creed was a strict disciplinarian, and his influence almost certainly impacted on the Selling regime.³² Humanity did not extend to continuing old practices where they were no longer economical. Having invested in a new building, it is understandable that the Guardians were not prepared to pay paupers' rents, which had been a regular feature under the previous system. Their attitude was quite uncompromising and must have come as a shock to the former recipients:

The committee shall not pay rent for any house or lodging, but the General Poorhouse . [and a notice was immediately issued] to such poor parishioners of the united parishes whose rents are paid to come into the Poor House on Easter Monday...after which time no rents will be paid or allowed out of the Poor House.

The day to day running of the institution was in the hands of the master and mistress, and their competence, probity and demeanour must have been crucial to the well being of the inmates. Whether empathy or enmity prevailed is not evident. No doubt personal relationships produced varying responses. Misbehaviour resulted in disciplinary action. Thus, in August 1790, an entry records 'that Wm. Monk be taken before a magistrate in consequence of carrying away from the Hospital and selling of part of his cloaths [*sic*]'. This was the first, but by no means the last, sign of trouble.

Forty years later, Petty Sessions Records provide evidence of disturbances within the workhouse at a time when protest was at its height amongst agricultural labourers. Between 1829 and 1831, the master, William Saunders, 'informed' on a total of 10 miscreants who were brought before the magistrates. The offences included refusing to work; running away; taking clothing; 'great misconduct and behaviour'; creating a disturbance and swearing. The culprits received variously 14 or 21 days in the house of correction. In 1831, John Pringuer succeeded Saunders when the latter moved to Faversham workhouse. The new master experienced similar problems, reporting five offenders to the magistrates up to 1833. On 31 December 1831 Wm York, labourer, was sentenced to 3 months in prison for stealing 'shoes and a gabardine' from the workhouse. In February 1831, James Garland spent 21 days in prison for 'constantly swearing and causing a disturbance in the poorhouse', but the punishment had little deterrence, since in February 1833 he was again before the magistrates. Pringuer ordered him bread and water for misbehaviour, only to have it thrown in his face.³³ It is difficult to assess to what extent these incidents reflected the general level of discipline. No doubt certain inmates were prone to anti-social behaviour, but the guilty offenders were probably atypical. Since both Saunders and Pringuer continued their careers in Faversham workhouse with approbation, the inference is that both these masters were competent and managed the house satisfactorily. The records show that it was not all 'sweetness and light' within the regime, but at no point does discipline appear to have been beyond control.

Part of the difficulty undoubtedly stemmed from the wide classification of inmates accommodated within the one building. These included the sick, the old, entire families, split up families where one or more of the children are taken in because the parent(s) could not support them,

deserted wives, 'fallen women' and bastard children. The issue of bastardy and unwanted children was a major concern to the Guardians, so much so that they felt it necessary to place an addendum to the Rules stating: 'that basterdy is in every point of view highly injurious to society, ruinous in its consequences to individuals, destructive of the morals of both sexes, and particularly injurious to the unhappy offspring of this illicit commerce...'. Such imputations had little effect on the likes of poor Elizabeth Mumford, ordered into the hospital in June 1791 'with her bastard child', and re-admitted in January 1796, 'having a big belly', as the scribe graphically describes it.

The new purpose-built accommodation was presumably a great improvement on the old poorhouse, but the confinement of different classes of paupers must have resulted in certain discomfort, no matter how humane and efficient the regime. The proximity of lactating mothers, chronic sick, boisterous youths, old age pensioners and general 'down and outs' presents a kaleidoscopic microcosm of society at its humblest level. Yet, wherever practical, paupers were expected to work to contribute towards their own upkeep, retaining a 'penny in the shilling' on the value of their work. If capable, adults and children were permitted to undertake work in the fields. The educational needs of children were not to be ignored, but the emphasis remained on lucrative work. Scholars themselves might be promoted to teachers, signifying the long-term nature of institutionalised care for some children.

The timespan covered by the 'Minute Book' includes the dearth years of 1795-6, and the entries for this period testify to the general state of distress. In early 1795, there was a considerable increase in the numbers receiving out-relief, with the weekly total payments peaking at £7 2s. 0d. on 6th February. The following winter the Guardians responded by enhancing out-relief: '...every pauper...shall receive weekly half gallon rough meal gratis for each of their children...(but)... no person shall be relieved known to keep a dog'. There is no indication as to whether the numbers receiving in-relief were affected during these periods.

It is a great pity that there are no 'Minute Books' after 1797, particularly as the early nineteenth century was one of enormous social and economic distress. After 1815, opinions towards poverty generally hardened as a result of the effects of post-war depression, but the investigation of these changes in the Selling Union is inhibited by the limited nature of available sources. However, there is an excellent sequence of statistical data in the 'Treasurers Book' 1823-1834, and the 'Relief List' 1829-1835.

To place this data in context warrants a general comment on the prevailing economic conditions. The complex inter-relationship between population growth, poverty, and the dominance of agriculture was fundamental to poor law rationale. Hastings points out that the 'increased pauperisation of the landless labourer was compounded by the relentless

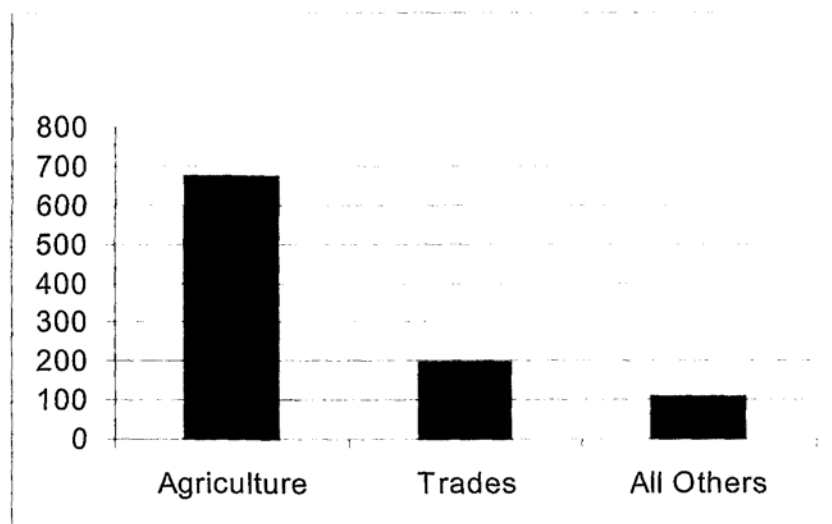


Fig. 2 The number of families in each occupation classification in the Selling Union of parishes, 1831. Source: PP. Census Returns 1831.

growth of population'³⁴ and Dobson says that demographic pressure was one of the factors transforming 'rural Kent into an arena of agricultural depression'.³⁵ Fig. 2 illustrates the overwhelming proportion of families directly engaged in agriculture in 1831. Many trades also depended on farmers for their business.

The position of the agricultural labourer gradually deteriorated throughout the eighteenth century. Some of this decline has been attributed to a consolidation of holdings, depressing small farmers into day labourers, totally dependent on a wage economy.³⁶ By 1840, agriculture in Selling, for example, was dominated by a handful of farmers.³⁷ During the French wars 1793-1815, farmers enjoyed high profits, but galloping inflation between 1794 and 1812 had devastating effects on real wages. There were great dearths in 1795-6 and 1799-1801, but generally full employment. However, a deep post-war depression set in after 1815. Board of Agriculture and Select Committee Reports highlight the acute distress, which continued until the mid-1820s. Agricultural prices then improved, but

... real gains for the Kent labourer in work remained small ...[and]..., until 1825, the index of real wages was almost continually depressed below its 1790 position, and even for the labourer in regular work real wages fell catastrophically for almost the entire period 1790-1840.³⁸

There was both a lack of work, and low wages within work. The condition of the increasing number of unemployed and under-employed was desperate. East Kent was particularly affected by a superabundance of unemployed, and the bad harvests and failure of the hop crop in 1829, followed by the severe winter, precipitated the 'Swing Riots' of 1830-1.

It is difficult to quantify the effect of these demographic and economic changes on both the overall number of paupers, and those specifically occupying workhouse beds. Statistical information on Kentish poverty is imprecise and particularly sparse for the eighteenth century. The Parliamentary Returns of 1776, and 1783-5, record the amounts raised and spent by each parish for poor relief, but provide no information as to the numbers of paupers involved.³⁹ Similarly, the 'Selling Poor Book' identifies paupers as receiving regular relief, but does not differentiate between those receiving indoor or out-relief. The earliest indication of the number of paupers in the Selling workhouse is contained in the 'Minute Book of the Selling Union', which gives precise numbers, albeit for a tantalisingly brief period of two years, 1792-1794. The average number of inmates is 82, with the highest number, 91, in January 1793.

The most proximate comparison with the Selling data of 1792-4 is contained in the Parliamentary Return of 1803-4.⁴⁰ It has been calculated that 13.4 per cent of the County population in 1801 was in receipt of permanent or occasional relief.⁴¹ Taylor indicates that 21 per cent of those receiving *permanent* relief were relieved in workhouses.⁴² How does Selling compare? A rough calculation based on the average number of paupers in its workhouse in 1792-4 (see above) and an estimate of the population of the parishes based on the 1801 census suggests that it shared the wider County experience at the turn of the century.

There follows a gap in statistical information until the Parliamentary Returns of 1812-15.⁴³ These indicate that 11.2 per cent of Kent's 1811 population was in receipt of relief.⁴⁴ Taylor refers to 18 per cent of those receiving *permanent* relief being relieved in the workhouse.⁴⁵ Fortunately, the 1812-15 Returns can be corroborated by a separate Return of 1815 made to the Select Committee of Education, and **Table 2** is based on this information.⁴⁶

It will be noticed that the combined percentage of the 15 parishes is 11.3 per cent, again almost exactly in line with the County figure. The variations between parishes are partly due to the small statistical base. These Returns contain no specific information regarding the number of workhouse inmates, but applying the 18 per cent figure cited above to the total poor of 451, produces 81, which accords with the 82 mentioned in the 'Minute Book' quoted above, and also the figure of 79 stated on the opening page of the 'Treasurers Book' for June 1823, detailed below.⁴⁷

From 1815 to 1823 there are no further statistics, but thereafter, the 'Treasurers Book' and 'Relief List' provide a continuous sequence of data

TABLE 2. PERCENTAGE OF POOR IN THE POPULATIONS OF THE SELLING UNION PARISHES, 1815.

Parish	Population 1811	Number of Poor (1815)	Per cent
Badlesmere	106	10	9.4
Boughton	1002	99	9.9
Challock	306	33	10.8
Davington	168	12	7.1
Dunkirk	n/a	n/a	n/a
Goodnestone	71	3	4.2
Harty	41	11	26.8
Leaveland	61	15	24.6
Molash	342	20	5.8
Norton	105	22	20.9
Preston	291	65	22.3
Seasalter	536	52	9.7
Selling	458	66	14.4
Sheldwich	449	25	5.6
Stone	62	18	29.0
Total	3,998	451	11.3

Source: PP 1819, IX. I, 'Digest of Parochial Returns to Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders'. Tables pp. 413-422.

recording the exact numbers of inmates in the workhouse from 6 June 1823 until 11 July 1835.⁴⁸ For the periods that these books overlap, the same information is replicated, affording a useful cross check. The entire sequence is contained in Fig. 3. The most notable feature of the graphs is the seasonal and annual fluctuations, for which some explanation is tendered, along with comment on the connection, if any, with the Swing riots of the 1830s. The total numbers in the workhouse ranged from a low of 37 in October 1827 to a maximum of 95 in 1835. There was a high level of occupancy up to mid-1826. Numbers rose sharply in January 1827, falling in March, after which the fluctuations were less accentuated, until rising rapidly again in the winters of 1829-30, 1831-2, and finally in the early spring of 1835.

The consistent seasonal movements are, perhaps, the easiest to account for. The seasons set the mode of agricultural activity and, as would be expected, the lowest occupancy occurred in the summer months when there were more employment opportunities, and the highest numbers arose in the winter months. The precise patterns vary between localities, but any attempt to disaggregate the figures to parish level is counter-

Inmates June 1823 to July 1835

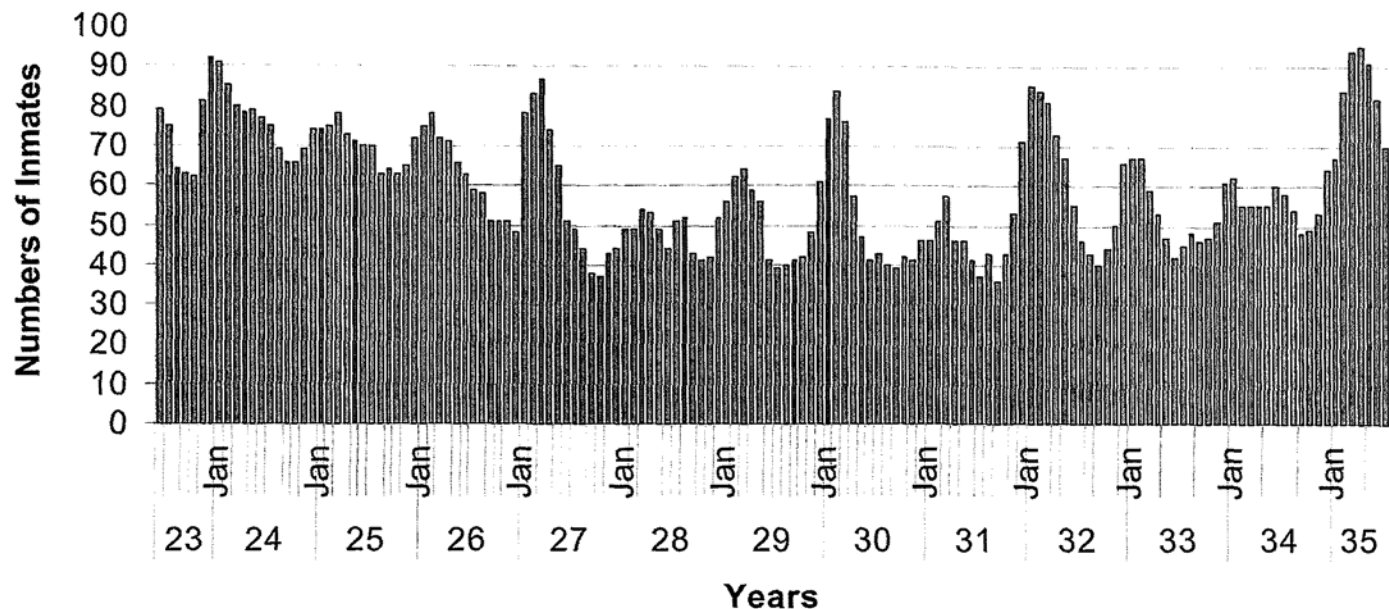


Fig. 3 The total number of inmates in the combined parishes, but excluding the parishes of Molash, Harty and Davington which joined the Union in 1829. (The additional number of paupers introduced by these 3 combined parishes ranged from 7 to 22.) Source: The 'Treasurers Book' 1823-1834 & the 'Relief List 1829-1835.

productive, as the individual numbers are too small to obviate distorting random influences, such as a single family's distress.

Superimposed on this basic unavoidable seasonal rhythm is the irregular pattern of the weather, which was crucial to all agricultural activity. It affected employment as well as yield, and thus prices. Within a community dominated by farming, adverse weather conditions could have serious economic consequences. Thus, with regard to the annual variations, there might be a direct correlation between the numbers of inmates and agricultural/economic conditions.

The lean post-war period lasting until the mid-1820s is certainly matched by consistently high occupancy levels up to the winter of 1826-7, and thereafter the levels appear to reflect the *general* agricultural fortunes of the late 1820s and early 1830s. The 1827 harvest was good, and the autumn occupancy numbers fell to their lowest level since this sequence started, followed by only a slight rise in the ensuing winter. 1828 was also a good year, until ended by a poor harvest, and the numbers of inmates rose again in the winter of 1828-9. The numbers fell in the summer of 1829 to the previous year's level, but the harvest failed, and 1829 was an entirely disastrous year. The numbers seeking relief in the workhouse rose rapidly to a peak of 84 in February 1830. By contrast, 1830 produced a good harvest, and the numbers of inmates in the winter of 1830-1 hardly exceeded the summer 'visitors'. There seems, therefore, to be a direct *prima facie* relationship between winter occupancy levels and the fortunes of the preceding harvest. The plight of the agricultural labourer was so precarious that the slightest deterioration in circumstances turned poverty into pauperism, and the divide seemed to hinge upon the quality of the harvest.

However, such a conclusion seems too simplistic allowing for the number of variables that need to be taken into account. Jones suggests that the harvest is 'not the key to the fortunes of all agriculturalists', bearing in mind the wide diversity of farming activities (which applies to the study area). Furthermore, *local*, rather than general weather patterns were more important. More detailed research, utilising local farm diaries/market prices, etc., might establish the extent to which the diverse agricultural activities of the study area, particularly the important but vulnerable hop crop, reflected general trends. Only after such research could the apparent relationship between harvest and workhouse occupancy be validated.⁴⁹

Although the harvest of 1830 did not repeat the failure of the previous two years, it was the prospect of another severe winter, the 'fear of winter' as it was expressed, that largely provoked the 'Swing Riots' in east Kent. Hobsbawm and Rude identify the autumn of 1830 as the time of maximum 'Swing' activity in the Selling area, listing a number of cases of arson, the most serious being barely half a mile from the Selling workhouse, at the barn of John Neame.⁵⁰ However, during this period the

workhouse occupancy levels were slightly below the equivalent months in 1829 and 1831, and there seems to be no discernible link between occupancy numbers and 'Swing' disturbances. This is not surprising; both reflect distress, but as the number of recorded 'Swing' incidents, and the percentage of the population in the workhouse are very small, such limited data is insufficient evidence of a relationship between protest and pauperism.

Workhouse occupancy is an inadequate measure of pauperism, because the poor were the recipients of many other sources of relief, and attention can now be focused on the relevance of Selling workhouse to the wider issue of poverty, in the light of alternative forms of welfare. Suffice to say that it assumed many guises, and contemporary perceptions of, and reactions to such poverty, altered with the passage of time. The shift in opinion from the austere regime of the 'workhouse test' to the more benign attitude of the 1790s was, in turn, replaced by a more stringent application of relief in the early nineteenth century. Such 'external' changes affected individuals who themselves came in and out of pauperism during their life cycles.

Welfare provision consisted of three main elements: state aid, charity and so-called 'self-help'. The local Poor Law administrators dispensed state aid, although in the *mixed economy of welfare* they were cognisant of the other forms of relief.⁵¹ The conundrum they faced was how best to meet the multifarious needs of the different classes of poor, within the resources available. Often this came down to a choice between indoor or out-relief, the latter invariably being the preferred option on both humanitarian and financial grounds. Indeed, throughout the entire period of this study, it must be stressed that in terms of total expenditure on the poor, the workhouse played a subsidiary role to out-relief, which was the principal 'state' benefit. This was particularly the case for the able-bodied, who 'were increasingly relieved outdoors in the late eighteenth century, a trend Thomas Gilbert's influence may have furthered. Eden found few houses providing relief to the able-bodied, as did the Assistant Commissioners a generation later'.⁵² Essentially, it was the impotent poor who were the main beneficiaries of the Gilbert unions, although Guardians were not averse to placing other classes of paupers in the house, if that seemed the most expedient approach.

The alternative forms of relief, charity and so called 'self-help', consisted of both formal and informal arrangements. According to Hasted, the number of established charities in each parish ranged from none, as in Selling, to five in neighbouring Preston.⁵³ But it is important to appreciate that only formal, corporate schemes created records. Thus, only 4 per cent of Kent's 1801 population were members of the 198 Friendly Societies listed in 1803-4,⁵⁴ and Keith-Lucas suggests that this comparative lack of self-help may account for the fact that by 1813

Kent maintained twice as many paupers in workhouses as the national average.⁵⁵ However, informal assistance amongst kith and kin, and private charitable donations are impossible to quantify, but were probably of more significance than has been generally acknowledged. This makes it extremely difficult to assess the relative impact of all forms of welfare in the alleviation of poverty.

From the above remarks, it might be concluded that the Selling Union workhouse played an insignificant role in such relief. Apart from the unquantifiable numbers benefiting from charity and 'self-help', only about one fifth of those on permanent Poor Law relief were contained in workhouses. However, this proportion includes all classes of paupers and disguises the fact that for the impotent poor in particular, the Union 'hospital' was essential to their well-being. For the able-bodied in need, the workhouse played a minor, but not insignificant role. When other means of relief were exhausted, it was the last port of call.

As far as the parish of Selling was concerned, the existence of such a substantial establishment within an otherwise modest community had a major impact. It became the focal centre of a wide catchment area, drawing together not only a large number of paupers, but also all the concomitant services that they required. It was an important source of business for several local tradesmen, and the traffic that these engendered, along with the to-ing and fro-ing of the various administrators, must have resulted in this being the busiest rural community for miles around.⁵⁶ A parish population of less than 600 played host to up to 100 Union paupers, and not all of their time was confined to the house. There was a degree of social intercourse with the wider community, when they worked in the fields and roads and attended church. The Selling parish registers record that it was not only Selling paupers that were christened and buried there.⁵⁷

The extent to which such workhouse activity succeeded in addressing the problems it was designed to alleviate, depended very largely on local conditions. An essential requirement was that the system was financially viable. Taylor has analysed the Parliamentary Returns 1803, and of the 409 Kent parishes which replied, 55 spent more in their workhouses than was earned, and only 16 made a net profit in excess of £50 per annum. But paupers contributed in many ways which did not directly show in the profit accounts, such as making their own clothes and various domestic duties, resulting in a degree of self-sufficiency which would otherwise have impinged upon the resources of the parish.⁵⁸ Workhouse profitability was raised in the 1832 Poor Law Commission's Rural Queries. In his reply to these enquiries, Giles Hilton, the respondent from Preston (part of the Selling Union) considered that it was more economical to keep families out of the poorhouse, although overseers sometimes had no option but to resort to in-relief.⁵⁹ The financial viability of the Selling workhouse



The Selling Union workhouse buildings c.1900

is difficult to quantify without further research, but the fact that parishes were applying to join the Union in the 1820s and 1830s suggests that they would not have done so had it been economically disadvantageous.⁶⁰

Apart from financial considerations, there was considerable criticism of the unreformed system, ultimately expressed in the Royal Commission Report of 1834.⁶¹ Workhouses were generally considered an unmitigated failure, being overcrowded, insanitary, filthy and indecent.⁶² Even defenders of the Old Poor Law system, conceded that they were 'invariably an insanitary and disorderly institution'⁶³ although recently historians have questioned the evidence for this and suggested that the administration of the Gilbert Unions, in particular, was often of a higher standard than the parish workhouses.⁶⁴ However, notwithstanding any disagreement as to the conditions that prevailed in the institutions (and few dispute the misery associated with pauperism) there is general acceptance that they failed to address the central issue of poverty amongst the able-bodied, and it was only their ability to provide institutional relief for the impotent which ensured their survival. Clarke maintains that they 'were rarely anything more than glorified almshouses'.⁶⁵

Within this limited capacity, Selling may have performed better than the norm. Firstly, overcrowding does not seem to have been an issue. In July 1835, the Faversham Guardians considered that Selling could accept

more than the 77 residing there. On this assessment, the house seems to have been operating within capacity for most of its existence. Secondly, whilst the same Guardians swiftly determined to close several other east Kent workhouses, they initially agreed to continue with Selling, the inference being that that institution was functioning satisfactorily.⁶⁶ Thirdly, the apparent competence of the masters Saunders and Pringuer has already been noted, reinforcing an overall impression of successful management. This is not to suggest that the Selling workhouse was a 'pauper palace'. The juxtaposition of the different classes of paupers was not an ideal arrangement, and instances of misbehaviour have been cited, but equally there is no evidence to suggest that the regime operated in conditions that might attract the epithet 'bastille'.⁶⁷ In spite of the general criticisms levelled at the unreformed workhouse, it is difficult to see how in rural communities a better system could have existed, given the constraints of travel, medical knowledge and administrative infrastructure of the time.

However, regardless of the efficacy of the Gilbert Unions in meeting the needs of the impotent poor, the Old Poor Law system was unable to remedy the cause of poverty. The rising cost of maintaining the poor, particularly the unemployed labourer, led to nation-wide concern, and the Swing riots finally precipitated the appointment of a Royal Commission to enquire into reform. Their report became the basis of the Poor Law Amendment Act, which intended to entirely replace the existing system with new workhouses based around market towns, and administered by a new Central Board. All parishes were obliged to comply with the new Act, but the finale of the Selling workhouse was by no means a foregone conclusion, and the drama of its last months of existence unfold in the pages of the Faversham Union Minute Book.⁶⁸

The inaugural meeting of the new Union was held on 30 March 1835, and addressed by Sir Francis Head, the assistant Commissioner for East Kent. Arrangements were promptly made to erect a new enlarged workhouse at Faversham. At a meeting on 5th July, it was agreed that:

.... the workhouses of Faversham and Selling are both capable of containing a greater number of persons than they now have residing in them, and that if the persons who are now kept in the other workhouses were to be sent to these two a great saving would be effected to the parishes to which such persons belong, and it is therefore resolved that the workhouses at Doddington, Lynstead, Ospringe and Throwley should be discontinued from and after the 18th instant and that the poor therein be sent to Faversham and Selling workhouses.

It looked as if a new expanding era was about to begin for Selling. However, it all went wrong. When the Faversham Guardians enquired as to the cost of rent from the proprietors of the Selling workhouse, and

they responded with a figure of 75s. per week, negotiations collapsed, and the following week the Guardians resolved that they 'enquire into the propriety and practicability of discontinuing the workhouse at Selling and removing the paupers now maintained therein to the Faversham workhouse'.

Selling might reasonably have expected a continuing role under the new Act. The Poor Law Commissioners were anxious that different classes of paupers were segregated, and that the best way of achieving this was by adapting several small workhouses in one union, each to house one class. Selling could have fulfilled that role admirably but, significantly, the recommendations of the Report were ignored throughout east Kent. This policy is generally attributed to the domineering opinion of Sir Francis Head, who was strongly opposed to the conversion of existing workhouses for the separate classes. The decision to build one single workhouse entirely countermanded the Report's recommendations.

The Guardians took little time over their deliberations. The *coup de grace* fell quickly. On 14th August the Guardians 'resolved that this Union do discontinue the use of the Selling workhouse immediately...'. By the end of the month, all paupers had been transferred to Faversham, and Selling Union hospital closed its doors for the last time. For 45 years it had served as the institutional focus for a wide area. Henceforth, Selling would export its paupers to Faversham, and the residual community at Hogben's Hill would settle down to a quiet existence, free from the hustle and bustle of a vibrant workhouse in its midst.

The history does not, of course, end there, but is beyond the temporal and spatial parameters of this study. Until 1835 the parishes had been free to make their own arrangements for the provision of their poor, and over an extended period they had developed associations and mechanisms in response to ever changing demographic economic and social conditions. The Union 'workhouse' evolved as one element of a multi-faceted flexible system designed to accommodate the disparate needs of poverty. 1835 punctured the comparative equilibrium of the Gilbert Union, which had survived the 'Swing' disturbances. The new Act altered the balance between compassion and compulsion. In April and May, parishes adjoining the Selling Union erupted in violent rioting against the new regime, and the fact that the new arrangements were not eagerly embraced by all is perhaps an indication of the acceptance, if not an affection, for the old system.

ENDNOTES

¹ For example, F. Crompton, *Workhouse Children* (Stroud, 1997); A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (1978).

² The 'traditional' view was endorsed by J. and B. Hammond, *The Village Labourer*

(1911); S. and B. Webb, *English Poor Law Policy* (1910); and their *English Poor Law History* (1929). Revisionist critiques commenced with M. Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New', *Journal of Economic History*, 23 (1963), and 'The Poor Law Report Re-examined', *JEH*, 24 (1964).

³ 4 & 5 Will. IV, c.76 (1834).

⁴ 9 Geo. I, c.7 (1723).

⁵ 22 Geo. III, c.83 (1782).

⁶ Parliamentary papers (PP), Old Series, IX.

⁷ Minute Book of the Selling Union 1790-1797, entry dated 30.03.1790 (CKS, GA/2.1); Selling Parish Registers, Christenings 1813-1979, entry dated 26.01.1813 (CCA, U3/229/1-10).

⁸ G.W. Oxley, *Poor Relief in England & Wales 1601-1834* (1974), p. 64 and note 8.

⁹ A. Neame, *Introduction to the Selling Poor Book*, microfiche. (CKS, Ref: U3/229/12/A1). He considered that the old workhouse had existed for many years, perhaps centuries.

¹⁰ 'Articles of Agreement between the Parishes of Boughton under the Blean, Selling & Ospringe abt a Workhouse' (CKS, Ref: U229.01-3).

¹¹ 43 Eliz. I, c.3 (1601).

¹² 13 & 14 Car. II, c.12 (1622).

¹³ B. Keith-Lucas, *Parish Affairs: The Government of Kent Under George III* (Kent, 1986) p. 111.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.115, lists a total of 24 known workhouses by 1762, but A.E.Newman, *The Old Poor Law in East Kent, 1606-1834: A Social & Demographic Analysis* (unpubl. PhD. thesis, Kent, 1979) lists additional examples.

¹⁵ P. Hastings, 'The Old Poor Law 1640-1834' in N. Yates, R. Hume and P. Hastings (eds), *Religion and Society in Kent, 1640-1914* (Kent, 1994) p. 139.

¹⁶ M. Dobson, 'Population 1640-1831', in A. Armstrong (ed), *The Economy of Kent 1640-1914* (Kent, 1995) p. 12.

¹⁷ P. Slack, *The English Poor Law 1531-1782* (Cambridge, 1995) p. 26.

¹⁸ Keith-Lucas, *Parish Affairs*, p. 112. These payments were within the usual band of 1s. 6d.-2s. 0d. for Kent parishes.

¹⁹ Selling Poor Book 1779-1793 (CCA, U3/229/12/A1).

²⁰ The uncertainty regarding chronology is not clarified by the 1776 Parliamentary Returns, which indicate that Selling did not have a workhouse, but that it spent £7 10s. 0d. 'in paying rent of workhouses and habitations for the poor'. It seems likely that their old poorhouse was not interpreted as being a 'workhouse', and that their expenditure consisted only of rents for the pauper's own 'habitations'. This probability is reinforced by the similar experience of Ospringe. R.Godfrey, *Ospringe Workhouse Admissions & Discharges 1805-8 & 1827-35* (Faversham, 2000) p. 3.

²¹ Neame, *Poor Book*.

²² Slack, *Poor Law*, p. 20.

²³ Minute Book of the Selling Union 1790-1797 (CKS, Ref: GA/2.1).

²⁴ T. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798).

²⁵ Hastings, *The Old Poor Law*, p. 121.

²⁶ Neame, *Poor Book*.

²⁷ Oxley, *Poor Relief*, p. 85.

²⁸ J.D. Marshall, *The Old Poor Law 1795-1834* (1973), p. 11.

²⁹ Newman, *Old Poor Law*, p. 140.

³⁰ Register of Workhouse Agreements: Gilbert's Act 1789-1829 (CKS, Ref: Q/RSP 1/2).

³¹ Newman, *Old Poor Law*, p. 146.

- ³² Keith-Lucas, *Parish Affairs*, pp. 113-4.
- ³³ Petty Sessions Records 1820-1833 (CKS, PS/US/14).
- ³⁴ Hastings, *The Old Poor Law*, p. 114.
- ³⁵ Dobson, *Population*, p. 15.
- ³⁶ Newman, *Old Poor Law*, pp. 223-30.
- ³⁷ Selling Tithe Apportionment shows that 2 families farmed half of the entire parish, and that nearly 90% was occupied by only 10 families (CCA, Ref: TO/5/11A/B).
- ³⁸ Hastings, *The Old Poor Law*, pp. 115-6.
- ³⁹ PP, Old Series, IX.
- ⁴⁰ PP, 1803-4, XIII.
- ⁴¹ Hastings, *The Old Poor Law*, p. 116.
- ⁴² J.S. Taylor, 'The Unreformed Workhouse 1776-1834', in E.W. Martin (ed.), *Comparative Development in Social Welfare* (1972), p. 78.
- ⁴³ PP, 1818, XIX.
- ⁴⁴ Hastings, *The Old Poor Law*, p. 116.
- ⁴⁵ Taylor, *Unreformed Workhouse*, p. 76.
- ⁴⁶ PP, 1819, IX.
- ⁴⁷ Treasurers Book of the Selling Union 1823-1834 (CKS, Ref: GA 2/2).
- ⁴⁸ Relief List of Selling Union 1829-1835 (CKS, Ref: GA 2/3).
- ⁴⁹ E.L. Jones, *Seasons & Prices. The Role of the Weather in English Agricultural History* (Bury St Edmunds, 1964).
- ⁵⁰ E.J. Hobsbawm and G. Rude, *Captain Swing*, Appendix III: Table of Incidents (1969); *Kentish Gazette* 29.10.1830; *The Times* 30.10.1830.
- ⁵¹ A. Kidd, *State, Society & the Poor in 19th Century England* (1999).
- ⁵² Taylor, *Unreformed Workhouse*, p. 78.
- ⁵³ E. Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, 2nd edn., vols VI and VII (1797-1801).
- ⁵⁴ Hastings, *The Old Poor Law*, p. 117, citing PP 1803-4, XIII: Abstract of Answers and Returns.
- ⁵⁵ Keith-Lucas, *Parish Affairs*, pp. 117-8.
- ⁵⁶ For example, the workbooks of John Hogben, local carpenter, contain regular entries for work carried out at the workhouse between 1821-1835. Private archive of John Hogben, Selling.
- ⁵⁷ For example, Selling Parish Registers 1813-1979, entry for 1813, refers to several persons from the workhouse belonging to parishes other than Selling (CCA, U3/229/1-10).
- ⁵⁸ Taylor, *Unreformed Workhouse* p. 69.
- ⁵⁹ PP, 1834, XXXV-XXXVI, Answers to Rural Queries, Question 45, Preston.
- ⁶⁰ See details in Table 1.
- ⁶¹ Royal Commission Report, 1834 (44), XXVII.
- ⁶² Webb, *Poor Law History*, Vol. 1, p. 248.
- ⁶³ Blaugh, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law', p. 157.
- ⁶⁴ For example, P. Grey, 'Parish Workhouse & Poor houses' *Local Historian*, 10 (1972), 75.
- ⁶⁵ P. Clarke, 'The Old Poor Law', *Poverty & Social Policy 1750-1870* (Milton Keynes, 1974) p. 13.
- ⁶⁶ Faversham Union Minute Book (CKS, G/F. AM.1).
- ⁶⁷ In May 1832 John Hogben's men spent 5 days working in the 'whole [sic] to the privy'. Attention to sanitation was not neglected! Hogben archive.