

**Contextualising Poor Relief Under the Late  
Old Poor Law in Maldon and its Rural  
Hinterland**

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PhD

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by

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## **Declaration of Own Work**

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is all my own.

Signed

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David Thomas

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## Abstract

This thesis analyses the provision of poor relief in selected parishes in the borough of Maldon and its rural hinterland with particular focus on the period 1831 to 1835. Chapter 1 presents an overview of English poor relief before the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and its historiography, with particular attention paid to the debates that preceded this legislation. It raises a series of key questions to be explored including, for example, what categories of relief expenditure existed, how payments within these were influenced by local/regional economic and social factors and whether this influence was confined to the parish or affected a wider area.

The second chapter considers if these questions can be satisfactorily answered using central government records as a source. It examines their strengths and weaknesses and considers some of the main conclusions drawn by historians in the light of this analysis. It shows that, in general, these sources are mainly too summarised or inaccurate to be wholly reliable and suggests that locally generated evidence could be used to overcome the issues identified.

Chapter 3 examines how and by whom decisions over poor relief were made, and in what social and cultural context, by investigating the structure, composition and powers of the Maldon area's elite. Whilst there were groupings with differing political and religious persuasions, as a whole the elite was mainly sympathetic towards the poor and operated the system of poor relief in a relatively unified and consensual manner.

The local social context is complemented by a study of the nature and fortunes of Maldon area's economy in Chapter 4. The rural economy is considered from both a micro perspective through the analysis of farm accounts, and for the whole area by statistical investigation of exports from Maldon port. These analyses reveal a number of findings, the most notable being an economic downturn caused by the fall in the wheat price that occurred in 1834/5. Additionally, an overview of the urban economy is provided based upon the distribution of businesses and three case studies.

Chapter 5 and 6 present the core quantitative analysis used to investigate the implementation of the old poor law in the district. Chapter 5 analyses the overseers' accounts for the agricultural parish of Woodham Walter based upon a database of every payment made, which allows the examination of poor relief expenditure by category. It concludes that whilst some types of relief were not sensitive to changing economic circumstances, that of 'allowances to the able bodied' was responsive. This demonstrates the flawed proposition from the architects of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act that there was no legitimate reason for such payments.

Chapter 6 presents an analysis of the overseers' accounts for the town's parish of St. Peter. It finds that there were similarities in the provision of relief to Woodham Walter but, perhaps unsurprisingly, there was no obvious correlation with the state of the local agricultural economy. Specifically, the increase in 'allowances to the able bodied' observed in Woodham Walter, did not occur in the town, probably because its economy was diverse and not wholly reliant on farming.

Chapter 7 concludes by summarising the findings of the thesis, most importantly the profile of relief provision in Maldon and its rural environs, and how this was affected by both social and economic factors. Also, it proposes that the methodology used for the research could be applied using different contexts, providing a valuable data source for the community of social and economic historians, thereby enhancing understanding of how local/regional socio-economic conditions affected patterns of poor relief provision.



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## Abbreviations

BNA	British Newspaper Archive
ERO	Essex Record Office
SEAX	Essex Archives Online
TNA	The National Archives

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- 6.1. The Structure of St. Peter's Overseers' Accounts, p.248.

# 1 Introduction

This study seeks to contribute to historical understanding of the old poor law through an examination of poor relief provision for the port town of Maldon in Essex and its rural hinterland, just before the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act (hereafter 1834 Act). The Act which created the new poor law, with its focus on providing relief in a workhouse as opposed to the payment of allowances, was an attempt to move to a new model which would reverse the rising cost of poor relief and prevent further outbreaks of social discontent such as the Swing riots of 1830/1. An important question arising from these aims, is whether the 1834 Act achieved them or, instead, replaced an effective system of welfare by another which failed to improve upon the situation.

In common with a number of other recent studies, this thesis presents detailed histories of poor relief for two parishes, St Peter in the town of Maldon and St. Michael in the country parish of Woodham Walter. It differs from some recent analyses insofar as its main goal is to gain an understanding of the types of relief provided and what socio-economic factors influenced these, rather than focusing mainly on how the system directly impacted the lives of the poor. Therefore, as well as examining the overseers' accounts for the two parishes described, it also explores how the Maldon area's wider social and economic context affected the scale and types of relief awarded. This approach was taken to attempt to demonstrate how outputs from local research may be combined into a cohesive analysis, which in turn can be used to answer broader questions than those from individual parish studies.

As Henry French noted, whilst recent studies which have enhanced understanding treatment of specific categories of the poor, such as the elderly or illegitimate children, they may have, 'ironically', presented a 'fragmented' picture of the distribution of relief within a given parish.<sup>1</sup> In particular, French cited Steven King and Samantha Williams as historians who have provided analysis of the experiences of the poor for the last seventy plus years of the old poor law. In considering the study conducted by Adair and Smith into relief provided for the elderly in south and east England, King observed the 'powerful imagery' of Smith's conclusion that there was compassion towards supporting the impoverished elderly.<sup>2</sup> This statement

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<sup>1</sup> H. French, 'An Irrevocable Shift: Detailing the Dynamics of Rural Poverty in Southern England, 1762-1834: A Case Study', *Economic History Review*, 68, 3 (2015), pp.769-805.

<sup>2</sup> S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009 [2000]), pp.146-7.

exemplifies the social insight gained from such studies and the concomitant contributions they make.

Nevertheless, French's point about fragmentation is important because whilst such studies enlighten us about the social perspective towards the poor as well as the day to day experiences of those relieved, they don't normally consider how socio-economic factors affect the interrelationships between classes of support. For example, did relief administrators increase some types of payment in response to changing economic conditions, and if so, did this impact the level of relief for other categories? Consideration of such macro-level issues may, therefore, be considered an important area for taking a different approach towards researching poor relief and it is this approach which will be followed in this thesis.

In order to explain the objectives of the thesis more fully, and to set out the questions to be explored, it will first be necessary to give a brief outline of the old poor law and discuss some of the philosophical ideas that led to the new law. The English Reformation had resulted in the closure of institutions such as monasteries and chantries, which had formerly facilitated the distribution of alms. This led to a proliferation in vagrancy and begging and caused both local and state level authorities to become concerned by the resulting civil unrest. In an attempt to discourage these practices, statutes of 1531 and 1547 prescribed severe punishments for those convicted of these 'crimes' which ranged from beatings to brandings.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, the Protestant church encouraged a sympathetic attitude to the plight of the poor and this influenced Parliament to pass a statute in 1536 which instructed parish officials to collect alms for the impotent on Sundays and other holy days. Subsequent acts in 1547, and more importantly 1552, defined the mechanisms for how parishes should collect for the poor and administer this aid, but crucially contributions were still voluntary.<sup>4</sup> Poor harvests in the sixteenth century led to further legislation being passed, for the first time making poor relief contributions mandatory, through acts in 1598 and 1601.<sup>5</sup> Both statutes reinforced the role of the parish in the provision of welfare to the poor, and although this position was already long established the new legislation added specific detail as to how the administration of poor relief should be performed.<sup>6</sup>

The Elizabethan Acts provided the legal framework upon which poor relief was administered in parishes for more than 200 years, but there were inherent

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<sup>3</sup> M.K. McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England, 1350-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.115-27.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.127-38.

<sup>5</sup> P. Fideler, *Social Welfare in Pre-Industrial England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.98.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.100-1.

weaknesses with this system of relief brought into greater focus by the increasing role of the state and economic development during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Steven King identified four key weaknesses with the old poor law. These were, firstly, the inconsistency between parishes concerning the eligibility of recipients and, secondly, the level of poor relief they were provided. Thirdly, the law was too focused on the provision of relief to the able-bodied because of the 'elite's' desire to prevent civil disorder, which meant insufficient attention was given to the prevention of poverty. Finally, the unsuitability of the parish as an administrative unit in developing urban areas because both the elite who managed poor relief and those persons being relieved often identified with the larger urban unit, both economically and socially, rather than with the parish.<sup>7</sup> In King's opinion these deficiencies in the old law caused many of the problems that occurred with its operation.<sup>8</sup>

In another review of English welfare systems, Harris concurred that there were problems with the old poor law, highlighting the inconsistent administration of poor relief from parish to parish which encouraged persons seeking relief to move to the places where the provision of relief was most generous.<sup>9</sup> King's analysis of the faults that lay at the heart of the Elizabethan legislation is also validated by the continuous attempts that were made to remedy them by the passage of supplementary legislation. The remedial acts were numerous, but it is worth noting three significant pieces of legislation in particular because they lay at the heart of the issues debated by philosophers and reformers in the lead up to the new poor law. These were the Act of Settlement of 1662 (which gave parish overseers the right to remove any 'strangers' that were about to claim relief); the Poor Law Act of 1722 (which gave overseers the right to build workhouses); and Gilbert's Act of 1782 (which allowed parishes to combine into poor law unions and also promoted the payment of outdoor relief to poor persons not relieved in workhouses).<sup>10</sup>

The principles that underpinned Gilbert's Act were to provide indoor relief to the vulnerable, as well as requiring them to work to give a 'moral' contribution towards their maintenance. The able-bodied were to be offered places within the workhouses only on a temporary basis and were expected to live and work externally, and to be relieved through outdoor relief if required.<sup>11</sup> Samantha Shave has noted that although parishes were not compelled to implement the provisions of

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<sup>7</sup> King, *Poverty and Welfare*, pp.21-2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> B. Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: Society, State and Social Welfare in England and Wales 1800-1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.41.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp.41-2.

<sup>11</sup> S.A. Shave, *Pauper Policies, Poor Law Practice in England, 1780-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp.57-60.

the act, there were many in south-England (although none in Essex) that found Gilbert workhouses to be a sympathetic and cost effective way of providing relief.<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note the philosophical differences between Gilbert's fairly benign and concerned rationale for workhouses, compared to the punishment oriented attitudes of Jeremy Bentham and the architects of the 1834 Act towards their use described later in this chapter. It seems likely that the social concern demonstrated by those that adopted Gilbert provisions after 1781 would have continued up to and after the 1834 Act.

### *1.1 Economic and Philosophical Debates Concerning the Old Poor Law*

Economic stress from the rising costs of outdoor relief upon local taxpayers, both during and immediately after the Napoleonic Wars, prompted wholesale calls for fundamental changes to the old poor law. There were several systems of relief within which able-bodied people could apply to the parish to have their wages supplemented by allowances. The best known of these was termed the Speenhamland system (the one advocated by the Berkshire parish of Speenhamland) and it had provoked intense disapprobation from philosophers, landowners and politicians alike.<sup>13</sup> Under Speenhamland, allowances were paid according to a pre-defined scale, although alternative systems existed alongside this; some parishes paid contributions to employers from outside their jurisdiction who hired workers that had been 'on the rounds' for work (Roundsman system), whilst others implemented a quota system for hiring whereby the vestry charged a labour rate which was rebated according to how many labourers a farmer employed.<sup>14</sup> Calls for reform of the old law to reduce the cost of relief prompted the House of Commons to set up a Select Committee in 1817 to investigate its operation, under the chairmanship of William Sturges Bourne. Based on the findings of the committee, the 'Sturges Bourne Acts' were passed in 1818 and 1819, to provide mechanisms to make savings in relief expenditure. The first of these allowed vestry votes to be weighted according to the rateable value of members' properties, and the second allowed parishes to create select vestries (for one or more parishes) whose sole focus was to control relief of the poor.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, the 'patchwork' of amendments and additions to the law was insufficient to satisfy the outcry for reform

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp.60-72.

<sup>13</sup> Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, p.41.

<sup>14</sup> D. Eastwood, *Governing Rural England, Tradition and Transformation in Local Government, 1780-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002 [1994]), pp.156-7.

<sup>15</sup> Shave, *Pauper Policies*, p.111.



and by 1832 the political environment and the clamour for change led to the creation of a Royal Commission that laid the groundwork for the 1834 Act.<sup>16</sup>

Much of the philosophical debate that preceded the 1834 Act focused upon the 'moral hazard' that was attached to the payment of outdoor poor relief to agricultural labourers which, it was suggested, had the effect of allowing employers to maintain low wages and acted as a disincentive to work. Thus, the aforementioned Royal Commission was pre-occupied with reducing the entitlement to outdoor-relief for agricultural workers.<sup>17</sup> The percentage of the total population of England and Wales, from the sixteen counties identified as predominantly agricultural, was only 31.9 % in 1751 and had fallen to 23.8% by 1851.<sup>18</sup> It would appear, therefore, that much of the rationale within the Act was skewed towards economic arguments applicable only to a minority of the population. The same focus on outdoor relief paid to farm workers, directly influenced Nassau Senior and Edwin Chadwick who were the most significant contributors to the 1834 Report by the Royal Commission (hereafter 1834 Report), which was followed by the passage of the 1834 Act.<sup>19</sup>

Brundage has provided a comprehensive summary of the main philosophies that influenced contemporary thinking on the subject of the poor laws. Joseph Townsend (English cleric, medical doctor and philosopher, 1739-1816), Edmund Burke (Irish statesman and political theorist, 1729-1797) and Thomas Malthus (English cleric and philosopher, 1766-1834) all advocated abrogation of statutory poor relief. Sir Fredrick Eden (writer on poverty and other social concerns, 1766-1809) also argued strongly against poor relief due to its negative economic effects but stopped short of proposing abolition. In contrast, Adam Smith (philosopher and political economist, 1723-1790) and Jeremy Bentham (philosopher and social reformer, 1748-1832) were in favour of maintaining statutory poor relief.<sup>20</sup> As Malthus and Bentham have been considered the 'spiritual fathers' of the 1834 Act it is appropriate to provide a brief overview of their ideas.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, p.27.

<sup>17</sup> W. A. Armstrong and J.P. Huzel, 'Food, Shelter and Self-Help, the Poor Law and the Position of the Labourer in Rural Society', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part II: 1750-1850*, ed. G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), p.760.

<sup>18</sup> W. A. Armstrong, 'Rural Population Growth, Systems of Employment and Incomes', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part II: 1750-1850*, ed. G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), p.642.

<sup>19</sup> N. Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement, 1834-44* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), p.2.

<sup>20</sup> A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp.30, 31.

<sup>21</sup> Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement*, p.2.

Malthus argued in his famous essay of 1798 that providing allowances to the able-bodied poor had an adverse effect upon others of the same class. He proposed that there was a finite amount of food and because relief payments did not result in any increase in economic output, this resource would have to be shared amongst a greater number of people. He therefore opined that: 'It may at first appear strange, but I believe it is true, That I cannot by means of money raise a poor man and enable him to live much better than he did before, without proportionably depressing others in the same class'.<sup>22</sup>

As Geoffrey Gilbert observed in the introduction to the *Oxford World's Classics* edition of Malthus' essay, he did not exercise the caution, in either his social or economic judgements, that would be considered appropriate today.<sup>23</sup> Malthus failed to provide any evidence to support his assertion that the poor lacked 'frugality' and 'sobriety', or that food prices increased because the payment of allowances was made with no commensurate increase in production.<sup>24</sup> Nor did he engage with the real reasons why allowances to the able-bodied were paid, or recognise that they supplemented insufficient wages rather than replaced them, particularly in agrarian communities where changing crop prices could significantly affect the profitability of farms. Nevertheless, his ideas were highly influential, particularly among land and tithe holders who often had to accept discounts to their rental income when farmers' profits fell below sustainable levels.

Additionally, Malthus argued that 'allowances to the able-bodied' caused further economic damage because they removed individuals' fear that they would be unable to support additional members of their family. He suggested that, because of this feature, population was likely to rise at a 'geometric rate' whereas food availability would rise at an 'arithmetic rate', which would inevitably lead to a shortage of food. Clearly, the compound effect of percentage increases as opposed to those of absolute amounts would have caused significant supply shortages, if his proposition had been proven to be correct. He also argued that without any external interference 'upper class' people would produce the optimal number of children to ensure that they maintained their standard of living, without any consideration of receiving relief. Whereas the 'lower classes' would follow the same principle in order to ensure they could subsist, but would take account of the relief they would probably receive. A disparity between the perceptions of these two groups towards poor relief,

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<sup>22</sup> T. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [1798]), p.38.

<sup>23</sup> G. Gilbert, 'Introduction', in *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [1798]), pp.1-XXX.

<sup>24</sup> Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, pp.40-2.

in Malthus' view, disrupted natural economic checks and balances.<sup>25</sup> While he did not believe that there was a realistic prospect of the poor laws being repealed, he proposed that the allowance system, which he believed was the most damaging of the provisions of the laws, should be abolished. This was a widely held opinion which influenced the drafting of the 1834 Act, as may be seen from its attention to this subject.<sup>26</sup>

Yet, it is possible to argue that Bentham had a longer-term influence than Malthus. In Bentham's opinion, the provision of poor relief to the deserving was a rational approach, not because it was morally correct but because failure to do so would inevitably lead to riot and possibly revolution. Nevertheless, the national increase in the level of poor relief was perceived as a financial crisis at the end of the eighteenth century and Bentham proposed a scheme which he believed would provide a solution.<sup>27</sup> As noted above, the idea of workhouses was not original, but as Brundage observed, the design that Bentham proposed was 'an entirely new type'.<sup>28</sup> He proposed building a network of workhouses, each of which would hold as many as 2,000 paupers, based upon the model he had developed for prisons named the Panopticon. They were to be circular buildings designed in such a way that supervisors could see the inmates at all times, whilst the latter would be unable to know that they were being observed. This idea was based upon a 'utilitarian' theory that the efforts of the occupants could be more effectively managed if they were subject to constant surveillance.<sup>29</sup> The proposal was controversial even for prisons, so to suggest using the same concept for workhouses was considered extreme. Kathryn Morrison aptly termed the conceptual building the 'deterrent workhouse', which captures the contemporary sentiment, felt by some, that it was criminal to require relief if you were poor.<sup>30</sup> From Bentham's perspective it was simply the most logical way to organise a building so that the labour conducted by its occupiers could be utilised in the most effective way, thereby maximising income.<sup>31</sup>

Bentham proposed that it was not all poor people that caused the increase in poor relief payments, but only those who were 'indigent'. He defined poverty and indigence as follows: 'Poverty is the state of everyone who, in order to obtain subsistence, is forced to have recourse to labour. Indigence is the state of him who,

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.15-17.

<sup>26</sup> Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930*, p.32.

<sup>27</sup> P. Schofield, *Bentham: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum Publishing, 2009), p.80.

<sup>28</sup> Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930*, p.35.

<sup>29</sup> Schofield, *Bentham: A Guide for the Perplexed*, p.11.

<sup>30</sup> K. Morrison, *The Workhouse, a Study of Poor Law Buildings in England* (Swindon: English Heritage, 1999), pp.33-5.

<sup>31</sup> Schofield, *Bentham: A Guide for the Perplexed*, p.81.

being destitute of property is at the same time either unable to labour, or unable, even for labour, to procure the supply of which he happens thus to be in want'.<sup>32</sup> He therefore recognised that there were separate categories of 'indigents' that required different treatment, but those who were able to work represented a labour resource that could at least cover their own relief costs and should be forced to remain in the workhouse until they had done so.<sup>33</sup>

Bentham's radical 'utilitarianism' was not widely accepted, and thus was not mandated in the 1834 Act. Nevertheless, a softer version of it was adopted, in the form of requiring every Poor Law Union to build a workhouse with the additional stipulation that relief should be provided within the institution unless there was a valid reason for outdoor payments. It seems likely, therefore, that Bentham influenced the authors of the 1834 Report and Act, as Malthus had, towards adopting a much harsher approach towards the poor than had existed in some areas under the old poor law.<sup>34</sup>

David Filtness has recently proposed that it was 'ideological opposition' to the system of relief under the old law that drove the agenda for change leading to the reform of 1834. In his recent thesis, he explored the doctrine of 'self-help' which had developed in the eighteenth century and gained momentum in the early nineteenth.<sup>35</sup> This philosophy rejected the paternalistic approach towards relieving the poor in favour of a purely economic one, whereby individuals were capable of extricating themselves from the state of poverty by their own efforts. However, it did not recognise that the prevailing socio-economic conditions made it all but impossible for the poor to exercise self-help, and in reality relief, rather than having been keenly sought by the poor, may have had a demoralising effect and therefore perpetuated the problem.<sup>36</sup> In describing the power of this abstract thought process, Filtness explained that it had largely overwhelmed the empirical evidence collected by the authors of the 1834 Report.<sup>37</sup>

Indeed, the influence of the philosophy of self-help was evident throughout the 1834 Report. For example, in the section which described the effect of allowances upon those workers who received them, the report stated they were 'destructive to his honesty and his temper, as his subsistence does not depend on

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<sup>32</sup> J. Bentham, *Writings on the Poor Laws: Vol. I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001 [1797]), quoted in Schofield, *Bentham: A Guide for the Perplexed*, p.81.

<sup>33</sup> Schofield, *Bentham: A Guide for the Perplexed*, p.81.

<sup>34</sup> Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930*, p.34.

<sup>35</sup> D. Filtness, 'Poverty, Savings Banks and the Development of Self-help, c. 1775-1834' (PhD Thesis, Cambridge Univ., 2013), pp.213-4.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.215.

his exertions'.<sup>38</sup> This polemical phrasing was purportedly based upon examples from the responses to the survey underpinning the report, although it seems that the conclusions of the authors relied more on conviction than evidence. Whatever the understanding of the poor law philosophers and legislators of the 1834 Act, a key question is whether their beliefs were shared by the elites that administered relief, both from a moral standpoint and in their practical application.

## 1.2 'Standard' and 'Revisionist' Analyses of the Poor Laws

A great deal of the scholarly study on poor relief has been expended on attempting to determine the validity of the views of this contemporary discourse, referring to mainly centrally collated sources of data. So, before considering historiography which is based upon local sources, it is appropriate to consider aspects of this work, initially from those historians who adopted a top-down approach.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb (hereafter called the Webbs), working after the First World War, were amongst the first historians to consider the question of the impact of the 1834 Act on the needs of the poor. In doing so they relied upon a broad-based understanding of legislation, implementation strategies and systems of belief. This approach was based upon their own strongly held beliefs concerning the iniquity of the old law, which they considered had consistently failed to provide sufficient relief for destitute people.<sup>39</sup> It was this viewpoint that led King to classify the Webbs as members of what he termed the 'pessimistic' school of old poor law historiography.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, as King explained, the Webbs' assertion was misleading because the insufficiency of relief was not calibrated against the level of wages.<sup>41</sup> The Webbs' interpretation of the old law was influenced by their own agenda and it seems that the latter accounted for their polemical style of delivery. In another review of the topic, Kidd suggested that poor relief historiography had too often taken a 'teleological perspective' insofar as it had portrayed a natural progression towards the modern welfare state and that this also contributed towards the Webbs' partisan account.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, whether the law was sufficient to support

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<sup>38</sup> ProQuest, 1834 (44), Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws, p.49.

<sup>39</sup> S. and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History: Part II The Last Hundred Years* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1963 [1929]), p.4.

<sup>40</sup> King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850*, p.61.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.55.

<sup>42</sup> A. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), pp.5-6.

the poor is a complicated question because the poor were not a single easily definable category and not all relief was necessarily provided by the parish.

For the Webbs, the 1834 Act did not satisfactorily address the deficiencies of the previous regime, and most importantly did not offer an approach which would alleviate the distress of the poor.<sup>43</sup> Concerning the first of the two fundamental principles embodied with the 1834 Act, discontinuing the practice of outdoor relief, the Webbs claimed that the Boards of Guardians had autonomy and that they continued to approve outdoor relief.<sup>44</sup> This statement, although made with certainty, was not supported by any published evidence and, whilst insufficient local studies have been conducted to completely refute the Webbs' claim, the prohibitory orders that were issued by the Poor Law Commission demonstrated that the Boards of Guardians did not have complete independence. The second principle of deterring indigence by the use of workhouse orders, was regarded by the Webbs as a concept akin to imprisonment for committing a crime, and they expressed concern about the implications for children and the growth of vice that would arise, particularly from the general mixed workhouse.<sup>45</sup> Again, they provided no specific evidence or examples, so there is a great deal of scope for detailed studies of how the two key principles of the 1834 Act were implemented. In his 1998 overview of the historiography of the Poor Laws, Englander criticised the approach of historians such as the Webbs, who were simply echoing contemporary discourse on the welfare state and pointed out that a historian writing at the same time, Helen Bosanquet, had also criticised the Webbs for failing to address the many challenges that the new poor law had to overcome to adapt to local conditions.<sup>46</sup>

A number of revisionist historians in the second half of the twentieth century, like the Webbs, continued to use centrally collated sources rather than local ones. Blaug termed the Webbs' historiography as the 'standard analysis of the effects of the Old poor law', which largely accepted and endorsed the conclusions embodied within the 1834 Act.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, he felt that these should be questioned, and in his revisionist approach he developed an argument against the key provision of the 1834 Report, i.e. that the payment of outdoor relief was harmful because it led to farmers setting a lower wage than they otherwise would have. Blaug observed, firstly, that the Poor Law Commissioners did not provide any detailed analysis in

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<sup>43</sup> Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law History: Part II the Last Hundred Years*, p.100.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.145.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.137-42.

<sup>46</sup> D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Britain, 1834-1914* (Oxford: Routledge, 2013 [1998]), p.83.

<sup>47</sup> M. Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old poor law and the Making of the New', *Journal of Economic History*, XXIII (1963), pp.151-84.

support of their conclusions and, secondly, that a wage subsidy would have anyway depressed the supply of labour which in turn would have resulted in an increase of wages.<sup>48</sup> Overall, Blaug adopted a more optimistic view of the old law's system of outdoor relief as an approach which had acted to provide effective income support at a time when there was a surplus of labour within the rural economy of England and Wales.<sup>49</sup>

Baugh was as critical as Blaug had been of the conclusions of the Poor Law Commissioners and stated that they lacked objectivity, because they ignored evidence provided in response to their own questions.<sup>50</sup> In similar fashion to Blaug, Baugh examined the allowance system that existed within the old law administration and provided an economic analysis in support of its overall flexibility and its ability to adapt to the local economic circumstances and needs.<sup>51</sup> Boyer further built upon these revisionist views by constructing an economic analysis to explain why the allowance system had become prevalent under the old poor law, as a flexible and relatively inexpensive way of providing income support for either unemployment or inadequate wages.<sup>52</sup> Thus, Blaug, Baugh and Boyer all focused upon the flexibility and expediency that derived from the old poor law's allowance system and their analyses were from an economic rather than a social history perspective.

These approaches have not passed unchallenged themselves. Karel Williams was highly critical of historians' use of the central sources that existed before the 1834 Act. He claimed that writers had been selective about which sources they had used and had failed to refer between the various returns. Examples he cited were Blaug's heavy reliance upon the 1824 return on labourers' wages in his 1963 article and upon the rural queries appendix of the 1834 Report in his 1964 article,<sup>53</sup> as well as his failure to refer between the two.<sup>54</sup> Williams also commented upon the reliability of the returns themselves in the period from 1803 until the 1834 Act, correctly noting the most comprehensive returns were the ones collected for 1803, 1824 and the Rural Queries.<sup>55</sup> These returns were based upon detailed questionnaires collected at a parish level. However, he failed to acknowledge that the return published in 1818

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.153.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp.176-7.

<sup>50</sup> D. Baugh, 'The Cost of Poor Relief in South-East England, 1790-1834', *Economic History Review*, 28 (1975), p.50-68.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> G. Boyer, *An Economic History of The English Poor Law 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.267.

<sup>53</sup> Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old poor law and the Making of the New'; M. Blaug, 'The Poor Law Report Reexamined'.

<sup>54</sup> K. Williams, 'The poor law after 1834', in *From Pauperism to Poverty*, ed. K. Williams (London: Routledge, 1981), p.35.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.36.

also provided figures for the years 1813-1815 at a parish level, albeit in less detail than in 1803.<sup>56</sup>

Overall, Williams was surely correct to highlight important issues that must be considered when constructing hypotheses based upon mainly centrally collated data. Firstly, whilst the central records were extensive (i.e. national in scope) they most often provided gross expenditure figures, and only occasionally analysed these by category of relief. The effect of this aggregation was likely to have hidden or obscured important information that could have been apparent from a more granular dataset. Secondly, some of these sources were subjective insofar as they recorded the answers to questions posed in surveys. The main examples of this are the 1825 Return on Agricultural Wages and the Rural Queries appendix to the 1834 Report.<sup>57</sup> Clearly, the respondents may have provided responses that were unreliable, either deliberately to satisfy the questioner, or due to insufficient information having been available to allow them to answer accurately. Thirdly, there was no precision or consistency concerning what the respondents included within the aggregated numbers provided. So, some officials may have included related parish expenses simply because they were accounted for in the overseers' accounts, whereas such items may have been excluded in other returns. Clearly, discrepancies of this type may have skewed the analyses of historians relying solely upon figures in the central returns.

### *1.3 Analyses of the Old Poor Law Based Upon Local Records*

Historical analysis of the central sources has become unfashionable in the last three decades or so, with historians of poor relief tending towards the development of local and micro-histories. The approach has partly resulted from the perception that the parish was the principal administrative unit for the determination of poor relief policy and historians have wanted to develop deeper and richer understandings of local behaviour, based upon local data. Also, more critical analyses of the centrally collected data has rightly shown that they were deficient in several respects and therefore limited the scope of reasoned analysis.<sup>58</sup> The counter-argument to this is that, despite their deficiency, the central records are sufficiently broad and coherent to allow historians to consider questions, such as the

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<sup>56</sup> ProQuest, 1818 (82), Abridgement of Abstract of Answers and Returns.

<sup>57</sup> ProQuest, 1825 (299), Abstract Return on Practice of paying Wages of Labour out of Poor Rates, (hereinafter called the 1825 return; 1834 (44), Royal Commission of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of Poor Laws, Appendix B1 Answers to Rural Queries.

<sup>58</sup> B. Khun Song, 'Parish typology and the operation of the Poor Laws in early nineteenth-century Oxfordshire', *Agricultural History Review*, 50.2 (2002), p.205.



validity of the philosophy of the poor law reformers, which would be difficult using local records.

Top-down approaches to writing the history of the old poor laws have inevitably failed to capture the different ways in which they had been adapted to the local provision of relief, and whether or not this was sufficient because by definition this would have required local study.<sup>59</sup> Digby recognised that there was a diversity in the way in which the old poor law had been implemented in different localities that could not be adequately understood or explained from a macro-level view of legislation or nationwide administrative arrangements.<sup>60</sup> More recently, King noted the same issue with the top-down writing of the history of the poor laws, but also suggested that the 'shortcoming' had begun to be addressed by the writing of local histories during the 1990s. He has made a call for further studies focussing upon 'smaller-scale spatial divisions' in order to develop a better understanding of the relationships that existed between the socio-economic characteristics of an area and the administration of poor relief.<sup>61</sup> An overarching and important point that both Digby and King have made is that there was a fundamental flaw in the reasoning of historians who had assumed that there was any national consistency in the perception and implementation of the poor laws, both old and new after the 1834 Act.

Englander's review of the subject acknowledged that an increased number of local studies has done much to improve the understanding of the ways in which the poor laws had been administered and also explained the necessity of considering the system in the wider context of poor relief.<sup>62</sup> Yet, he suggested there is also a negative aspect to the high volume of the studies on the local history of poor relief, namely that the level of detail makes it difficult to draw conclusions for a wider area. Whilst local studies have provided many insights into the experiences of the poor and the elite that managed their relief, it is important to measure these findings within a national or regional framework of reference to ensure that they contribute towards an improved level of knowledge.<sup>63</sup>

The entire bottom-up approach has been challenged strongly by Williams; in his opinion, it inevitably provides an incomplete and therefore skewed picture.<sup>64</sup> Williams was also dismissive of the value of local and regional studies in the absence of a 'national context', but went on to claim that no adequate national

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<sup>59</sup> Fideler, *Social Welfare in Pre-Industrial England*, p.192.

<sup>60</sup> A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p.ix.

<sup>61</sup> King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850*, p.4.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, pp.84, 269.

<sup>63</sup> Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Britain, 1834-1914*, pp.85-7.

<sup>64</sup> Williams, 'The poor law after 1834', in *From Pauperism to Poverty*, p.33.

studies existed.<sup>65</sup> He may have a point about the fragmentary nature of local histories of the poor law, but to counter this view, it seems entirely valid to state that only local records provide the level of detail required to gain a deep understanding of poor law history. It is possible that a more nuanced approach would overcome the disjointed nature of local study, whereby research is focused upon groupings of parishes that form 'spatial divisions' where there was some commonality in their socio-economic characteristics. Such an approach may be more informative of their attitudes towards poor relief provision and also enable a clearer comparison to regional/national data.<sup>66</sup>

Hindle credited Slack as being an historian who transformed the historiography of early modern poverty through his book *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England*. Despite the fact that Slack's 'seminal' book and Hindle's later, *On the Parish*, provided analyses for earlier periods than that covered by this thesis, they are highly relevant because they dealt with how poor law legislation was adapted by local elites to best serve their interests.<sup>67</sup> Slack helped to develop the study of local history 'from below', where the focus was to discover the factors that affected local decision-making. This in turn helped develop a picture of local socio-economic character and how this informed the decisions concerning the relief of the poor. It is important to note that sources used by historians of poor relief of the seventeenth and eighteenth century are generally the same as those available for the early nineteenth century and are equally inconsistent and diverse.<sup>68</sup> In this way Slack's approach is equally as valid for nineteenth-century research as it was for earlier periods.

There have been a number of micro-histories written since the 1970s and these have contributed to developing an insight into the multi-layered attitudes and treatment of the delivery of poor relief.<sup>69</sup> In one significant recent micro-history, Samantha Williams provided a summary of the main themes emerging from local studies during the last three to four decades of research. Firstly, that parishes were

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.35.

<sup>66</sup> King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850*, p.269.

<sup>67</sup> S. Hindle, *On the Parish: The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England, c. 1550-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 [2004]), p.1; P. Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Longman, 1988).

<sup>68</sup> Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England*., p.7.

<sup>69</sup> Key examples include: J. Broad, 'Parish Economies of Welfare, 1650-1834', *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), pp. 985-1006; Digby, *Pauper Palaces*; R. Dyson, 'Who were the Poor of Oxford in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries?' in A. Gestrich, S. King and L. Raphael (eds.), *Being Poor in Modern Europe: Historical Perspectives, 1800-1940* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), 43-89; P. Sharpe, *Population and Society in an East Devon Parish: Reproducing Colyton, 1540-1840* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002); S. Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle under the English Poor Law* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011).

often generous with the provision of relief, particularly to the aged and infirm, until the late eighteenth century at which point various factors such as increased unemployment, population growth and agricultural recessions, caused parish rates to become strained and resulted in a reduced level of generosity.<sup>70</sup> Secondly, that poor relief did not necessarily depend upon allowances provided under the auspices of the poor laws, and that sometimes relief was provided alongside other approaches, including charitable grants as well as charity in kind, such as direct gifts of food, clothing, fuel etc.<sup>71</sup> A third theme concerns the concept of 'the economy of makeshifts', as conceived by Olwen Hufton concerning the strategies used by the poor in France.<sup>72</sup> Hufton's concept of the sometimes aggressive strategies deployed by the poor to eke out an existence has since been modified, insofar as it pertained to the poor in England, as a multi-layered situation where a number of different, but possibly overlapping, agents assisted the poor and operated alongside them to develop strategies for survival.<sup>73</sup> The 'economy of makeshifts' is closely linked to the concept of the politics of the parish as introduced by Wrightson in terms of how the poor applying for relief were best able to appeal to decision makers in the parish vestry and also how these decision makers viewed the poor.<sup>74</sup> Fourthly, there is the question of how parishes regarded the provision of outdoor relief and the allowance system, and how this was perceived before and after the 1834 Act as discussed earlier.

Finally, Williams has drawn attention to a certain disequilibrium in the provision of poor relief, whether because of gender bias (the extent to which relief was preferentially provided to women who were unmarried but with children, or widows), or related to the life cycle of poverty.<sup>75</sup> The latter concept is potentially revealing because it suggests that families desired employment, but required relief at different junctures during their lives because of reasons of inability or incapacity to work. This in turn may reveal a great deal about the structural aspects of local

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<sup>70</sup> Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Lifecycle*, p.5.

<sup>71</sup> L. Botelho, *Old Age and the English Poor Law* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004); Broad, 'Parish economies of welfare'.

<sup>72</sup> O. H. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750-1789* (London: Methuen, 1974).

<sup>73</sup> S. King and A. Tomkins, 'Introduction: The historiography of parish poor relief', in S. King and A. Tomkins (eds.), *The Poor in England, 1700-1850: An Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.13.

<sup>74</sup> K. Wrightson, 'The politics of the parish in early modern England', in P. Griffiths, A. Fox, S. Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996), pp.10-46.

<sup>75</sup> Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle*, p.12; A. Tomkins, 'Women and Poverty', in H. Barker and E. Chalus (eds.), *Women's History, 1700-1850* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp.152-73; T. Wales, 'Poverty poor relief and life-cycle: some evidence from seventeenth century Norfolk' in R.M. Smith (ed.), *Land Kinship and Life Cycle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp.360-4, 366-7.

economies as well as variations in economic cycles which forced people to resort to poor relief. Williams explained that substantial research has shown that the life cycle of poverty had been consistent throughout the existence of the old poor law varying little during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>76</sup>

#### 1.4 *Evaluating the Historiographical Approaches to the Poor Law*

For approximately the last three decades, old poor law historians have used the detailed records prepared by parish officials such as overseers' accounts and vestry minutes (local records), as opposed to those collated by Parliament and based upon returns submitted in response to requests/demands for information (central records). Analysis of local sources has greatly enhanced the understanding of the plight of paupers and the strategies they used to survive. The approach, however, is not without its problems or obstacles. Assimilating the large amount of material available may not always be practically possible. Also, as Henry French recently argued, the lack of uniformity of local records and the differing approaches towards their analysis means that it is difficult to develop an holistic view from studies based upon them; as a result they can often be both 'overlapping and contradictory'.<sup>77</sup> While observing that the research into the old poor law over the last thirty years had been extensive and 'left few stones unturned', he also stated that much of the research had concentrated on specific groups such as the elderly or sick and, therefore, there had been a failure to address the overall composition of poor relief in any particular parish.<sup>78</sup> Further, he noted that only the 'systematic' studies from King and Williams had provided chronological changes in the patterns of relief between 1760 and 1835.<sup>79</sup>

French suggested an approach towards identifying relief patterns from a large amount of local data in a recent study focused on the Essex parish of Terling, using the reconstruction of pauper biographies data previously created by the Cambridge Group for Population and Social Structure (CAMPOP). These were combined with the overseers' disbursements to show how relief provision had changed over the period. For example, he was able to show that widows who were under sixty years old had received on average a higher number of payments between 1815 and 1834, than any of the other periods for which he analysed data.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Lifecycle*, p.13.

<sup>77</sup> H. French, 'How dependent were the "dependent poor"? Poor relief and the life course in Terling Essex, 1762-1834', *Continuity and Change*, 30, 2 (2015), pp.193-222.

<sup>78</sup> French, 'An Irrevocable Shift', p.788.

<sup>79</sup> King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850*; Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Lifecycle*.

<sup>80</sup> French, 'An Irrevocable Shift', p.788.

Similarly, Thomas Sokoll recognised the value of time series of poor relief data insofar as they provide a framework which allows identification of trends, and in turn the recognition of the factors affecting them. He returned to the relationship between the price of wheat and poor law expenditure, as originally discussed by Blaug.<sup>81</sup> In his article, Sokoll charted poor relief expenditure for the Essex parish of Ardleigh, other Essex parishes and the price of wheat between 1790 and 1834. He also used the dataset that Baugh had used in his article on poor relief costs in southern-England, i.e. returns prepared for the House of Lords which had never been submitted.<sup>82</sup> In similar fashion to Blaug, he noticed that there appeared to be some relationship between relief expenditure and the wheat price, although the source must be treated with some caution as will be discussed below in Chapter 2. Nevertheless, his analysis demonstrates the value of time series data which would be further enhanced if it was based upon locally sourced data.

These analyses from French and Sokoll proposed quantitative approaches which could be extended to become common frameworks that allow for analysis across multiple parishes and wider areas. This would allow historians to pose and attempt to answer broad questions in the way of earlier studies from historians such as Blaug, Baugh and Boyer.<sup>83</sup> The issues with using the central records as the basis for historical analysis will be discussed in some detail in the next chapter, but even before entering into this discussion, an approach which allows for macro-level as well as micro-level analysis based upon the best available data would clearly be valuable.

It may be the case, as suggested by Barry Reay, that ultimately all history is micro-history because it is impossible to 'unravel' complex subjects without using the information which may be available from local sources.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, these studies may represent a patchwork of understanding, from which it is difficult to derive a broader view. So, it is essential to combine the granularity and accuracy that is derived from local analyses in a way which facilitates the development of regional and even national views. One of the overarching aims of this current study has been to demonstrate a way in which local poor relief data may be organised so that it may be analysed to answer wide-reaching questions as well as local ones. Before

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<sup>81</sup> T. Sokoll, 'Families, Wheat Prices and the Allowance Cycle', in P. Jones, S. King (eds.), *Obligation, Entitlement and Dispute under the English Poor Laws* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), pp.84-6.

<sup>82</sup> Baugh, 'The Cost of Poor Relief in South-East England'.

<sup>83</sup> Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law' pp.151-84; Baugh, 'The Cost of Poor Relief in South-East England', pp.50-68; Boyer, *An Economic History of The English Poor Law*.

<sup>84</sup> B. Reay, *Microhistories: Demography, Society and Culture in Rural England, 1800-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.262.

considering the approach used to achieve this objective, it is important to give context by providing an overview and definition of the geographical area that was chosen as the subject to research.

### 1.5 *The Extended Maldon Area*

The borough town and port of Maldon and selected rural parishes from the geographically neighbouring Dengie hundred in mid-east Essex (hereafter called the Extended Maldon Area) have been chosen as the area for study. From the perspective of landscape, Essex may be divided into three main regions; the 'Essex Till' which covers the mid-west to north-west, the 'Mid-Essex Zone' strip of land that extends from the north to the south through the centre of the county, and 'Coastal or maritime Essex' to the east side from top to bottom.<sup>85</sup> Maldon and its rural environs are all situated within the coastal area, which borders the Thames Estuary and the North Sea. Understandably, given this access to the sea and major river estuary, transport of goods and people to Europe and major ports in Britain, particularly London, mainly took place by water until the development of the railways and road networks. Hunter suggested that there was a 'symbiosis' between the region and London from the 'later middle-ages', where farm produce, oysters and fish were all shipped from Essex to the city and 'the returning barges' transported large quantities of manure to fertilise crops.<sup>86</sup>

Despite Essex's proximity to London it was only the south-western part of the county which could access this city easily by land until the advent of the railway system. The Eastern Counties Railway was formed by an act of Parliament in 1836, and a train line was initially constructed between Mile End and Romford in 1839, extending to Brentwood in 1840, Colchester 1843 and Norwich in 1849. Over the same period, a further line was built from Cambridge to London that ran from north to south along the west side of the county via Bishops Stortford in Hertfordshire.<sup>87</sup> Prior to the construction of the railway, major roads had been improved in the county from the late eighteenth century because they had been placed under the control of Turnpike Trusts, although cross country routes were still of poor quality because they were managed by parishes which could only raise limited funds to spend on them. Whilst, the turnpikes supported a stagecoach network and some corn wagons, the

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<sup>85</sup> J. Hunter, *The Essex Landscape, a Study of its Form and History* (Chelmsford: Essex Record Office, 1999), pp.12-13.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.13-14.

<sup>87</sup> K. Neale, *Essex in History* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 1997), pp.142-3.

bulk of produce was still transported by water.<sup>88</sup> Even though travel to London or other major towns was possible before the construction of the railways, it was probably difficult and expensive for the majority of Essex inhabitants. This may have acted as a deterrent to farm workers migrating from their parishes, and they may have adopted the view that even though there were sometimes labour surpluses they could at least subsist under the relatively generous poor relief regimes in most of Essex.

Whilst the county was predominantly rural, western parishes in the Becontree Hundred, such as West Ham, adjoined the London metropolitan districts in Middlesex. London's population had almost doubled in size between 1801 and 1841, and East London was on average, between these dates, the second most populated area of the city with 21.7%.<sup>89</sup> Becontree's proximity to London meant that its parishes were, therefore, untypical of Essex as a whole and more urban than rural in character with commensurately higher populations. For example, the parish of Ilford was already shown as having population of 11,580 in the 1831 Census.<sup>90</sup>

Outside of this increasingly urbanised part of the county, the towns were mainly small to medium-sized, mostly developing as markets for the surrounding country parishes, and/or as centres of communication because of their locations. The following table provides examples of some basic data concerning five Essex towns relevant to this study; Chelmsford and Witham because of their business connections with Maldon, and Colchester and Harwich because they were also ports on Essex's east coast.

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<sup>88</sup> A.F.J. Brown, *English History from Essex Sources, 1750-1900* (Chelmsford: Essex Record Office, 1952), pp.55-61.

<sup>89</sup> D. R. Green, *Pauper Capital, London and the Poor Law, 1790-1870* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2010), p.52.

<sup>90</sup> ProQuest, 1833 (149).

Town	Number of Parishes	Population	% Families Employed in Agriculture
Maldon	3	3,831	17
Chelmsford	1	5,435	9
Colchester	16	16,167	14
Harwich	2	4,297	9
Witham	1	2,735	18

**Table 1.1: Comparison of 1831 Census Data for the Essex Towns of Maldon, Chelmsford, Colchester, Harwich (with Dovercourt) and Witham.<sup>91</sup>**

In the early nineteenth century, Colchester was predominantly a market town that supported surrounding rural parishes through processing some of their agricultural produce and providing retail/professional services. This meant that it was sensitive to the economic state of agriculture, and consequently this adversely affected the town's fortunes during the agrarian recession that took place in the forty years following the end of the Napoleonic wars. Previously, during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the town had prospered from cloth manufacturing but when this industry declined no substitute, in terms of economic contribution, was developed. The silk making industry established in the second half of the eighteenth century 'never assumed comparable scale or importance'.<sup>92</sup> In the 1820s the industry started to decline, and by the 1840s the remaining workers were so poorly paid they had to seek support in the local workhouse. Despite this reduction in industrial output, Colchester benefitted from its closeness with the London market, and trading links with the continent through its own port and nearby Harwich. It was, therefore, able to develop a position as trading hub, which facilitated development of the town's economy during the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>93</sup>

Chelmsford is the county town, and after the end of the Napoleonic wars its population expanded rapidly, from 3,755 in 1801 to 7,796 in 1851.<sup>94</sup> Its expansion

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. It should be noted that both Chelmsford and Witham were parishes within hundreds with the same names. Consequently, they have been listed as single parish towns.

<sup>92</sup> J. Cooper (ed.), *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 9, the Borough of Colchester*, (London: Victoria County History, 1994), pp.179-198.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> H. Grieve, *The Sleepers and the Shadows, From Market Town to Chartered Borough, 1608-1888* (Chelmsford: Essex record Office, 1994), p.274.



was unrelated to manufacturing, but rather took place because it was a marketing hub for other Essex and Suffolk towns. Its central position led to road links and carrier services being developed to twenty-one other market towns, and in 1839 there were 144 carrier journeys a week.<sup>95</sup>

Harwich is a port on the east Essex coast with a deep-water harbour. Until the 1830s its main role had been as a mail packet port but after transporting mail by packet ceased, it developed a dual function with commercial trade passing through it and as a 'vital' harbour for defence purposes. The borough town incorporated the agricultural parish of Dovercourt, and 96 people were employed in farming in 1831. This was not the main form of employment, however; 271 males were employed in handicrafts and 328 as non-agricultural labourers, so it is clear that economic activity generated by the town was greater than that from the rural area.<sup>96</sup>

Maldon and Witham were fairly typical mid-sized Essex towns, which had grown from providing markets for their rural neighbours. Maldon lies within ten miles of both Chelmsford and Witham, with close ties to both towns. Therefore, its location, coupled with it having been a port, makes it and its rural environs an interesting subject of research for contextualising the late old poor law. Additionally, there are no known major studies concerning the poor law focused on the Extended Maldon Area, so this study will be unique in that respect.

Maldon derived its name from an Anglo-Saxon settlement called Maeldun, and in 1085 it became the second royal borough, after Colchester, in Essex. This was confirmed in a Royal Charter granted by Henry II in 1171. The charter conferred special status to the burgesses of the town, which meant they held free tenure and trading privileges within the feudal system of the time. More importantly, the town administered its own government and judicial system, leaving it well positioned to take advantage of its prime geographical location. Its borough status had to be renewed on the accession of a new monarch which continued unbroken until 1768 when it was withdrawn due to the illegal election of bailiffs. The Borough was restored in 1810 allowing the town to again benefit from the legal and administrative rights that accrued.<sup>97</sup>

The town's location on an estuary at the confluence of the rivers Chelmer and Blackwater (see Map 1.1), meant that it was ideally positioned to receive imports of

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<sup>95</sup> N. Raven, 'Chelmsford During the Industrial Revolution, c.1790-1840', *Urban History*, 30, 1 (2003), pp.44-62.

<sup>96</sup> A. Senter, *Harwich, Dovercourt and Parkeston in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: Victoria County History for the Institute of Historical Research, 2019), pp.1, 52.

<sup>97</sup> J.R. Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800: a Golden Age* (Studley: Brewin Books, 2013), p. 31; I. Linton, *The Book of Maldon* (Buckingham: Barracuda Books Ltd., 1984), p.19.

coal, timber and other products from elsewhere in Britain and Europe.<sup>98</sup> Produce could also be brought to Maldon by water from mid-Essex using the arteries of the two rivers. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the town's fortunes became closely aligned with those of agriculture, especially corn. This was partly due to growth of the regular markets held, but also because of its growing importance as a port from which grain and flour was exported from mid-Essex farmers to be sold on the London markets.<sup>99</sup> Overall, this maritime trade prospered, and this had a double benefit on the town's economy. Firstly, it encouraged the development of businesses within the town to support the trade, which ranged from wharf management to innkeeping. Secondly, the borough obtained revenues from levying landing fees and port dues, which reached their peak during the prosperous eighteenth century.

Maldon's status as a port was partly diminished following the completion of a navigation to the county town of Chelmsford in 1797 which allowed goods to be barged to the town following transshipment at the Heybridge Basin. Nevertheless, by the start of the nineteenth century, there was a wide range of services, retail, manufacturing and other mercantile businesses in place, which along with its close associations with agriculture ensured continued prosperity, albeit without the significant growth of the previous century.<sup>100</sup>

There were twenty parishes in the Dengie hundred, located on the peninsula of land between the rivers Blackwater to the north and the Crouch to the south, with the North Sea to its east (Map 1.1).<sup>101</sup> The soil was very fertile, which explained the heavy reliance on agriculture in the area. Up until the second half of the eighteenth-century significant parts comprised marshland, which was converted into cultivable land when the marshes were drained. Until then, the Dengie Hundred, in common with others such as the adjacent Rochford and Thurstable, had been a notoriously unhealthy place to inhabit. This was because the brackish water of the marshland was a natural habitat for the mosquitoes carrying the bacteria that caused ague, which was a disease similar to malaria.<sup>102</sup> Arthur Young noted 'the low sickly faces of the inhabitants', which was improved after the drainage of the marshes.

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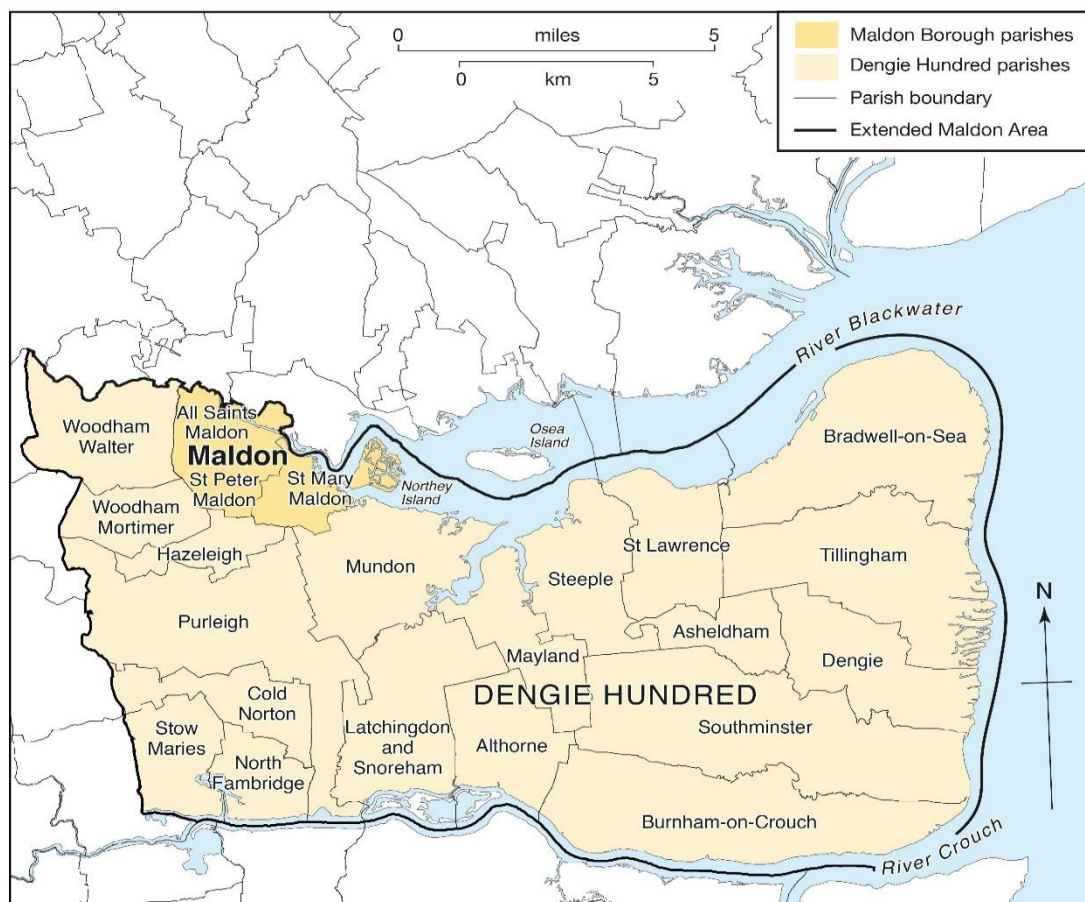
<sup>98</sup> Linton, *The Book of Maldon*, pp.53-4.

<sup>99</sup> P.J. Corfield, 'Introduction: The Maldons of England' in Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800*, pp. xvi-xviii.

<sup>100</sup> Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800*, pp.24-51.

<sup>101</sup> C. Humphrey-Smith, *The Phillimore Atlas & Index of Parish Registers* (Andover: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 2003), pp.144-8.

<sup>102</sup> A.F.J. Brown, *Prosperity and Poverty: Rural Essex, 1700-1815* (Chelmsford: Essex Record Office, 1996), pp.99-100; M.J. Dobson, *Contours of Death and Disease in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002 [1997]), pp.287-367.



**Map 1.1: Parishes in the Extended Maldon Area.**

Arthur Young's agricultural surveys observed that the wheat yield in Dengie parishes was above that of the county average of just over three quarters per acre, at three and a half to three and three quarters.<sup>103</sup> The yields Young quoted may have been too low. In Brown's opinion, Dengie was one of the most progressive farming areas in the county. Some farmers were experimental and deployed techniques such as 'rotations that eliminated or reduced fallow years, drill sowing, coastal reclamation, soil improvement, systematic draining and the use of new or improved implements, including threshing machines'. These novel approaches had, by the late eighteenth-century, produced wheat yields in excess of five and a half quarters per acre for some farms.<sup>104</sup>

Innovations and improvements in farming technique were largely conducted by Dengie's tenant farmers, not the landowners. Thomas Western, John Strutt and other significant landlords in the county owned large tracts of land in the Hundred,

<sup>103</sup> A. Young, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Essex: Volume 1* (Memphis, General Books LLC., 2012 [1807]), pp.3-4 72-3.

<sup>104</sup> Brown, *Prosperity and Poverty*, pp.26-7.

but few lived there during the eighteenth century. As Brown noted, major properties, such as North Fambridge Hall, remained unoccupied for extended periods. The reason why landowners were reluctant to reside in Dengie may have partially been due to the risk of contracting ague, but additionally the quality of road communications was poor, and this would have limited their social life.<sup>105</sup> Towards the end of the century, Bate Dudley, a landowner in the area and also a justice of the peace, attempted to travel to his property in the parish of Bradwell (Bradwell Lodge). He found his journey so difficult, because of the poor quality of the roads, that he used his authority as a justice to impose fines upon the relevant parish vestries. This action, coupled with similar measures from other Dengie justices, had led to significant improvements in the road system by the start of the nineteenth century.<sup>106</sup>

To give the Dengie Hundred some context in term of its size and population, census data was used to compare it to its neighbours, Thurstable to the north, and Rochford to the south.

<b>Hundred</b>	<b>Number of Parishes</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>% Families Employed in Agriculture</b>
Dengie	20	9,915	69
Thurstable	10	5,942	62
Rochford	26	13,604	60

**Table 1.2: Comparison of 1831 Census Data for the Essex Hundreds of Dengie, Thurstable and Rochford.**<sup>107</sup>

All three Hundreds were predominantly agricultural, with Dengie having the highest proportion of families employed in agriculture (69%). Every parish in Dengie, except Burnham-on-Crouch, followed the same occupational pattern as the Hundred had overall. Burnham was a small port facing the parishes of Paglesham and Foulness in the Rochford Hundred, which lie to its south across the river Crouch. At Burnham a comparatively low 46% of the resident families were employed in agriculture, although with 3.6 acres of land available for each of the 1,393 population, it was still sparsely populated.<sup>108</sup> Whilst this percentage was lower than

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., pp.99-100.

<sup>106</sup> A.F.J. Brown, *Essex at Work, 1700-1815* (Chelmsford: Essex Record Office, 1969), pp.80-1.

<sup>107</sup> ProQuest, 1833 (149).

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

Dengie's other parishes, the parish was still much less urban in character than Maldon, and it may be best described as a small rural market/port.

Shaw-Taylor and Wrigley categorised Essex as belonging to the 'agricultural group' of counties, along with twenty-two other English counties, including the adjoining ones of Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Suffolk.<sup>109</sup> The three other groups identified by the authors were; the 'industrial', the 'London' and 'the rest of England'. Whilst they stated that the classification method they used was 'somewhat arbitrary', they went on to explain that small changes to the counties included in each group would not have greatly altered the pattern of population growth and structure. The criterion they used to determine inclusion within the 'agricultural group' was that 39% or more of the 'male labour force' were shown as employed in agriculture in the 1831 census.<sup>110</sup> Shaw-Taylor and Wrigley explained that the significance of these groupings were the differences in population growth that occurred between them between 1600 and 1851. For example, from 1801 to 1851 the population increases for the 'London', industrial', and 'rest of England' groups were 123%, 152.8% and 84.5% respectively, whereas the population rose by just 60% for the 'agricultural group' (over 37% below the increase for the whole of England). Essex clearly fell well within the 'agricultural group', as just over 50% of male workers were employed in agriculture.<sup>111</sup>

Shaw-Taylor and Wrigley suggested that the population figures were a proxy for economic activity, and prior to the industrial revolution significant increases in population led to hardship because there wasn't any mechanism to generate greater domestic output, but from the mid-eighteenth century this changed in the 'industrial' and 'London' groups, hence their rapid growth.<sup>112</sup> At least superficially, there would appear to have been a relationship between the slow-growing agricultural economies and their attitudes toward poor relief provision. Nigel Goose referred to King's work on the generosity of poor law regimes and noted that the rural south of England was generous, but the south-east was even more so.<sup>113</sup> The latter region includes the counties that are adjacent to Essex, such as Hertfordshire and Cambridge, and were

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<sup>109</sup> L. Shaw-Taylor and E.A. Wrigley, 'Occupational Structure and Population Change', in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, Volume 1, 1700-1870*, ed. F. Floud, J. Humphries, P. Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.53-88.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> ProQuest, 1833 (149), Abstract of the answers and returns made pursuant to an act, passed in the eleventh year of the reign of His Majesty King George IV, intituled, "an act for taking an account of the population of Great Britain, and of the increase or diminution thereof." Enumeration abstract. Vol. I. M. DCCC.XXXI.

<sup>112</sup> Shaw-Taylor and Wrigley, 'Occupational Structure and Population Change', pp.89-117.

<sup>113</sup> N. Goose, 'Regions, 1700-1870, in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, Volume 1, 1700-1870*, ed. F. Floud, J. Humphries, P. Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.149-77.

included in the 'agricultural group', as observed above.<sup>114</sup> This area was also the focus of the work from the 'revisionist' historians discussed previously and, therefore, explains why poor relief in Essex is of particular interest, as a county with a generous approach and economy that was sensitive to changing agrarian prosperity.

Probably for this reason, as noted above, Baugh, French and Sokoll have all used Essex parishes as subjects of their research. Additionally, Sokoll performed extensive analysis of all the letters written by, or on behalf of, Essex paupers between 1731 and 1837 concerning poor relief claims, and Pamela Sharpe carried out a micro-study which highlighted some of the 'social divisions' that developed between poor relief claimants and administrators during the late old poor law.<sup>115</sup> Undoubtedly, agricultural counties such as Essex experienced an economic downturn which sometimes caused social discord for two to three decades after the Napoleonic wars, and this was probably a factor behind the Swing riots of 1830/1. These started in Kent, which was classified by Shaw-Taylor and Wrigley in the 'London group as opposed to the 'agricultural group', but also occurred in several other counties in south-east England, including Essex, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.<sup>116</sup>

## 1.6 Key Research Questions and Approach

As noted previously, this study is based upon largely local sources and the addition of a case study from south-east England consequently adds to the knowledge base of local poor law historiography. Additionally, it seeks to present much of its analysis in a way that allows consideration to be given to questions that extend beyond the parish. In doing so it responds to some of the issues raised, by historians such as Williams, Englander and more recently French and Sokoll, about how to structure local studies of the poor law so that themes may be identified and wider questions answered. The study's methodological approach aims to facilitate the examination of local relief data with the economic context to determine if any patterns or correlations are observable.

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> T. Sokoll, ed., *Essex Pauper Letters, 1731-1837* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); P. Sharpe, 'Malaria, Machismo and the Original Essex Man: The Limits of Poor Relief in the Early 1830s', in *Essex Harvest, A Collection of Essays in Memory of Arthur Brown*, ed. M. Holland and J. Cooper (Chelmsford: Essex Record Office, 2003), pp.46-59.

<sup>116</sup> I. Coulson and P. Hastings, 'Law and Order, Riots and Unrest, 1750-1850' in *An Historical Atlas of Kent*, ed. T. Lawson and D. Killingray (Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 2004), pp.153-4.

The philosophical perspectives presented by Malthus and Bentham and other contemporary commentators which influenced the debate ahead of the 1834 Act and its drafting, did not engage with any facts which revealed the economic circumstances faced by the local elites or the poor relief claimants. Equally, the supporters of the 1834 Act were largely removed from the social relationships on the ground that existed between these relief providers and receivers. Revisionist historians, such as Blaug, Baugh and Boyer, undertook significant analyses in order to evaluate whether the principles that underpinned the act were valid. However, they used mainly nationally collected figures on poor relief alongside a variety of sources of general economic information, as the basis for their studies. This thesis will revisit the validity of some of the assertions of the 1834 Act's architects, using a combination of local sources to provide more detailed economic and poor relief data.

Before engaging in these detailed quantitative analyses for the Extended Maldon Area, Chapter 2 will consider whether local study is really necessary by examining the strengths and weaknesses of the central records. This will review all of the major Parliamentary information requests that pertained to poor relief from the start of the nineteenth century until ten years after the 1834 Act. Whilst the focus of the quantitative work in Chapters 4 to 6 is on the last four to five years of the old poor law, Chapter 2 will consider a longer period of the summarised central data to provide context and perspective. Revisionist historiography will be considered alongside the qualitative evaluation of the sources, to allow the historians' conclusions to be reviewed in light of the sources that they based their studies upon.

As discussed above, economic factors were not the only influences on poor relief provision, as alongside these social considerations and cultural values inevitably played their part. Consequently, in Chapter 3, the poor law administrators will be examined for the rural parishes of Woodham Mortimer and Woodham Walter as well as those from the Maldon urban parishes of St. Peter and All Saints. Maldon's borough had a local government structure distinct from the parishes in the Dengie Hundred which fell within the administrative and judicial control of Essex county. The Maldon corporation officers, and their roles, will also be considered to determine if any synergies and commonality existed between town and country, in terms of attitudes and approach. Building upon this picture of the Extended Maldon Area elite, their political and religious affiliations will be reviewed to attempt to understand their belief system/s. This review is intended to develop an insight into the motivations of the area's elite, for example whether they were aligned with the opinions of the proponents of the 1834 Act. Did they believe that relief recipients were indigent and should be forced to help themselves or even be punished or, alternatively, did they regard relief recipients more sympathetically and feel a duty of

care towards them? Ahead of a detailed analysis of the poor relief distributed for a selected rural parish from the Extended Maldon Area, Chapter 4 investigates the economic context for the last four to five years of the old poor law. It commences with the rural economy through a micro-study of the accounts of Bourne farm in the parish of Latchingdon, to determine how and why its profit fluctuated during the period. The agricultural exports from Maldon port are then analysed, to identify any significant economic changes over time. Both these micro-level and macro-level analyses are based upon data captured at the most granular level available from the sources. Excel databases were built to enable detailed filtering calculation and charting, used to identify key trends and correlations. As well as this quantitative approach, specific consideration is given to reductions to tithes and rents paid by tenant farmers to their tithe holders/landlords, to understand their root cause. Additionally, to comprehend how economic circumstances may have affected labourers, the 1830/1 Swing riots are studied as well as the incendiarism that occurred over a longer period. Chapter 4 also contains an examination of the urban economy for the Extended Maldon Area, beginning with a profile of business diversity in Maldon created by the c. 200 trades that have been identified. It then evaluates the state of the urban economy by examining three sets of business accounts. Two of these businesses from outside of Maldon, but from the same region in Essex, were used as proxies and selected because of their potentially close relationships to agriculture. The third was the building business owned by the Sadd family, who were leading members of the local elite in Maldon.

Following the contextualisation of the economy, Chapter 5 analyses the poor relief distributed in the agricultural parish of Woodham Walter. This parish was chosen because it was considered typical of rural communities in the Extended Maldon Area. The parish financial year ran from early April until the end of March, so it was decided to use this periodicity for the years that ended March 1832 and 1835. These years were selected, firstly because they were the last few of the old poor law, but also because they were economically distinctive. The price of wheat, the main crop for the largely arable farms, fell sharply in 1834/5 to its lowest level since 1824; the study will, therefore, be able to explain any impact an economic downturn had on poor relief expenditure. All of the entries in the overseers' accounts were entered into an Excel database and this was used to identify the categories of relief that existed. It enabled patterns of relief to be identified and whether there was any correlation between these and the economic context defined in the previous chapter.

Subsequent to analysis of poor relief distribution in rural Woodham Walter, Chapter 6 adopts a similar approach for the parish of St. Peter in Maldon. The overseers' accounts analysis follows the same methodology and examines time



series for the parish overall and individual categories of relief, based upon those used in Chapter 5. Due to differences in social character and administration there are some additional categories derived from the accounts to those identified in Woodham Walter, such as poor people passing through the town, and these are explained before the presentation of the analyses.

The databases of poor relief distribution created for Woodham Walter and St. Peter hold information at the most detailed level available within the source documents, so they invariably hold the names of recipients as well supplementary information when available. For example, when 'relief in kind' was provided this was codified within the model into classes that were specific to this category, e.g. shoes, clothing, ale, meat etc. This level of granularity coupled with a systematic approach towards data classification, enables wide ranging and detailed analyses to take place in an automated way. These include, but are not limited to, pivot table analysis, charting, regression and correlation.

The model developed is easily extendible and an unlimited number of additional parishes could be incorporated. In addition to analysing parishes individually it would be straightforward to add the higher-level units they belonged to the base data. For example, the Hundred, county and area within the country (e.g. south-east) could be added to each record allowing aggregation at each of these levels. This quantitative presentation of poor relief data allows direct comparisons between both the lowest and higher-level areas. The potential is demonstrated in the concluding Chapter 7 which, in addition to summarising the key findings from this study, presents a comparison between the detailed parish studies for Woodham Walter and St. Peter to ascertain their similarities and differences in their provision of relief.

Finally, Lynn Hollen Lees offered an overarching opinion that, from the late eighteenth-century until the 1834 Act, society's elite had changed its attitude towards the poor from sympathetic support to one where those who sought relief were regarded as being at the margin of society and often indigent. In her largely cultural analysis, she argued that this was reflected in the way that relief was administered in many parishes, particularly those in the rural-south.<sup>117</sup> The analysis presented in this thesis will, therefore, present the opportunity to consider Hollen Lees', perhaps controversial, view concerning the changing attitudes of ratepayers at the end of the old poor law.

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<sup>117</sup> L Hollen Lees, *The Solidarity of Strangers, The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.82-111.

## 2 Interpreting the Provision of Poor Relief from the Central Sources

In the early nineteenth century there was considerable interest within Parliament concerning the question of poor relief. The economic and philosophical debates that raged fed a desire to accumulate statistical information about the levels and types of poor relief distributed and the rates collected in support. Successive Select Committees of the House of Commons oversaw the distribution of surveys to parishes in England and Wales between 1803 and 1831, before the Royal Commission took up the mantle of discovery leading to the publication of its 1834 Report. Following the passage of the 1834 Act, the onus for statistics on poor relief moved to the Poor Law Commissioners in the form of the central collection of annual returns from each Board of Guardians.

Consequently, there is a large body of information about poor relief distribution that may be accessed through the digitised Parliamentary Papers.<sup>1</sup> These data are sometimes available at only aggregated levels (e.g. by county), but other times they were published at a parish level. This chapter will examine the central sources from the perspective of both the Extended Maldon Area and Essex overall. There were occasions when returns were not made for any of the Maldon parishes; in these cases, parishes that had similar socio-economic profiles from outside the area were selected as substitutes for analysis. Also, the limitations of the sources will be discussed along with how this may have caused inaccurate or incomplete conclusions to be drawn, and how this may have been avoided by the use of more detailed local records.

Table 2.1 summarises the major central sources that have been analysed in this chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> ProQuest U.K. Parliamentary Papers (ProQuest), URL, <https://0-parlipapers-proquest-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/>

Name	Year/s Covered	Year Published	Level Parish/Other	Split by Indoor/Outdoor Expenses?	Persons Detail
Return for the Expense & Maintenance of the Poor	1803	1805	Parish within Hundred	Yes	Number relieved – split by indoor/outdoor, children outdoor, persons relieved occasionally
Return for the Maintenance of the Poor	1813-1815	1818	Parish within Hundred	No	Number Relieved – split by indoor/outdoor, persons relieved occasionally
Report from Select Committee on the Poor Law	1816-1821	1822	Parish within Hundred	No	No
Report from Select Committee on the Poor Law	1822-1824	1825	Parish within Hundred	No	No
Report from Select Committee on Labourers Wages	1824	1825	Hundred, Division, Town	No	Whether allowances received, number unemployed, lowest wage, average wage
Report from Select Committee on the Poor Law	1825-1829	1830	Parish within Hundred	No	No
Report from Select Committee on the Poor Law	1830-1834	1835	Parish within Hundred	No	No
Rural Queries Appendix B1 to the 1834 Act	1832-1834	1834	Parish within County	No	Wide ranging questionnaire concerning the wages, lifestyle and payment of allowances and other forms of relief for agricultural labourers
Annual Returns of the Poor Law Commissioners from 1835 to 1844 (1 to 10)	1835-1844	1835-1844	Parish within Hundred 1836/1837. Parish within Union 1838, Union 1839-1844	No, except the sixth annual return for 1840	No

**Table 2.1: Summary of Central Sources for Poor Relief Expenditure 1803-1844.<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup> ProQuest, 1825 (299), Abstract Return on Practice of paying Wages of Labour out of Poor Rates, (hereinafter called the 1825 return); 1834 (44), Royal Commission of Inquiry into

## 2.1 *Early Nineteenth-Century Central Sources*

The bill of 1803 authorising the procurement of returns for all the poor law jurisdictions in England and Wales prescribed a quite strict completion process. The overseers for any parish, township, or any other unit responsible for maintaining the poor, were required to complete the returns and submit to their examination by a Justice/s of the Peace under oath. This was intended to allow the Justice/s to satisfy themselves as to their accuracy and completeness; they were allowed to have access to the overseers' accounts when they felt that this was necessary. The Justices were then required to attest to the returns' accuracy by signature, after which they were to be delivered to the Clerks of the Peace or Town Clerks for transmitting to Parliament. The Bill made it clear that any overseer who wilfully submitted an inaccurate return would be subject to financial penalty.<sup>3</sup>

Parliament's stringent approach accounted for the completeness of the 1803 returns, which provided data for almost every parish and town in England and Wales. The detailed questionnaire despatched asked eighteen questions. The first asked for the name of the returning district; the next two concerned the funds that had been raised by poor, and other rates. Questions (4) to (8) asked what sums had been expended on poor relief, related matters - such as legal costs and salaries and non-poor relief services such as highways etc. The next six asked for further categorisation of the persons who had received relief, such as: whether they had received in relief (i.e. within the workhouse) or out relief, number of children that had received out relief, number of persons who were over sixty or disabled who had received relief, and how many non-residents of the returning district had received relief. The final four asked about the existence of friendly societies within the area, how many children were receiving education, and for any additional information considered relevant.<sup>4</sup>

The 1803 return also provided the value of rates collected and the expenditure on the poor from the late eighteenth-century poor law returns as

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Administration and Practical Operation of Poor Laws, Appendix B1 Answers to Rural Queries; 1818 (82), Abridgement of Abstract of Answers and Returns relative to the Expence and Maintenance of the Poor of England and Wales; 1803 (Bills), A Bill, Intituled An Act for procuring Returns relative to the Expence and Maintenance of the Poor in England; 1822 (556), Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns; 1825 (334), Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns. 1830-31 (83), Poor Rate Returns; An Account of the money expended for the maintenance and relief of the poor in every parish, township in England and Wales; 1835 (444), Poor Rate Returns: An Account of the money expended for the maintenance and relief of the poor in every parish, township in England and Wales.

<sup>3</sup> ProQuest, 1803 (Bills), A Bill for procuring Returns.

<sup>4</sup> ProQuest, 1803, Abstract of the Answers and Returns made pursuant to an Act passed in the 43<sup>rd</sup> year of His Majesty King George III.

comparison points: 1776 as well as an average for 1783, 1784 and 1785. The report was organised by county, and within county by hundred followed by towns and boroughs. For each county, a summary was given which stated how many parishes had responded to the questionnaire. In Essex 410 provided answers, so although comprehensive the county's return was not quite complete.<sup>5</sup> The number of parishes in Essex before 1832 was 447 according to the Phillimore Atlas, so thirty-seven parishes were missing from the return.<sup>6</sup>

The parishes of Woodham Walter and Woodham Mortimer, adjacent to the town of Maldon, were included within the returns for the Dengie Hundred. These have been selected for analysis along with Maldon's urban parishes of St. Peter, St. Mary and All Saints, as shown in the following table.

Parish	Population	Amount Raised by all Rates £	Expenditure On the Poor Outdoor Relief £	Expenditure On the Poor Indoor Relief £	Total Expenditure on the Poor (including expenses) £
Woodham Mortimer	252	160	116	0	119
Woodham Walter	352	484	422	0	423
Maldon - St. Peter	866	704	539	198	772
Maldon – All Saints	707	420	315	69	419
Maldon – St. Mary	785	633	506	108	643

**Table 2.2: 1803 – Monies Raised from Rates and Expenditure on the Poor at Woodham Mortimer, Woodham Walter and Maldon Parishes.<sup>7</sup>**

From this high-level summary, there are two initial points to be made. Firstly, all the Maldon parishes gave figures for indoor relief, probably because they all

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> C. Humphrey-Smith, *The Phillimore Atlas & Index of Parish Registers* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 2003), pp.144-8.

<sup>7</sup> Rates and expenditure figures are from: ProQuest, 1803, Abstract of the Answers and Returns. Population figure are from: ProQuest, 1801 (9), Abstract of the answers and returns made pursuant to an act, passed in the forty-first year of His Majesty King George III.

made use of the Maldon Workhouse constructed using money bequeathed by Dr. Thomas Plume in 1704, whereas Woodham Mortimer and Woodham Mortimer did not.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, the total expenditure figures are not in a consistent ratio to the population size across the parishes. For example, Woodham Walter's poor law expenditure was higher per person than that of Woodham Walter, and the same applies to St. Peter and All Saints. The following table provides additional numerical analysis to highlight differences between the parishes and gives further data extracted from the 1803 return.

Parish	Expenditure per Head £	Persons Relieved Outdoor	Persons Relieved Indoor	Children Relieved	Persons over 60 or Disabled Relieved	Persons Relieved Occasionally	Non-Resident Relieved
Woodham Mortimer	0.47	6	0	0	0	7	0
Woodham Walter	1.20	15	0	14	6	21	0
Maldon - St. Peter	0.89	51	10	46	19	16	137
Maldon – All Saints	0.59	25	4	0	6	25	20
Maldon – St. Mary	0.82	28	5	6	0	13	31

**Table 2.3: 1803 Returns – Expenditure per Head and Relieved Persons Data at Woodham Mortimer, Woodham Walter and Maldon Parishes.<sup>9</sup>**

There are several apparent anomalies within the data in Table 2.2. First, poor relief expenditure per head for Woodham Walter was almost three times that for Woodham Mortimer and, second, Woodham Walter also had more persons that were relieved for every category in the 1803 return. These neighbouring parishes were both predominantly agricultural in character, so the difference between them is surprising and may raise questions over data validity. For example, Woodham Mortimer reported that no children, persons over sixty, or disabled persons received relief, which would seem unlikely. Possibly the categories of person reported as zero by Woodham Mortimer were supported by charitable donation, and the thirty-second report of the charity commissioners did record charities that offered relief in the parish. Viscountess Falkland from Saffron Walden had bequeathed £100 to the

<sup>8</sup> Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800: a Golden Age*, p. 362.

<sup>9</sup> All figures for persons relieved are from: ProQuest, 1803, Abstract of the Answers and Returns. Expenditure per head has been calculated by dividing 'Total Expenditure' by 'Population'.

parish and 1837 this was valued at £125. The dividend on this bequest was £3 15s per annum used to purchase loaves which were distributed to the poor who attended mass regularly.<sup>10</sup> Susannah Meard of Hackney in Middlesex had donated £200 to the parish poor in 1786 and this was also invested to provide a dividend of £6 a year. It was distributed to the poor after mass each Sunday and preference was given to widows and old people 'with large families'.<sup>11</sup> However, the total value of charitable contribution was only £9 15s a year, so it seems unlikely that this would have been sufficient to explain the difference between poor relief expenditure in the two parishes. The charities provided no 'allowances to the able-bodied' in monetary form, and it seems probable that the needy would have required support beyond the provision of bread.

These anomalies between the relief paid in Woodham Walter and Woodham Mortimer highlight a fundamental problem with the central returns; that it is sometimes impossible to determine whether anomalies are genuine, and therefore in need of interpretation, or whether they are due to inaccuracies or incompleteness with the data. These examples demonstrate that further analysis would be required to substantiate the data, before it could be relied upon for historical analysis in isolation. It may be that the data would have more value when considered as a part of a series. Unfortunately, the next available centrally collected returns at a parish level are for 1813-1815, so there is a gap of ten years in the data series. Also, the questions asked for the returns for 1813-1815 did not have the same level of detail as those of 1803. They did not include questions about relief granted to: children (except insofar as they were children of militiamen); people over sixty; invalids; or non-residents.<sup>12</sup> As a result, the 1813-1815 returns do not provide a great deal more information than those which provide parish level poor law expenditures from 1816 to 1834 as discussed below.

## *2.2 The 1825 Report on Agricultural Wages*

The only other central source before 1834 which contained detailed information about allowances paid was the published report on labourers' wages in 1825.<sup>13</sup> As noted in Table 2.1, the report is useful but was produced only at the level

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<sup>10</sup> ProQuest, 1837 (38), Thirty-Second Report of the Commissioners appointed in pursuance of 5 & 6 Will. 4. c.71., intituled "An Act for appointing Commissioners to continue the Inquiries concerning Charities in England and Wales until the First Day of March One thousand eight hundred and thirty-seven".

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> ProQuest, 1818 (82), Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns.

<sup>13</sup> ProQuest, 1825 (299), Select Committee on Practice of Paying Wages.

of hundred or district. Also, because less than twenty percent of the hundreds/districts within Essex responded (Dengie Hundred, which included Woodham Walter and Woodham Mortimer did respond, but Maldon Borough did not) it would not be prudent to rely on the report: its contents should be considered indicative only.<sup>14</sup> The Select Committee which ordered the return seemed unconcerned by the paucity of information available to them. The introduction to their minutes adopted a polemic style which was a pre-cursor to the, much more voluminous, 1834 Report. The committee did not attempt to analyse the sufficiency, or possible accuracy, of the data, but confined itself to commenting that a 'great number' of returns had been received.<sup>15</sup> Further, the minutes frequently referred to the 'evils' of any allowance system and justified their rhetoric by extensive references to testimonies from returning officials.<sup>16</sup>

Question (1) related to whether labourers' wages were supported from the poor rate, and the following table gives the answers to this question from the ten Essex districts that submitted a return.

District	Answer
Brentwood	'Yes, occasionally'
Chelmsford Division	'Yes'
Colchester Borough	'Yes, part'
Dengie Hundred	'No'
Dunmow Hundred	'In some cases'
Havering-atte- Bower	'No'
Hinckford Division	'Yes, when the wages are low or insufficient'
Rochford Hundred	'No'
Walden Division	'In one or two parishes, only'
Witham Division	'It has been so, but has nearly ceased'

**Table 2.4: Essex Districts' Responses to the Return on Agricultural Wages, 1825.<sup>17</sup>**

The replies in Table 2.4 are too nebulous to reasonably determine whether Essex was a county which predominantly paid allowances in support of wages. For

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> ProQuest, 1825 (299), Abstract Return.



instance, one way of interpreting the responses is that only Chelmsford division admitted the payment of allowances in support of wages in an unqualified way, so elsewhere allowances were either not provided or were only on an exceptional basis. An alternative interpretation is simply that the majority of parishes usually used the allowance system.

In addition, there is good reason to suppose that the answers from districts such as the Dengie Hundred that had answered 'No', are likely to have been inaccurate. Dengie parishes such as Woodham Walter had declared relatively high levels of out relief payments in the 1803 and 1813-1815 returns and it is improbable that these would have ceased by 1825. The response provided by the Hinckford Division appears to be a more plausible one for areas that experienced variable labour demands, such as those where the primary business was arable farming. Contrastingly, the answer from the Witham Division could be interpreted as telling the Select Committee what they may have wanted to hear. It seems unlikely that the Witham overseers would have been able to achieve the removal of allowances, as this would have required either finding a way to level out the demand for agricultural labour through the year or providing alternative types of work for the people when required.

The data available in the 1825 report was used extensively in Blaug's study. He was probably the first historian to develop a statistical analysis indicating that the claims that outdoor allowances had the effect of suppressing wages and encouraged population growth were unfounded. According to Blaug the poor law commissioners had undertaken little or no analysis of the data that was available to them in arriving at their conclusions.<sup>18</sup> He noted that before 1834 there were only two detailed (by which he meant at an administrative unit level below that of the county) published surveys of the poor in the early nineteenth century. As discussed above, the most detailed of these for 1803 included the majority of parishes within England and Wales and was based upon a questionnaire containing eighteen questions, whilst the survey for 1812-1814 was a little less detailed, having only fourteen. Blaug observed that there were deficiencies with the surveys such as: double counting of claimants, uncertainty of how many of the relieved had their wages supplemented permanently or occasionally, and failure to count children under fifteen who received outdoor relief.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> M. Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New', *Journal of Economic History*, XXIII (1963), p.152.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.157.

Nonetheless, Blaug decided that even though the poor relief returns were flawed, they were sufficient to enable high level trends to be inferred. One of the main arguments in his article relied upon a comparison between what he termed 'Speenhamland' and 'non-Speenhamland counties to support his research into whether relief payments increased more rapidly in counties which subsidised wages from the poor rate. He used Clapham's analysis of the responses to question (1) from the 1825 report, despite the evident flaws with these data discussed earlier in this chapter.<sup>20</sup> Blaug identified eighteen counties as having followed a Speenhamland policy based upon whether the majority of areas responded 'yes' to question (1) in the report. Thus, he included Essex in the Speenhamland category because six out of ten parishes responded 'yes', whereas he classed Kent as non-Speenhamland because 'most' districts responded 'no'.<sup>21</sup> Blaug referred to the survey as a 'worthwhile' source and commented that it was 'conceivable' it correctly depicted the pattern of the allowance system at the time.<sup>22</sup> For some counties such as Durham, where all districts answered 'no' to question (1), it may be possible to argue that the allowance system was generally not practised. Yet, where there were mixed responses, such as in Hertfordshire, Essex and Kent, it would seem too subjective to classify the counties as 'Speenhamland' or 'non-Speenhamland', given the data issues that have been identified.

### *2.3 Expenditure Returns, 1813-1834*

To validate whether there was any relationship, as claimed by the authors of the 1834 Act, between economic factors such as the level of pay or population growth and the payment of 'allowances to the able-bodied', the central sources should have captured these figures. Yet, they provide no such quantification after 1815. The only data they gave was the total poor relief expenditures figures for each parish. This is evidently sub-optimal because the 'allowances to the able-bodied' may not have changed in the same way as the total sum of relief paid.

Charts 2.1 and 2.2 show poor relief expenditure per head of population for selected parishes from the Extended Maldon Area and for Essex for the years 1813 to 1834. Poor relief expenditure figures have been taken from returns that were

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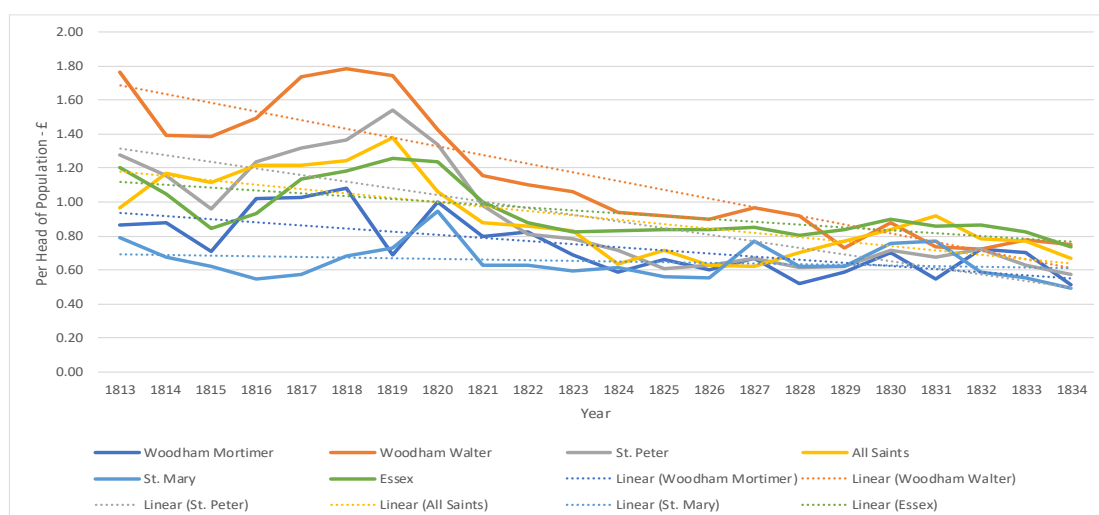
<sup>20</sup> J.H. Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain: The Early Railway Age 1820-1850*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939 [1926]), pp.123-5. ProQuest, 1825 (299), Abstract Return.

<sup>21</sup> Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain*, pp.123-5; Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New', pp.159-60.

<sup>22</sup> Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New', p.158.

published between 1813 and 1834.<sup>23</sup> The population data was taken from the census data from 1801 to 1841. The population figures used for calculating the poor relief for any year when a census was not conducted, were linearly interpolated between the population figures provided for the previous and next decades.<sup>24</sup>

These graphs display several informative features. As a whole there are peaks of poor relief expenditure per head in 1813 and 1819 for all parishes except Woodham Mortimer. As Woodham Walter and Woodham Mortimer are adjacent rural parishes, it might be expected that they would have had similar levels of poor relief head expenditure. This was not the case, and in 1813 the level of relief per head in Woodham Walter was over twice that of Woodham Mortimer. It stayed higher for the whole of the period, although the gap was much smaller from the early 1820s. Woodham Mortimer's expenditure per head was consistently lower than even the urbanised and mixed economy parishes of St. Peter and All Saints in Maldon, which again is surprising for what may have been expected to be a high spending rural parish.

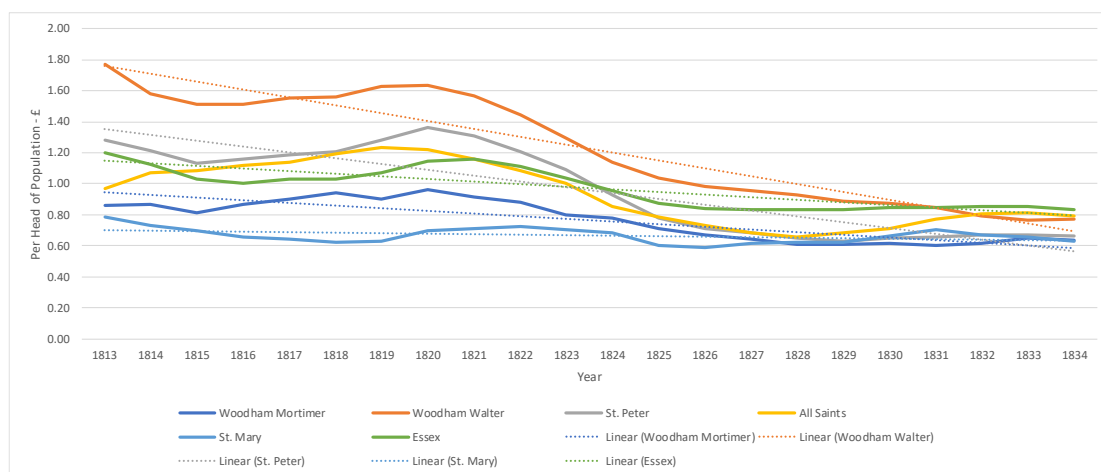


**Chart 2.1: Expenditure per Head of Population 1813-1834, Extended Maldon Area parishes and Essex.**

<sup>23</sup> ProQuest, 1818 (82), Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns; 1822 (556), Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns; 1825 (334), Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns; 1830-31 (83), Poor Rate Returns. An Account of the money expended for the maintenance and relief of the poor in every parish, township in England and Wales; 1835 (444), Poor Rate Returns: An Account of the money expended for the maintenance and relief of the poor in every parish, township in England and Wales.

<sup>24</sup> ProQuest, 1812 (316), Abstract of the answers and returns made pursuant to an act, passed in the fifty-first year of His Majesty King George III; 1822 (502), Abstract of the Answers and Returns made pursuant to an act, passed in the first year of His Majesty King George IV; 1833 (149), Abstract of the answers and returns. 1843 (496), Abstract of the answers and returns made pursuant to acts 3&4Vic. c. 99 and Vic. c.7.

The sharp fluctuations in the line plots may be smoothed by the calculation of a five-year moving average, so that the trends may be seen more clearly, as follows.



**Chart 2.2: 5-Year Moving Average of Expenditure per Head of Population 1813-1834, Extended Maldon Area parishes and Essex.**

After 1819 all the plots show a declining trend, although the downward gradient is shallow except for Woodham Walter which had a higher level of expenditure per head than any of the other parishes, or Essex, for most of the period. By 1831 it had fallen to the same level as Essex overall, and from 1832 to 1834 it was lower than the county and All Saints. Despite Woodham Walter's generally higher level of expenditure per person, it followed a similar trend to Essex and the other parishes. The Maldon parishes also followed the same trend as the agricultural parishes and the whole of Essex (which, indeed, was predominantly agricultural) after 1820, even though Maldon had a more diverse craft/industrial and trading economy. Overall, it is striking that the relief per head for All Saints and St. Mary is closely aligned with that of Essex from about 1820 until 1834, and the same is true for St. Peter from 1827.

Thus, both the selected parishes from the Extended Maldon Area and Essex as a whole show a declining rate of expenditure per head from 1820 to 1834, directly contradicting the assertion made by the supporters of the 1834 Act. This is unsurprisingly consistent with the revisionist historians' findings for the larger area of Southern England. The key question though, is the extent to which the total expenditure figures were a reliable indicator of payments to the able-bodied.

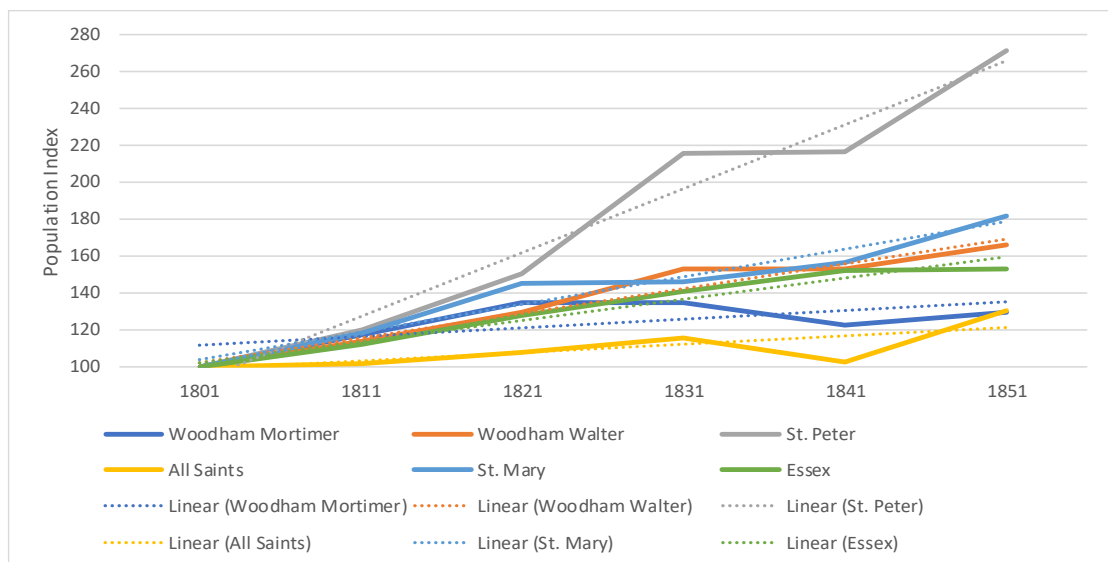
It is now important to consider the second assertion of the poor law reformers observed earlier, that increasing the payment of allowances led to a commensurate

increase in the population. For the same selected parishes, the following table shows the population figures from the censuses between 1801 and 1851.

	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851
Woodham Mortimer	252	295	340	339	308	326
Woodham Walter	352	400	454	538	537	585
St. Peter	866	1,033	1,301	1,870	1,878	2,350
All Saints	707	719	759	815	724	919
St. Mary	785	927	1,138	1,146	1,225	1,424
Essex	226,437	252,473	289,424	317,507	344,979	346,941

**Table 2.5: Population Figures for the Parishes in the Extended Maldon Area and Essex for 1801 to 1851.**<sup>25</sup>

The following chart shows the growth trends for these parishes



**Chart 2.3: Population for the Parishes in the Extended Maldon Area, 1801 to 1841.**<sup>26</sup>

The trendlines for all parishes and Essex as a whole in Charts 2.1 to 2.3, make it clear that there was an inverse relationship between the increase in

<sup>25</sup> ProQuest, 1801 (9), Abstract answers and returns; 1812 (316), Abstract of the answers and returns; 1822 (502), Abstract of the answers and returns; 1833 (149), Abstract of the answers and returns; 1843 (496), Abstract of the answers and returns; TNA, 107/1778, Maldon Sub-District Census Returns, 1851.

<sup>26</sup> The population change has been calculated based upon an index where the base is 100 for 1801, because of the different scales that would have been required for Essex and the parishes.

population and decrease in relief expenditure.<sup>27</sup> The trendlines in Chart 2.3 are all upward sloping, whereas those in Charts 2.1 and 2.2 are downward, which therefore shows no support from the Extended Maldon Area and Essex overall for Malthus' suggestion about the effect of allowance payments on population growth.

The third significant question which had concerned the revisionists was the idea, much favoured by the authors of the 1834 Act, that the payment of allowances in support of wages acted as a brake on the level of wages. There are fundamental problems with addressing this question when using central sources. Although it is possible to use the overall level of expenditure as a proxy for the level of outdoor payments in support of labourers' subsistence, as already discussed there is insufficiently detailed data to confirm whether the payment of 'allowances to the able-bodied' rose or fell. Additionally, finding a reliable source for the level of agricultural wages is problematic. The revisionists used the wages data provided in either the 1825 Report on Labourer's Wages, or the Rural Queries that were appended to the 1834 Report as their source, although this material was sparse.<sup>28</sup> The challenge of obtaining agricultural wages data from central sources, particularly for predominantly arable farming areas such as Essex, is significant, as worker's wages could vary from winter to summer, and again at harvest time.

The variation for these seasonal changes could be substantial and John quoted weekly wage figures of 13s 6d in winter with the addition of bread, 15s 3d in summer, and 30s at harvest time for 1805.<sup>29</sup> John had used Arthur Young's agricultural reports for wages data in the eighteenth century, county reports for the period 1793 to 1815, and an 1846 government enquiry for the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Snell attempted to solve the problem of assessing agricultural wages by using data from settlement examinations.<sup>31</sup> Following this method, he provided wage trend analyses for groups of counties from 1706 to 1836, although this was shown in the form of variation from an index (base years 1741-1745) rather than in terms of actual wages.<sup>32</sup> Two of Snell's graphs included Essex in the county groups and both of these showed a decline in wages from about 1810 until the mid-1830s, but he

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<sup>27</sup> T. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [1798]), pp.35-45.

<sup>28</sup> ProQuest, 1825 (299), Abstract Return on Practice of paying Wages of Labour out of Poor Rates; 1834 (44), Answers to Rural Queries.

<sup>29</sup> A.H. John, 'Statistical Appendix', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part I: 1750-1850*, ed. by G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), p.1081.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 1069.

<sup>31</sup> K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995 [1985]), p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29-35.

provided no actual figures.<sup>33</sup> Bowley provided an incomplete data series for agricultural wages, which confirmed the trend shown by Snell, this time specifically for Essex.<sup>34</sup> He quoted an average weekly wage of 14s 4d in 1805 and 10s 6d in 1831, but only for these two years. Also, he did not, as John had done, provide any data which recognised seasonality.

Returning to the wages material from the 1825 Report (with data at hundred or district level), and the 1834 Rural Queries (parishes for these hundred/districts), these have been compared in Table 2.6. Wages in the parishes in 1834 were generally higher or the same as that reported at hundred/division level in 1825, although there were four parishes in Hinckford and one in Witham which reported lower figures. The pattern is not consistent with the general decline in wages suggested in Snell's trend analysis for this period noted above, but although Essex was included in some of these analyses it is possible that data from other counties skewed the overall trends.<sup>35</sup> Whilst wages had seemed to increase overall in the nine year period between the two reports, it must be noted that the probable quality of the data was poor, given that the basis upon which the estimates were produced is unclear and probably inconsistent. So, given the statistical uncertainty of the wages data it would be inappropriate to use it to calculate correlations with the level of poor relief expenditure, particularly as the latter has its own issues with quality.

Nevertheless, the wages data provided within the returns was not widely dispersed, all falling within the range of 7s 10d to 12s 10d with a median of 10s. The distribution is therefore sufficiently consistent to reasonably assume there were no significant changes in the level of wages during the nine-year period between the reports, the balance of probability being that they increased slightly. As shown in Charts 2.1 and 2.2 above, poor relief expenditure (used as a proxy for outdoor relief) fell gradually in the period, so if this assumption about wages is accepted then there is some support for the traditionalist view that allowances to the able-bodied acted as a brake on wages because as these rose, allowances fell. Such an interpretation highlights the problems with arriving at conclusions based upon the analysis of data series that are of such uncertain quality. There are multiple reasons why the data extracted from the central returns could have been inaccurate, ranging from inbuilt bias in the wages' estimates provided by returning officials, to poor relief expenditure figures having been unrepresentative of 'allowances to the able-bodied'.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> A. L. Bowley, *Wages in the United Kingdom in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900), pp. 32-3.

<sup>35</sup> Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor 1660-1900*, pp. 29-35.

1825		1834	
Hundred/District	Weekly Wage	Parish by Hundred/District	Weekly Wage
Brentwood	No usual rate	No parish returns	-
Chelmsford District	9s 10d		
		Great Baddow	12s
		Boreham	10s
		Chelmsford	10s 10d average
		Fryerning	10s 10d average
		Ingatstone	10s average
		Springfield	10s 10d average
		Great Waltham	9s 10d average
		Little Waltham	12s 10d average
Colchester Borough	7s 10d average		
		St. Giles	-
Dengie Hundred	11s average	No parish returns	
Dunmow Hundred	8s		
		Great Dunmow	8s 10d average
Havering Liberty	11s average		
		Romford	12s
Hinckford	9s		
		Bocking	-
		Braintree	9s
		Bulmer	10s average
		Finchingfield	11s average
		Gestingthorpe	9s
		Castle Hedingham	8s
		Sible Hedingham	8s 10d average
		Great Henny	8s 10d average
		Great Maplestead	-
		Stebbing	8s 10d average
		Stisted	10s 10d average
Rochford Hundred	9s 10d average		
		Prittlewell	12s
		Rayleigh	11s average
		Rochford	11s average
		Great Wakering	11s 10d average
Walden Division	8s 10d average		
		Stansted Mountfichet	11s average
		Thaxted	9s
Witham Division	11s average		
		Great Coggeshall	11s
		Hatfield Peverel	10s
		Kelveden	11s 10d average
		Witham	11s 10d average

**Table 2.6: Comparison of Agricultural Wages in Essex from the 1825 Report and 1834 Rural Queries.<sup>36</sup>**

To facilitate comparison between the data, the 1834 parish responses have been sorted in Table 2.6 by the relevant hundred/division. Concerning the content of both reports, the returning officials quite often provided a range of wage figures,

<sup>36</sup> ProQuest, 1825 (299), Abstract Return on Practice of paying Wages of Labour out of Poor Rates; 1834 (44), Answers to Rural Queries. St. Giles Colchester, Bocking and Great Maplestead did not provide an answer to question eight and this has been indicated by a dash in the appropriate column.



usually because of the differences between the summer and winter work. Where this was the case, the average has been calculated and marked accordingly in the table.

In this light, it is again important to consider the conclusions of the revisionist historians. Blaug made some high-level assumptions about the relationship between the price of wheat, the yield and poor relief payment. His thesis was that when there were poor harvests, the price of wheat rose and that this caused relief payment to also increase.<sup>37</sup> Whilst this may seem intuitively correct, there are other issues that must be considered. Firstly, the relationship between the annual fluctuations in the wheat price and yield may not have been direct because storage and grain imports probably impacted upon the price as well. Secondly, the relief expenditure figures published centrally were usually aggregates, as already discussed. These were likely to have been inaccurate to some extent because overseers included expenditures which were not strictly poor relief, but even more importantly they included within them relief of the impotent as well as allowances to supplement wages. The factors which affected one type of relief would not necessarily have affected the other. For example, a shortage of work may have increased the need to pay 'allowances to the able-bodied' but wouldn't have had a direct impact upon widows and orphans.

Baugh's article targeted the same subject, although he stated that he would take an economic rather than an administrative approach.<sup>38</sup> In a similar fashion to Blaug, he focused upon the Speenhamland system and extended his data series back to the late eighteenth century using parish records for selected parishes for the counties of Essex, Kent and Sussex. It may be that both Baugh and Blaug gave Speenhamland attention because the system was frequently referenced by commentators in the early nineteenth century and by the authors of the 1834 Report. Yet, it seems probable that the discontinuity of demand for labour in arable farming communities had given rise to systems of allowances well before the meeting of magistrates at Speenhamland.

In addition to using some local parish data to supplement the central sources for the eighteenth century and the central returns used by Blaug, Baugh identified a further source in the returns that had been ordered by the House of Lords Select Committee on the Poor Laws in 1817. He stated that whilst these returns were available in the record offices for Essex, Kent and Sussex, they had never reached the Lords, and consequently were not printed (even though they must be regarded as central sources). The returns for Essex cover 343 parishes, which is

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.162.

<sup>38</sup> D. Baugh, 'The Cost of Poor Relief in South-East England, 1790-1834', *Economic History Review*, 28 (1975), p.51.

approximately 76% percent of the total.<sup>39</sup> Although the geographical coverage of these returns is significant, there are again issues with their content. As Baugh acknowledged, the returns record the poor rate, along with other items such as poor law expenditure, highway expenses, salaries etc., rather than how the poor relief was distributed.<sup>40</sup> Whilst the questionnaire had a column for net amount spent, Baugh acknowledged that there were errors in its completion.<sup>41</sup> He also noted two other issues with the use of the returns: that some parishes did not complete them (this includes the three parishes in Maldon, although both Woodham Mortimer and Woodham Walter were included), and some returned only partial data, because of incomplete or missing parish accounts.

These factors mean that the 1801-1817 returns should be treated with caution and that their reliability should be tested by comparison to the parish overseers' account books, where these are available. Clearly such an exercise would be extremely time consuming and is not something that Baugh undertook except for the eighteenth-century data used in his article, because the returns intended for the House of Lords did not cover that period. For the 1790s he extracted information from overseers' account books, and, in the case of Essex, he carried out this exercise for thirty-two parishes. Baugh believed that the data in the overseers' accounts was difficult to analyse, included expenses that were unrelated to poor relief and double counted some items.<sup>42</sup> Whilst this was likely to have been the case for some sets of accounts, it is surprising that he found this universally true because the parishes he selected are geographically diverse and it seems probable that the standard of the overseers' bookkeeping would have differed significantly between them. Baugh made no comment on how detailed the local data was or how he categorised and summarised it, or how he chose the parishes where he used overseers' records, why they were representative of the counties they belonged to, or what method he used to scale the data to represent their counties. So, the possibility for significant statistical error within this part of his data analysis seems high. Coupled with the data problems with his other sources, his conclusion that the allowance system (he referred to this as Speenhamland) had not led to an artificially high level of poor relief, whilst possibly correct, must be viewed in the light of the questions raised about the data he employed for his analysis.

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<sup>39</sup> ERO, Q/CR 1/9/1-29, Clerk of the Peace, Parliamentary Returns – Poor Law: 1801-2, 1816-17, summary data searched by SEAX.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Baugh, 'The Cost of Poor Relief in South-East England, 1790-1834', p.52.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

## 2.4 The 1834 Report's Rural Queries Appendix

The Rural Queries Appendix to the 1834 Report was used by proponents of the 1834 Act to justify many of its provisions, and thus it is important to consider its validity. The extensive survey sent to all the parishes in England and Wales may have provided the necessary data source for this validation if more parishes had replied, but only fifty-three of a possible 437 Essex parishes did so.<sup>43</sup> With only just over 12% of the Essex administrative units included in the Rural Queries, it would be inappropriate to rely upon it as the basis for firm conclusions. Only St. Mary from the Extended Maldon Area provided a response to the Rural Queries, so data is only available for one of the five parishes studied in this chapter.<sup>44</sup> To address these lacunae, an overall analysis of the Essex parishes that responded has led a further selection of parishes that are reasonable proxies. Charts 2.1 and 2.2 showed there was close alignment in expenditure per head of population between All Saints, St. Peter, and Essex, from 1820 until 1834. Despite the predominance of arable farming within the county, both these two Maldon parishes had diverse economies, which may explain the similar shaped graphs. The 1831 Census shows that Witham's economy was similarly varied, with 103 families mainly employed in agriculture versus 462 which were engaged in other occupations.<sup>45</sup> Examples of these were employment in industries such as tanning and fellmongering, both of which were connected with agriculture and thus demonstrated the relationship the town had with its rural environs.<sup>46</sup> Although Maldon was larger than Witham, and had additional economic activities due to its port, both places shared characteristics as market towns possessing similar rural hinterlands. Therefore, Witham's response to the Rural Queries may offer a reasonable proxy for the Maldon urbanised parishes where no such return existed.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, with most families being employed in agriculture in the adjoining parishes of Great Waltham and Little Waltham, these will be used as a proxy for the agricultural parishes of Woodham Walter and Woodham Mortimer.<sup>48</sup> Great Waltham is four to five miles north of Essex county town of Chelmsford on the west side of the river Chelmer and was one of the largest

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<sup>43</sup> Humphrey-Smith, *The Phillimore Atlas*, pp.144-8. ProQuest, 1834 (44), Answers to Rural Queries.

<sup>44</sup> ProQuest, 1834 (44), Answers to Rural Queries.

<sup>45</sup> ProQuest, 1833 (149), Abstract of the answers and returns.

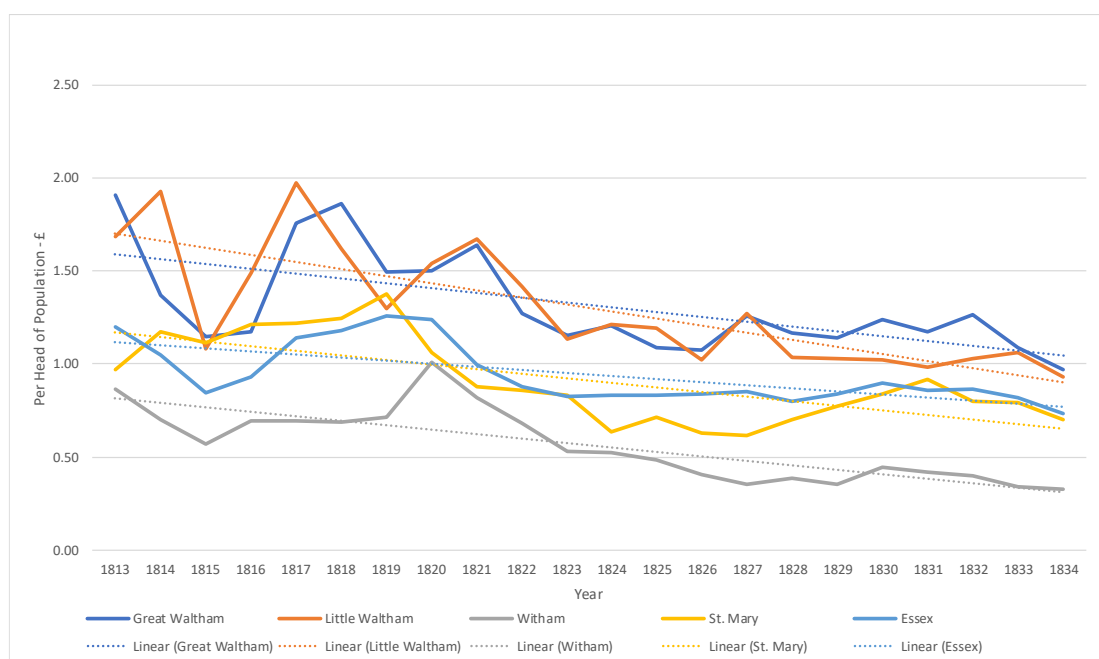
<sup>46</sup> J. Gyford, *A History of Witham England* (Witham, 2005), p.65.

<sup>47</sup> The composition of the Maldon economy is discussed in some detail in Chapter 4, and a comparison with Witham is included later in this chapter.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

parishes in Essex, covering some 7,054 acres of land. As the name suggests, Little Waltham covered only 2,209 acres and is on the east side of the Chelmer.<sup>49</sup>

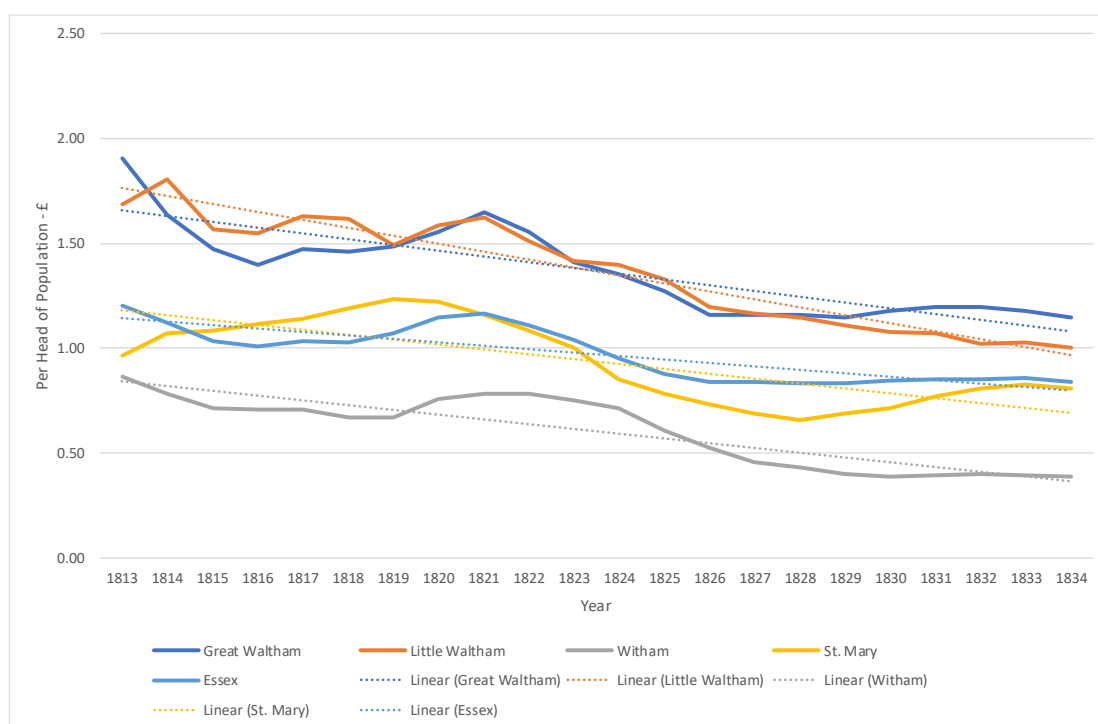
To further justify the suitability of Witham, Great Waltham, and Little Waltham as proxy parishes, the following charts provide the poor relief expenditures per head between 1803 and 1834, in terms of the actual figures and the moving averages. As before, the population figures used for calculating the poor relief for any year were calculated by linearly interpolating between the population figures provided for the previous and following censuses.



**Chart 2.4: Proxy Parishes - Expenditure per Head of Population, 1813-1834.<sup>50</sup>**

<sup>49</sup> W. White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Essex* (Sheffield: Robert Leader, 1848).

<sup>50</sup> The poor relief expenditure figures have been taken from returns that were published between 1813 and 1834. ProQuest, 1803, Abstract of the Answers and Returns; 1818 (82), Abridgement of the Abstract of the answers and returns; 1822 (556), Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns. 1825 (334), Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns; 1830-31 (83), Poor Rate Returns: An Account of the money expended for the maintenance and relief of the poor in every parish, township in England and Wales; 1835 (444), Poor Rate Returns: An Account of the money expended for the maintenance and relief of the poor in every parish, township in England and Wales. The population data was taken from the census data from 1801 to 1841: ProQuest, 1801 (140), Abstract presented to the House of Commons of the answers and returns made to the Population Act of 41<sup>st</sup> Geo. III. &c. 1812 (316), Abstract of the answers and returns made pursuant to an act, passed in the fifty-first year of His Majesty King George III; 1822 (502), Abstract of the answers and returns made pursuant to an act, passed in the first year of His Majesty King George IV; 1833 (149), Abstract of the answers and returns; 1843 (496), Abstract of the answers and returns made pursuant to acts 3&4Vic. c. 99 and Vic. c.7.



**Chart 2.5: Moving Average per Head of Population, Proxy Parishes Compared to St. Mary (Maldon) and Essex, 1803-1834.**

Witham, Great Waltham, and Little Waltham all showed a decline in poor relief per head from about 1820 until 1834, comparable to all the parishes in the Extended Maldon Area. The relief per head for Witham was approximately twenty basis points per head less than it was for Essex and St. Mary, but as the overall trend is the same, the response to Rural Queries seems likely to be representative. Both Great Waltham and Little Waltham show very similar average levels of relief per head to Woodham Walter – almost £1.60 per head in 1820, declining to nearer to £1.20 per head in 1834. This is what would be expected from similar higher poor relief spending rural parishes and would indicate that the low levels of relief for Woodham Mortimer were probably an anomaly.

The Rural Queries were split into five parts. Part (1) asked general questions about the parish, such as its name and area, and also about the income that was earned by male labourers and their families. The second part commenced by asking if families could subsist on what they earned and what type of food they could eat based on their earnings. It continued by asking questions about rent payments, allowances, whether the parish had a workhouse, and if so, how much it was used. Part (3) concerned itself more with questions that related to the raising of rates and the agricultural economic capital of the parish. The fourth part enquired about the role of the magistrates in the payment relief under the old poor law, but also had a

series of scenario-based questions, such as what would be the effect of ceasing to pay allowances? The final part continued in a similar vein by posing several 'what if' style questions, this time regarding the laws of bastardy and settlement, accounting standards, whether the parish should continue as the administrative unit for relieving the poor, and finally possible causes of the riots of 1830 and 1831.<sup>51</sup>

The economic profile of St. Mary becomes clear from the answers to the first part of the survey, with only a limited role for agriculture. There were only two farms of about 300 acres and four 'parts' of farms of fifty acres each. The respondents also stated that only fifteen to twenty men were employed as agricultural labourers, because most of the population were seamen, as Maldon was a port.<sup>52</sup> The employment figure conflicts with the 1831 census, which stated that thirty-four families were mainly employed in agriculture and demonstrates the approximative nature of survey responses. The answer of 'very few' to question six, concerning the number of agricultural labourers unemployed during the summer and winter, would suggest that there was little surplus of agricultural labour within St. Mary.<sup>53</sup> It probably explains the relatively low level of poor relief per head, when compared to more agriculturally based parishes, such as Woodham Walter or the Walthams. The responses about the level of wages within part one of the Rural Queries, will be summarised for St. Mary and the three proxy parishes later in this chapter.

Whilst Great Waltham and Little Waltham were both predominantly agricultural, they differed regarding the structure of farming. Great Waltham had over 6,000 acres split between just a few landowners, while Little Waltham had only 2,200, which was 'much divided'.<sup>54</sup> Question (4), which asked how many labourers were sufficient to adequately cultivate the soil, had not been answered for either St. Mary or Little Waltham. The response for Great Waltham was 250, although the actual number of agricultural labourers living in the parish in 1831 was 321. So, unlike St. Mary, there was a surplus of labour within the parish and consequently it would be expected that there was a greater requirement for poor relief. The respondent for Great Waltham claimed that approximately thirty people were paid from the poor rates throughout the year.<sup>55</sup> There is a clear contradiction with these responses, because at face value they would imply that around forty people on average did not work, but received no allowance, if the farms were optimally staffed. This in turn raises the questions of whether the responses were accurate; but,

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<sup>51</sup> ProQuest, 1834 (44), Answers to Rural Queries. Questions, Parts I-V.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182a.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188a.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

possibly, farmers employed more labourers than they needed, or some labourers worked outside of the parish.

The comparable answers from Little Waltham were not as straightforward, because they introduced data that had not been asked for, such as the age of the workers and whether they were agricultural or not. A reasonable interpretation of these responses is that there were 128 agricultural labourers, of whom an average of approximately eight were unemployed throughout the year. Therefore, the answers from the Walthams were relatively similar in terms of their proportion to the populations of the parishes in 1831. At Great Waltham approximately 6.3% of the population were adult male agricultural labourers, of which about 10% were unemployed, whilst at Little Waltham these ratios were 5.2% and 6.2%.<sup>56</sup> When compared with the full agricultural employment that St. Mary had claimed, these data were consistent with the much higher poor relief per head figures for the Walthams.

Witham, like the Maldon parish of St. Mary, was mainly urban in character, with only 103 of 565 families chiefly employed in farming.<sup>57</sup> The proportional dependency on agriculture for employment (18%) was therefore very similar to that found in St. Mary (17%). The census data somewhat contradicts Gyford's suggestion that around a quarter of the male population of Witham were farmworkers until 1871, but even at taking the higher value it underlines its economic profile was quite different from the truly rural parishes.<sup>58</sup> Probably for this reason the respondents to the Rural Queries didn't answer questions such as the number of agricultural labourers employed, or the number of acres that were cultivatable.

Witham and Maldon are only seven miles apart, so it is also unsurprising there were close connections between the two towns. William Henry Pattisson was a prominent solicitor in Witham and the brother of Joseph, who held important roles in Maldon as will be discussed in the Chapter 3. Some members of their family, which originated in Maldon, had established businesses in Witham in the 1730s. The family were also members of the Congregationalist church and attended services in both places.<sup>59</sup> So, it is likely that the social focus of the elite within the towns was similar, as Chapter 3 will establish the prominent role that Congregationalists held in both Maldon and Witham.<sup>60</sup>

Wages data in the Rural Queries, both for the adult males and women and children, was not cited in quite the same way for St. Mary and the proxy parishes, so

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> ProQuest, 1833 (149), Abstract of the answers and returns.

<sup>58</sup> Gyford, *A History of Witham*, p.68.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp.32-3, 70-3.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.72.

it has been set out in the following table to allow comparative analysis. The weekly wage for adult males was calculated by taking the projected annual wage and converting this figure to shillings per week. This approach was adopted because all the parishes which responded in detail allowed for seasonal changes to wages in their annual calculation.

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Adult Male - Average Weekly Wage in shillings</b>	<b>Proportion which is piece work</b>	<b>Labourer's Model Family – Average Weekly Wage in shillings</b>
St. Mary, Maldon	11.15	Some	4
Great Waltham	9	Half	0
Little Waltham	11.5	General but reducing	1.5
Witham	12.7	General	6 when work available

**Table 2.7: Wages Data from the Rural Queries, for St. Mary (Maldon) and Proxy Parishes.<sup>61</sup>**

One clear anomaly with the above data is that the average weekly wage for an adult male in Little Waltham was 2s 6d a week greater than the neighbouring parish of Great Waltham. Unlike the respondents for Great Waltham those for Little Waltham took care to allow for the wages increase during the harvest month and the hay making season so it seems probable that this explains the difference. The average weekly wage for an adult male in St. Mary seems a little low for a parish that claimed full agricultural employment, but this was compensated for by the four shillings a week that could be earned by the labourer's family. The highest weekly wages for adult males and their family (when work was available) were in Witham. It seems plausible that the relatively high-level of remuneration may account for the low levels of poor relief per head for that town.

The first two questions of the second part of Rural Queries asked parishes to offer opinions about whether the agricultural labourers and their families could subsist on their wages, and if so with what type of food. Also, whether the respondents believed that they could save anything from their wages. St. Mary did not provide an answer to the first of these questions and gave a clear 'nothing' to the

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<sup>61</sup> ProQuest, 1834 (44), Answers to Rural Queries, p.182a-190a.



question on savings.<sup>62</sup> At Great Waltham, the vestry clerk was clear that they could not subsist without receiving parish relief, but the response for Little Waltham stated they could subsist on 'good wholesome food' if they were continually employed and hard working.<sup>63</sup> This was notwithstanding that they probably did not have the opportunity of being employed for the whole time, so the parish may have structured their reply in a manner calculated to appease the Commissioners. Informatively, the respondents for Witham provided individual and contradictory answers to this question. The Revd. Newman claimed that the labourers could subsist on 'good hearty food', and that they could save a little. In contrast W. Luard of Witham Hall, who was the deputy lieutenant of the county, was unequivocal that they could not subsist and could not save anything. The third respondent, Thomas Tracy, Witham overseer, answered somewhere between these replies, claiming that labourers could subsist but could not save anything.<sup>64</sup>

Part (2) questions moved on to considering the outgoings of the labourers in terms of rent and rates. St. Mary's return stated that the average rent for a labourer's cottage was between £3 and £5 per annum. It also explained that although the labourers' cottages were usually rateable, these were not usually collected for the relieved poor. The parish also conceded that there were some parish cottages made available and that it also paid some of the rents on the occupants' behalf.<sup>65</sup> The Walthams responded similarly to these questions, with the only differences from St. Mary's responses being nuance rather than substance. For example, Little Waltham claimed that rents were never paid on behalf of labourers directly, but could be so indirectly.<sup>66</sup> For Witham, again the responses were mainly the same, except it was stated that the parish often paid the rent.<sup>67</sup>

Following these questions about agricultural workers' outgoings, the Rural Queries posed their most controversial questions, concerning the payment of outdoor allowances to the able-bodied. St. Mary acknowledged that it had paid outdoor allowances to forty-five persons during the previous week, but that none of these had been to the able-bodied and they had not been paid according to any defined scale.<sup>68</sup> It is not possible to assess whether that response accorded with reality or not because of its pithy nature. Great Waltham's answer certainly seems contrived, because after acknowledging the payment of outdoor allowances to

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182b.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p.188b.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p.190b.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182b.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p.188b.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p.190b.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182b.

around 200 people it also stated that whilst this had been in support of wages it did not think this applied any longer. Great Waltham also recognised that the outdoor relief payments were based upon a scale, which was calibrated according to pecks of flour. This contrasted with the open admission from Little Waltham that it had made outdoor allowances to fifty-two people and that many of these had been able-bodied. It explained that such payments were made in support of the labourers' families, rather than the men themselves, and were based upon a scale which was determined by the magistrates. The Little Waltham respondents effectively blamed the magistrates for such payments, claiming that they would like to place a check upon them but were unable to do so.<sup>69</sup>

Witham gave a more detailed response to the questions on allowances, probably indicating that the respondents understood that this was a key subject for the poor law report commissioners. They answered that outdoor relief payments had been made to fifty-three persons, being: bastards, widows, and heads of families, and went on to claim that payments made in support of wages were not made from the poor law rates fund, but some other, unspecified, source. Again, it seems possible that the Witham response was crafted for the benefit of the commissioners, as it seems unlikely that the parish's accounting was sufficiently detailed to be able to segregate funds available in the manner suggested; Gyford confirms that such payments were made from the poor rate.<sup>70</sup> In common with the other parishes, except St. Mary, Witham stated that the outdoor allowances were paid according to a scale, and that this scale was determined by the magistrates.<sup>71</sup>

The third part of the Rural Queries survey addressed the level of poor rates and how parishes were administered. The level of rates was set as an amount per pound of a percentage of the 'rack rent', for each of the four parishes, as shown in Table 2.8. The level of rates per pound was similar for St. Mary and the Walthams, which is surprising given the lower rate of relief expenditure in St. Mary; no obvious explanation is apparent. The lower rate of 5s per pound for Witham was also quite high compared to the Walthams. Given that poor relief per head in the Walthams was over double that of Witham in 1834, it might be expected that the rate would be less than 4s per pound. This discrepancy is probably explained by the difference between the assessment that was used between land and houses, as shown in the table.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p.188b.

<sup>70</sup> Gyford, *A History of Witham England*, p.57.

<sup>71</sup> Proquest, 1834 (44), Answers to Rural Queries, p.190b.

Parish	Percentage of Rack Rent	Amount per Pound
St. Mary	Two thirds	7s 6d
Great Waltham	Two thirds, or three fourths	8s
Little Waltham	Two thirds	6s 6d to 7s 6d
Witham	Land two thirds, houses one third	5s

**Table 2.8: Rates Data from the Rural Queries, for St. Mary (Maldon) and Proxy Parishes.<sup>72</sup>**

Part (3) of the Rural Queries also asked if the parishes believed that the level of agricultural capital was increasing or diminishing. The return from St. Mary did not provide a response, probably because of its urban focus, but the other three parishes gave answers that may again have been constructed to support the view of the poor law commissioners.<sup>73</sup> Both Walthams stated that capital was decreasing rapidly, and that was due to increased pauperism and abuse of the poor law system.<sup>74</sup> The answers from Witham were more intriguing. Revd. John Newman claimed that agricultural capital had increased, because of the better administration of the poor law in the parish. Whereas, the other two answers claimed that capital was reducing, and that this was mainly due to the poor rate and other rates, such as the highway, county etc.<sup>75</sup> Clearly agricultural capital cannot have been both increasing and decreasing at the same time. This dichotomy illustrates again the questionable reliability of Rural Queries as a source, because some respondents may have provided answers that were inaccurate or simply intended to satisfy the commissioners.

The structure of the Rural Queries was relentless and, in some ways, resembled modern day questionnaires, with similar types of questions phrased in slightly different forms. Part (4)'s focus examined the consequences of changing or abolishing the allowance system. Question (39) asked if any attempt had been made in the parish to discontinue the system of paying allowances to able-bodied men or their families.<sup>76</sup> St. Mary answered this question evasively, by stating that the

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182c- 190c.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182c.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p.89c.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p.192c.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, Part IV Introduction.

payment of allowances was discontinued if the claimants' circumstances changed.<sup>77</sup> Great Waltham, gave a partly rhetorical and partly empirical response, by saying that in spite of a 'very great dislike' of the system labourers with large families did not earn enough to support their families without the payment of allowances.<sup>78</sup> Little Waltham, directly contradicted its answer to question (24) from part (2), in which the parish had acknowledged that it did pay allowances in support of families, by claiming that 'the vicious system' referred to in the question had never been adopted within the parish.<sup>79</sup> Witham, again continued with its practice of providing three entirely different answers from its individual respondents. The Revd. John Newman simply observed that when allowances were refused, the claimants often appealed to the magistrates; W. Luard gave, what was probably the honest answer, that allowances were paid when families could not adequately support themselves and that had always been the case; conversely, Thomas Tracy claimed that no allowance system had ever 'prevailed'.<sup>80</sup>

The answers from the proxy parishes to question (39) of the Rural Queries therefore again illustrate how carefully the appendix to the 1834 Report must be treated as a source. Yet, there was one question within part (4), question (44), that was unlikely to lead to misleading answers from the returning parishes - how influential were magistrates in the decisions of granting poor relief?<sup>81</sup> It may be that the authors of the 1834 Report had an agenda which sought the reduction of the powers of magistrates insofar as poor relief allowances were concerned, but the question was not one where the parishes would have to admit their own culpability if they answered it truthfully. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that the responses provide a valuable insight into the role of the magistrate. St. Mary provided a terse 'yes', that the magistrates were the ultimate authority. In similar vein, Witham acknowledged the authority of the magistrates, but the Walthams also made it clear that not only did the magistrates have the ultimate authority, but they also set the scale for relief.<sup>82</sup>

These responses suggest that the Essex magistrates were very influential in poor relief management, which in turn may have led the commissioners to believe that their involvement encouraged the payment of allowances and therefore that their role in poor relief administration should be discontinued. If it was the case that magistrates were supportive of the allowance system the key question is why,

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p.182d.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p.188d.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.190d.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., Part IV Introduction.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, pp.182d-190d.

because they were often substantial local landowners, as was the case with W. Luard, and as such had to make significant contributions to the poor rate. Among the explanations that should be considered is that their attitude was due to social conscience developed through local convention over a long period. Many would probably have been connected with arable farming where the payment of 'allowances to the able-bodied' was an effective way maintaining a flexible supply of labour. Within the area for which they held jurisdiction, such payments delivered consistency which may have dissuaded people attempting to move to obtain improved poor relief within the same hundred/district.

Most of the questions within part (5) of the Rural Queries were generalised and related to associated matters such as: emigration, bastardy, and settlement, but the final question (53) was fundamental and must have been of great concern to all of those involved with reform of the poor laws. This was whether the parishes could provide any insight into the 'Swing riots' of 1830 and 1831.<sup>83</sup> Appendix II in Hobsbawm and Rudé's book listed all of the places in England where there were disturbances that led to court action.<sup>84</sup> None of the studied parishes were included in that list, but this may not tell the whole story. St. Mary did not answer the question, Great Waltham claimed that there had been a fire which had been accidental, whilst Little Waltham claimed no incidents took place despite a great deal of apprehension. The Little Waltham answer, spoke of 'general poverty' and 'want of employment', being the causes of bad feelings between 'master and man'.<sup>85</sup> Witham once more provided contradictory answers. The Revd. John Newman claimed that no riots took place and said that that he could not comment upon why they may have done so elsewhere. W. Luard did not directly acknowledge that riots had taken place, although it is possible that they had, because he gave the reasons of lack of employment for labourers and 'vexatious' taxes for landowners. The overseer, Thomas Tracy, admitted that incendiarism had taken place and suggested that these had not been due to low wages or lack of employment.<sup>86</sup> Gyford's analysis confirmed that economic strictures had caused social unrest which resulted in an outbreak of incendiarism in Witham between November 1828 and February 1829, with multiple fires being started at local farms. These protests were rapidly quelled by arrests and trials which resulted in sixteen-year-old James Cook being hanged and nineteen-year-old Edmund Potto being transported.<sup>87</sup> Whilst this prompt and brutal action from

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<sup>83</sup> C. J. Hobsbawm, G. Rudé, *Captain Swing* (London: Verso., 2014 [1969]), p.12.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.308-58.

<sup>85</sup> ProQuest, 1834 (44), Answers to Rural Queries, p.182e,188e.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190e.

<sup>87</sup> Gyford, *A History of Witham England*, pp.55-6.

the authorities may have limited the protests, it appears that there was underlying unrest in the agricultural sector caused by economic distress.

Despite the small number of Essex parishes that responded to the Rural Queries and many of the answers being unclear or misleading, they provide a picture of communities that relied, for at least some of the year, upon the provision of allowances to support agricultural labourers and their families. Even if the agricultural workers could subsist, it was evident that they barely did so, and this would have explained the tensions that were alluded to by some parishes in 1830/1. The allowance system was underpinned by local magistrates, indicating that the parishes formed part of larger spatial units that supported the old poor law system. The interpretation advanced here attempts to see through the opacity or outright falsity of some of the parish answers. Such disingenuousness on the part of the parishes may well indicate that they realised that change to the poor law was going to take place and they were aligning themselves with the spirit of the forthcoming changes.

As a source, the Rural Queries share many of the issues identified with the 1825 Report and the poor relief expenditure figures published for 1813 to 1834. Nevertheless, Boyer used these extensively in his follow-on analysis to those of Blaug and Baugh. He recognised that that these early revisionist historians had rejected the traditional economic analysis of the reasons for outdoor relief derived from the 1834 Report, and that they had correctly argued that the fundamental reason for the payment of allowances to agricultural labourers was that there was generally an over-supply of labour. Whilst at certain times of the year the labour supply may have been fully employed (harvest and sowing being prime examples), the rest of the time the people were relying upon agricultural wages which would fall below the level of subsistence.<sup>88</sup>

Boyer contended that the main reason for his study was to disabuse the idea held by many historians that the allowance system commenced with Speenhamland in 1795. Further, he wanted to provide an explanation of why allowances were adopted, rather than other schemes such as the provision of allotments or annual contracts providing a consistent lower wage, as well as a mathematical model that allowed for empirical testing of the relationships between unemployment rates, wages and relief payments. To address the last point, Boyer developed a three-equation regression model, which used the data from the Rural Queries data accompanying the 1834 Report and the 1831 Census.<sup>89</sup> His conclusion was that an allowance model had been adopted in predominantly arable areas in order to

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<sup>88</sup> Boyer, *An Economic History of The English Poor Law 1750-1850*, pp.77-9.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

maximize profitability, whereas in areas where mixed or livestock farming dominated, full-employment contracts were more profitable. Boyer's conclusion is intuitively plausible and there is no reason to question his quantitative model. Nevertheless, as discussed in this section his prime data source was flawed and it is important to view his analysis in that context. It emphasises the need for the type of additional research, based upon local data, as described in the introduction to this thesis.

## *2.5 Poor Law Returns after the 1834 Act*

The 1834 Act was a far-reaching reform of the system of poor relief, insofar as it legislated for the removal of the parish as the main administrative unit. The parish was to be replaced by a system of poor law unions representing groups of parishes. The Extended Maldon Area parishes were all included within the Maldon Union, which was formed on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1835, the union being sub-divided into the three districts of Dengie, Maldon and Thurstable.<sup>90</sup> The administrative tasks of: forming unions; establishing standard reporting formats; developing regulations etc., took time, and no official figures for poor relief were published in the first annual report of the poor law commissioners.<sup>91</sup> The annual reports from 1836 and 1837 published expenditure by parish, the 1838 report gave figures by parish within union, and from 1839 to 1844, they gave poor relief expenditure figures by union only.

It seems that the hasty enactment of the poor law legislation in 1834 left insufficient time for the complexities of communications to the parishes, and the establishment of new administrative processes to be completed. In their first report, the commissioners complained that there was a great deal of uncertainty concerning the transition to the new system amongst the existing managers of relief.<sup>92</sup> Many of the parish officers had gained the impression that they should no longer continue their role of providing poor relief, and that this role would be carried out by the commissioners. They were therefore forced to communicate to the parishes, that they should continue with their responsibilities until new measures had been implemented.<sup>93</sup>

The commissioners were also faced with the economic realities of why the allowances had been developed in the first place. They noted that the fall in the prices of agricultural produce during the first winter following the 1834 Act had forced

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<sup>90</sup> ERO, G/M M1A, Maldon Union Board of Guardians Minutes, December 1835 to January 1836.

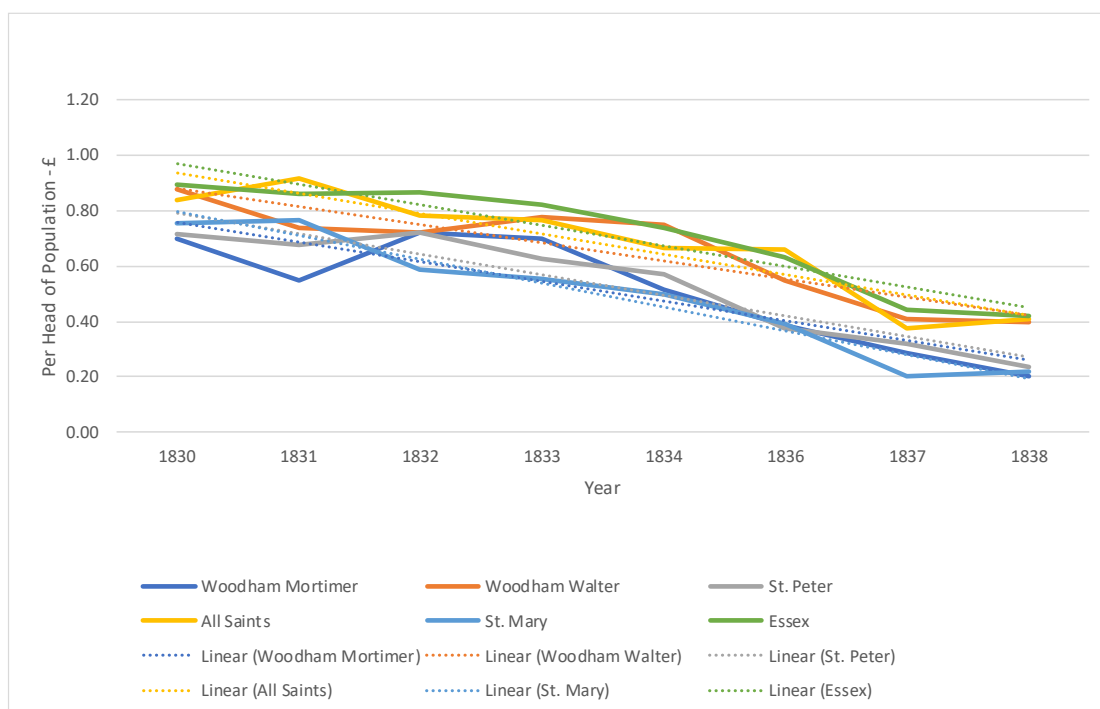
<sup>91</sup> ProQuest, 1835 (500), First annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

some farmers to reduce the wages of agricultural workers. The commissioners observed that when the customary allowances were not paid to supplement low wages, this had led to disturbances in some areas. They did not in any way suggest that the 1834 Act was in error in its denouncement of allowances to the able-bodied, instead adopting the stance that such allowances should be given in kind rather than in money and be supported by work for the parish. Thus, it seems they tacitly acknowledged the need for some system of support, even though they continued to exhort the moral iniquity of the allowance system.<sup>94</sup>

The immediate impact of the 1834 Act upon poor relief expenditure in the Extended Maldon Area can be seen from the following graph, which shows expenditure for the four years prior to the Act and for the three years following the Act (1836-1838) where expenditure data by parish was available.



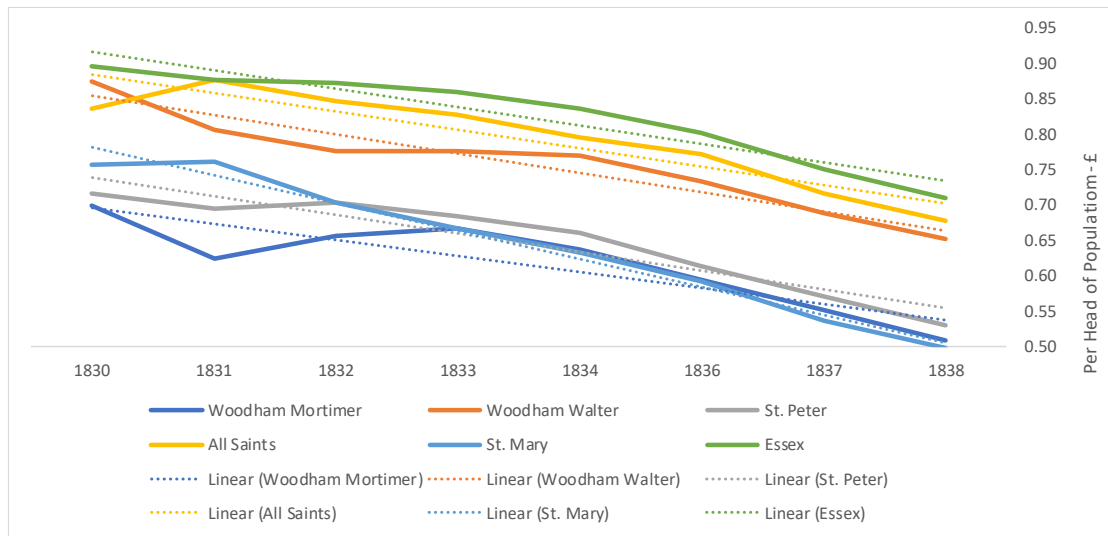
**Chart 2.6: Expenditure per Head of Population 1803-1838, Extended Maldon Area and Essex.<sup>95</sup>**

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., pp.4-5.

<sup>95</sup> The poor relief expenditure figures from 1830 to 1834, have been taken from parliamentary returns; ProQuest, 1830-31 (83), Poor Rate Returns, 1835 (444). The poor relief expenditure figures from 1836 to 1838, have been taken from the poor law commission's annual reports; Proquest, 1836 (595), Second annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners; 1837 (546 I, II), Third annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners; 1838 (147), Fourth annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners; The population data was taken from the census data from 1801 to 1841: ProQuest, 1801 (140), Abstract of the answers and returns; 1812 (316), Abstract of the answers and returns; 1822 (502), Abstract of the answers and returns; 1833 (149), Abstract of the answers and return; 1843 (496), Abstract of the answers and returns.



The parishes and Essex, all had lower levels of expenditure per head in 1834 than they had in 1830. Expenditure per head fell for all individual parishes and for the county between 1834 and 1837, continuing the falling trend from 1830 to 1834. Also, no figures are available for 1835, so the missing year appears to exaggerate the expenditure reduction between 1834 and 1836. Furthermore, the rate of decline of expenditure per head, was much lower between 1837 and 1838, and for All Saints the expenditure per head increased between 1837 and 1838. The expenditure trend may be seen more clearly from the following graph of the moving average of expenditure per head, which takes 1830 as the first year in the average.



**Chart 2.7: Moving Average of the Expenditure per Head of Population 1830-1838.**

It is really only St. Mary that shows a steeper trend of decline in poor relief per head following the passage of the 1834 Act. This raises the question of whether the poor law unions were unwilling, or economically unable, to implement the provisions of the Act. The poor law commissioners themselves had acknowledged the hardship that was experienced by agricultural workers at certain times of the year, and it is possible that the allowance system was intractable.<sup>96</sup> These data from the annual reports are insufficient to confirm such a suggestion. In common with the poor law returns by parish, which had been collected before 1834, the figures available were only for overall expenditure. There are no figures for the number of claimants available in the central sources, so it is not possible to understand the reasons why relief was increasing or decreasing. Also, the relief figures were not

<sup>96</sup> ProQuest, 1835 (500), First annual report.

generally analysed (except for the limited data available from 1803 and 1825) by the type of relief. Consequently, it is also not possible to differentiate between allowances to the able-bodied, and relief payments to the elderly, children, or those who were invalids.

The lack of granularity of the data thus makes it impossible to judge the accuracy of the commissioners' annual reports. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the message that they attempted to convey. In the fifth report, which was published in May 1839, the commissioners recounted the short history of the new poor laws to date. They explained that in the first two years of the operation of the new poor law, most of the effort had been focused upon establishing the machinery of administration. In the third year, there had been a particularly harsh winter, and an extensive bout of influenza, which had affected many labourers. Year four had seen poor trading conditions, and in year five, there was a shortage of food, which had resulted in excessively high prices.<sup>97</sup> The commissioners acknowledged that there was general distress amongst labourers and their families in agricultural areas, and explained that they had 'urged' that wages be raised.<sup>98</sup> However, they also indirectly acknowledged that their exhortations were unsuccessful, by stating that such attempts to influence the labour market were really beyond their province.<sup>99</sup>

The introduction to the fifth annual report thus appeared to be laying the groundwork for an explanation of the continuity of payment of 'allowances to the able-bodied'. The report then continued with reports from assistant commissioners, which claimed successes for poor law unions that had discontinued the payment of allowances in support of wages. The reports were all anecdotal, non-specific, and mainly asserted that when the payment of allowances was stopped most labourers could find employment and support themselves and their families.<sup>100</sup> The commissioners published a table which showed the number of able-bodied paupers that there had been in 1834 in comparison to the number in 1839, in support of the rhetoric from the assistant commissioners. It gave figures for only eight counties: Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Somerset, and Norfolk.<sup>101</sup> The report provides no explanation of why these counties were selected, although as they all showed a reduction in the number of able-bodied paupers, it seems likely that the commissioners were attempting to

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<sup>97</sup> ProQuest, 1839 (239), Fifth annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners, p.1.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

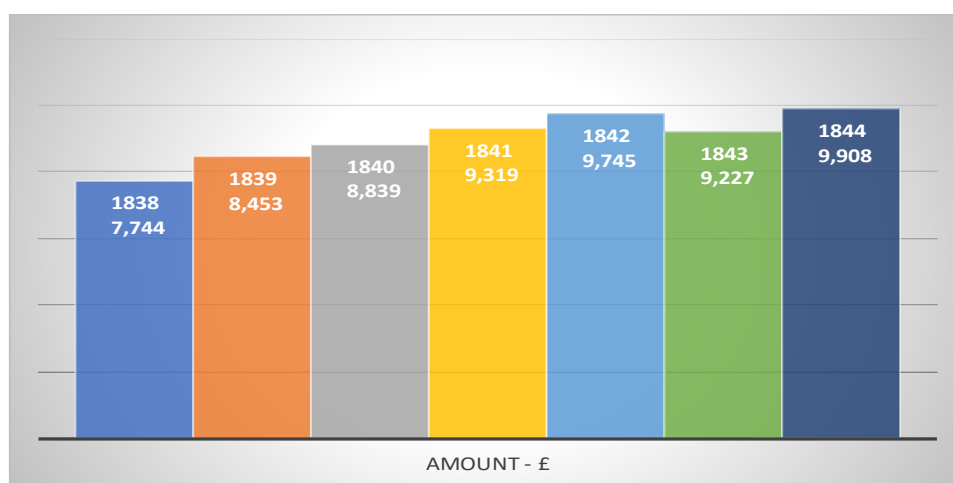
<sup>100</sup> Ibid., pp. 2-8.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

deliver the most favourable message possible. It should also be noted that there is also no explanation of the provenance of the figures.

The sixth annual report showed the split between the payments of indoor relief, outdoor relief, and expenses in the form of salaries etc. In the year ended 25<sup>th</sup> March 1840, the Maldon Union spent £2,417 on indoor relief, £4,858 on outdoor relief, and £1,564 on expenses.<sup>102</sup> This limited insight into the workings of the Maldon Union, demonstrates that the provision of outdoor relief was still more significant than indoor relief, and that expenses were high, at over 17% of the total cost. A further reading of the return for 1840, shows that the outdoor relief costs were higher than the indoor relief costs for every union in Essex, sometimes significantly so. For example, the outdoor relief cost for the Dunmow Union was £10,910 versus £1,474 indoor cost and £11,241 and £1,944 for the Chelmsford Union respectively. Across England and Wales a pattern of outdoor costs being higher than indoor costs was found for a majority of poor law unions, and probably explained why the commissioners stopped publishing the split from the seventh annual report onwards.<sup>103</sup> Assuming that a significant proportion of the outdoor relief was paid to the able-bodied and their families, it was clear from the figures in the 1840 return that the 1834 Act was not immediately successful in its aim of discontinuing allowances to this class of claimant.

The total expenditure figures for the Maldon Union, for the years 1838 to 1844 (figures by union are available from 1838) are shown in the following bar chart.



**Chart 2.8: Maldon Union – Total Poor Relief Expenditure 1838-1844.**<sup>104</sup>

<sup>102</sup> ProQuest, 1841 Session 2 (57), Return of the sums expended in every union in England and Wales for the year ending Lady-Day 1840, p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., pp.1-11.

<sup>104</sup> ProQuest, 1838 (147), Fourth annual report; 1839 (239), Fifth annual report; 1841 Session 2 (57). Return of the sums expended in every union. ProQuest, 1841 Session 1 (327),

Whilst the published costs were not split by indoor and outdoor relief, the fact that the overall cost rose year on year, except for 1843, suggests that the overall level of outdoor relief continued to rise within the Maldon Union. The figures for that district were in line with the national picture described by the commissioners in the tenth annual report of 1844, which identified that although the cost of poor relief had fallen from 1834 to 1838, it had then increased steadily.<sup>105</sup> The poor law commissioners attempted to soften this message by noting that the monetary value of poor law expenditure in 1843 was below that of 1834. Although, as previously explained, the level of relief was on a downward trend well before the 1834 Act, and it may be that the reduced level of expenditure from 1834 to 1838 was simply a continuation of that trend.

The commissioners also attempted, as they had in previous annual reports, to comment upon a continued adherence to non-payment of outdoor relief to the able-bodied.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, such claims have little credibility because it seems improbable that there had been a change in the split between outdoor and indoor relief since the sixth annual report. Also, the commissioners found it necessary to issue a comprehensive prohibitory order in 1844, demonstrating that there was still a need to force a change of behaviour from all the unions in England in Wales a decade after the passing of the Act.<sup>107</sup>

Overall, therefore, the commissioners' annual reports as a source for analysing how poor relief was administered exhibit some of the same problems as other central government records up to and including 1834. Whilst it could be argued that the data became more reliable and consistent because of central government rules and regulations, it was insufficiently detailed to determine if the pattern of relief changed and how it was affected by local economic and social circumstances. As discussed above, even the split between outdoor and indoor relief was omitted after the sixth annual report.

Nevertheless, the post 1834 reports have been used by revisionist historians to investigate whether claims by supporters of the 1834 Act about its effectiveness were accurate. As with the other sources discussed in this chapter it is important to consider the conclusions of some of these historians in light of the limitations of the

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Seventh annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners; 1842 (399), Appendices B to F to the eighth annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners; 1843 (491), Appendices A to D to the ninth annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners; 1844 (589), Appendices A to C to the tenth annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners.

<sup>105</sup> ProQuest, 1844 (560), Tenth annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners, p.1.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> ERO, D/P 275/19/1.

sources they were based upon. Boyer adopted a theoretical approach using the same model he had used for the old poor law, with an additional factor reflecting additional costs that would have occurred with the provision of indoor relief under the new poor law. He assumed that the latter was at least 50% higher than outdoor relief, although he provided no empirical evidence to support this assertion.<sup>108</sup> His model predicted that in parishes where outdoor allowances were abolished, it would be most cost effective to offer annual contracts to labourers. So, it was evident that farmers would have sought to maintain allowances post the 1834 Act, to optimise their profits.<sup>109</sup> Whilst Boyer's model seems plausible, again it must be treated with caution because he was building upon the same data sources that he had used for modelling the old poor law. His conclusions would have to be tested against real wages and outdoor relief data to gain full credibility.

One source which would have allowed Boyer to explore the extent to which the practice of paying allowances in support of wages continued after the 1834 Act, is the third of the central sources named earlier in this chapter – the annual returns from the Poor Law Commissioners. Rose used this as the basis for his paper on the allowance system after the 1834 Act.<sup>110</sup> Rose, though not solely focused on south-east England, claimed that allowances continued to be paid, even though they were portrayed as a social and economic evil by the 1834 Act. His view was mainly based upon the summary tables for outdoor relief payments that were published in the annual returns for 1840-1847.<sup>111</sup> These tables not only published the numbers of adults that had been paid outdoor relief, but also described the reasons why this had been allowed.<sup>112</sup> He also noted that after 1847, this detail concerning outdoor relief had been omitted, perhaps reflecting the commissioners' reluctance to publicise their failure to ensure the abolition of allowances in support of wages.<sup>113</sup>

Rose did not engage in detailed analysis about the economic issues affecting agricultural regions such as the south-east of England. Although he claimed that whilst the allowance system survived long after 1834, it probably was not implemented in the same way as it had been under the Speenhamland system. His source for this speculation was another paper authored by Blaug which analysed the Rural Queries appendix from the 1834 Report.<sup>114</sup> Blaug had concluded that the

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<sup>108</sup> Boyer, *An Economic History of The English Poor Law 1750-1850*, p.212.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p.216.

<sup>110</sup> M.E. Rose, 'The Allowance System under the New Poor Law' *Economic History Review*, 19. 3 (1966), pp.607-20.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 608.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old poor law and the Making of the New', M. Blaug, 'The Poor Law Report Reexamined', *Journal of Economic History*, 24.2 (1964), pp.229-45.

operation of the Speenhamland system had mainly ended by 1832, based upon the answers within Rural Queries, although there are issues with the validity of his conclusion because he failed to recognise the problems with this source that have already been discussed.<sup>115</sup> Alongside Rose's statement concerning Speenhamland, he also claimed that although this system may not have survived, a system in support of 'small' and 'irregular earnings' did, although he provides no evidence to support this claim.<sup>116</sup>

Rose considered that one reason for the continuation of the payment of allowances, was that no effective order existed to prohibit the payment of allowances until 1844.<sup>117</sup> This may have been true, but given the overall tone of the commentary from the drafters of the 1834 Report about the payment of outdoor allowances, Boards of Guardians can have been in little doubt that it was considered to be unacceptable.<sup>118</sup> It is therefore more instructive to consider the underlying reasons why Guardians continued to authorise outdoor relief payments. In Rose's opinion, the reasons were twofold: the inhumanity of the workhouse coupled with the frequent need to split families, and the increased cost of paying indoor relief over outdoor relief.<sup>119</sup> Whilst both of these statements are compelling, they don't provide any real insight into the economic motivation of the members of the elite who made these decisions. For economic and social reasons, analysed in detail later in this study, the allowance system was deeply embedded in the practice of poor relief administration in the Extended Maldon Area and other similar regions. To have simply desisted, would probably have had significant consequences for all concerned.

## *2.6 The Value of the Central Sources*

All the central government sources available for the Extended Maldon Area, both before and after the 1834 Act, exhibit the same fundamental problem in that they generally only provide overall poor law expenditure figures, at either parish or union level. The information these sources provide about the numbers and types of person relieved, required for a persuasive insight into the treatment of the poor, is either not available, incomplete, or doubtful in terms of its accuracy. The survey conducted in 1803 was detailed, but the answers which have been examined are

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<sup>115</sup> Blaug, 'The Poor Law Report', p.231.

<sup>116</sup> Rose, 'The Allowance System under the New Poor Law', p. 609

<sup>117</sup> The prohibitory order does not exist within the ProQuest database. However, some parish records hold copies of the original printed orders for example, ERO, D/P 275/19/1, Parish Records, Printed Orders from Poor Law Commissioners (St. Andrew Great Yeldham): 1837-1845.

<sup>118</sup> ProQuest, 1834 (44), Royal Commission of Inquiry.

<sup>119</sup> Rose, 'The Allowance System under the New Poor Law', pp.612-3.

anomalous, and cannot readily be relied upon in the absence of further data. The 1825 return for labourers was conducted at too high a level of unit of administration (hundred or district rather than parish), and only 22% of these units responded in Essex. Also, as with the 1803 return, many of the answers seem inaccurate or contrived. The 1834 rural queries were directed at parish level, but elicited responses from only 12% of the Essex parishes, and in common with previous detailed returns, the accuracy of the answers may be questioned.

The overarching finding, therefore, is that while the central government records may identify general themes and indicators of how poor relief was provided, all conclusions should be verified from local data or at least heavily caveated. Also, as observed in Chapter 1, there are many avenues of historical research which cannot be pursued using them. They provide little or no information about children, single women, widows, or the elderly. Consequently, it is difficult to judge whether localities were truly generous or not, and if they had particular preferences which favoured different categories of the poor. Equally, the national data does not provide enough data points to determine whether changing economic circumstances correlated with expenditure on relief.

Clearly, all of these constraints applied to the work of historians that have relied heavily on the central records, notwithstanding that the revisionists were prepared to undertake more detailed analysis than had been carried out previously. This allowed them to legitimately question many of the precepts of the poor law reformers. Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that the multiple flaws with the central data require at least qualification, and that the local information required to achieve this opens up new research opportunities, so their work should be supplemented accordingly. Before engaging with the detailed data on poor relief that is available in overseers' accounts, it is important to understand the contemporary social and cultural attitudes existing within the Extended Maldon Area. This will be attempted in Chapter 3 by a study of the local elite, who were the decision makers in the administration of the old poor law.

### 3 The Role and Attitudes of the Elite

Poor relief payments were authorised by the local 'elite' of wealthy and influential individuals who, as discussed in Chapter 1, dominated parish vestries and the local magistracy. Their economic position and imperatives, along with their social and cultural viewpoint, must have shaped local policies concerning poor relief under the old poor law.<sup>1</sup> In order to develop a fuller understanding of the context to the provision of poor relief in Maldon and its adjacent parishes, it is therefore necessary to study the persons responsible for implementing the poor laws and their attitudes and beliefs.

The composition and role of the elite, with regard to the administration of poor relief and the passing of the 1834 Act, has been the subject of some debate. Mandler described the elite as a narrow group of landed gentry frequently uninvolved in the administration of poor relief beyond sometimes acting as Justices of the Peace. Further, he argued that this group had developed a 'new ethos' towards dealing with the economic issues faced by rural landowners, which was influential in the passage of the 1834 Act.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Mandler felt that that any sense of paternalism, which he regarded in any case as weak, had by the early nineteenth century given way to a more utilitarian attitude that eventually held sway in drafting the wholesale change to the Poor Law.<sup>3</sup> Brundage counter-argued that the landowning class retained a strong sense of paternalism, which still persisted after the 1834 Act, and also that this paternalism gave a 'sense of identity' with an area.<sup>4</sup> From yet another perspective, Eastwood described the group of landed gentry to which Mandler referred as 'elusive' and he doubted that there was such a pervasive philosophy for radical poor law reform amongst them. Instead, Eastwood ascribed landowners' concern for providing poor relief as a result of 'humanitarian liberal Christianity', rather than paternalism. Like Brundage he recognised how elite attitudes shaped particular localities' approach to poor relief both before and after the 1834 Act.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009 [2000]), p.269.

<sup>2</sup> P. Mandler, 'The Making of the New Poor Law Redivivus', *Past & Present*, 17 (1987), pp.131-3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Brundage and Eastwood, 'Debate - The Making of the New Poor Law Redivivus', *Past & Present Society*, 127 (1990), pp.184-6.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.188-94.



The debate between Mandler, Brundage and Eastwood raises some overarching questions about the role of elites in the provision of poor relief and the development of their ideas about its management. Firstly, to what extent were the elite involved with the administration of poor relief and whether this involvement changed post the 1834 Act? Secondly, whether the elite demonstrated a sense of duty towards the poor, either in the form of paternalism or humanitarianism? Thirdly, if there is any evidence that they engaged with the philosophical debate about the principles that underpinned the 1834 Act? Furthermore, these and similar questions have yet to be extensively tested against specific cultural, social, or economic settings, which formed the context for policy decisions by local elites.

The gentry may have contributed to the poor relief debate nationally, but locally it was the broader 'middling sort' who were largely the administrators of relief. Margaret Hunt defined this class of people as being business owners, professionals, and others of a similar type, who were 'beneath the gentry but above the level of the laboring classes'.<sup>6</sup>

Henry French disagreed with Wrightson that this group 'self-identified' as a middle-class within the national social order, instead suggesting that they regarded themselves as members of the administrative units of parish or town.<sup>7</sup> Within this confined unit, it is understandable that a person's status was, to an extent, perceived around the offices held within the community. Appointment to office was not based solely from an individual's wealth, for as French noted, qualitative factors such as honesty judgement and wisdom were often as important.<sup>8</sup> This was the case based upon the evidence presented within this study, as detailed later in this chapter.

Within the Extended Maldon Area, many members of the elite had interests in both the rural and urban settings; certainly, the major landowning elite were often, as described by Sir Lewis Namier (British historian, 1888-1960), 'amphibious', because they were neither wholly rural nor wholly urban.<sup>9</sup> Cannadine revealed that the landed elite rarely ignored the opportunities that arose from entrepreneurship that extended to a wide range of activities that included many types of trading activity as well as involvement in infrastructure development projects.<sup>10</sup> Clark has also explained how local rural landowners often exerted significant economic influence over nearby

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<sup>6</sup> M. R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (London: University of California Press, 1996), p.15.

<sup>7</sup> H. R. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England 1600-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.23-4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.90-1.

<sup>9</sup> Sir Lewis Namier was quoted in D. Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords: the Aristocracy and the Towns 1774-1967* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1980), p.30.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.31-2.

towns, and thus understanding such relationships may be critical in understanding policy in the Extended Maldon Area.<sup>11</sup>

Maldon's characteristics as a small market town and port, with a closely related rural hinterland, also prompts a series of more specific questions over the local elite's approach to the relief of the poor. Firstly, as some members of the Maldon elite had both rural agricultural interests and urban economic interests and/or roles in town government, how did such individuals balance these different concerns when forming a policy for poor relief? Secondly, how did the local elite operate within what seems, on the surface, contrasting styles of local government between country and town? In the latter case, when the landed elite were managing their affairs in a rural area, they were able to operate in a dictatorial, or at least oligarchical fashion. In contrast, the form of Maldon's Borough government, which had a strong degree of autonomy, was essentially, democratic, with a more diffuse pattern of political participation and power. A key question, therefore, is whether locally powerful individuals were able to adapt to the more democratic style of government that prevailed in the town? It will also be informative to discover the extent to which the urban style of government influenced how the vestries for the three Maldon parishes formulated poor relief policy. It is intended that in pursuing such lines of enquiry the following study of the Maldon elite will assist in enhancing knowledge of the general relationship between the socio-economic character of an area and its poor relief policy.

### *3.1 Identifying the Extended Maldon Area's Elite*

As already described in Chapter 1, Maldon had a diverse economy which included: coastal trade; fishing; manufacturing; general trading and services, which supported a variety of local wealth generating activities. Consequently, it contrasted sharply with rural parishes where the key members of the elite were typically dominant local agricultural landowners. It is therefore important to evaluate the extent to which Maldon's economic diversity had the effect of tempering elite attitudes towards the need to limit poor relief.

Maldon was a small borough town that had been incorporated by Royal Charters of 1554 and 1555. The Corporation members (officers) were elected annually by persons who were freemen of the borough, and these freemen were also entitled to vote in elections for the two seats in the House of Commons that derived

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<sup>11</sup> P. Clark, 'Small towns 1700-1840', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Volume II: 1540-1850*, ed. P. Clark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 [2008]), pp.733-73.

from Maldon's corporate status. Freeman did not have to be residents of Maldon and could gain this position by inheritance, marriage to a freeman's daughter, apprenticeship to a freeman, or by nomination. There were twenty-six elected Corporation members split between eight aldermen and eighteen headburgesses and the senior positions within the Corporation structure, such as the mayor and justices of the peace, were drawn from these members. As Smith noted, the extent of the Corporation's power was unclear from its Royal Charters but became extensive following a series of precedent cases during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The Corporation exercised legal power through its own courts of quarter and petty sessions, alongside other courts such as an admiralty court and the court of record. In this way the legal powers held by Maldon Corporation were on a par with the legal divisions of Essex County, such as the neighbouring Dengie Division. In addition, the Corporation was responsible for important matters such as the infrastructure (roads, bridges and public buildings); public health and safety; and policing.

Although the powers held by the Corporation were significant, they did not extend to the direct management of poor relief, which was still vested with the town's three parishes. However, as disputed poor relief cases were referred to the Maldon court of petty session for resolution, an important question is whether the Corporation promoted a common approach within the borough? Smith noted that there had been an instance in 1737 when the Corporation had appointed the overseers for all three parishes. This procedure had not continued because it was illegal, but it provided an example of the way the Corporation sought to extend its jurisdiction.<sup>12</sup>

The rural parishes of Woodham Mortimer and Woodham Walter adjoined Maldon but were not subject to the Corporation's direct control. Both lay within the Dengie Hundred administered by the County of Essex. The 1831 Census enumerated forty-nine out of seventy families (70%) as being 'chiefly employed in agriculture' for Woodham Mortimer and eighty-one families out of 102 (79%) for Woodham Walter.<sup>13</sup> Both parishes therefore appear to conform more closely to the model agricultural parish described at length in the 1834 Report. For local government, such parishes operated with a significant degree of independence, with the key roles of churchwarden and overseer of the poor within the parish vestry

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<sup>12</sup> J.R. Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800: a Golden Age* (Studley: Brewin Books, 2013), pp.52-121.

<sup>13</sup> ProQuest, 1833 (149), Abstract of the answers and returns made pursuant to an act, passed in the eleventh year of the reign of His Majesty King George IV, intituled, "an act for taking an account of the population of Great Britain, and of the increase or diminution thereof." Enumeration abstract. Vol. I. M. DCCC.XXXI., p.184.

usually filled by leading local farmers.<sup>14</sup> Yet, the parish vestries were not omnipotent and poor relief disputes between parishioners and overseers could be referred to the court of petty session for judgement by county magistrates. In the case of Woodham Mortimer and Woodham Walter this court was administered within the Dengie Division of Essex. The role of the courts of petty session, in resolving disputes concerning poor relief, gave significant power to influence decision making within parishes; thus, local magistrates were effectively key members of the elite which administered local poor relief.

In order to develop a profile of the elite for the three Maldon Parishes and the parishes of Woodham Mortimer and Woodham Walter, databases have been built of all of the members of the vestry for each parish for the period between 1824 and 1835. These databases include: the occupation of the vestry members (when discoverable); the vestry positions held throughout the period; positions held within the Maldon Corporation (where applicable); and whether the vestry member held the position of JP within the Dengie Division. Unfortunately, no vestry records were available for Maldon's parish of St. Mary, but even with this gap, the study has produced a reasonably comprehensive view of Maldon's elite.

The 1831 Census showed that 1,870 persons lived in the Maldon parish of St. Peter's, 1,146 in St. Mary and 815 in All Saints. Although the three parishes operated independently from each other, insofar as they had separate administrative structures, there were strong connections between them. All Saints and St. Peter had separate vestries but worshipped as a single congregation at All Saints' church, and St. Peter's vestry meeting was generally held at All Saint's church.<sup>15</sup> There was a single workhouse in Maldon which served all three parishes, and in 1829 the three parishes relied upon the provisions of the 1819 Sturges Bourne Act in order to form a Select Vestry which combined their members in order to jointly manage the workhouse. The specific purpose of a meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1829 was to 'discharge' the governor of the workhouse for allowing persons who were not parishioners of any of the three parishes to occupy the workhouse, and further combined meetings were held until 1835.<sup>16</sup>

St Peter was the largest of the three Maldon parishes and between 1824 and 1835 fifty-four people served terms as members of the vestry. The occupations of

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<sup>14</sup> D. Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government 1780-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Books, 1994 [2003]), pp.24-42.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800: a Golden Age*, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> ERO, D/P 201/8/1, Parish Records, Minutes of The Select Vestry (St. Peter's Maldon): 1818-1833.

eight have not been identified, but those of the remaining members are summarised as follows.

<b>Class of Occupation</b>	<b>Number</b>
Agriculture	7
Independent Means	3
Manual Tradesman	12
Merchant/Business Owner	13
Professional	4
Shop Owner	7
Unidentified	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>

**Table 3.1: Occupations of St. Peter’s Vestry Members, 1824-1835<sup>17</sup>**

It should be noted that in the case of St. Peter, the category of ‘Agriculture’ included five farmers and two husbandmen, so unsurprisingly no agricultural labourers were vestry members. A striking feature of St. Peter’s vestry in the 1824 to 1835 period, was the level of continuity that existed within the membership. For example, the senior figures of John Payne and Joseph Pattisson (both merchants, although Pattisson had declared himself as of ‘independent means’ by the start of this period) held positions within the vestry for the whole period and were in regular attendance. In John Payne’s case he undertook the role of overseer for the years 1824 to 1827 and then moved to the role of churchwarden or was simply a member. His position as an overseer reveals how senior members of the elite were prepared to engage in the detailed work of administering poor relief and not just oversee the process. Payne was one of the most prominent people in Maldon in the period 1824 to 1844 and went on to become the town’s mayor and a justice within both Maldon and the Dengie Division. The role of overseer was not only considered as of key importance but must also have required significant effort; in 1827 (John Payne’s last year as overseer) the victualler Henry Whitmore was appointed as the assistant overseer on a salaried basis.<sup>18</sup>

The most senior positions within the vestry were generally held by persons who contributed substantially to the poor law rates. Nevertheless, the control of the

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<sup>17</sup> These occupations were established from: TNA, HO 107/345; ERO, D/B 3/10/5; Printed Poll Book for the Maldon Election of 1826; W. Robson, *Robson’s Directory of the Home Counties* (London: Richard Studley, 1838), pp.75-8.

<sup>18</sup> ERO, D/P 201/8/1.

vestry was not straightforwardly based upon a formula whereby those that paid the most rates exercised most control. For example, the largest landowner in St. Peter was the Right Honourable Henry Labouchere, but he was an absent landlord. His tenant farmers, Isaac Pledger and William Read, paid high amounts (approximately £23 and £13 respectively) for the third quarter's poor law rate in 1829. Both tenants were vestry members for most of the period 1824 to 1835, but neither held the position of overseer, churchwarden, or chaired the vestry during that period. In contrast, John Payne paid two rates of approximately £13 and £2 for the third quarter 1829 poor rate but held all of the senior positions within the vestry between 1824 and 1835. Also, the surgeon Benjamin Baker, a major landowner within St. Peter, paid over £21 for the third quarter of 1829, but did not apparently exercise greater influence within the vestry than John Payne, or others. Baker held positions as overseer but was never churchwarden and only chaired occasionally.<sup>19</sup>

It may be concluded, therefore, that some other criteria, perhaps related to social standing or other influences, determined who occupied the most senior of vestry positions, and that most often these persons were merchants or persons of 'independent means'. In addition to John Payne and Joseph Pattisson, these included John Strutt Hance ('independent means'), Edward Bright (merchant and soap manufacturer) and Henry Wells ('independent means'). The less influential members of the vestry, for example manual tradesmen, most often held the role of constable. Again, the consistency of vestry participation was demonstrated by how long the roles of constable were occupied by certain members. James Cook (carpenter), John Balls (shoemaker), William Oliver (carpenter) and William Heard (carpenter) all held the role of constable for more than five years. In summary, the vestry for St. Peter was an administrative body that was consistent in terms of its membership, clearly structured based upon criteria other than just the wealth of its members and highly focused upon poor law administration at the most senior level.

Given that All Saints had a congregation that was shared with St. Peter parish, it might be expected that the All Saints vestry would operate in a similar manner.<sup>20</sup> All Saints was a less populous parish than St. Peter and this was reflected in the lower number of recorded vestry members (thirty-six) between 1824 and 1835. It was not possible to determine the occupation of nine, but the occupations of the remaining twenty-seven are summarised in the following table.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.; ERO, D/P 201/12/7, St. Peter's Overseer's Accounts, 1813-1830.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., D/P 201/8/1.

<b>Class of Occupation</b>	<b>Number</b>
Agriculture	1
Independent Means	2
Manual Tradesman	11
Merchant/Business Owner	3
Professional	4
Shop Owner	6
Unidentified	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>

**Table 3.2: Occupations of All Saints' Vestry Members, 1824-1835.<sup>21</sup>**

All Saints parish occupied a much smaller area than St. Peter, enclosed by the land of St. Peter, and was entirely urban in character.<sup>22</sup> This explains why only one All Saints vestry member occupied a role within agriculture (husbandman), i.e. there was little land to farm. The physically small area also explains why there were fewer merchants/business owners within the parish – three versus thirteen. Given the low number of merchants, it is inevitable that they would have been unable to consistently occupy the most senior positions within the vestry. Indeed, one of the All Saints vestry members was the wine merchant John May, who also held a position within the St. Peter's vestry and may have been unable to devote sufficient time to both. Similarly, Joseph Patisson and John Strutt Hance also occupied positions within both All Saints vestry and St. Peter's vestries. Hance held the position of chairman of All Saints parish for the whole period 1824 to 1835.

The different occupational profile between St. Peter and All Saints meant that some of the latter's vestry roles were filled by professional persons or by a variety of shop keepers, rather than by merchants. Two surgeons, John Thorp and James Tomlinson, each held the role of churchwarden for two years, although the business owner (maltster) Isaac Rush held the same role for three years. Equally, Richard Pettit (hairdresser) and David Pitcairn (draper) were both overseers for multiple years during the period. More minor tradesmen, William Turner (tanner) and Thomas Livermore (shoemaker), held the role of constable for the period, demonstrating that All Saints followed a similar hierarchical approach to St. Peter and that any differences were probably due to the ratio of occupations.

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<sup>21</sup> TNA, HO 107/345; ERO, D/B 3/10/5; *Robson's Directory of the Home Counties*, pp.75-8.

<sup>22</sup> Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800: a Golden Age*, p.4.

All Saints vestry was also similar to St. Peter's in regard to a significant continuity of membership, as evidenced by John Strutt Hance and Joseph Pattisson, along with others, between 1824 and 1835. Additionally, it seems probable that the attention that St. Peter's vestry gave to the role of overseer was also true for All Saints. The role of overseer was often held by shopkeepers, such as David Pitcairn and Richard Pettit, because of the small number of merchants/business owners in the parish, but the brewer Alfred Busbridge held the role for four years. Even Joseph Pattisson, who was of 'independent means' and had not held any active role in the St. Peter's vestry for twelve years, acted as overseer for two years in 1829 and 1830.<sup>23</sup>

Overall, the operation of the parish vestries of St. Peter's and All Saints provide some indication of the socio-economic characteristics of Maldon and of how these influenced the administration of poor relief. The vestries were dominated by the leading merchants and business owners within the town and these participants operated alongside a small number of gentlemen and residents of 'independent-means'. Following the leading merchants, the professional members of the communities and shopkeepers were also intimately engaged with the operation of the vestries and generally held important positions, albeit most often secondarily to the merchants and independents. Manual tradesmen also performed active roles, providing an overall impression of a community managing itself (particularly the relief of the poor) in organised concert. It is certainly the case that the merchant and independent vestry men were also landowners within the parishes of St. Peter and All Saints, but it is not the case that the amount of property owned by the vestry members automatically dictated their seniority.

Maldon's size and urban character meant that the elite did not conform to the rural model of a single, or a few, dominant landowners. While there were major landowners within the Maldon parishes, such as Joseph Pattisson and Benjamin Baker, they seemed to collaborate within an organised administration where they devoted significant effort towards the management of poor relief but did not seek to dominate. This paints a very different picture from the narrow elite suggested by Mandler,<sup>24</sup> and is also at odds with the 'political primacy' that attached to landowners as suggested by Eastwood.<sup>25</sup> This is not to suggest that Maldon was an open society where it would have been possible for people of lesser wealth and influence such as

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<sup>23</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/3, Overseers Accounts and Vestry Minutes (All Saints, Maldon): 1813-1835.

<sup>24</sup> Mandler, 'The Making of the New Poor Law Redivivus', pp.131-3.

<sup>25</sup> Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government 1780-1840*, p.12.



manual tradesmen to gain senior level office. Rather, it implies that the machinery of local government within the Maldon parishes was more developed and nuanced than in less economically diversified or sophisticated communities where the wealthiest ratepayers dominated all decision making.

It will be instructive, therefore, to examine whether or to what extent the administrative culture of Maldon permeated the adjacent parishes of Woodham Walter and Woodham Mortimer. In comparison to the Maldon parishes, the populations of Woodham Mortimer and Woodham Walter were much smaller, with 339 and 538 inhabitants respectively in 1831. Records of the constitution of the vestries for these parishes were available for the whole period from 1824 to 1835.<sup>26</sup>

Woodham Mortimer was the smaller of these two agricultural parishes.<sup>27</sup> For such a small parish there were a surprisingly high number of vestry members - nineteen different individuals served in the period 1824 to 1844. Unsurprisingly, the occupations of vestry members were predominantly agricultural and are summarised as follows – there were four people for whom their occupation could not be discovered.

<b>Class of Occupation</b>	<b>Number</b>
Agricultural Labourer	3
Clergyman	2
Farmer	7
Independent Means	2
Miller	1
Unidentified	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

**Table 3.3: Occupations of Woodham Mortimer Vestry Members, 1824-1844.**<sup>28</sup>

As in Maldon, there was significant continuity within the vestry for the period 1824 to 1835, but here farmers dominated the senior positions within the vestry. Christopher Comyns Parker (hereafter Comyns), who was both a farmer and an influential land agent, held the position of churchwarden throughout the period and also was normally the vestry chairman.<sup>29</sup> Comyns lived at Woodham Mortimer Place and was the second largest landholder within the parish, owning over 228 acres

<sup>26</sup> ProQuest, 1833 (149), p.184.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> TNA, HO 107/345; ERO, D/B 3/10/5.

<sup>29</sup> ERO, D/P 274/12/2, Woodham Mortimer Account Book 1821-1838.

which he mainly farmed himself.<sup>30</sup> The greatest landholder was the Coopers Company for whom the farmer William Hart was tenant during the period.<sup>31</sup> He resided at Woodham Mortimer Hall and occupied over 317 acres of mainly arable farmland. Hart also held the position of churchwarden for the same duration as Comyns. So, in the case of Woodham Mortimer it appears that David Eastwood's argument that the most significant landowners/landholders generally dominated local politics was applicable.<sup>32</sup> The small population size of Woodham Mortimer (339 in 1831) dictated that there were few shopkeepers or professional persons who supported the community: there were no such persons represented within the vestry. The equivalent status to the manual tradesman in Maldon was the agricultural labourer in Woodham Mortimer. Labourers who were vestry members normally held the role of constable, as was illustrated by John Ong and William Hayward, both agricultural labourers who each held the post of constable within the vestry for several years.<sup>33</sup>

Whilst Comyns and Hart along with other farmers may have dominated parish administration in Woodham Mortimer they were still answerable to the divisional justices of the peace (JPs). As already noted, disputed cases of poor relief were referred to the Dengie Court of Petty Session, and in addition the divisional JPs had to agree to the poor rate level set. In the case of Woodham Mortimer, the JPs who signed off on the poor rates were usually Revd. Charles Matthews and Joseph Pattisson.<sup>34</sup> Charles Matthews was the rector for All Saints Church in Maldon, while Joseph Pattisson was a senior member of the vestries of St. Peter and All Saints Maldon. So, although Woodham Mortimer was administered independently, members of the Maldon elite would have exercised significant influence. It should be noted that in Joseph Pattisson's case his influence as JP was extended because he also owned over forty-one acres of land within Woodham Mortimer.<sup>35</sup>

In the case of the Extended Maldon Area, therefore, it appeared that the magistracy was interwoven with parish level administration, because at least some of the JPs were the same people who made decisions locally. This is in contrast to the analysis from Morgan and Rushton, which found that the activist magistrate Revd. Edmund Trew frequently intervened in disputes between poor relief claimants and

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<sup>30</sup> J. Oxley Parker, *The Oxley Parker Papers* (Colchester: Benham and Company Ltd., 1964), p.4; ERO, D/CT 410, Woodham Mortimer Tithe Apportionment 1838.

<sup>31</sup> ERO, D/DC 27/970, Deed of covenant for the Production of Title Deeds 1835; ERO, D/CT 410.

<sup>32</sup> Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p.12.

<sup>33</sup> ERO, D/P 274/12/2.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., D/CT 410.

parish administrators, and in doing so created a regional poor relief policy which led to parishes providing subsistence when they otherwise would not have.<sup>36</sup> Trew operated in the Boldon area of Durham in north-east England, so it is possible that the relationship he had with parishes may be attributed to regional differences between that the north-east and south-east. However, Peter King discovered that similar tensions concerning poor relief provision existed between Essex and Suffolk magistrates and parish administrators. Whilst the magistracy supported local authorities when there was civil unrest caused by the poor, normally there was a 'triangular' relationship between claimants, vestries and JPs where a regional policy was created in much the same way as Trew had in Boldon.<sup>37</sup> Morgan/Rushton and King analyses were largely focused on the mid-eighteenth century, so it is possible that practice changed between that period and the late old poor law. Whilst outside the scope of this study, this would be an interesting subject for further research.

Woodham Walter was a larger parish than Woodham Mortimer (population of 538 in 1831). Unfortunately, there are no existing vestry minutes for Woodham Walter for the years 1824 to 1829, or for 1835, so the database was restricted to 1830-1834. Despite only having records for these five years, nineteen vestry members served during this period and their occupations were split as follows – no occupations could be found for three members.

<b>Class of Occupation</b>	<b>Number</b>
Clergyman	1
Farmer	10
Independent Means	1
Manual Tradesman	2
Miller	2
Unidentified	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

**Table 3.4: Occupations of Woodham Walter Vestry Members, 1830-1834.**<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> G. Morgan and P. Rushton, 'The Magistrate, the Community and the Maintenance of an Orderly Society in Eighteenth-Century England', *Historical Research*, 76, no. 191 (2003), pp.54-77.

<sup>37</sup> P. King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England, 1740-1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.362-3.

<sup>38</sup> TNA, HO 107/345; ERO, D/B 3/10/5; ERO, D/P 101/18/4 Woodham Walter Census Return 1831.

Table 3.4 reveals that Woodham Walter was similarly dominated by agriculture. The greatest landowner within the parish was the Duke of Saint Albans and, like Rt. Hon. Henry Labouchere, the Duke was an absentee landlord.<sup>39</sup> Unlike All Saints, where the tenants were vestry members but did not hold the most senior vestry positions, the Duke's tenants were prominent within the Woodham Walter vestry. William Baker (farmer of over 190 acres) was an overseer three times during the five-year period and Barry Burchell (who farmed just under 100 acres) was overseer twice and also held the unusual combination of churchwarden and constable for three years.<sup>40</sup> As with Woodham Mortimer, the farmers controlled the vestry, although the largest farms were all managed by tenants. It is also worth noting that Isaac Pledger, who had been a tenant farmer and vestry member within St. Peter Maldon, was also a tenant farmer and a vestry member for Woodham Walter where he held the influential position of overseer for three years, i.e. he apparently wielded more influence in Woodham Walter than he had in St. Peter. Also, as with Woodham Mortimer, the JPs were the arbiters for setting the poor rates, and again Joseph Pattisson and Revd. Matthews acted in this role during the period. Comyns was also a JP who approved the rates for Woodham Walter, so it is possible to discern much interconnectivity between the two Maldon parishes and also between Woodham Walter and Woodham Mortimer. While on the surface the Woodhams both appear to fit the mould of traditional rural parishes, it is clear that Maldon's sphere of influence extended beyond its boundaries.

### *3.2 Maldon's Government and its Relationship with Rural Areas*

As described above, Maldon Borough had its own system of government and councillors were elected by the freemen of the borough. Between 1829 and 1831 and for 1835 (there are no records available for the period 1824 to 1828 or 1832 to 1834), twenty-six people served as councillors.<sup>41</sup> The occupations of the councillors are shown in Table 3.5 – no occupation could be found for William Felton.

The occupation profile closely matched that of the Maldon parish of St. Peter, which is unsurprising because fourteen of the councillors were resident in St. Peter and two held property in both St. Peter and All Saints – Joseph Pattisson and John Strutt Hance. Of the remaining councillors, eight lived in All Saints and two who resided outside of Maldon - Charles Hurrell, who dwelt in Heybridge, and Comyns,

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<sup>39</sup> ERO, D/CT 411, Woodham Walter Tithe Apportionment 1845.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> ERO, D/B 3/5/3, Maldon Council Minute Book: 1829-1831; ERO, D/B 3/5/4, Maldon Council Minute Book: 1835-1838.

who lived in Woodham Mortimer. The majority of councillors were also members of the vestries for the parishes where they lived, with only three Maldon resident councillors not being vestry members. These were William Lawrence (lawyer) and William Blackbone ('independent means') from St. Peter and John Wilmhurst (grocer). A significant overlap is therefore apparent between the senior persons within the Maldon parish vestries and Maldon Borough's government. People already frequently mentioned, such as John Payne, Edward Bright, John Strutt Hance and Joseph Pattisson, were all councillors. Indeed, the overall profile of Maldon's government was similar to that of St. Peter and All Saints, the administration was consistently dominated by the mercantile and financially independent inhabitants.

<b>Class of Occupation</b>	<b>Number</b>
Agriculture	3
Independent Means	4
Manual Tradesman	2
Merchant/Business Owner	8
Professional	3
Shop Owner	5
Unidentified	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>

**Table 3.5: Occupations of Maldon Corporation Officers, 1829-1831, 1835.**<sup>42</sup>

The most senior positions within Maldon Corporation were those of mayor, justice of the peace and alderman. Councillors were elected to these positions on an annual basis. After 1835 the 'sessional jurisdiction' for many boroughs, including Maldon, was removed following the passage of the Municipal Corporations Act.<sup>43</sup> Thereafter, the minutes showed that the designation of JP was no longer used.<sup>44</sup> Table 3.6 lists the persons who held senior office for the period records are available.

Persons holding the position of mayor corresponded to the socio-economic profile identified for Maldon Borough and the Maldon parishes. Four of the people who held the role were merchants or of 'independent means'. The other three people had similar or closely related occupations. Comyns' profile was similar because he

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<sup>42</sup> TNA, HO 107/345; ERO, D/B 3/10/5; *Robson's Directory of the Home Counties*, pp.75-8.

<sup>43</sup> Clark, 'Small towns 1700-1840', p.771.

<sup>44</sup> ERO, D/B 3/5/4.

was both a businessman and wealthy; George Hearn was a glazier, and although not classified as a merchant he was still occupied in trade; and William Lawrence was a professional who would have provided legal services to the community.

Name	Occupation	Politics	Mayor	JP	Alderman
William Bugg	Collector of Taxes and Duties for the Port of Maldon	Tory		X	
Edward Bright	Merchant	Whig	X		
John Bygrave	Merchant	Tory	X	X	
John Strutt Hance	Independent Means	Tory	X	X	
George Hearn	Glazier	Tory	X		
Charles Hurrell	Yeoman	Tory		X	
William Lawrence	Lawyer	Tory	X	X	
John May	Merchant	Whig			X
Christopher Comyns Parker	Land Agent/Farmer	Tory	X	X	
Joseph Patisson	Independent Means	Whig			X
John Payne	Merchant	Whig	X	X	X
John Sadd Jr.	Merchant	Whig			X

**Table 3.6: Persons holding the office of Mayor or JP, 1829-1839.<sup>45</sup>**

Perhaps more significant positions for this study than that of mayor, particularly regarding influence over poor relief, were those of JP, until the revocation of this borough responsibility in 1835. Before this date, the Maldon JPs oversaw appeals concerning relief rather than the JPs from the Dengie Division but, as Eastwood explained, the powers of justices acting in petty session were reduced by many counties in order to ensure that potential conflict between the newly elected

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<sup>45</sup> BNA, 'Died', *Essex Herald* (Chelmsford, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1830); BNA, 'True - Blue Club Dinner, *Chelmsford Chronicle* (Chelmsford, 29<sup>th</sup> June 1832); BNA, 'Maldon Election', (Chelmsford, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1847); ERO, D/B 3/5/3, D/B 3/5/4, D/B 3/10/5; ERO, D/DCf B2/14, Deed: Abstract of Title.

boards of guardians and the magistracy was minimised after the 1834 Act.<sup>46</sup> Maldon's justices prior to 1835 again closely fitted the socio-economic profile for the town. The possible exception was Charles Hurrell, a yeoman from the neighbouring parish of Heybridge, who may therefore have had more of a farming ethos. Although, given Hurrell's active involvement in Maldon government, it seems probable that he was similar to the type of country landowner described by Cannadine, i.e. one who was comfortable in urban as well as rural environments.<sup>47</sup> Comyns was another rural landowner who was also a Maldon justice - for most of the period from 1829 until 1835. The influential positions held by Hurrell and Comyns as members of the Maldon elite, even though they were resident in Heybridge and Woodham Mortimer respectively, adds weight to the suggestion that Maldon did not operate in isolation from nearby parishes. It seems that it was both influenced by, and capable of having influence over, other neighbouring locales.

The extent to which this interrelationship would be maintained, with regard towards the administration of poor relief, after the passage of the 1834 Act is of relevance. It took a while, after 1834, for the Maldon Union to be formed and assume the responsibility for poor relief. The first existing records are the Guardian Minutes from December 1835.<sup>48</sup> There were thirty-two parishes included within the Maldon Union divided into the three districts of Maldon, Thurstable and Dengie. On a meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1835 each parish overseer was ordered to pay a sum for poor rates to the Union. The period of the rate was not explained, and the sums detailed do not equate to the quarterly amounts listed for the Maldon parishes. The largest order was for £97 to St. Peter, with a further £63 and £46 for All Saints and St. Mary respectively. Other parishes such as Southminster (£95), Purleigh (£74) and Tollesbury (£69) were ordered to pay similarly high sums, but the sums for the majority of parishes were much lower.<sup>49</sup> Maldon had eleven of the thirty-three elected guardians, approximately in proportion to its population size relative to the other districts. The board also had five ex-officio members of which two were lay members, and both of these positions were held by persons who held positions of authority in Maldon - Patisson and Comyns. Of the three clergymen ex-officio members, one was Revd. Charles Matthews of All Saints, so Maldon held three of the five ex-officio positions on the board and, in addition, Comyns acted as chairman. So, the composition of the Union's leadership adds further weight to the idea that Maldon held an extended influence over the Dengie parishes in its

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<sup>46</sup> Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p.92.

<sup>47</sup> Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords*, p.30.

<sup>48</sup> ERO, G/M M1A, Maldon Union Guardian Minutes: 1835-1836.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

immediate hinterland and that consequently the town's elite continued to have considerable say in the administration of poor relief even after the 1834 Act.

Having established the interconnectedness between the town and the country for the Extended Maldon Area, it is important to briefly consider the typicality of that pattern, because it informs the question of commonality of socio-economic values within spatial units. Clark noted that whilst the transformation of small towns was significant during the Georgian period, their relationship with 'the countryside' continued to be critical. He also conceded that as both rural and urban areas developed, the interaction did not evolve in a consistent manner.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, the increased diversity of trades/businesses that took place in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was widespread, and Maldon fitted this pattern as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.<sup>51</sup> Also, Clark observed the continuing influence of large landowners in town government.<sup>52</sup> Again, this was the case at Maldon where the wealth of central figures in the town's government, such as Comyns and Patisson, was heavily dependent upon rural prosperity. Maldon's status of being incorporated as a borough by royal charter, meant it was one of only 135 in England.<sup>53</sup> Clark argued that the privileges that were attached to towns with royal borough status, such as the ability to maintain their own courts and elect their own MPs, acted as powerful attractions to the rural gentry. Even though these powers were reduced by the 1832 Reform and the 1835 Municipal Reform Acts, they continued to afford such towns with an influence that was disproportionate to their size. Maldon, as will be discussed later in this chapter, seems to be in line with the profile that Clark outlined.<sup>54</sup>

### *3.3 Ideological Groupings within the Elite of Maldon*

Some studies have been able to consider how the attitudes of the elite directly affected local poor law policy, such as Williams' study of the east Bedfordshire communities of Campton and Shefford. She found that the well-known poor law campaigner and MP, Samuel Whitbread, was very active in the formation of poor law policy in that area. It was therefore possible for Williams to describe how

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<sup>50</sup> Clark, 'Small towns 1700-1840', pp. 757-9.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.762.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.757.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.769.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.769-72.



Whitbread's opposition to Malthusianism influenced the empathetic policy to the relief of the poor in east Bedfordshire.<sup>55</sup>

So far, the elite of Maldon have been considered as a single group made up of mainly merchants/businessmen and persons of 'independent-means'. From this group a sense of the socio-economic character of Maldon's elite has emerged. Yet, whilst this category of society may have held some common values and followed an established way of working, it is improbable that they all shared the same political and ideological beliefs. The elite clearly collaborated in a consensual manner in the administration of the town and vestries, but it is important to understand how their convictions diverged. The absence of a single dominant public figure equivalent to Samuel Whitbread within the Maldon area raises the problem of how to gain an understanding of the beliefs of the different groupings that probably existed.

One straightforward way of identifying interest groups is to establish the political persuasion of the most senior members of the elite. The twelve people listed in Table 3.6 were all freemen of the borough of Maldon and as such were entitled to vote in elections to Maldon's two parliamentary seats. There was a reasonably even split of political allegiance between Whig (five persons) and Tory (seven persons), and this may reveal something about how the occupations of the office-holders gave an indication of their politics. Of the five people who voted Whig, four were merchants and one was a person of 'independent means'. The latter was Joseph Patisson, a landowner, but the origin of his wealth came from his grocery trade, which may have influenced his political belief.<sup>56</sup> From the seven people that voted Tory, George Hearn did not fit the pattern of merchants/businessmen voting Whig. Comyns was a hybrid businessman/land owning farmer, but his land agency meant that he was continuously involved with landowning interests, so it seems probable that his political perspective was heavily influenced by his career. William Lawrence was a lawyer, William Bugg a collector of taxes for the Port of Maldon, Charles Hurrell a landowner, and John Strutt-Hance was of 'independent means' and a landowning farmer. It was only the merchant John Bygrave, who had the same occupation, of merchant, as the Whig Mayors.

The policies of the Whigs and the Tories, at a national level, were not neatly divided in a way whereby they could be directly matched to the two groupings within the Maldon elite. More specifically, this was the case for the two parties' policies concerning the administration of poor relief. As Brundage explained, there were

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<sup>55</sup> S. Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle Under the English Poor Law* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011) pp. 92-4.

<sup>56</sup> Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800: a Golden Age*, p. 10.

Tories and Whigs alike that supported reform of the poor laws, but this was often driven by their own personal economic interests. Equally, there were many Whigs unconcerned about reforming the poor laws, particularly those who lived in urban areas.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, at a local level it is suggested that the political differences within the Maldon elite are likely to provide an insight into any ideological differences between the two groupings, what influenced these viewpoints and therefore assist in understanding how Maldon's socio-economic character impacted poor relief policy. So, the Maldon Whigs and Tories will now be considered as separate groups.

### *3.4 Dissenters within the Whigs of the Maldon Elite*

Among the five individuals in Table 3.6 who supported the Whigs, it is possible to identify a further sub-group based upon religion. As previously noted, that there was a significant overlap between Maldon's borough officials and members of the vestries of St. Peter and All Saints. The parishes were a key part of the system of local government and were, by definition, divisions within the Anglican Church. However, as John Smith observed, as early as 1763 over a quarter of the members of Maldon Corporation were Protestant Dissenters (i.e. did not conform to the religious interpretations and rites of the Church of England), so it is important to investigate if this was still the case in the first half of the nineteenth century, because it will help assist in understanding this sub-group of Maldon's elite.<sup>58</sup> The records of membership of the Maldon Congregational Church for the period 1824 to 1844, have been used to identify which members of that church were also members of Maldon's government between 1829 and 1839.

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<sup>57</sup> A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 37-89.

<sup>58</sup> Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800: a Golden Age*, pp. 397-405.

Name	Occupation	Politics	Position	Vestry
William Felton	Currier	Whig	Councillor	St. Peter's
John May	Wine and Spirit Merchant	Whig	Alderman	St. Peter's /All Saints
Joseph Pattisson	Merchant	Whig	Alderman	St. Peter's /All Saints
David Pitcairn	Draper	Whig	Councillor	All Saints
John Sadd Jr	Merchant	Whig	Alderman	St. Peter's
John Wilmshurst	Draper	Whig	Councillor	None known

**Table 3.7: Maldon Congregationalist Members who were also Maldon Councillors, 1829-1839.<sup>59</sup>**

Comparing Tables 3.6 and 3.7, it may be seen that a least three of the twelve senior Maldon Corporation officials were dissenters, in line with the earlier proportion in 1763. Approximately the same percentage applied to council members, from Table 3.5, i.e. six from twenty-six. It is also possible that the proportion of dissenters was slightly higher than shown in Table 3.7, but no records remain for other dissenting churches such as the Methodists, Baptists or the Society of Friends (Quakers).

There were on average under 100 members of the Maldon Congregationalist Church between 1824 and 1844, representing fewer than 3% of the total population of Maldon. The high proportion of members Maldon government who were Congregationalists, suggests that there were some special characteristics of either ability or willingness to govern that existed within this small group. Sir Llewellyn Woodward postulated that the 'democratic character' of the dissenters helped train them for government, administration and oratory.<sup>60</sup> More specifically, Woodward suggested that the Congregationalists had organised themselves in a way that would maximise their influence, by unifying a number of disparate churches into a union that held clearly defined principles. He also described Congregationalists as being

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<sup>59</sup> BNA, 'Maldon Assessors Election', *Essex Standard* (Colchester, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1837); BNA, 'Executors Notice', *Essex Herald* (Chelmsford, 15<sup>th</sup> August 1837); BNA, 'Maldon Municipal Elections', *Essex Herald* (Chelmsford, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1840); ERO, D/NC 76/1/15, Church Book: 1800-1926; ERO, D/NC 76/4/9, Reverend Burls Notebook: 1820-1857; W. White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Essex* (Sheffield: Robert Leader, 1848).

<sup>60</sup> L. Woodward, *The Age of Reform: 1815-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938 [1962]), p.522-4.

essentially middle class in character, exercising most influence within older mercantilist and manufacturing towns, often out of proportion to their numbers.<sup>61</sup>

The profile of Maldon's elite echoes Woodward's description of the Congregationalist church in England during the nineteenth century. Table 3.7 shows that all of the Congregationalists were merchants or shopkeepers, with the exception of William Felton, who was a currier. The occupational profile is therefore similar to that suggested by Woodward and it is reasonable to infer that the people listed in the table would also have been middle class. It is also possible to find support for his suggestion that dissenters may have developed disproportional influence because of the democratic form of their organisation. Two sources, Maldon's Congregational Church Book and Revd. Robert Burls (1793-1866) notebook, contain material demonstrating that the church was consensual and well organised. The church book documented financial contributions from all members in considerable detail and also the election of trustees for the management of the church's finances.<sup>62</sup> Burls' notebook reveals that church members had to be nominated and were then subject to election. Whilst this shows that the Congregational church apparently followed a democratic process, it also implies a degree of exclusivity.

Burls' records of the election of church members show that new members were often nominated and then elected unanimously, such as in the cases of John Sadd and his wife in December 1824. On other occasions, existing church members were 'deputed to inquire' into a potential new member. For example, Mr. May and Mr. Sharp were asked to enquire into James Stock in 1824 and reported that everything was satisfactory.<sup>63</sup> Sometimes the record of election was omitted, accompanied by a stark statement that it was unanimous. In these cases, there was often an additional note written in a form of shorthand, which it has been impossible to translate. For example, in September 1825, Mary Ablee was admitted to the church, accompanied by a note in longhand which stated that Mr. Pattisson and Mr. May would visit her. This was followed by a note in shorthand, presumably so that only those capable of understanding it would know the content.

Burls' records do not provide any information about applicants for church membership who were rejected. It is possible that there were none, but it is clear that it was not possible to become a member of the Maldon Congregational Church without some process of vetting. This suggests that the Maldon Congregationalists applied certain criteria in order to determine the suitability of fellow church members,

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> ERO, D/NC 76/1/15.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., D/NC 76/4/9.

which in turn indicates that they had a strong sense of the common values that bound them together as a group.

Revd. Burls provided a summary of the core values and principles of the Maldon Congregationalists in the sermon he preached at John May's funeral in August 1837, based upon the assumption that he would have presented a picture of John May as a person whose fundamental values were aligned with those of the Congregational Church. The core principles listed by the Reverend were numerous but included: piety and Lords' day observance, equality for all regardless of opinion or religious belief, participation in civic government, and, importantly, care for the disadvantaged and the poor. This indicates that, at least for the dissenters, there was a perceived moral duty of care towards the poor.<sup>64</sup>

Five of the six Congregationalists listed in Table 3.7 were also members of the vestries of St. Peter and All Saints. The exception was John Wilmhurst, although it is possible that he was a member of the vestry of St. Mary. The Test Acts of 1672 had prohibited persons from holding public office unless they received Holy Communion in accordance with Anglican rites and these acts were not repealed until 1828. So how were six Congregationalists able to have held office within the Maldon Corporation before the repeal of the Test Acts? Smith has suggested that dissenters found a way around the strictures of the acts by occasionally 'submitting to Anglican Communion'.<sup>65</sup> This suggestion seems plausible and emphasises the importance that the Congregationalists attached to active participation in local government and the administration of parishes, which of course included the management of poor relief distribution. Smith also suggested that Maldon dissenters were, in the main, supporters of the Whig party during the eighteenth century because the Whigs were supportive of religious toleration.<sup>66</sup>

### *3.5 The Ideas and Principles of Maldon Whigs*

The key questions to consider in understanding the attitudes of the Whigs within the Maldon elite in 1824 are: whether a liberal approach towards religious toleration continued to be important for the dissenters and the non-dissenters, and also if this liberalism extended to other policies and ideas. John Payne was one of the two Whigs in the Maldon elite (Table 3.6) who was not a member of the Congregational Church. During the 1826 Parliamentary election for Maldon, Payne

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., ERO, LIB/SER/2/44, Sermon by the Revd. Robert Burls at the Funeral of John May.

<sup>65</sup> Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800: a Golden Age*, p.398.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 403.

acted as the agent for Thomas Barrett-Lennard, the Whig candidate. He supported free trade, Catholic emancipation and electoral reform, and had been the Member of Parliament for one of Maldon's two parliamentary seats for six years prior to the election.<sup>67</sup> The person who seconded Barrett-Lennard as a candidate for election was John May, both a Whig and a member of the Congregational Church. The 1826 election was a rumbustious affair and during its course Payne had cause to remonstrate severely with the returning officer for Maldon, who was the Tory-supporting mayor – Comyns. The 1826 election preceded the 1832 Reform Act, corrupt electoral practices were rife, and the conduct of elections was often aggressive to the point where they had to be heavily policed.<sup>68</sup> In this context, the dispute between Payne and Comyns during the election should be considered behaviour quite typical of the time. The direct involvement of Payne, May and Comyns in the election does demonstrate how involved these members of the Maldon elite were in national party politics and the wider issues that were at issue between the candidates.<sup>69</sup>

Payne had accused Comyns, who as returning officer should have been impartial, of directly favouring the Tory candidates – Quintin Dick and George Winn. The, unnamed, author of the council minutes stated that as the chairman of the magistrates of the Dengie division, and a substantial landowner with great influence, Comyns' behaviour was 'disgraceful'. Payne and Comyns must have spent a significant amount of time together, either as fellow magistrates or in the day to day government of Maldon, acknowledged in the minutes by where Payne was recorded as commenting that his issue with Comyns' behaviour related to the election because he otherwise had great regard for him.<sup>70</sup> It is apparent that whoever authored the minutes was pro-Whig, because he praised Barrett-Lennard for the 'liberal sentiments' he had displayed both during the election and the previous six years that he had represented Maldon. In contrast, the author criticised the illiberal views expressed by Tory candidate, Quintin Dick. The latter held views that were largely the opposite of Barrett-Lennard's. He was against parliamentary reform, Catholic Emancipation, abolition of slavery and any repeal of laws that prevented

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<sup>67</sup> Barrett-Lennard, Thomas (1788-1856), *The History of Parliament Online*, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/barrett-lennard-thomas-1788-1856>, [accessed 17<sup>th</sup> February 2019].

<sup>68</sup> J.W. Derry, *Reaction and Reform 1793-1868: England in the early Nineteenth Century* (London: Blandford Press, 1963), p.56.

<sup>69</sup> ERO, D/DL O42, Minutes of the 1826 Election.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

dissenters from holding public office.<sup>71</sup> Dick's opposition to the repeal of the Test Acts directly impacted the dissenting members of the Maldon elite and that alone would have explained their support for the Whigs. Significantly for this study, whilst the candidates appealed to the Maldon electorate by clear statement on many of the key contemporary issues, the debate concerning the provision of poor relief was not mentioned. Was the question of poor relief, therefore, of less importance to Maldon than other key questions of the day or were approaches essentially uniform and not a matter for controversy?

Barrett-Lennard's overall policy tenets appeared to have been aligned to those of the Maldon Independent Club, which had been formed in 1784 by Edward Bright, one of the Maldon Whig elite listed in Table 3.6.<sup>72</sup> A meeting of the Independent Club in July 1830, provides some insight into the principles adhered to by this grouping. A full list of attendees was not provided, but in addition to Barrett-Lennard, both John May and John Payne addressed the meeting. The meeting's chairman was Charles Callis Western, former MP for Maldon and by then MP for one of the two Essex County constituencies.<sup>73</sup> Following an introduction by Barrett-Lennard, Western addressed the meeting about the fundamental beliefs of the Independent Club. The club held the somewhat unambitious goal that a Whig should occupy one of the two parliamentary seats for Essex and also one of the two seats for Maldon, Western acknowledging that this was a limited aim which could be modified in time. It was presumably borne of desire to ensure that there was some agenda for reform in place for Essex and Maldon. The Maldon Independent Club was clearly not insular in viewpoint, as they wanted to promote liberalism in the wider county as well as in Maldon.

Western went on to outline two further key principles, which were to: minimise public expenditure; and promote liberalism concerning religious beliefs.<sup>74</sup> The support for religious tolerance was heartfelt by the Whigs within the Maldon elite, as demonstrated by Payne, who was an Anglican, during his address in seconding Barrett-Lennard for the Maldon seat at the 1830 general election, when he expressed his sincere support for a liberal view towards religion.<sup>75</sup> The statements of principle from Western were mainly at a high level, but he made it clear, that

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<sup>71</sup>Dick, Quintin (1777-1858), *The History of Parliament Online*, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/dick-quintin-1777-1858>, [accessed on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2019].

<sup>72</sup> Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800: a Golden Age*, p.404.

<sup>73</sup> Western, Charles Callis (1767-1844), *The History of Parliament Online*, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/dick-quintin-1777-1858>, [accessed on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2019].

<sup>74</sup> BNA, 'Maldon Independent Club', *Essex Herald* (Chelmsford, 20<sup>th</sup> July 1830).

<sup>75</sup> ERO, D/DL O46, Miscellaneous Papers of Thomas Barrett-Lennard.

generally, the club supported a policy of liberal reform by his approbation for the views of Sir Francis Burdett (1770-1844) and Sir James Graham (1755-1836). So, it is also possible to infer the guiding principles of the Independent Club from the views of these two MPs. Sir Francis Burdett, was a radical reforming Tory who supported parliamentary reform and the removal of restrictions on office for fellow Christians.<sup>76</sup> Sir James Graham, was a Whig, who held similar views to Burdett, although in 1838 he shifted allegiance to the Tory party and dropped many of his liberal beliefs.<sup>77</sup>

Western's summary of The Independent Club's principles included a desire for political reform, religious liberality and curtailment of public expenditure, but no mention was made of the need to reform the system of poor relief provision. However, some opinion about proposed reforms of the poor law was expressed in the *Essex Herald* in April 1829. In response to a letter written by a Mr. Quilter from Suffolk, the *Essex Herald* supported his view that the persons proposing changes to the poor laws, specifically with regard to the provision of outdoor relief to agricultural workers, were 'theoreticians' and had no practical experience of the behaviour of agricultural workers, particularly concerning how they suffered in poverty.<sup>78</sup>

It is possible that the *Essex Herald* was expressing ideas that were not in line with the major agricultural interests of the county, but it seems unlikely that it would have offered a contrary view. As the Maldon elite were deeply interested in Essex's agricultural interests it seems probable, as evidenced by the membership of the Independent Club, that their views were aligned with at least the Whig members of the agricultural community. As a Maldon MP, Barrett-Lennard was certainly in close touch with Essex agricultural interests; in 1837 he nominated a farmer named Edward Branfill as a candidate for an unspecified Essex seat, with a glowing recommendation of his being a representative of the liberal opinions of the county.<sup>79</sup> Barrett-Lennard specifically recognised Maldon's affinity with agricultural interests in the county in the lead up to the 1835 general election, and his statement concerning the importance of 'the prosperity of agriculture' probably recognised the economic connection between the country and the town.<sup>80</sup>

The relationship between agricultural interests and Maldon was brought into further focus during a debate between Barrett-Lennard and Comyns during the 1830

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<sup>76</sup> Burdett, Sir Francis, 5th bt. (1770-1844), *The History of Parliament Online*, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/burdett-sir-francis-1770-1844>, [accessed on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2019].

<sup>77</sup> Graham, James, Mq. of Graham (1755-1836), *The History of Parliament Online*, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/graham-james-1755-1836>, [accessed on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2019].

<sup>78</sup> BNA, 'Letters to the Editor', *Essex Herald* (Chelmsford, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1829).

<sup>79</sup> ERO, D/DL O46.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.



general election for the Maldon seats. Repeal of the Malt Tax was believed by many Essex farmers to be an essential part of assisting agricultural interests, at a time when agriculture was depressed. This point of view was clearly articulated by Thomas Bramston, a farmer from Roxwell (near Chelmsford).<sup>81</sup> Barrett-Lennard had voted in favour of the tax's repeal during the previous parliamentary session, but he believed that Comyns had accused him of subsequently voting to rescind the abolition, whereas he had simply not been in the House at the time of the vote. Despite Barrett-Lennard complimenting Comyns by stating that many of his views were so liberal that he could have been a Whig, the debate between the two was very fierce, illustrating the importance attached to farming issues within the town of Maldon.

### *3.6 The Farming Perspective of the Maldon Tories*

Comyns was the personification of a member of the elite, equally comfortable in both urban and rural environments. Prominent in both Maldon and Essex he was also representative of Tory thinking in the town and county. An overview of Comyns' concerns and ideals will, therefore, help to encapsulate the perspective of the Maldon Tories. His father had been a successful Chelmsford solicitor who had also developed a successful business in estate management. Comyns started work within the family business but chose not to pursue this as a career. Instead, in 1796, he took the lease of Woodham Mortimer Place and some adjoining land, which he farmed.<sup>82</sup> Comyns extended the area he farmed in Woodham Mortimer in the early nineteenth century and also started to cultivate marsh pasture in Bradwell (also in the Dengie Hundred). He not only farmed himself, but also acted as a land agent for both substantial and small landowners and this business extended his sphere of influence. Examples of his important clients were Thomas Bramston and John Round of Danbury Place, who were both significant landowners and Tory MPs for South Essex and Maldon respectively.<sup>83</sup> When Comyns gave evidence to the House of Commons Agricultural Committee in 1836 he provided some indication of the extent of his connections within Essex when he stated that he farmed 2,000 acres

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<sup>81</sup> ERO, D/Z 227/6/1, Assignment Book of Duties and Transfers, 1818-94.

<sup>82</sup> J. Oxley Parker, *The Oxley Parker Papers* (Colchester: Benham and Company Ltd., 1964), p.4.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p.166.

himself and was responsible for another 20,000 acres as land agent for multiple clients.<sup>84</sup>

That Comyns had been called to give evidence to the House of Commons stands testament to him being recognised as a person whose opinions on agriculture were to be respected. He was giving evidence towards the end of a period, from c.1830, generally perceived as an era of agricultural depression in most of England.<sup>85</sup> The depression was clearly a phenomenon that deeply concerned the legislature. Based upon the responses that Comyns provided the committee it seems that whilst he had made profits, they were minimal. Comyns was at pains to state that he was very well acquainted with Essex farming and that generally the farmers were experiencing difficulties.

In Holderness' opinion there was not a wholesale depression, rather that economic difficulty was being experienced in some areas, particularly when the soil type was heavy clay, as applied to much of southern-Essex. It is interesting to note Holderness' comment that farmers often asserted that they could make reasonable profits if the price of wheat was at 60s per imperial quarter or above, by exercising sound economic management.<sup>86</sup> In contrast, Comyns told the committee that it was difficult to make a living when the price of wheat dropped below 40s a quarter, so it is possible to infer that his farming was successful when prices were above this level and that he would have probably made substantial profits when the price reached 60s.<sup>87</sup> Using the average price of wheat in England as a proxy for the price that Comyns was able to obtain, the price only dropped below 40s once (in 1835) in the period from 1830 to 1836. It ranged from 39s to 68s, so it seems probable that Comyns' farm was, as he suggested, making a profit in most years.<sup>88</sup>

Comyns' central argument was that it was imperative to elevate the price of wheat in order to improve the situation of farmers generally and, specifically, in Essex. He implied that he was personally managing because of good husbandry, but that any repeal of the Corn Laws (which imposed trade tariffs on the import of grain) would give rise to a reduction in the price of wheat and cause widespread economic distress. Comyns' opinion on the Corn Laws was widely held by Essex Tories and

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<sup>84</sup> BNA, 'Evidence of C. Comyns Parker to the Agricultural Committee', *Essex Standard*, (Colchester, 28<sup>th</sup> July 1837).

<sup>85</sup> Oxley Parker, *The Oxley Parker Papers*, p.50.

<sup>86</sup> B.A. Holderness, 'Prices, Productivity, and Output', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part I: 1750-1850*, ed. by G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), p. 102.

<sup>87</sup> BNA, 'Evidence of C. Comyns Parker to the Agricultural Committee', *Essex Standard*.

<sup>88</sup> A.H. John, 'Statistical Appendix', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part I: 1750-1850*, ed. by G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), p. 975.

was a key tenet of their policy. This was exemplified in a speech from J.T Tyrell, the Tory MP for North Essex, in a speech to the annual dinner of the Essex Agricultural Society annual dinner in 1836. The dinner was attended by Comyns and other leading Tories including John Round MP, Thomas Bramston MP, Quintin Dick MP, and Joseph Strutt MP (Lord Rayleigh). Tyrell exhorted his audience to oppose any suggestion of a repeal of the Corn Laws because of the economic damage this would cause and was greeted by cheers and applause from his audience.<sup>89</sup>

In the minds of the majority of Essex agriculturalists the Corn Laws were an essential support for their revenue and any reduction in prices would inevitably lead to a requirement to reduce costs. A major component of farmers' cost base was agricultural labour and in Comyns' opinion the legislature's vacillation over the efficacy of the Corn Laws had led to farmers being reluctant to hire, which in turn placed an additional burden on the 'poor-rate'.<sup>90</sup> Essex rural parishes appear generally to have adopted a system of labour rates (or outdoor relief to the able-bodied in order to supplement wages) that was a derivative of the Speenhamland system, although it was not based upon a sliding scale dependent upon the number of members within the beneficiary's family. The system of labour rates was not limited to individual parishes, at least within the Dengie division. Comyns was a member of the magistrates' bench which approved a renewal of the labour rate for the parish of Writtle in mid-Essex and commended the rate as having been very successful. He also commented that farmers in Writtle should have all of the advantages of the labour rate even when employing labourers that were not residents of the parish. This was because the labour rate allowed farmers to offer continued employment of labourers they would not otherwise have been able to afford to employ.<sup>91</sup> A letter to the editor of the *Essex Chronicle* in January 1834 used the term 'labour rate', although the brief description of how this worked appeared to be a hybrid between a parish allowance in support of wages and the 'roundsman' system. This differed from the more complex system of 'labour rates', as described by Huzel, in which farmers could opt to pay wages in full or in part as opposed to paying the rate.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> BNA, 'Summary of the Proceedings of the Annual Dinner of the Essex Agricultural Society', *Essex Standard* (Colchester, 16<sup>th</sup> December 1836).

<sup>90</sup> BNA, 'Letter to the Editor of the Chelmsford Chronicle', *Chelmsford Chronicle* (Chelmsford, 31<sup>st</sup> January 1834).

<sup>91</sup> BNA, 'Proceedings of the Petty Session at Chelmsford on 4<sup>th</sup> April', *Essex Standard* (Colchester, 13<sup>th</sup> April 1833).

<sup>92</sup> J. P. Huzel, 'The Labourer and the Poor Law 1750-1850', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part I: 1750-1850*, ed. by G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), p. 781.

The evidence therefore implies that, at least prior to the 1834 Act, Comyns wanted to ensure the highest possible rate of employment for agricultural labourers through the strategies of maximising revenues and supporting wages by the use of labour rates. The House of Commons Agricultural Committee to which Comyns provided evidence in 1836, asked him directly about how well the provisions of the 1834 Act were working in Essex. His response was that poor rates were not particularly heavy in the Dengie part of Essex and that, anyway, it was probably too early to tell whether the level of poor relief would be reduced overall. Comyns went on to say that he was a supporter of the Act because it would lead to labourers having to work for pay, rather than being idle. This comment was in direct contradiction to the practice of the use of the labour rate in support of labourers' wages that Comyns had supported prior to the 1834 Act. Perhaps this discrepancy in his evidence can be explained by a desire to appear compliant, even though he wanted to maintain the system of paying allowances to the able-bodied.<sup>93</sup>

The suggestion that Comyns may have been telling the committee what they wanted to hear maybe supported by an exchange between Comyns, in his role as chairman of the Maldon Board of Guardians, and the Poor Law Commissioners. It was clear that the Maldon Union must have continued the practice of paying allowances to able-bodied men, because the Poor Law Commission wrote to Comyns in 1837 (no more specific date was given) to instruct him that this practice must be stopped. The commission were quite clear that relief could be provided only by admission into the workhouse. Comyns did not rush to respond to the instruction from the commission, because his detailed reply was dated December 1838 – so a minimum of a year after he received his admonishment from the commissioners.

Comyns commenced his response by again showing apparent support for the measures of the 1834 Act. He stated that he disagreed, and always had, with the practice of the use of poor relief to 'make up' wages, even though this was clearly the practice that he had supported prior to the 1834 Act. Comyns went on to explain the circumstances under which the Maldon Union had, 'reluctantly', authorised the payment of outdoor relief. He stated that despite the fact that wages in the area had recently risen, they were still often insufficient to support families when many of the family members were unable to contribute to living costs. Comyns argued for a gradual transition to the practices mandated by the New Poor Law, because the agricultural labourers had relied upon the payment of outdoor relief to sustain their families for a long time. He went on to argue that stringent implementation of the

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<sup>93</sup> BNA, 'Evidence of C. Comyns Parker to the Agricultural Committee', *Essex Standard* (Colchester, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1836).

New Poor Law could give rise to severe local dissatisfaction, as could the separation of families by forcing them into the workhouse. Comyns also dismissed the notion that families could make up the difference between their minimum maintenance costs and wages by relying on charity. He pointed out that the availability of charity was patchy and depended upon there being sufficiently wealthy and generous members of the local gentry being prepared to provide it, which was most often not the case.<sup>94</sup>

The arguments that Comyns presented to the Poor Law Commissioners were very practical and may have struck a chord, given the ferocity of the campaign waged by the anti-Poor Law movement in the north of England,<sup>95</sup> and also the more sporadic protests that had occurred to the 1834 Act in other parts of England and Wales.<sup>96</sup> Although influential, Comyns was only the chairman of the Maldon Union and probably had support for the actions taken by the Union from other board members. Those members of the Union were not all Tories with a significant landed interest like Comyns. The Maldon members of the Board of Guardians included: John Payne who was a Whig and a merchant; and Joseph Pattisson, Whig and dissenter, who although he had some agricultural interests had come from a mercantile background. This may suggest that the broader constituency of the Maldon Union Guardians were generally in favour of the continuation of the payment of outdoor relief, in the face of the provisions of the 1834 Act.

The proceedings of the 1830 general election for the two Essex parliamentary seats also provided a strong indication of how Whig and Tory interests were closely aligned over the question of agriculture. One set of minutes from the election demonstrated again significant synergy between Maldon and the rest of the county. One of the Whig candidates, Charles Western, had represented the county for a number of years, but had held his first parliamentary seat as the member for Maldon. Also, Thomas Barrett-Lennard and Quintin Dick, who were the existing MPs for Maldon, spent time addressing the Essex electorate, even though they were conducting their own campaigns for Maldon at the time.<sup>97</sup> Three candidates were nominated for election: John Tyrell (Tory) and Charles Western (Whig) – the incumbent MPs, and William Long Pole Wellesley (Long Wellesley) who was standing as a Whig. Wellesley, who had converted from the Tory party immediately prior the election, was considered to be an outsider by many of the electorate.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> ERO, D/DOp B123/878A, Letters of the Oxley Parker Family.

<sup>95</sup> N.C. Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement: 1834-44* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), pp.67-99.

<sup>96</sup> Huzel, 'The Labourer and the Poor Law 1750-1850', p.805.

<sup>97</sup> ERO, D/DL O43/3, Minutes of the 1830 Election.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

Western and Tyrell gave similar opening addresses to the electorate, focusing mainly upon the 'distress' to agriculture within the county and how it was imperative to alleviate it. Both men stressed that an improvement of the agricultural economy was required in order to maintain lifestyle for all classes of society. Wellesley listed his policy aims under the general headings of taxation, reform of parliament, civil and religious liberty, abolition of slavery, revision of the Poor Law and improvement of the criminal code. His policy headings may have captured the national agenda, but most of the debate was focused upon aspects of farming and it became clear that the Essex electorate were dissatisfied with Wellesley's engagement with the agricultural issues of the county. He accused Western and Tyrell of having formed an 'unnatural coalition' because they represented different political parties. It was evident, as one of the speakers named in the minutes (the Revd. William Sheepshanks – Stipendiary Curate for the parishes of Stondon Massey and Norton Mandeville) explained, that many of the electors who had voted for both Western and Tyrell had put political party interests to one side in the interests of their common policy concerning agriculture.<sup>99</sup>

Thus, although there may have been a range of differing political beliefs amongst the Essex and Maldon electors, local economic and social exigency could prevail over national concerns. Maldon's style of government was clearly consensual, and the interests of Maldon town were closely tied to those of its own rural hinterland and the wider county. The willingness to put aside political allegiance in order to prioritise local interests was keenly illustrated by a letter from Comyns to the 'Burgesses of the Borough of Maldon', following the passage of the Municipal Reform Act in 1835. The Act had sought to end the practice of the election of councillors and officials by a body of self-perpetuated freemen and replace this by formal election by the same electorate that would vote in general elections. In the first of these, new style, local elections Comyns expressed his disapprobation that the candidates were campaigning with declared allegiances to political parties. In Comyns' view the welfare of Maldon was not served best by a local election campaign that was conducted along party lines, with the inevitable 'animosity' that would ensue. In his opinion, local interests were best served by a disinterested, objective approach which was implemented by the most qualified persons within the borough.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Sheepshanks, William, *CCEd: Clergy of the Church of England Database*, <https://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/search/index.jsp>, [accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2018].  
Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> ERO, D/DOP F12, Letter to the Burgesses of the Borough of Maldon.

### 3.7 *A Characterisation of the Extended Maldon Area Elite*

Study of the elite of the borough town of Maldon, and the adjoining rural parishes of Woodham Walter and Woodham Mortimer, has revealed that, at a superficial level, their composition was quite different between the urban and rural areas. Maldon was governed by a mixture of the mercantile community and persons of 'independent-means'. The majority of the merchant class within the town elite were Whigs, but there was also a sub-group of people who were not Anglicans but Congregationalists, and this sub-group had an avowed sense of duty towards caring for the poor. John Smith discussed the strong tradition of dissent that had existed among several of Maldon's leading families since the mid sixteenth century, He noted that dissenters were particularly concerned with the issue of 'civil rights' and it seems likely that this was conflated with provision of poor relief, and led to a sympathetic attitude towards the needy as discussed in section 3.4.<sup>101</sup> In addition to the congregational church, there were also Wesleyan and Quaker places of worship in Maldon town.<sup>102</sup> However, it seems that these persuasions were minor, when compared to Congregationalists, and consequently held comparatively limited influence over administration of the poor law.<sup>103</sup> The persons of 'independent-means' within the Maldon elite were mainly Tories and usually Anglican. Despite the diversity of Maldon's elite, they collaborated in a consensual manner in both the parish vestry and in the government of the borough. In contrast, the elite within the parishes of Woodham Walter and Woodham Walter were more typical of small parishes with predominantly agricultural economies, where a small number of local landowners dominated decision-making in their vestries. It is the case that the elite in both the urban and the rural parishes usually performed active roles in the administration of poor relief, which contradicts Mandler's assertion that they were largely uninvolved.

Nonetheless, further analysis demonstrates that Maldon town and the adjacent parishes had multiple interconnections, personally, legally, politically and economically. Individuals such as Comyns, who had large scale interests outside of Maldon, were nevertheless intimately involved with the government of the borough. As these businesses were most often farms, it meant that there was a good deal of personal involvement in farming issues within Maldon's government. The parishes did not operate in isolation and, prior to the 1834 Act, had to have their poor rates approved by the county or borough courts of petty session. This meant that, even

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<sup>101</sup> Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800: a Golden Age*, pp. 397-405.

<sup>102</sup> S. Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of England, Volume III* (London: S. Lewis & Co., 1844), p.210.

<sup>103</sup> Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800: a Golden Age*, pp. 397-405.

though the old poor law was a parish-based system, wider interests than those of the parish were involved in decision making. Then, after the 1834 Act, poor relief became administered not at a parish level but by the Maldon Union. Politically, both the Whig and Tory parties held a sense of common identity at an Essex county level. Even though Maldon separately returned two MPs to the House of Commons, it was clear from the election campaigns that there was synergy between the county and the town.

Economically, it appears that the dominant factor for both Maldon and the rural Essex parishes was the state of agriculture within the county, and many people associated this with the town's overall economic health, despite the fact that it also had many trading and manufacturing businesses. Additionally, within this interconnected area, it seems that local economic and social concerns could transcend political beliefs because they directly affected the livelihood of both the elite and the poor. The ruling class in the Extended Maldon Area may have held opinions about the contemporary philosophies regarding the relief of the poor, but it did not appear that such thinking was paramount in local thinking. The elite appeared to have a mainly practical attitude based on the state of agriculture and how this influenced the demand for poor relief from agricultural workers, as well as others whose livelihood was closely related to the agricultural economy.

Thus, the socio-economic character of the elite of the Extended Maldon Area was nuanced, as were the issues that they had to deal with. It is true that the elite was greatly affected by the agricultural considerations that dominated the 1834 Report. However, the simplistic formulae prescribed within the 1834 Act, such as the elimination of outdoor relief for the able-bodied, would probably have been difficult to apply within the relatively sophisticated economic sphere of Maldon and its environs, without some negative consequences. In order to better understand the complex issues that faced the Maldon elite, it will next be necessary to explore and understand how the agricultural economy operated to comprehend the close relationship between farming prosperity and the provision of poor relief.



## 4 The Economic Context of the Extended Maldon Area

This chapter will focus upon the economic context behind the provision of poor relief in the Extended Maldon Area. Human experience in developed economies suggests that economics would probably have had some influence upon the key decision makers for poor relief. Indeed, given the focus on agricultural prosperity in the Maldon district as a whole, it seems probable that the economic factors affecting farmers would have influenced the culture of poor relief administration. Inevitably, the profitability of their businesses would have directly influenced the affordability of labour. It seems likely, therefore, that in unprofitable times workers in the community would often have relied on poor relief to subsist. Also, that over time this may have become regarded as normal practice when there was economic hardship. This policy may have had wider application than the parish and extended to broader areas. The overarching question King posed, is whether a region, for example the south-east of England, was a generous provider of poor relief simply because it was wealthy or because it had developed a powerful convention of relieving the poor.<sup>1</sup> It is possible to consider this question in a nuanced manner, where one motivating factor was more powerful than the other. For example, depending upon the severity of any economic downturn, it is conceivable a culture of poor relief had developed during periods of prosperity whereby it was counter-intuitive for the elite to change their practices even when the local economy was in decline.

King's suggestions have not gone unchallenged. In a review of his book *Poverty and Welfare in England*, George Boyer disagreed with his suggestion that the differences in levels of poor relief actually reflected different 'welfare cultures' rather than economics.<sup>2</sup> In Boyer's view, King offered insufficient evidence to support such a statement based upon too few local studies and that he was too ready to dismiss the potential role of 'economic structures'. Boyer acknowledged that King had noted that it may have been possible to 'write a more sophisticated sub-regional history' which was 'based upon socioeconomic typologies'. This suggests that, despite the main argument in his book, King had also recognised that there was a

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<sup>1</sup> S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> G. Boyer, 'Review of *Poverty and Welfare in England*', *The Journal of Economic History*, 62.3 (2002), p.874.

complex relationship between economics and culture. Indeed, Boyer summarised King's description of the south-east as being an economy based upon arable farming, whereas the northwest's was founded on pastoral farming and industry but concluded that this analysis was based upon insufficient local studies.<sup>3</sup>

In order to examine the role of economic structures and trends in the provision of poor relief in the Extended Maldon Area, this chapter will commence with a micro-study of Bourne farm in the parish of Latchingdon in the early 1830s, to provide perspective on farm profitability and the factors affecting it. Following that study, export figures for the port of Maldon over the same period will be used to provide a broader analysis of the state of the Extended Maldon Area economy. The downturn in the agrarian economy revealed by these analyses naturally leads into a wider consideration of the agricultural downturn that was experienced in Essex since the Napoleonic wars and how this affected farmers' ability to pay rents and tithes. Also, the recession inevitably affected the income received by farm labourers which often fell below subsistence level during the period studied. Clearly, the level of deprivation was inconsistent across the county as was the way in which workers reacted. In some districts incendiarism and riots occurred, and the analysis of the rural economy concludes by examining those areas to understand if there were any pervasive economic or social reasons which explain the outbreaks of discontent.

Maldon's business profile was quite sophisticated and diverse by the nineteenth century, and the discussion of the urban economy starts by presenting a summary of the town's businesses. The agricultural downturn in the early 1830s would clearly have impacted farmers, but an important question is the extent non agrarian businesses were affected and whether any adversity had a correlative effect on poor relief. The business overview is followed by three case studies; firstly, a milling business with its direct relationship with agriculture, then a building business with no obvious relationship with the rural economy, and finally a wheelwright where some of its customers were likely to have been local farmers.

#### *4.1 Agricultural Profitability at Bourne Farm, Latchingdon*

The detailed examination of poor relief expenditure in Chapter 5 is based on records from the parish of Woodham Walter, so ideally the micro-study would have been based on a farm in that area. Whilst over a hundred farm account records exist in the ERO for the period 1832-35, there are none for Woodham Walter and most

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

others were found to be unsuitable because they are either insufficiently detailed or incomplete. However, the accounts for Bourne Farm in Latchingdon, another parish close to Maldon and adjoining Mundon and Purleigh, were selected for analysis. Whilst they do not cover all the years 1832-35, they provide detailed records for most of the period, and specifically for 1834/5 when the price of wheat fell its lowest level in the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Bourne Farm in Latchingdon was largely arable with a mix of land types similar to those in Woodham Walter such as those farmed by the Polley and Oxley-Parker families.<sup>5</sup> The close connections between the two parishes is further emphasised because both of these landowners farmed in Latchingdon as well as Woodham Walter. There are, therefore, reasonable grounds for believing that analysis of Bourne Farms' accounts will provide insights applicable to other local farms such as those in Woodham Walter and other parishes in the Extended Maldon Area.

In 1831 Latchingdon had a population of only 229 people and it was overwhelmingly agricultural, with thirty-six of forty-three families being employed in agriculture.<sup>6</sup> Bourne farm was owned by Henry Rowlands, his tenant being George Bourne, the younger son of William Bourne senior and his wife Ann, who had been born in 1809. His elder brother, William Bourne junior, was also a farmer and was born three years earlier in 1806.<sup>7</sup> The Bourne family had been farmers within, or close to, the Extended Maldon Area since at least early in the nineteenth century. William senior and his brother John had been bequeathed the estate of their brother Thomas, who was a farmer in Mundon, in 1807.<sup>8</sup> By the time the tithe survey was undertaken, the Bourne family no longer occupied land in Mundon, but they did so in Latchingdon, Althorne and Mayland.<sup>9</sup> The tithe maps for these three parishes showed William junior was now the tenant farmer, George having moved to Braintree where he died in 1861.<sup>10</sup>

The 1841 tithe map gave details of the size and utility of fields at Bourne farm as follows.

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<sup>4</sup> ERO, D/DCf A21, Bourne Farm Accounts, 1809 to 1835. Whilst the title of the entry in ERO gives 1809, the first entry is in 1832 as noted in the text.

<sup>5</sup> ERO, D/CT 411a, tithe apportionment for Woodham Walter, 1845. Also see Chapter 1 Section 1.5.

<sup>6</sup> ProQuest, 1833 (149), Abstract of the answers and returns made pursuant to an act, passed in the eleventh year of the reign of His Majesty King George IV, intituled, "an act for taking an account of the population of Great Britain, and of the increase or diminution thereof." Enumeration abstract. Vol. I. M. DCCC.XXXI.

<sup>7</sup> ERO, D/P 258/1/1, Latchingdon baptisms, marriages and burials, 1725-1812.

<sup>8</sup> ERO, D/AEW 41/1/9, will of Thomas Bourne, 1807.

<sup>9</sup> ERO, D/DCf P8, parish copy of tithe map and award of Latchingdon, 1841; ERO, D/P 52/27/1, Tithe apportionment for Althorne and Mayland, 1837-9.

<sup>10</sup> ERO, D/Dcf F65, correspondence, accounts and associated papers, 1813-96.

<b>Description</b>	<b>Usage</b>	<b>Size in Acres</b>
Hither Eleven Acres	Arable	13
Twelve Acres	Arable	14
Occupation Road	Not farming	0
Chase Six Acres	Arable	7
Home Meadow	Pasture	11
Plowed Marsh	Arable	8
Wall and Saltings	Not farming	2
Grass Marsh	Pasture	15
Homestead	Not farming	1
Pightle	Pasture	2
Home Six acres	Arable	7
Barn Field	Arable	21
Sea Field	Arable	17
Wall	Arable	1
Saltings	Arable	30
Seven Acres	Arable	8
	<b>Total Acreage</b>	<b>157</b>

**Table 4.1: The Bourne Farm, Latchingdon, According to the 1841 Tithe Map.<sup>11</sup>**

The farm was 157 acres in size, of which 126 acres were contiguous arable, twenty-eight pasture and three unfarmable. It is possible that the farm was either larger or smaller a decade earlier and also that the usage composition was different. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assume that the farm was similar to that defined in the 1841 tithe map for the purposes of analysing the accounts.

The accounts listed every item of income and expenditure on a cash basis, with usually a clear description of each item. It was therefore possible to produce an income and expenditure statement analysed by category. The approach adopted was similar to that which will be used for the analyses for the poor relief figures and Maldon's exports and is shown in Table 4.2. Although the 1833 accounts covered only half a year, they are useful because along with the 1834 figures they show that the farm had been quite profitable before 1835. The profit expressed as a percentage of income, was close to thirty for both the second half of 1833 and 1834. This measure dropped sharply to just over 1% in 1835, but the reality was even worse, because only half of the annual rent was paid in 1835. If this had been paid during that year, the farm would have shown a loss of over £100.

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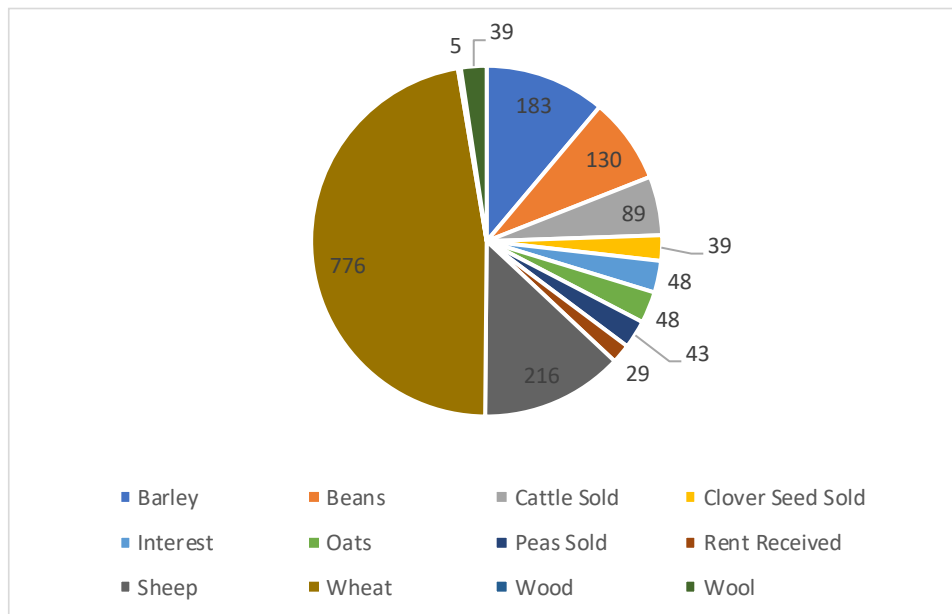
<sup>11</sup> ERO, D/DCf P8. The acres column has been rounded to the nearest number of acres.

	Income in £		
	2nd Half 1833	1834	1835
Barley	37	102	44
Beans	4	76	50
Cattle Sold	23	33	33
Clover Seed Sold	14	10	15
Oats		24	24
Peas	13	25	
Peas Sold			5
Rent Received		8	21
Sheep		93	123
Wheat	203	436	136
Wood	3	1	0
Wool		15	24
Interest			48
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>523</b>
	Expenditure in £		
Blacksmith	3	5	10
Butchery	33		
Cattle/Sheep Bought	27	59	97
Clover Seed Bought	5	5	2
Grain Storage Cost	22	25	52
Harvest Purchase		36	28
Labour	78	144	126
Legal Cost	16		
Peas Bought			2
Poor Rate	14	28	22
Rent Paid		225	113
Sale Expenses		41	4
Taxes	9		19
Tithes		43	41
Church Rate		1	
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>517</b>
<b>Profit/Loss</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>P&amp;L as % of Income</b>	<b>29.15</b>	<b>27.79</b>	<b>1.04</b>

**Table 4.2: Income and Expenditure Statement for Bourne Farm Latchingdon, for the Years Second Half of 1833 to 1835.<sup>12</sup>**

Chart 4.1 shows the annual distribution of income during the period.

<sup>12</sup> ERO, D/DCf A21.



**Chart 4.1: The Distribution of Income for Bourne Farm for the Years Second Half of 1833 to 1835 in £.<sup>13</sup>**

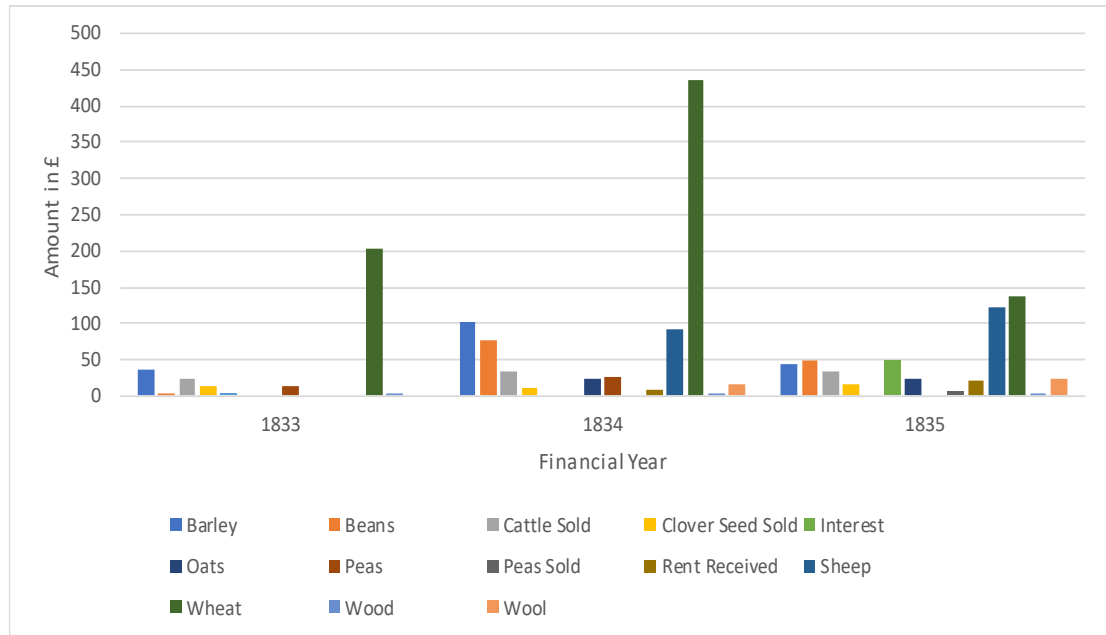
Bourne farm's husbandry was mixed but emphasised corn. While around 20%, over £300, came from the sale of cattle and sheep, the combined value of sales of barley, beans, clover seed, oats and peas were almost £450, and the major source of income came from wheat at almost £800. Arable farming was prevalent in the county and Arthur Young, whilst complimentary about the methods used for growing crops, observed that 'Essex was never famous for its livestock' although it had 'awakened to this object'.<sup>14</sup> Young compiled his report several decades before the Bourne farm accounts were prepared, so it is possible rearing of livestock had increased, but he described a largely experimental model for maintaining cattle, sheep and other animals. Whilst Bourne farm derived some income from livestock, it was evident that it conformed to the typical Essex model insofar as it was still heavily reliant on the sale of wheat.

The income totals for the period understated the wheat ratio because there was a significant fall in sales of this crop in 1835, probably due to the farmer having waited for the price to increase. Without this decline, wheat sales would have comprised an even greater proportion of the total income. The following Chart 4.2

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> A. Young, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Essex, Volume II: Drawn up for the Consideration of the Board of Agriculture* (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1813), p.270.

analyses the income by year.



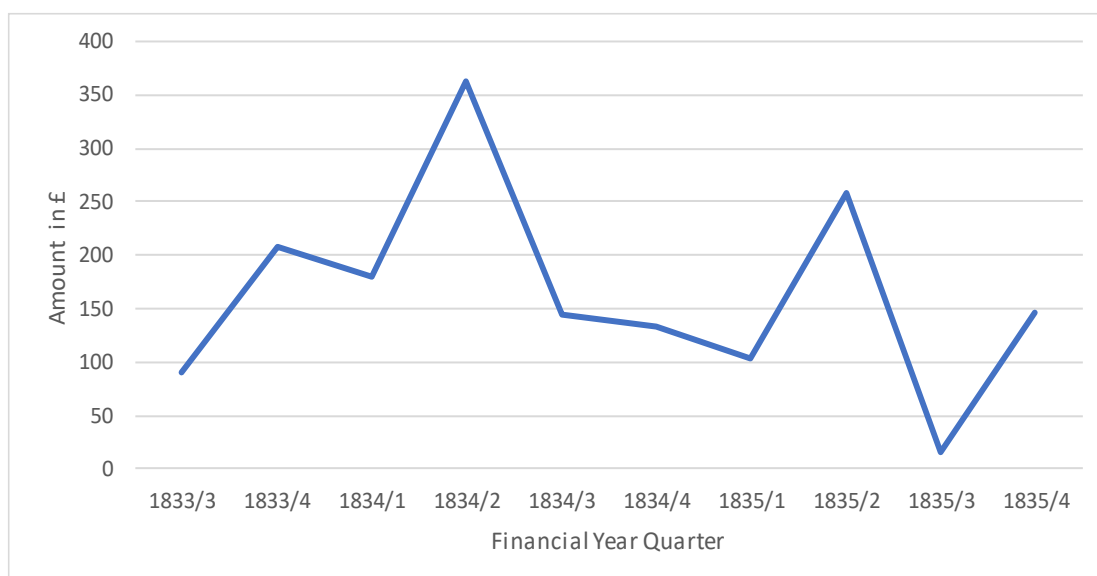
**Chart 4.2: The Distribution of Income for Bourne Farm Split by Year for the Years Second Half of 1833 to 1835 in £.<sup>15</sup>**

This clearly shows the sharp decline in wheat sales from 1834 to 1835, particularly as the 1833 figures were only for a half year and the harvest period was not included in that half. Also, other grain products had a negative impact on income in 1835. Whilst the sale of clover seed rose from £10 to £15 and oats remained constant at £24, barley fell from £102 to £44, beans £76 to £50, and peas £25 to £5. Income from cattle was constant at £33 for the two years, but it seems that the farmer was able to compensate for a small part of the shortfall by increasing sheep sales from £93 to £123.

The acute nature of the fall in profitability was highlighted by the income from bank interest of £48. The entry in the accounts was not specific about the interest rate or the number of years that it had accrued but stated that it was interest that had accumulated over a number of years. It seems likely that the farmer had invested some of his profits in an interest-bearing account and had been forced to withdraw from this to meet the financial challenges presented in 1835.

A year on year analysis is insufficient to fully understand the nature of income decline for a seasonal business such as farming. To understand how Bourne farm was affected the income was plotted quarterly as follows.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



**Chart 4.3: Income for Bourne Farm Split by Quarter for the Years Second Half of 1833 to 1835 in £.<sup>16</sup>**

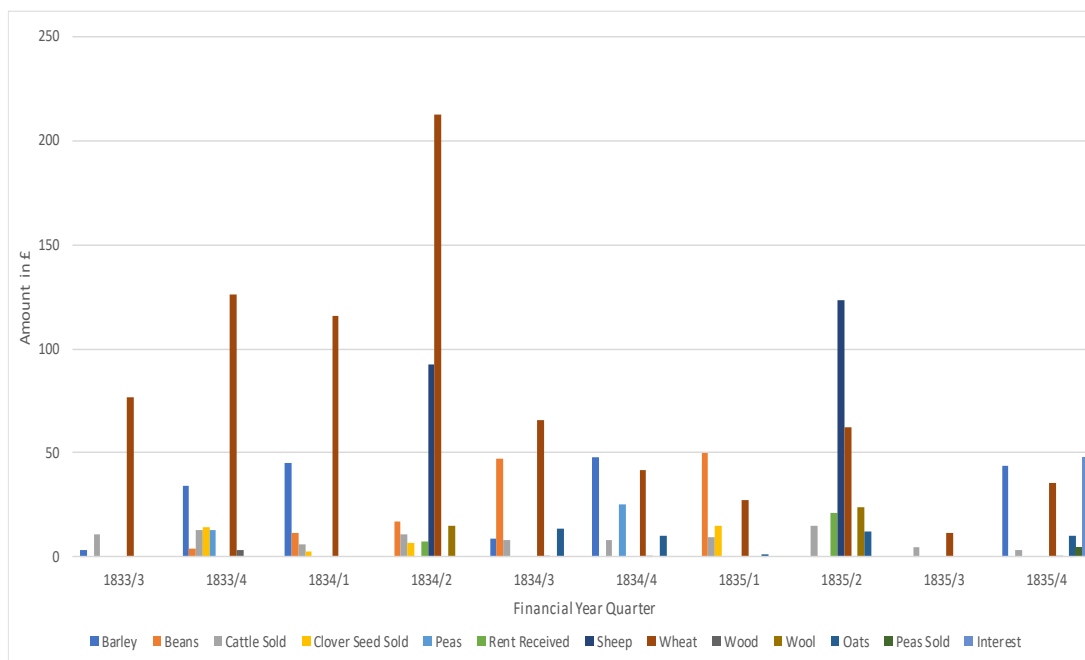
The second quarter in the financial year coincided with the harvest, so it would be expected that this would provide the greatest income. This was the case in 1834 and 1835, but the peak was over £100 higher in 1834 than in 1835. In both years' income fell sharply in the third quarter, although the decline was dramatic in 1835 when income fell to only £17 against £145 for the previous year. It seems likely there would have been a peak in the second quarter of 1833 when the third quarter figure was £91 with a recovery to £207 in the fourth. This pattern was similar in 1835, when fourth quarter income rose from a lower base to £146. This was not the case in 1834 when it fell further in the fourth quarter, which was perhaps a precursor of what was to follow during the following financial year.

When these figures are further analysed by category, the root cause of the fall in total income in 1835 is highlighted as follows.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.





**Chart 4.4: Income for Bourne Farm by Product Split by Quarter for the Years Second Half of 1833 to 1835 in £.<sup>17</sup>**

The chart makes it clear that the fall in income from wheat was even more spectacular than appeared from the yearly analysis. In the second quarter of 1835, income was only £62 compared to £213 in the same quarter in 1834. So, in 1834 around 25% of the annual income had been derived from the wheat sold in the harvest quarter, consequently the impact this revenue loss must have had upon the farm's profitability was severe. The farmer had attempted to make up for this in a variety of ways. Firstly, the rent received increased to £21 from £8 the previous year, secondly wool sales had generated £24, and finally oats had contributed £12. The increase in rent received is interesting because it seems doubtful that the farmer could have successfully increased the sub-tenants' annual rate by that amount. It is possible that he had previously been prepared to offer some abatement but was not in a position to do the same in 1835.

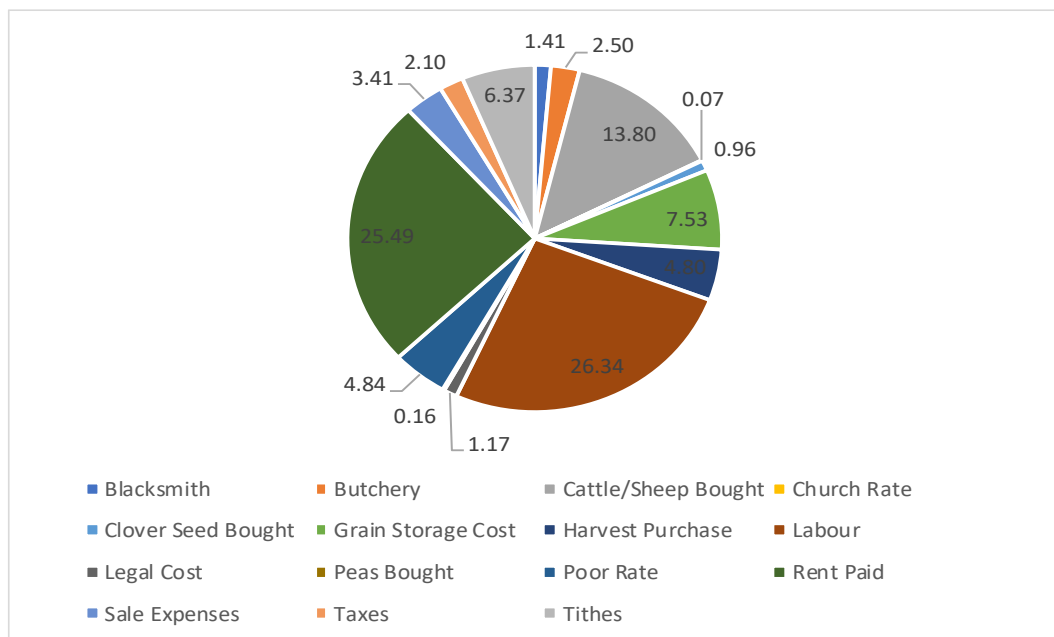
As noted earlier, it seems possible that George Bourne held back sales of wheat in the hope that the price would rise and improve the farm's profitability. His best efforts were not enough to make up for the fall in wheat sales and the situation got even worse in the third quarter. By this point, the farmer was unable to find alternative income sources and the only sales were £12 for wheat and £5 for cattle. In the fourth quarter grain sales did increase to £36 wheat, £44 barley and £10 oats.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

This was still insufficient to pay all of the farm's expenses, and it was at this point that the drawdown of interest from the savings account took place.

As shown in the next section of this chapter, the price of wheat had fallen from over 64s a quarter in 1832 to below 41s in 1835, with the steepest decline occurring between 1834 and 1835. Analysis of Maldon exports in the next section shows that the fall in price had been counteracted by shipping greater quantities, so although profitability was adversely affected revenues were maintained. In the case of Bourne farm, a similar strategy was not followed, perhaps because the farmer had experienced a significant problem with the growth of his crop, or as suggested above he was not prepared to sell at such low prices and chose to store his product for as long as possible. Unfortunately, there are no records which provide data concerning the yield for the harvests during the period, so it is not possible to easily validate the first of these two possibilities. The analysis of Bourne farm's expenses may provide some support for the second.

The overall distribution of expenses by category was as follows.



**Chart 4.5: Bourne Farm Percentage Split of Expenses for the Years Second Half of 1833 to 1835.<sup>18</sup>**

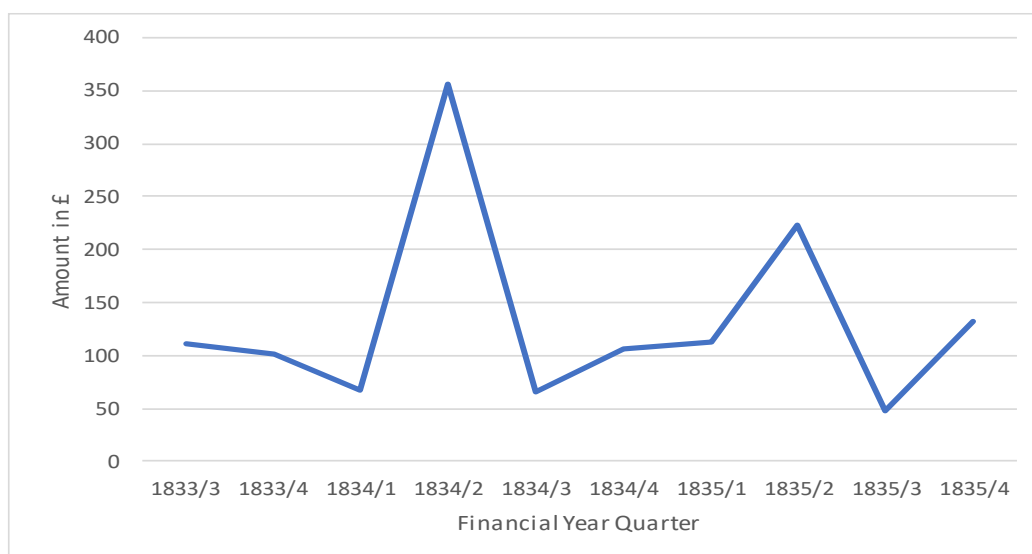
Chart 4.5 is somewhat misleading, because the figures shown in the accounts were straightforward payments made and monies received. The second rent payment for 1835 was not made until after the 1835 financial year end but

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

should be included in that year and the figures for 1833 should be adjusted to reflect rent for half a year. If these adjustments were made, rent was over 36% of the total expense and labour almost 25%. So, in times when revenues were reduced, the obvious options for the farmer were to minimise the use of labour and attempt to negotiate either a rent reduction, or at least a deferral of payment.

Of the other categories of expenditure, only tithes provided a clear option to manage expenses downward. Items such as the purchase of cattle and sheep had a direct relationship with revenue, so lowering these could have reduced revenue more than the cost saving. Expenses such as the blacksmith's and butchery were operational necessities, and those such as taxes and the poor rate were legal obligations. Also, it is worth noting that only £64 was paid towards the poor rate during the period, which was 4.84% of the total expense. Although a legal obligation, it also seemed a low-cost way of providing relief to workers when it was necessary to reduce labour costs.

Clearly some of these expenses, such as labour, were seasonal in their nature in the same way as income. The following graph shows this fluctuation.



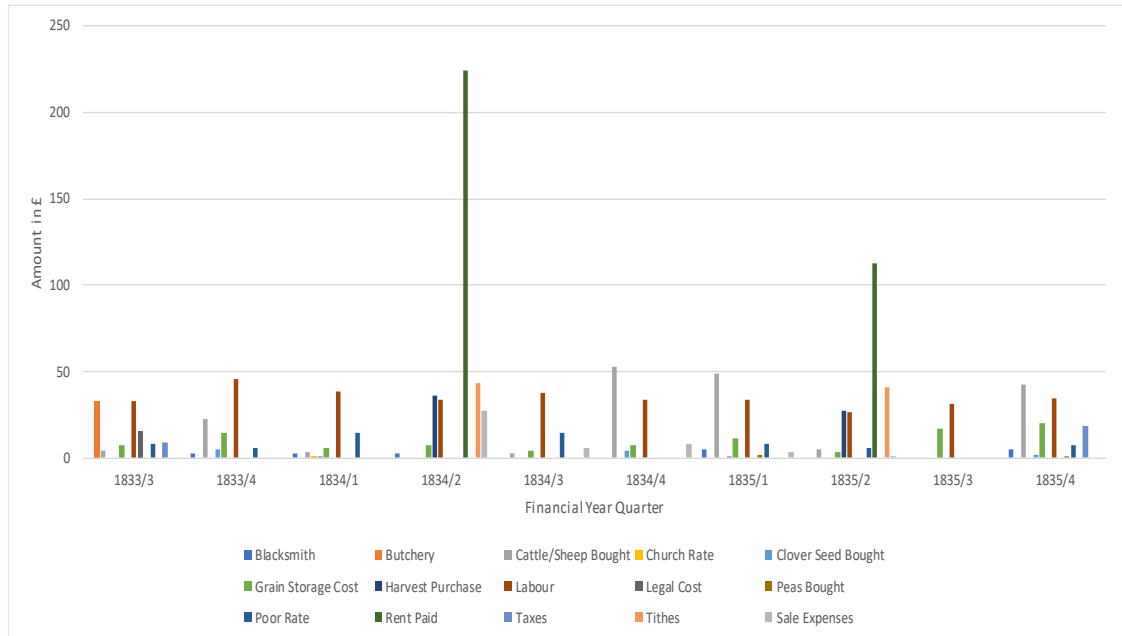
**Chart 4.6: Expenses for Bourne Farm Split by Quarter for the Years Second Half of 1833 to 1835 in £.**<sup>19</sup>

The pattern of expenses follows that of income in some respects, but not all. The last two quarters of 1833 showed an upwards trend for income but a downward one for expense and the reverse was the case between the third quarter of 1834 and

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

the first of 1835. Despite these anomalies, the major peaks in both graphs were those in the second quarters, followed by significant drops to the third.

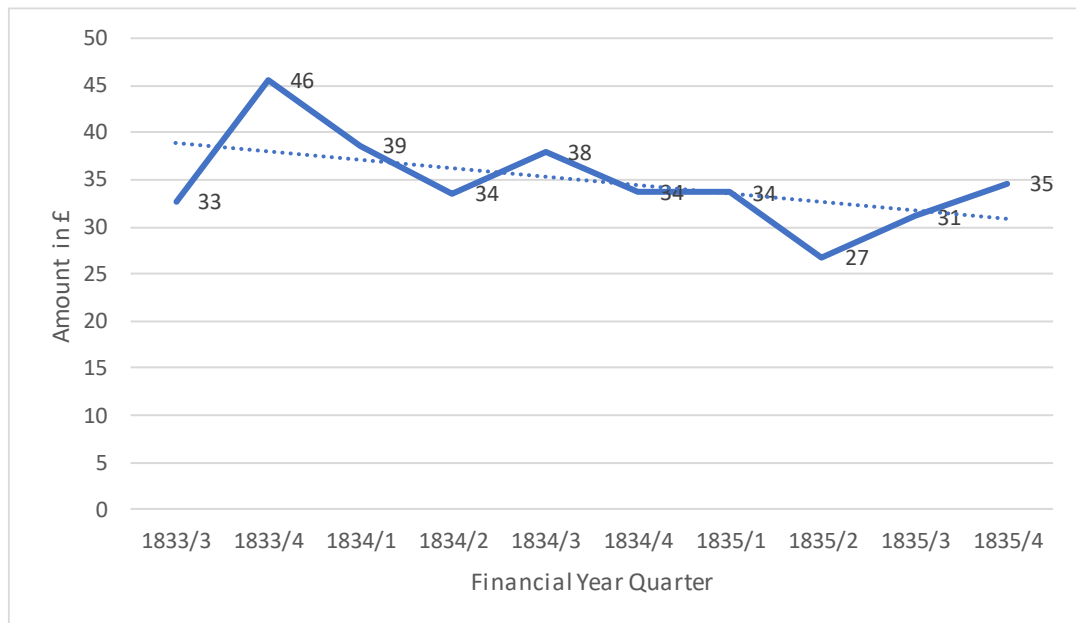
As with the income, to fully understand what occurred the quarterly analysis was extended to show the quarterly distribution by category, as follows.



**Chart 4.7: Expenditure for Bourne Farm by Product Split by Quarter for the Years Second Half of 1833 to 1835 in £.<sup>20</sup>**

As well as the quarter in which the highest income was generated, the second was also when expenses were at their highest, as both the rent and the tithes were payable at around the time of the harvest. Clearly it would be expected that labour costs would also have been at their highest at this time, but for Bourne farm this was not the case. To demonstrate this more clearly than can be seen from the chart above, expenditure on labour has been plotted separately as follows.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.



**Chart 4.8: Labour Costs for Bourne Farm Split by Quarter for the Years Second Half of 1833 to 1835 in £.<sup>21</sup>**

Although the line graph shows an overall downward trend for labour costs during the period, it does correspond with the expectation given the income profile. Firstly, the level of decline was quite low considering the significant fall in income that occurred in 1835. Secondly, costs dropped between the first and second quarters in both 1834 and 1835 even though the second was when the requirement for labour should have been at its highest. Thirdly, they rose in the third quarter of 1835 which had the lowest level of income at any time during the period. In fact, the labour expense was almost double the income for the period. Finally, the cost increased again from £31 to £35 in the last quarter of 1835 even though the income was still low.

All of the above points suggest that Bourne farm's costs were inelastic, and the tenant farmer was unable to reduce labour costs in response given the sharp downturn in economic fortunes that took place in 1835. In order to try and understand what took place concerning the demand for labour, the following table was produced which compares a 'typical' week in July 1833 with July 1834 – i.e. the second quarters for the 1834 and 1835 years. 'Typical' is defined as a week when there were only payments made to wage earning labourers and when there were no

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

ad hoc labour payments, such as those to sub-contractors like the payment of £1 10s made to Mr. Clay on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1833, for two days work with his machine.<sup>22</sup>

<b>Week Ending</b>	<b>Name of Labourer</b>	<b>Amount paid</b>
27 <sup>th</sup> July 1833	Thomas Grist	10s
	John Carter	10s
	Boy Givings	2s 6d
	Taylor Dunghill	5s 6d
	Boy Dunghill	2s 6d
	Mr. Taylor	5s 5d
	Boy Taylor	2s 6d
	Mr. Riley	9s
	Mr. Thurogood	9s 7d
	Boy Grist	2s
	Mr Sewell for 2 days work	3s
	<b>Total for week</b>	<b>£3 1s</b>
11 <sup>th</sup> July 1834	Thomas Grist	10s
	John Gunn	10s
	Boy Gunn	3s
	George Riley	7s 9d
	John Grist	5s
	George Taylor	9s 4d
	William Ridgewell 2 days	2s 8d
	Boy Grimwood	1s 6d
	Boy Givings	3s 6d
	<b>Total for week</b>	<b>£2 12 s 9d</b>

**Table 4.3: Wage Payments from Two Typical Weeks – July 1833 and July 1834.**<sup>23</sup>

The wages were approximately 13% lower in 1834 than in 1833 and the number of people employed reduced from eleven to nine. There was some consistency in the people employed by the farmer for these weeks. Using the surnames as matching criteria, five of the labourers listed in July 1833 were the

<sup>22</sup> Ibid; probably a threshing machine.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

same as those a year later - Thomas Grist, boy Givings, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Riley and boy Grist. Probably these workers fell into the category of what Armstrong referred to as 'regular outdoor labourers'.<sup>24</sup> He described this class of labourer as providing the core labour force for many farms, without which they would probably have struggled to operate. If this was the case, it seems probable that the tenant of Bourne farm would have wanted to keep the workers listed above as close to fully employed as he was able.

This suggestion is supported by only one of the workers in 1833, William Thurogood, being listed in the overseers' accounts for the parish. He was mentioned multiple times as having been relieved in the parish workhouse. Even though farm's labour accounts stated that Mr Sewell and William Ridgewell worked for only two days, they do not appear in the overseers' accounts, so it seems likely that they were able to obtain work at another farm or were underemployed.<sup>25</sup>

It is not possible to determine if the other people who were employed were casual labour or entrants to the 'regular outdoor labourers' class. Whatever category they fell into, it was evident that work was required which could not be carried out by the regular workers alone. If 10s is considered to be the cost of the weekly unit of labour, i.e. a full-time man employed, then there were approximately a net six men employed in the typical week in 1833 and five in 1834.<sup>26</sup> So, in 1833 Bourne farm was aligned with the largest distribution of labourers employed for a farm of its size, based upon the 1851 census distribution analysis for Essex, but fell below this the following year.<sup>27</sup> This would suggest that financial circumstances forced George Bourne to operate below the optimal level of labour in 1834.

Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that Bourne farm's wheat crop was seriously impaired in the harvest of 1834 because in that case he would not have required as many as a net five labourers. It is also improbable the price would have fallen if there had been a shortage. These points go some way to answering the question of whether the sales of wheat were reduced significantly because of an extremely low yield or because the farmer decided to store it until the price improved. It seems that the latter was the case, and further supporting evidence may be found in significantly

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<sup>24</sup> W.A. Armstrong, 'Labour I: Rural Population Growth, Systems of Employment, and Incomes', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part II: 1750-1850*, ed. by G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), pp. 688-95.

<sup>25</sup> ERO, D/P 258/8/1, vestry minutes and overseers' accounts, 1832-1927.

<sup>26</sup> This was calculated by dividing the typical weeks' total wages by 10s, with the result rounded to the nearest whole number.

<sup>27</sup> ProQuest, 1853 (55), Census of Great Britain, 1851, Population Tables II.

increased costs of grain storage in the third and fourth quarters of 1835 (£17 and £20 respectively), compared to 1834 (£4 and £7).

Overall, it seems that the farmer probably knew that he had sufficient cash reserves to continue to meet his expenses, or at least was confident he could have borrowed a sum that was sufficient to meet his cash flow requirement. The idea that he had enough capital seems plausible, because his gross profit in 1834 had been quite high at £228, and the same was true of £87 for just a half year in 1833. Given that the price of wheat was higher in previous years, it seems likely that his profits would have been even higher in earlier years and he would have accumulated cash reserves through profit retention.

The increase in labour costs in the third and fourth quarters, in both 1834 and 1835, is intriguing and there is no indication in the accounts of what activity contributed to the rise. It is clear that Bourne farm must have been run efficiently, or it would not have been so profitable. The major difference between 1834 and 1835 was that the farm's income from wheat fell by exactly £300, close to the income differential for the two years. Assuming the Bourne farm accounts represent a microcosm of agriculture in the Extended Maldon Area, they provide a fascinating insight into the financial dynamics for farmers in this part of south-east Essex. Nevertheless, for those businesses that did not have a cash reserve to fall back on the low wheat price must have been devastating. Although they too would have had to maintain their labour usage at a level that was sufficient to protect future revenues, so it was inevitable that they sought to reduce their expenses in other ways. The Bourne farm accounts demonstrate that rent was, along with labour, the major cost but also that tithes were substantial too. Faced with potential bankruptcy, farmers negotiated with landowners and tithe holders to have their payments reduced. As discussed in section 4.4, rent and tithe reductions were inevitable and by 1844 tithes in Latchingdon had been commuted by £900.<sup>28</sup>

It appears that such negotiations were successful more widely as no Essex farmers were registered as bankrupt between 1830 and 1835, with only twenty-three appearing in the London Gazette between 1820 and 1829. Only one, Richard Burgess Scale from Halstead in 1842, was after 1835.<sup>29</sup> Clearly, the farmers' creditors realised that reduced income was better than none.

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<sup>28</sup> S. Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of England, Volume III* (London: S. Lewis & Co., 1844), p.30.

<sup>29</sup> G. Elwick, *The Bankrupt Directory, Being a Complete Register of All the Bankrupts, with their Residences, Trades and Dates when they Appeared in the London Gazette, from December 1820 to April 1843* (London: Simpkin Marshall & Co., 1843).



## 4.2 Exports from Maldon Port, 1832-1835

To provide a wider view, the export figures from Maldon port were analysed to present a picture of the agrarian economy for the Extended Maldon Area. This also allows for an assessment of the typicality of Bourne farm. In the years preceding the 1834 Act, Maldon was still an active port, and details of its grain and flour exports are available from the *Essex Standard*, and were first published on 10<sup>th</sup> September 1831.<sup>30</sup> In this edition it stated the quantities of various grains, including wheat, barley, oats etc., that had been shipped from British ports, Irish ports and foreign ports to the Port of London for the preceding week, measured in quarters. It also published the quantity of flour that had been shipped, measured in sacks. These data were not published again until 15<sup>th</sup> October 1831, but thereafter weekly until at least the end of the 1835 financial year.<sup>31</sup> These data are significant, because they provide a clear insight into the state of the economy of the Maldon area for the period.

The newspaper adopted a consistent pattern of reporting the weekly shipped quantities of wheat, barley, malt, oats, beans and flour, along with the London Corn Average prices for all these items except malt. It seems likely that the value of grains exported gave an indication of the health and size of the agricultural economy and also that the flour exports provided an insight into the status of the local milling industry. Of course, these data do not give a complete view of the Maldon economy, because there were other industries and service-based activities not included in the data series. Nevertheless, the weekly publication of these figures provides an obvious indication of their importance to agriculture and related industries, and that the economic factors they contained within them could be used to determine if there is any correlation with the variable poor relief costs of 'allowances to the able-bodied'. The weekly exports and prices were therefore entered into an Excel spreadsheet and the prices were converted from shillings and pence into decimal pound values for ease of calculation.

From around 1750 the London market for agricultural produce surpassed all others, particularly for counties in south-east of England. This was not only because of its rapidly expanding population, but also because of the high proportion of

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<sup>30</sup> BNA, 'Various data of grains and flour shipped to the Port of London', *The Essex Standard* (Chelmsford, 10<sup>th</sup> September 1831).

<sup>31</sup> BNA, 'Shipped quantities and prices from the London Corn Averages', *The Essex Standard* (Chelmsford, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1831 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1835). The data series was only captured up until the end of the 1835 financial year.

consumers that demanded high quality produce.<sup>32</sup> Wheat was the most valuable crop at the beginning of the nineteenth century and Brown estimated that London consumed about half of the Essex crop, with around two-thirds sent to London 'factors' without the intervention of Essex agents.<sup>33</sup> As the century progressed the London market increased in importance, so it seems probable that the percentages quoted by Brown did so in line with the market.<sup>34</sup>

There were two methodological challenges to overcome to ensure that the data was complete for the whole period for which poor relief has been analysed in detail for Woodham Walter and St. Peter in chapters 5 and 6 – i.e. 1832 to 1835. Firstly, no data was available from April 1831 to September 10<sup>th</sup> and then again for the next four weeks. This gap was filled by calculating the average difference of the quantities shipped between weeks twenty-nine and fifty-two for the financial year 1832 and 1833, where there was data available, then using this percentage to calculate a proxy figure for 1832. For example, the quantity of wheat shipped was approximately 76% lower in 1832 than it was in 1833 for the weeks where data was available, so the 579 quarters published for the first week of 1833 gave a calculated weight of 151 for 1832. The first published prices in the *Essex Standard* were used to calculate the value of the exports for each week where the quantities were approximated. Secondly, prices for malt were not published in the *Essex Standard*, so the annual average price for this grain, provided by John, was used.<sup>35</sup>

As noted, the data was captured by product per week, but to gain an initial impression of economic scale the exports were initially analysed in total by financial year, as shown in the following line graph.

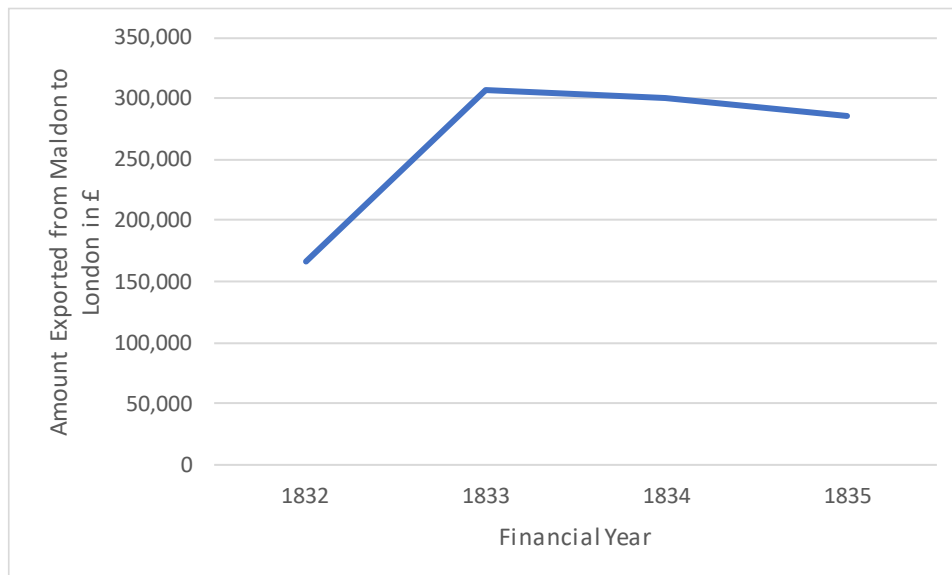
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<sup>32</sup> R. Perren, 'Markets and Marketing' in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part I: 1750-1850*, ed. G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), pp.190-272.

<sup>33</sup> A.F.J. Brown, *Essex at Work, 1700-1815* (Chelmsford: Essex Record Office, 1969), p.35.

<sup>34</sup> Perren, 'Markets and Marketing', pp.190-272.

<sup>35</sup> John, 'Statistical Appendix', p.985.



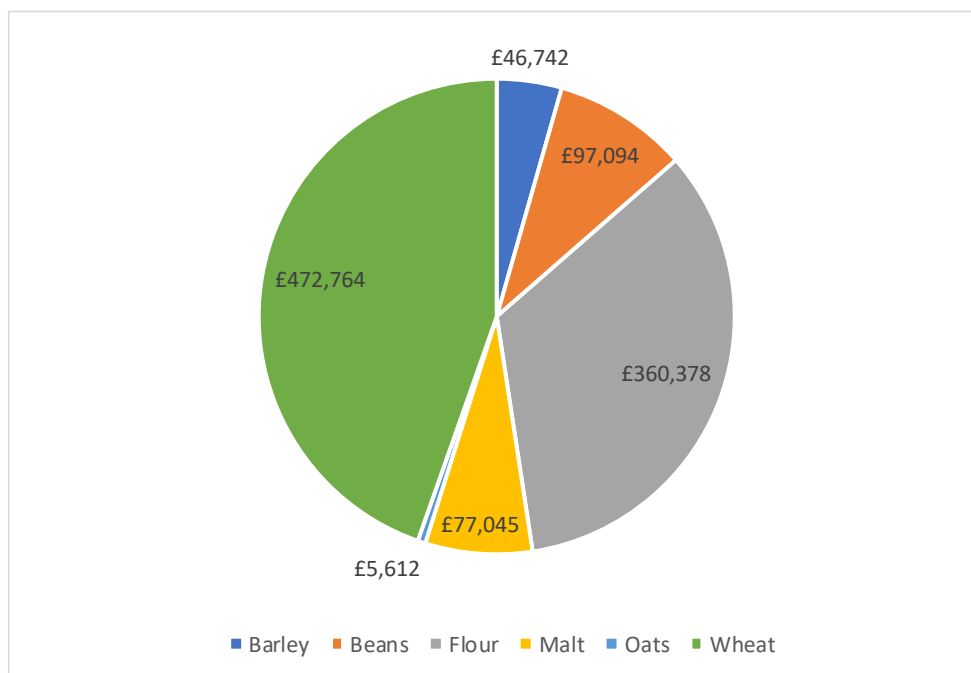
**Chart 4.9: Total Exports Shipped from Maldon to London for the Years 1832 to 1835.**<sup>36</sup>

The value of exports for 1833 to 1835 was fairly consistent, with a small decline from £306,986 to £285,935, whilst the amount for 1832 (where some figures were estimated as noted above) was significantly lower, at £166,016. Also, the lower percentages of quantities shipped in 1832 were not consistent across the different products. These were approximately: wheat 76%, barley 55%, malt 29%, oats 79%, beans 33% and flour 25%. It is possible that either the producers extended their use of the London markets after 1832, or alternatively they simply chose to extend the use of shipment by sea.

When the value of exports is analysed by product, it shows the extent to which the local economy was dependent upon wheat and flour, as depicted in the following pie chart.

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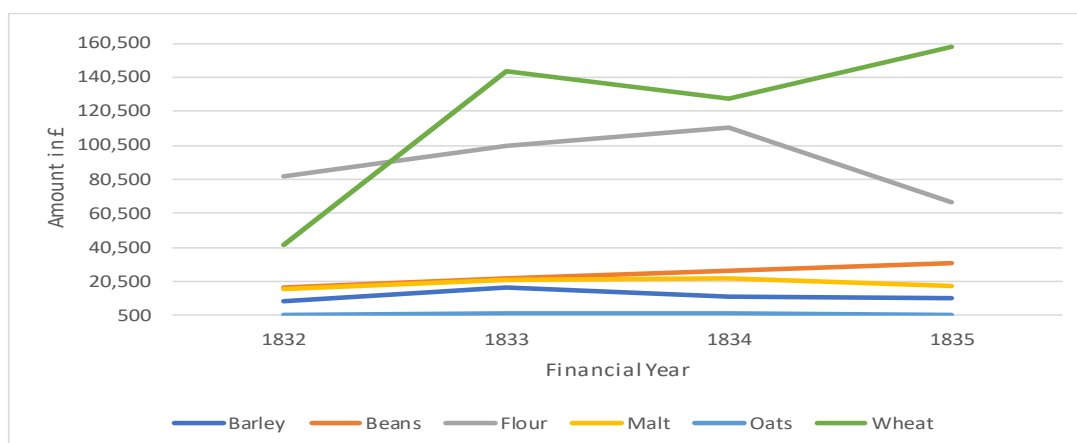
<sup>36</sup> BNA, 'Shipped quantities and prices from the London Corn Averages', *The Essex Standard* (Chelmsford, 10<sup>th</sup> September 1831 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1835). The data which was not available in the newspaper was approximated using the methodology explained above.



**Chart 4.10: Maldon Exports for the Years 1832 to 1835 Analysed by Product Total for the Period.<sup>37</sup>**

The percentages of the total export value of £1,059,635 were: barley 4%, beans 9%, flour 34%, malt 7%, oats 1% and wheat 45%. So, the combined percentage export of wheat and flour was 79%, demonstrating the heavy commercial reliance of the agricultural and milling industries upon this crop.

When these values are analysed by financial year it provides further insight, as depicted by the following line graph.



**Chart 4.11: Maldon Exports by Product for Each of Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>38</sup>**

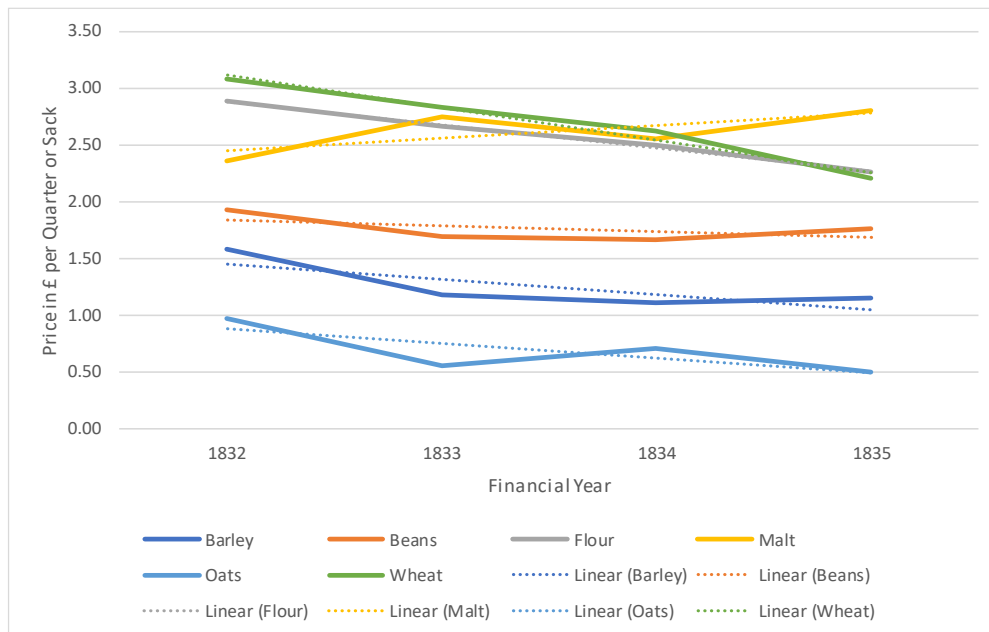
<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

The export values for barley, beans, malt and oats were mainly consistent for the period, with beans showing a small increase from £26,980 to £31,012 and malt a decrease from £21,825 to £17,497. The pattern for wheat diverged, for the export value fell gradually between 1833 and 1834 and then rose more sharply between 1834 and 1835. Flour, conversely, followed the opposite pattern between 1833 and 1835.

These patterns indicate that there must have been a more complex relationship between the exports of wheat and flour than would have been expected by just the production level and price of the former. Superficially, it might be expected that there would have been a close positive correlation between the two products, but the reverse is apparent. Also, it is clear that the economic status of farmers seemed heavily reliant upon wheat and that it was improbable that they would have been able to mitigate price reductions or poor yields by swiftly increasing production of other grains. Equally, the members of the elite who were mill owners in the Extended Maldon Area must have experienced the same economic volatility that was caused by the falling wheat price.

This economic snapshot is further complicated by the knowledge that the price of wheat fell in 1834 and 1835 as previously discussed, even though the export value increased. The value of agricultural products was a function of both the quantities shipped as well as the price, so it is necessary to consider these factors individually. The price movements will be considered first, and the following line graph shows these by product and financial year.

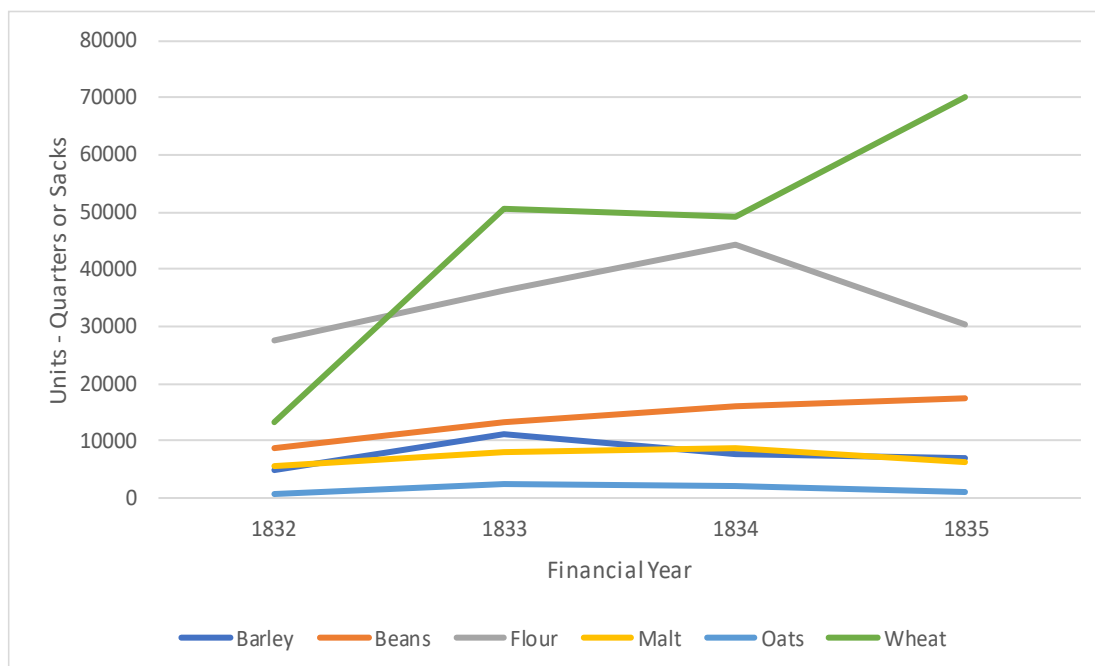


**Chart 4.12: Maldon Exports, Average Price by Product for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>39</sup>**

The trendlines on Chart 4.12, show that there was an overall fall in the price of every product during the period with the exception of malt. The most striking difference from the line graph of exports by value is that the clearly different plots shown in that graph for wheat and flour, are replaced by a downward price trend for these items. The price series are so closely correlated, that the Excel 'CORREL' function calculated the value to be 0.995. It is evident therefore, that the different gradients for wheat and flour between the value of exports and the product prices were caused by changes in the quantities shipped (Chart 4.13).

The plots are very close to those shown in Chart 4.11 and may provide a useful indication of economic behaviour in the Maldon area. The correlations were calculated between the quantities shipped and the product prices, to see if any inferences can be taken from these, as listed in Table 4.4.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.



**Chart 4.13: Maldon Exports, Quantities Shipped by Product for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>40</sup>**

Product		Financial Year				Correlation
		1832	1833	1834	1835	
Barley	Amount	4,877.17	10,947.00	7,707.00	6,884.00	
	Price	1.57	1.17	1.11	1.15	-0.66
Beans	Amount	8,709.77	13,045.00	16,094.00	17,302.00	
	Price	1.92	1.69	1.67	1.76	-0.75
Flour	Amount	27,528.80	36,301.00	44,266.00	30,186.00	
	Price	2.88	2.66	2.50	2.25	-0.23
Malt	Amount	5,605.18	7,930.00	8,559.00	6,249.00	
	Price	2.36	2.75	2.55	2.80	0.29
Oats	Amount	528.44	2,321.00	2,188.00	904.00	
	Price	0.97	0.56	0.71	0.49	-0.43
Wheat	Amount	13,246.24	50,515.00	48,999.00	70,113.00	
	Price	3.08	2.83	2.62	2.20	-0.91

**Table 4.4: Maldon Exports, The Correlations Between Quantities Shipped and Prices.<sup>41</sup>**

The clearest relationship established by Table 4.4 was between the price of wheat and the quantities shipped. As the price fell through the period the quantities shipped increased, as shown by the negative correlation of close to -1. The only

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

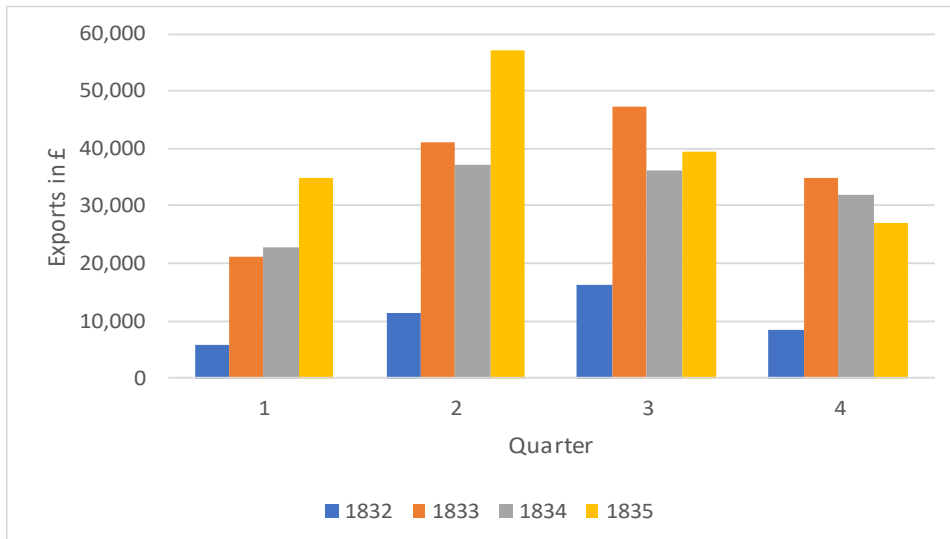
product where there was a positive correlation was malt, although at 0.29 this is not considered statistically significant. Barley and beans also show correlations that suggest that the economic agents involved tended to export higher quantities as prices fell in order to maintain revenue, although it is possible that farmers simply sold all that they harvested. Oats had a negative correlation of less than -0.5, which cannot be considered significant, but the crop was anyway only a minor component of the total exported product.

The puzzling figure is the low negative correlation between the price of flour and the exports. As previously noted, there is close to a positive correlation of one between the price of wheat and flour, so it would be expected that they would have a similar correlation between price and the quantity exported. It is possible that the local mills had only limited output capacity, but even if this was the case, they clearly had a greater capacity than that shown by the reduced exports in 1834/5. Chart 4.9 shows that the export of flour had risen consistently between 1832 and the start of 1834 and then fell in line with the price. If the correlation between the price and flour is calculated for just 1834 and 1835, it is a perfect one. Consequently, this suggests that the millers were not prepared to sell their product at a reduced profit and therefore stored it, for at least a period, until the price rose again.

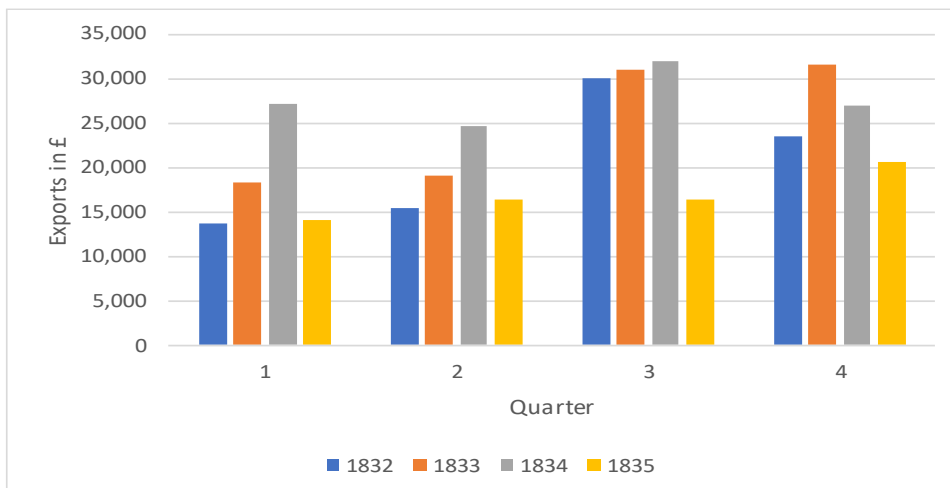
There was thus a clear contrast between farmers and millers, the former increasing exports as the price of wheat and other grains fell. Presumably they needed the cash flow, even if their profit margins were impaired. It seems possible therefore, that the business models and cash reserves of the purely agricultural business were more precarious than those of the milling firms. If this was the case it demonstrated the extent to which farming in Extended Maldon during the period was price sensitive and found it hard to absorb downturns. This in turn may have been a factor in farmers' inability to afford to employ labour and the consequent increased reliance of the able-bodied upon allowances from the poor relief fund to survive.

To analyse this possibility further, the export data for wheat and flour, the most significant products, were examined at a quarterly level to establish any patterns that were not discernible from the annual figures. Firstly, the value of exports for wheat and flour was compared as follows.





**Chart 4.14: Maldon Exports of Wheat by Quarter for the Years 1832 to 1835.**<sup>42</sup>



**Chart 4.15: Maldon Exports of Flour by Quarter for the Years 1832 to 1835.**<sup>43</sup>

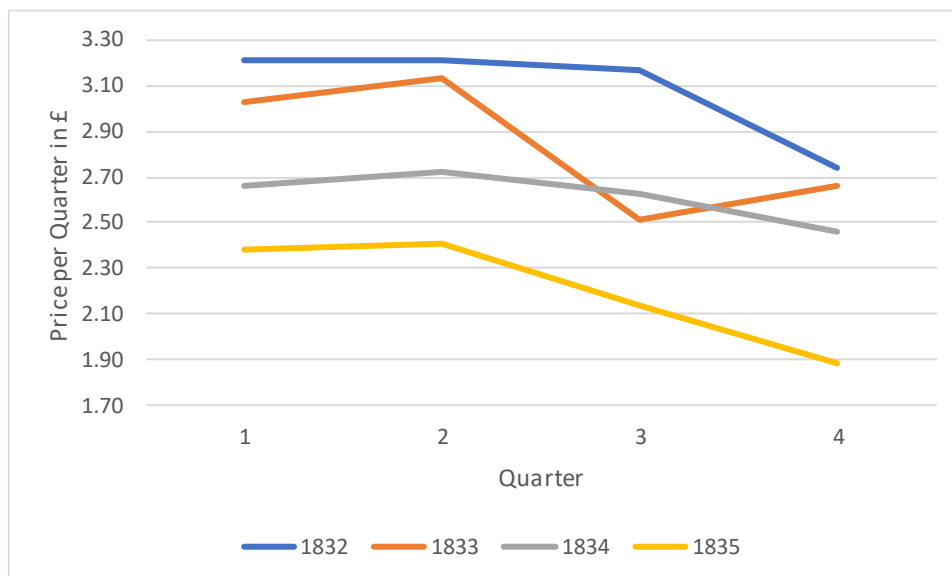
There is no obvious similarity between the quarterly export patterns of wheat and flour during the period. In 1832, there was a low level of wheat exports in every quarter when compared to other years. The exports of flour in that year were not as high in each quarter as they were in 1833 and 1834 but were not strikingly lower in any one for those years. In the third quarter, exports were at their highest level for 1832 to 1834 at almost £30,000 and a little more than this for the other two years.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

Wheat exports were at their highest in the second and third quarters of every year during the period. There was little difference in the values for these quarters, except in 1835 when exports increased to over £57,000 in the second quarter from £37,000 in the previous year. As the wheat harvest took place in the second quarter, it might be expected that exports would have been at their highest. This was not the case in 1832 and 1833, however, when exports were higher in the third quarter than they were in the second. Also, in 1834 the export values were close to each other for these quarters, at approximately £37,000 and £36,000 respectively. This demonstrates that in most years during the period there had been no compulsion to move the harvest to export as soon as possible. There was evidently the capability to store wheat in the Maldon area and export it to London when it was considered expedient, as demonstrated by the figures for not just the third quarter but also because exports occurred throughout the year.

Therefore, an important question is why the farmers and grain merchants moved to increase exports in the way they did in the second quarter of 1835. The movement of the wheat price gave an indication of the reason for this and is shown in the following line graph

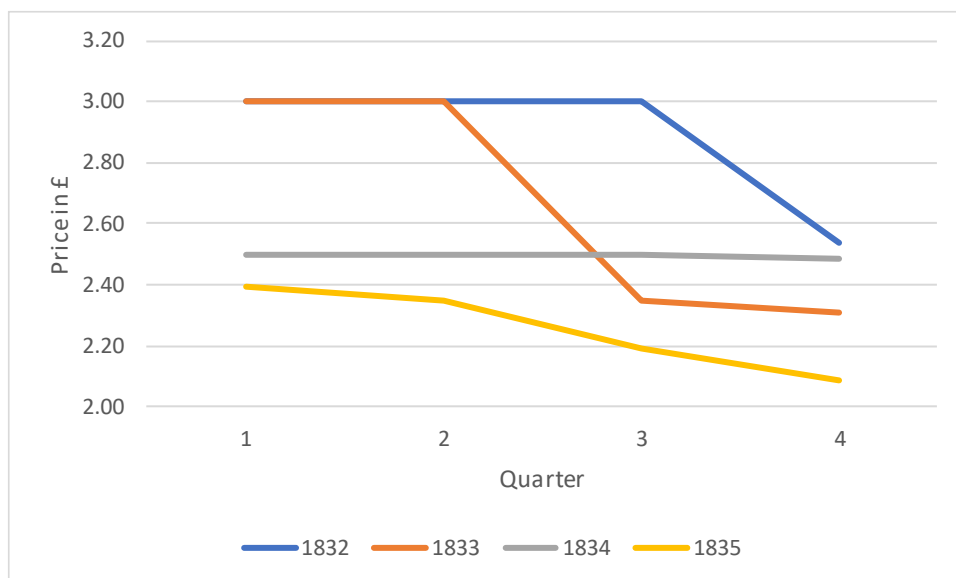


**Chart 4.16: Maldon Exports, The Price of Wheat by Quarter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>44</sup>**

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

The price of wheat fell after the second quarter in every year, with the exception of 1832, when it fell after the third quarter. The price fall from the second to third quarters was very sharp in 1833, at almost 20%. This dramatic fall may have conditioned the thinking of wheat sellers, as they had seen an overall decline of almost a pound a quarter between the start of 1832 and the beginning of the second quarter of 1835. Consequently, they may have increased the quantity they exported in this quarter in an attempt to maximise revenue whilst they could. In the event, the price continued to decline in 1835 so their decision was prudent.

The exports of flour during the period were lower in every quarter of 1835 than they had been in all other years in the period. They rose in value from a little over £14,000 in the first quarter to over £20,000 in the last. There was no spike in their value in the second, as there had been for wheat. To understand if flour experienced the same quarterly price pattern as wheat, the following line graph was produced.



**Chart 4.17: Maldon Exports, The Price of Flour by Quarter for the Years 1832 to 1835.**<sup>45</sup>

This shows that the quarterly pattern of flour price fluctuations was very similar to that of wheat. A significant fall between the second and third quarters was even greater than it was for wheat at almost 22%. The price fell between the third and fourth quarters in 1832, as it had for wheat, and also continued to fall in 1835.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Only in 1834 was there any real difference between the two products' profiles, when the flour price flatlined, whereas it had fallen from the second quarter of 1834 for wheat. So, the comparison of wheat and flour exports by quarter confirms the differences between them that were seen in the annual analysis.

To explain the differences in 1834 it seems possible that flour exporters were convinced that the consistency of the flour price in 1834 would continue, in the face of other statistical evidence. They may have erased the sharp fall that took place in 1833 from their collective memory and also ignored the price drop at the start of 1835. This left them in a position where they did not optimise their revenue, because they increased the amount they exported in the fourth quarter even though the price was falling. It may have been the case, as suggested in the analysis of the annual figures, that the flour producers had a lower cost base than farmers and decided to restrict exports until prices improved. Nevertheless, they were unable to continue this economic reasoning as prices did not improve. They increased exports in the last quarter suggesting that their financial resources were too limited to continue this approach.

The breakdown of the exports from Maldon to London, for the years 1832 to 1835, clearly confirms the widespread impact of the fall in the price of wheat on the Extended Maldon Area in 1835. Although wheat sellers and millers did not react to this situation in the same way, it seems reasonable to assume that it would have had an adverse effect on their profitability, even if they could maintain revenue by shipping higher quantities.

### *4.3 Perceptions of Agricultural Distress in Essex*

As observed at the beginning of this chapter, Essex agriculture had been in decline since the end of the Napoleonic wars and 1834/5 was probably the lowest point in this trajectory. It is, therefore, now appropriate to consider the preceding economic analysis of Bourne farm and the Maldon agrarian economy in this context, starting with contemporary viewpoints on the crisis. As discussed in Chapter 3, Christopher Comyns Parker (Comyns) was a well-known land agent and farmer in the Maldon area whose business interests extended throughout Essex. The book written by Comyns' descendant, John Oxley Parker, provides an insight into the agricultural distress in Essex in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup> In 1835 Comyns received a letter from John Eliot, the tenant farmer of Patch Farm in Stapleford

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<sup>46</sup> J. Oxley Parker, *The Oxley Parker Papers* (Colchester: Benham and Company Ltd., 1964).

Tawney, requesting an abatement of his rent. Eliot observed that since starting his tenancy, the price of wheat had fallen from 60s to 40s, and other crops such as oats and barley had fallen by the same ratio.<sup>47</sup> Comyns responded that an agricultural depression had existed for as long as he had lived and had affected both his own business and his health.<sup>48</sup>

Comyns protestations may have been intended to let Eliot know that everybody was suffering and possibly were a prelude to him declining Eliot's request. From his first engagement with the business of farming in 1796, Comyns had been innovative with land utilisation and had continued to develop a successful business until his death in 1844. This was despite Comyns' opinion that agriculture had been distressed since the end of the Napoleonic wars.<sup>49</sup> His analysis was that a decline in corn prices had resulted in a sharp reduction in revenue, which in turn had caused a sharp reduction in wages without any equivalent lowering of the cost of living. He considered this as the root cause of the disturbances amongst farm labourers and believed that relief had to be provided for them by the redistribution of resources when necessary. Abatement of rents and tithes were among the approaches he believed would assist employers to pay reasonable wages or continue to afford poor rates.<sup>50</sup> Comyns' explanation for the depression that followed the end of the wars, was that the import of corn had resumed and that this had caused an oversupply which had resulted in a fall in the price.<sup>51</sup> It was certainly true that the price of wheat fell steeply, from a peak of 126s in 1812, to a low of 39s in 1835.<sup>52</sup>

This caused distress for many agricultural labourers because of low wages, to the point where they were sometimes on the point of starvation and this regularly gave rise to protests and demonstrations, which culminated in the Swing riots of 1830/1. These disturbances were most prevalent in Sussex, Kent, Suffolk, Berkshire, Hampshire and Essex, although they also took place in another eighteen counties. In Mingay's view the labouring poor recognised that the ability of their employers to pay higher wages was affected by the profitability of their businesses, and because of this they lobbied landlords to reduce rents alongside of demanding higher wages

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<sup>47</sup> J. P. Eliot, Letter to Christopher Comyns Parker, 1835, quoted in *The Oxley Parker Papers*, p.139. The letter makes no reference to the units of price of wheat, but this would have been per imperial quarter.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.139.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.136.

<sup>50</sup> C. C. Parker, A letter responding to his daughter Elizabeth, 1830, quoted in *The Oxley Parker Papers*, p.137.

<sup>51</sup> Parker, *The Oxley Parker Papers*, p.136.

<sup>52</sup> A.H. John, 'Statistical Appendix', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part I: 1750-1850*, ed. by G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), p.975.

from their employers.<sup>53</sup> This approach to alleviating the farmers' economic stress was in line with one of Comyns suggestions, but it did not address the fundamental cause of the problem. In Mingay's opinion, the underlying issue was that there was a surplus of labour. The reason why this had manifested itself following the end of the wars was that returning soldiers had markedly increased the number of people looking for work. Farming methods had also been improving continuously since the early eighteenth century and it seems possible that this process had accelerated during the war because of exigency and this had led to more efficient use of labour.<sup>54</sup>

It is clear that the protestors were probably motivated by their want and that the reasons for this lay with the economic viability of agriculture as a business. Nevertheless, even within affected counties the disturbances were localised. Comyns noted only one incident of threatened violence in Belchamp Walter in 1831 and two of arson in Laindon and Basildon Hall in 1830, which demonstrated that protest was the exception not the norm in his experience. A key question is whether some areas were more content as labourers were better off because the farmers were sufficiently profitable to pay better wages or higher poor relief? Or, did the parish elite support the labouring class based upon a stronger sense of duty to the poor than was held in other areas, and find ways of paying for this from innovative ways of saving money elsewhere.

A letter to the *Suffolk Chronicle*, published in the *Essex Herald* in January 1830, gave a full explanation for agricultural distress. A person using the pseudonym Timothy Tormentor, taking the years 1795 and 1830 as his reference points, explained that whilst the price of corn had reduced by almost a half between these dates, tithes and rents had doubled.<sup>55</sup> Although he professed to being unable to explain this economic discrepancy because he was only a farmer, he did assert that the circumstances that accompanied the Napoleonic wars had caused the price of corn, rents and tithes to rise. Whilst the price of corn had fallen after the war ended, rents and tithes had remained at the same level. He provided the information in Table 4.5, based upon a farm of 120 acres, to support his argument.

Tormentor argued that within his parish there were forty to fifty able-bodied labourers who wanted work, but that the farmers could not afford to employ them. This is an interesting point because, if true, it suggests that farmers restricted hiring

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<sup>53</sup> G.E. Mingay, 'Conclusion: The Progress of Agriculture 1750-1850 in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part II: 1750-1850*, ed. by G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), pp. 955-7.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> BNA, 'Letter from Timothy Tormentor to the Editor of the *Suffolk Chronicle*', *Essex Herald* (Chelmsford, 26<sup>th</sup> January 1830).

because of poor profitability rather than an unwillingness to hire. The key factors which contributed toward profitability were the price of corn affecting income and major costs such as rents and tithes. Consequently, it might be expected that was an inverse relationship between the price of corn and payment of 'allowances to the able-bodied'. Also, that similar correlations would be observed based upon the fluctuations of significant costs.

<b>Costs</b>	<b>Amount for 1795</b>	<b>Amount for 1830</b>
Rent	£86 0s 0d	£160 0s 0d
Tithe	£14 8s 0d	£30 0s 0d
Rates	£9 8s 0d	£29 12s 0d
Total	£109 16s 0d	£219 12s 0d

**Table 4.5: A Comparison of Essex Farm Costs Between 1795 and 1830.<sup>56</sup>**

Not all of those who commented on agricultural distress were as clear minded about its causes as Tormentor. John Disney of the Hyde in Ingatestone around seven miles west of Chelmsford, a substantial landowner, chaired a dinner of the Essex Agricultural Society in December 1835. He there offered the backward-looking opinion that the income of labourers would be enhanced if their wives resumed the practices of spinning and weaving. In the same speech he also proposed that local economies should be assisted by the poor rate being replaced by a national system of which could be funded by the Government's 'deep purse'.<sup>57</sup> Although a barrister by training, Disney was an enthusiastic antiquarian who produced a detailed catalogue of the marbles, bronzes and other artefacts in Hyde Hall. It is possible that his deep interest in the past influenced him to the point where some of his opinions were based upon nostalgia.<sup>58</sup>

Joseph Marriage, a farmer and miller in the Maldon area, also felt that a return to previous norms would alleviate the situation.<sup>59</sup> In 1832 he wrote a pamphlet on the 'distressed state of agricultural labourers' which he addressed to 'the nobility of England and other large landed proprietors'.<sup>60</sup> He was concerned with the inadequate provision of housing and associated facilities for farm labourers and their

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> BNA, 'A Report of the Proceedings of the Essex Agricultural Society', *The Chelmsford Chronicle* (Chelmsford, 18<sup>th</sup> December 1835).

<sup>58</sup> ERO, D/DDs F6, The pedigree of the Disney family, 1810-57.

<sup>59</sup> ERO, D/DU 419/8, probate copy of the will of Thomas Marriage – farmer, 1824-8.

<sup>60</sup> ERO, LIB/PAM 1/3/5, Letters on the Distressed State of Agricultural Labourers, 1832.

families, and proposed that there should be a return to such facilities being made available to labourers, which would allow them to exercise husbandry and that this would in turn reduce their reliance on wages and improve their conditions. Marriage quoted George Henry Law, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, as one prominent and influential person who had campaigned for the allotment of land and housing to labourers and had lamented the reduction of small holding which had removed the ability of labourers to provide for themselves.

Yet another Essex landowner, and a more substantial one, who published his opinion was Lord Western of Felix Hall, who had also been MP for Essex.<sup>61</sup> In 1835 he expounded an entirely different theory for the cause of the distress, attributing the problem to the passing of the 1819 Currency Act, which had restricted the amount of paper money that could be issued by British Colonies. Western's proposition was that the Act should be repealed and that the consequent increase of the money supply would lead to a significant increase in the price of corn.<sup>62</sup>

In order to justify his proposition, Western gave a detailed example in his pamphlet. He calculated that, following a 30-40% reduction in the price of corn which occurred immediately after the 1819 Act, a 100-acre farm would have had its annual income reduced by approximately £325 15s. This was calculated as shown in Table 4.6.

<b>Crop</b>	<b>Number of Acres</b>	<b>Yield per Acre in Quarters</b>	<b>Price Reduction After 1819</b>	<b>Revenue Reduction</b>
Wheat	25	3.5	30s per quarter	£131 15s
Barley	25	5	20s per quarter	£125
Beans and Peas	12.5	3.5	20s per quarter	£42
Clover	12.5	1.2	20s per quarter	£15
Turnips	12.5	0.96	20s per quarter	£12
Fallow	12.5	N/A	N/A	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100</b>			<b>£325 15s</b>

**Table 4.6: Lord Western's Estimate of Potential Revenue Loss for a 100 Acre Farm, Based Upon Corn Price Reduction Following the 1819 Currency Act.<sup>63</sup>**

<sup>61</sup> ERO, D/DRb Z8, handbills and squibs for the parliamentary election in Essex, 1830.

<sup>62</sup> ERO, LIB/PAM 1 3/10, Letter to the Chelmsford Agricultural Society Upon the Causes of the Distressed State of the Agricultural Classes, 1835.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.



The average national prices for wheat, barley, beans and peas in 1819 had been £74 6s, £45 9s, £54 1s and £56 1s respectively. By 1835, when Western's pamphlet was published, these had fallen to £39 4s, £29 11s, £36 11s and £36 6s respectively. Whilst these price reductions appear consistent with Lord Western's thesis, corn prices had already fallen in most years since their peak in 1812 until 1819. Also, the rate of descent between 1819 and 1820 was, for example, only around 10% for wheat, whereas in some years prior to the Currency Act it had fallen more steeply – for example over 32% between 1813 and 1814.<sup>64</sup>

It therefore seems improbable that Western was correct in his attribution of falling prices to the Currency Act. Following his explanation for the reduction of farm revenues, he went on to say that such large falls in revenue could not be compensated by reductions of rent or other costs. Continuing with his sample farm, he explained that even if the farmer's landlord was prepared to give up his entire annual rent of £175, this would not cover the revenue reduction of £325. Furthermore, he suggested significant rent reductions would have disastrous consequences for landowners. As a significant landlord himself, it seems possible that Western was making his case in way that was designed to undermine suggestions that the farming malaise could be resolved by reductions in rents or other major costs.

Lastly, a letter to the *Essex Standard* under the pseudonym 'Rusticus' agreed that the 1819 Act may have had some minor impact on the corn price, but argued it was not the major reason for the fall in prices. It made the point that prices had stabilised during the 1820s and suggested that there were two major causes of the crisis in agriculture. Firstly, that the wars had caused a spike in corn prices which had encouraged landlords to raise rents in response to the increased revenues received by farmers. Secondly, the landowners had recognised that larger farms were more efficient, and that revenues and profits would be maximised if they rented larger units. This had the effect of encouraging many investors to rent large farms and this increased demand leading to further rent increases. The consolidation of farms had the secondary effect of converting previously small farmers into agricultural labourers, which meant there was a greater number of people who relied upon receiving a wage.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> John, 'Statistical Appendix', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, pp.974-5.

<sup>65</sup> BNA, A Letter to the Editor of the *Essex Standard* from 'Rusticus' on the Causes and Progress of the Long-Existing Agricultural Distress, *The Essex Standard* (Chelmsford, 13<sup>th</sup> November 1835).

#### 4.4 *Rent and Tithe Reductions, Resulting from Agricultural Downturn*

A high cost base was clearly not sustainable when revenues were falling and whilst farmers could not afford to hire all of those people looking for work, they had a minimum requirement just to sustain their businesses. In these straitened circumstances they looked at other cost items such as rents and tithes and sought to negotiate reductions from the landlords and tithe holders. Clearly rent was a higher overhead than tithe payments, but the latter were nevertheless a significant percentage of farmer's costs. The half year's Bourne farm accounts for the 1833 financial year did not include the tithe payments. Consequently, the overall percentage understated their percentage of total costs at almost 6.4%. If this percentage is calculated for only 1834 and 1835 it was almost 7.5%, or around 28% of the annual labour cost.<sup>66</sup> So, from a farmer's perspective, there would probably have been resentment at having to pay tithes because there was no tangible benefit they derived from doing so; they were an obligation from a system that no longer appeared relevant.<sup>67</sup>

The origin of tithe payments had been to provide payments in kind to support the parish church and local clergy. In the early Middle Ages, the tax held religious significance and penalty for non-payment could include excommunication. By the twelfth century this religious purpose was sometimes diluted because tithes became payable to laymen who held leases purchased from monasteries and following the Reformation this practice was greatly extended, which was a 'clear perversion' of the original purpose of the duty.<sup>68</sup>

Also, as the British economy developed during the eighteenth century with the development of industry, mercantilism and services such as banking, it became evident that tithes were an unjust imposition upon agriculturalists.<sup>69</sup> Porter observed that the clergy had a pivotal role in maintaining social equilibrium in parish societies, but that as local economies developed the 'injustice' of tithes caused tensions with farmers. This was particularly the case if they were non-conformist Christians, because they felt little empathy with the church that had created the system of tithes

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<sup>66</sup> ERO, D/DCf A21.

<sup>67</sup> E.J. Evans, *The Contentious Tithe: the Tithe Problem and English Agriculture 1750-1850* (Abingdon: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), p.17.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p.16.

in the first place.<sup>70</sup> The financial pressures that farmers were subjected to by the falling price of wheat, particularly in 1835, probably acted as a catalyst to bring the ongoing debate on tithes to a head with the proposal of a Tithe Commutation Bill in 1836. Lord Russell was the lead proponent for the bill and suggested that its passage was in the best interests of not only agriculture, but also the church.<sup>71</sup>

This act did not abolish tithe payments but commuted them to monetary payments determined by farmers' cultivatable land based upon maps commissioned for this purpose. The tithe maps and apportionments took sixteen years to complete and, even then, the costs did not go away for they were simply determined on a fairer basis.<sup>72</sup> Whilst this governmental process was underway, there was still the practical issue facing farmers to make cost reductions or face potential bankruptcy. Clearly, a reduction or at least a deferral of tithe costs was an important aspect of how this could be achieved.

The activity required by the 1836 Tithe Commutation Act, along with negotiating specific abatements very often fell to the growing business of land agency. As noted earlier in this chapter, the Oxley Parkers' business was a good example. The 1836 Act made provision for tithe payments to be reviewed in light of these surveys, and Comyns was in considerable demand. In 1838 he 'attended 87 tithe commutation meetings in 46 different parishes.'<sup>73</sup> He was also called upon to conduct negotiations on behalf of both tenant farmers and landowners. One example was the Heybridge Hall Estate within the parish of Heybridge, which was within the Extended Maldon Area. Table 4.7 demonstrates the progress that was made by tenants in achieving tithe abatements as the financial circumstances deteriorated.

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<sup>70</sup> J.H. Porter, 'The Development of Rural Society: Social Institutions', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part II: 1750-1850*, ed. by G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), p.885.

<sup>71</sup> BNA, 'A Summary of the Debate in the House of Commons Concerning the Tithe Commutation Bill', *The Essex Herald*, (Chelmsford, 16<sup>th</sup> February 1836).

<sup>72</sup> Porter, 'The Development of Rural Society: Social Institutions', pp.884-7.

<sup>73</sup> E.J.T. Collins, 'The Agricultural Servicing and Processing Industries: Country Trades, Crafts and Professions', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part I: 1750-1850*, ed. by G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), pp. 452-3.

Payer Name	1832			1833			1834			1835							
	Arrears B/F in	Tithe Due	Paid	Arrears C/F	Arrears B/F in	Tithe Due	Paid	Arrears C/F	Arrears B/F in £	Tithe Due	Paid	Arrears C/F	Arrears B/F in £	Tithe Due	Tithe Abated	Paid	Arrears C/F
Argent, Ameritta		2.8		2.8	2.8	2.8	5.6		2.8	2.8				2.8	0.3	2.5	
Belsham, Daniel		1.8	1.8			17.1	17.1		17.1	17.1				17.1	1.7	15.4	
Bentall, William		1.5	1.5			1.5	1.5		1.5		1.5		1.5	1.5	0.3	2.7	
Brooke, James		30.0	30.0			30.0	30.0		30.0	30.0				30.0	3.0	27.0	
Bateman, Edward		18.0	18.0			18.0	18.0		18.0	18.0				18.0	1.8	16.2	
Cottee, Mark		3.8	3.8			3.9	3.9		3.9	3.9				3.9	0.4	3.5	
Chelmer Navigation		5.0	5.0			5.0	5.0		5.0		5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	0.0	10.0	
Clarke, Robert		27.6	27.6			27.6	27.6		27.6	27.6				27.6	2.8	24.8	
Clarke, John (late)	0.6	0.6		1.2	1.2	0.6	1.8										
Cozens, James		21.0	21.0			21.0	21.0		21.0	21.0				21.0	2.1	18.9	
Carter, James		8.8		8.8	8.8	8.8	17.6		8.8		8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8			17.6
Francis, James		22.8	22.8			22.8	22.8		22.8	22.8				22.8	2.3	20.5	
Holloway, Jeremiah		4.8	4.8			4.8	4.8		1.3	1.3				1.3	0.1	1.2	
Keys,	0.3	0.6		0.6	0.6	0.3		0.9	0.9	0.3		1.2					
Mofs, William		3.2	3.2			3.2	3.2		3.2	3.2				3.2			3.2
Mofs, Shuttleworth		3.8	3.8			3.8	3.8		3.8	3.8				3.8	0.4	3.4	
May, Alfred		0.5		0.5	0.5	0.5	1.0		0.5		0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.9	
Prentice, William		1.2		1.2	1.2	1.2	2.4		1.2		1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2			2.4
Sadd, John		24.7	24.7			24.7		24.7	24.7	24.7	49.4			24.7	2.4	22.3	
Goring, Joseph						3.6		3.6	3.6	3.6		7.2	7.2	3.6			10.8
Shaen, Samuel		0.8	0.8			0.8	0.8		0.8	0.8				0.8			0.8
Vicar (not to be taken)		10.8		10.8		10.8		10.8	10.8	10.8		10.8	10.8	10.8	1.1	9.7	
Wade, William		16.1		16.1	16.1	16.1	16.1	16.1	16.1	16.1	16.1	16.1	16.1	16.1	9.0	6.0	19.1
Wade, Henry									16.1			16.1		16.1	1.6	14.5	
Waring, Reginald	30.8	15.4	15.4	30.8						3.4		3.4	3.4	3.4	0.7	6.1	
Hazel, Thomas		3.0	3.0			1.9	1.9										
Wood, William		3.6	3.6	7.2													
<b>Totals</b>	<b>35.3</b>	<b>232.0</b>	<b>187.1</b>	<b>80.0</b>	<b>31.2</b>	<b>230.8</b>	<b>205.9</b>	<b>56.1</b>	<b>61.4</b>	<b>228.2</b>	<b>217.8</b>	<b>71.8</b>	<b>43.7</b>	<b>236.9</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>206.4</b>	<b>53.1</b>

**Table 4.7: Tithe Payments from Tenants of the Heybridge Hall Estate: 1832-1835.<sup>74</sup>**

The annual accounts maintained by the Oxley-Parkers were for the year ending on Michaelmas (29<sup>th</sup> September). Between 1832 and 1834 most of the tithe payments were collected, but there was an amount overdue in each year, ranging from almost £50 in 1832 to just over £11 in 1834. Major tenants, such as Brooke and Cozens, were generally up to date with their obligations, although there were occasions when significant payments were delayed until the following financial year. For example, Sadd paid the 1833 tithe in 1834.

There were some tithe-payers who were unable or unwilling to pay on time, such as William Wade and Joseph Goring. The latter failed to make any payment from when he first appeared in the accounts in 1833. Wade did make payments in each of the years from 1833, but was unable to ever settle his account fully. The vicar appeared to have been granted a dispensation not to pay from 1832 to 1834, and his entries were marked – ‘not to be taken’. This was not the case in 1835, when he paid the amount that was due, after the abatement had been deducted, of £9 7s.

<sup>74</sup> ERO, D/DOP/B29/3, Annual Payments of Tithes for the Heybridge Hall Estate, 1832-1835.

The year 1835 was the first that an abatement column had been added to the accounts, and these reductions were probably agreed because of the economic strictures of that year. The tithe payers that had obligations over £10 in that year all paid the abated sum in full. The following table provides an insight into their occupations.

Name	Occupation	Parish if not Heybridge	Amount of Abatement £	Net Tithe Paid £
Belsham, Daniel	Maltster, Timber Merchant, Coal Merchant, Farmer		1.7	15.4
Brooke, James	Farmer		3	27
Bateman, Edward	Farmer		1.8	16.2
Clarke, Robert	Farmer	Great Totham	2.8	24.8
Cozens, James	Farmer	Woodham Mortimer	2.1	18.9
Francis, James	Farmer		2.3	20.5
Sadd, John	Timber Merchant, Farmer	St. Peter	2.4	22.3
Vicar	Clergyman		1.1	9.7
Wade, Henry	Farmer		1.6	14.5

**Table 4.8: Tithe Payers Owing Over Ten Pounds in 1835 from Tenants of the Heybridge Hall Estate: 1832-1835.<sup>75</sup>**

This summary of the major tithe payers in Heybridge once again shows the interconnectedness of landowning in the Extended Maldon Area. All of them, with the exception of the vicar, were farmers in the parish, but Daniel Belsham and John Sadd also had significant business interests elsewhere in the district. In Sadd's case he was not even a resident of Heybridge, but of St. Peter in Maldon. Nevertheless, their farming interests must have been adversely affected by the fall in the wheat price and they were able to negotiate tithe abatements, albeit for relatively small amounts.

It was clearly a condition of the abatement that the payers had to clear any arrears, because any who owed money at the end of 1835 did not receive any

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<sup>75</sup> These occupations were established from, TNA, 1841 Census; ERO, D/B 3/10/5, Printed Poll Book for the Maldon Election of 1826; ERO, D/CT 179B, Heybridge Tithe Map, 1847; W. Robson, *Robson's Directory of the Home Counties* (London: Richard Studley, 1838), pp.75-8.

reduction. These were James Carter - £17 6s arrears, William Mofs - £3 2s, William Prentice - £2 4s and William Wade - £9. The parliamentary debate on tithe apportionment had not taken place in 1835, so the prospect of tithe abolition cannot have influenced their actions. William Wade paid £6 of what he owed in 1835, and the others had made varying payments in previous years. Consequently, it seems improbable that they refused to pay the 1835 tithe on principle. More probably they were under revenue pressure and chose to prioritise paying those costs which were essential to business continuation. In turn this would also suggest that those who ran larger farms, such as those in Table 4.8, had sufficient cash reserves to make the payments and benefit from abatement.

As noted earlier in this section, although tithe abatements were able to alleviate a little of farmers' financial pressures, rent abatements would have had more impact because they represented a higher percentage of overall costs. A prelude to landlords being prepared to consider reducing rents was often a preparedness to tolerate a level of arrears. If rents were paid late it impacted their cash flow but not profitability. Only when their tenants were faced with severe financial difficulties for long periods were they forced to consider rent abatement.

In her study of the Montagu and Langham estates in Northamptonshire, Georgina Dockry noted that landlords were reluctant to evict tenants who fell into arrears, because they realised that that it would probably be difficult or impossible to replace them. Also, they had benefited substantially from the increase in rents at the end of the eighteenth century and were loath to consider permanent reductions as the agricultural economy declined after the Napoleonic wars. She showed that the percentage of tenants in arrears, rose sharply from 0% in 1821 to 8% in the 1830s and in these circumstances, landlords were prepared to consider abatements to prevent bankruptcies.<sup>76</sup>

It is therefore easy to understand why landowners were vociferous about reducing any farmers' costs which may have limited the amount they had to accept reductions in rent. The poor rate was an obvious target, particularly the payment of 'allowances to the able-bodied'. In reality, the poor rate represented a fairly low percentage of farm expenses, just less than 5% for Bourne farm compared to over 25% for rent, but nevertheless it became a target for landowners wanting to maintain the same level of income.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> G. Dockry, 'Landed Estates in Northamptonshire: The Rural Rental Economy 1800-1881', (MPhil Thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2013), pp.160-70.

<sup>77</sup> ERO, D/DCf A21.

Despite this attitude, some rent abatement was inevitable and in the Extended Maldon Area a good example of the type of farm where this could occur was Iltney Farm in Mundon. That parish is adjacent to the Maldon parish of St. Mary and its land borders the Blackwater estuary. Although it was protected by a seawall this was frequently breached leading to flooding which adversely affected the farm's profitability. The farm was owned by the Plume Trust and in 1820 the existing tenant, Edward Payne, committed to a new twenty-one-year lease at £215 per annum, which was first abated to £200 in 1824. In July 1834 the trustees commissioned a report from Comyns, in response to a request for further abatement. This was delivered in September and supported a further rent reduction 'to induce the tenant to keep the farm in its present creditable state of cultivation'.<sup>78</sup> In addition, Comyns recommended that Payne should be further incentivised to maintain the lease by the trustees assuming the cost of repairing the seawall and contributing towards further improvements elsewhere.<sup>79</sup>

As noted previously, the rent for Bourne farm was £225 per annum for 157 acres, whereas, even before the abatement that followed Comyns report, Iltney's rent was £200 for 186 acres. So, following a further reduction to £170 per annum that proceeded after Comyns' 1834 report the rent was over 36% per acre cheaper than that for Bourne farm. Whilst that farm is located in the parish of Latchingdon, which is adjacent to Mundon, it is inland from the estuary and this may be the reason for the disparity in rent.<sup>80</sup>

Outside of the Extended Maldon Area, rent abatement also occurred elsewhere in Essex. An example occurred at Chignal Hall Farm in the parish of Chignall St. James near Chelmsford, where Thomas Bramston was the landholder.<sup>81</sup> Bramston was a significant landowner in Essex whose main residence was Chignall Hall (part of the same estate as the farm). Again, his land agent was Comyns and Bramston owned several other farms throughout the county.<sup>82</sup> The farm was mainly arable and just over 294 acres in size and no rent abatement was shown in the estate records until 1829. The following table provides the rents paid and abatements given between 1829 and 1835.

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<sup>78</sup> ERO, D/DOP B45, Valuation of property of Plume's Charity: Iltney Farm, Mundon, 1834.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> ERO, D/DCf A21; ERO, D/DOP B45.

<sup>81</sup> ERO, D/DOP B11/1, Particulars of Chignal Hall Farm, 1833-44.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<b>Period Ended half-year</b>	<b>Rent in £</b>	<b>Abatement in £</b>
March 1829	196	24
September 1829	186	24
March 1830	186	24
September 1830	186	24
March 1831	186	24
September 1831	186	24
March 1832	186	24
September 1832	186	18.5
March 1833	167.5	0
September 1833	167.5	0
March 1834	167.5	5.5
September 1834	167.5	28
March 1835	167.5	28
September 1835	167.5	28

**Table 4.9: Rent Paid for Chignal Hall Farm From 1829 to 1835.**<sup>83</sup>

Abatements of £48 were given in every year between 1829 and 1831 until 1832, when the sum was reduced to £42 10s. In 1833 no abatement was given, but the annual rent was lowered from £372 to £335. This reduction may have been agreed because the farm was smaller, but it seems more likely that Bramston agreed to a permanent reduction due to the continuous pressure for abatements. In the first half of 1834 there was a small abatement of £5 10s, but the amounts increased to £28 in the second half of 1834 and this continued throughout 1835. The rent reductions coincided with the fall of the price of wheat, which was around 52s for

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.



most of the first half of 1834 but fell to 48s by the end of the year. This decline continued throughout 1835 until it stood at 41s at the end of that year.

The interrelationship between market prices, farms' profitability and landlord income is therefore clear. Reductions in farms' revenue meant that most farmers had little choice but to seek reductions in discretionary costs such as tithes and rent. The impact upon landowners' income was significant. Thomas Bramston received £392 rent for Chignal Hall Farm in 1828, but this had been reduced to £279 in 1835, a 29% per annum reduction, with smaller but still important reductions in the intervening years in the period. Whatever the accumulated wealth members of the landed elite possessed, this level of reduction would probably have been difficult to accommodate and may have led to consideration of how they could convince farmers to reduce their other costs.

#### *4.5 Responses to Agricultural Distress: Incendiarism and Swing Riots*

As discussed earlier in this chapter, there was a significant debate in Essex in the 1830s concerning the reasons for, and potential solutions to, the problems of the farming industry. Worsening conditions affected landlords, employers, and, most poignantly, workers in the county. The pressures of insufficient wages or other means of survival meant that many labouring families were suffering severe deprivation and hunger. As noted in Chapter 1, incendiarism and riots took place in Essex, as in many other counties, culminating in the Swing riots of 1830/1.<sup>84</sup>

There were incidents of incendiarism throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>85</sup> In the cases where there was a clear motive for these occurrences, it was often 'mistreatment' of individuals by their employer rather than a 'collective' dispute. For example, in June 1844 twelve-year-old John Hardy from Witham was sentenced to fifteen years transportation for setting fire to his employer's stacks. He had done this because Fred Fitch, his employer, had frequently beaten him. For older people the grievances were often due to being refused work, such as Robert Woodward (who was 33 years old) from West Bergholt, also sentenced to fifteen years transportation for starting a fire at a farm owned by a Mr. Lambert in 1843.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> See Chapter 1, section 1.5.

<sup>85</sup> S. Hussey and L. Swash, *'Horrid Lights': 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Incendiarism in Essex* (Chelmsford: The Essex Record Office in collaboration with The Local History Centre, University of Essex, 1994), p.1.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

Although it appears that incidents of incendiarism were largely motivated by individual grievances, Hussey and Swash note that 313 of the 452 recorded incidents for the nineteenth century occurred between 1836 and 1855. They suggest that during this period wages were at their lowest because of the agricultural depression and that the safety net provided by outdoor relief paid by parish overseers had been removed by the 1834 Act, suggesting a possible correlation between these factors. They qualify this possibility with the observation that often several incidents occurred in a particular parish but were entirely absent in adjoining ones. For example, West Bergholt experienced ten attacks between 1843 and 1845, but the neighbouring parishes of Great and Little Horkesley experienced none.<sup>87</sup> Discussion of the possible relationship between incendiarism, the state of the local economy and the system of poor relief, would be an interesting area for research, but is not within the scope of this study. Attention will instead concentrate on the Swing riots and the occurrences of these are listed in the Table 4.10 and shown on Map 4.1.

The riots occurred in only pockets of Essex, and Hobsbawm and Rudé's analysis was that they were not politically motivated but that their immediate cause was poor wages, insufficient employment coupled with inadequate poor relief.<sup>88</sup> No riots were recorded in the Extended Maldon area, which suggests, assuming Hobsbawm and Rudé's analysis was correct, that conditions were better for agricultural labourers than they were in areas where they did occur. The recorded incidents took place over less than a three-month period, between November 1830 and January 1831. It therefore seems possible that riots were a response to winter conditions causing either a lack of work, insufficient relief, or a combination of the two factors. Indeed, Armstrong's opinion was that the riots were caused by the 'exceptionally adverse circumstances' that existed immediately beforehand. He pointed to the poor harvest of 1829 and a severe winter in 1829/30 as catalysts which inflamed existing problems of low wages and under-employment.<sup>89</sup> He further suggested they particularly affected the southern counties because the resources available through poor relief were most strained in this area because of under-employment, the absence of non-agricultural jobs and poor employment mobility.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>88</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, *Captain Swing* (London: Verso, 2014 [1969]), pp.16,74-5.

<sup>89</sup> W.A. Armstrong and J.P. Huzel, 'Labour II: Food, Shelter and Self-Help, the Poor Law and the Position of the Labourer in Rural Society, in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part II: 1750-1850*, ed. by G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), pp. 827-9.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

Yet, Armstrong failed to point out that in some counties the riots were quite localised and that similar circumstances had existed in many places where disturbances did not occur. Also, with regard to his point about the 1829 harvest, although the wheat yield had been low at 27.7 bushels per acre, it had been almost as low at 28.1 in the previous year which had not provoked riots on the same scale.<sup>91</sup>

In a more recent study of the Swing riots, Carl Griffin focused on the counties of Hampshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex, because it was in this general area south of the Thames that the riots started.<sup>92</sup> Griffin emphasised the symbolic nature of threshing machines to many of those who participated in the riots. He explained that machine breaking was 'predictable and had precedent' as opposed to the 'bolt from the blue' asserted by Hobsbawm and Rudé.<sup>93</sup> Further, Griffin suggested that Swing was partially founded upon a gender based view where the machines were seen as a 'female', and were executing tasks that were traditionally performed by men.<sup>94</sup> Crucially, and contrary to Hobsbawm and Rudé's opinion, Griffin identified a possible reason why the Swing riots occurred in specific areas and not uniformly across a wide region. That, whilst there was central organisation, they were often provoked and diffused by local radicals. For example, the radicals Robert Price and John Adams carried out this role in Kent, where it is 'questionable' that the riots would have spread in the way they did without their political activism.<sup>95</sup>

A novel and nuanced perspective of the riots was presented by Iain Taylor in his analysis of the 'Sevenoaks Fires' in Kent. He noted that the majority of historians have produced studies of the Swing riots from the viewpoint of the rioters, without paying attention to how the elite victims of the incidents were affected. He suggested that understanding the riots is assisted by evaluating them through the lens of a risk framework. Using this approach, Taylor suggested that the poor experienced risk to their lifestyle if local ratepayers failed to meet their traditional obligations in caring for the needy. This risk could be transferred to farmers by rioting and making threats to those who failed to show support for relief claimants. The risk to the farmers arose because their unsupportive attitude could lead to one or many assaults upon their person or property. For example, in the case of the disturbances in Sevenoaks, Jonathan Thompson experienced the most attacks because he appealed against his

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<sup>91</sup> John, 'Statistical Appendix', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, p.1051.

<sup>92</sup> C.J. Griffin, *The Rural War, Captain Swing and the Politics of Protest* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012 [2015]), pp.6-7.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p.88.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p.321.

rate assessment, thereby failing in his obligation to contribute sufficiently to the poor relief fund insofar as the rioters were concerned.<sup>96</sup>

Hobsbawm and Rudé suggested that parishes were more likely to experience riots if they were larger in size, had a higher ratio of labourers to farmers, were open not closed, or had a larger number of artisans. Nevertheless, they had acknowledged that there was considerable local variation and that these suggestions were tentative.<sup>97</sup> The area which experienced the most incidents in Essex was Tendring Hundred, a coastal district in north-east Essex. If the riots were provoked by extreme poverty, it seems likely that the level of relief paid in Tendring would have been noticeably lower than that paid in the Extended Maldon Area in 1830/1. Although the relief payment was only one of the factors suggested by Hobsbawm and Rudé as a contributory factor, it was probably correlated to the level of wages and employment because of the way in which the relief scales worked. Relief payments have therefore been considered as a meaningful indicator of the level of poverty.

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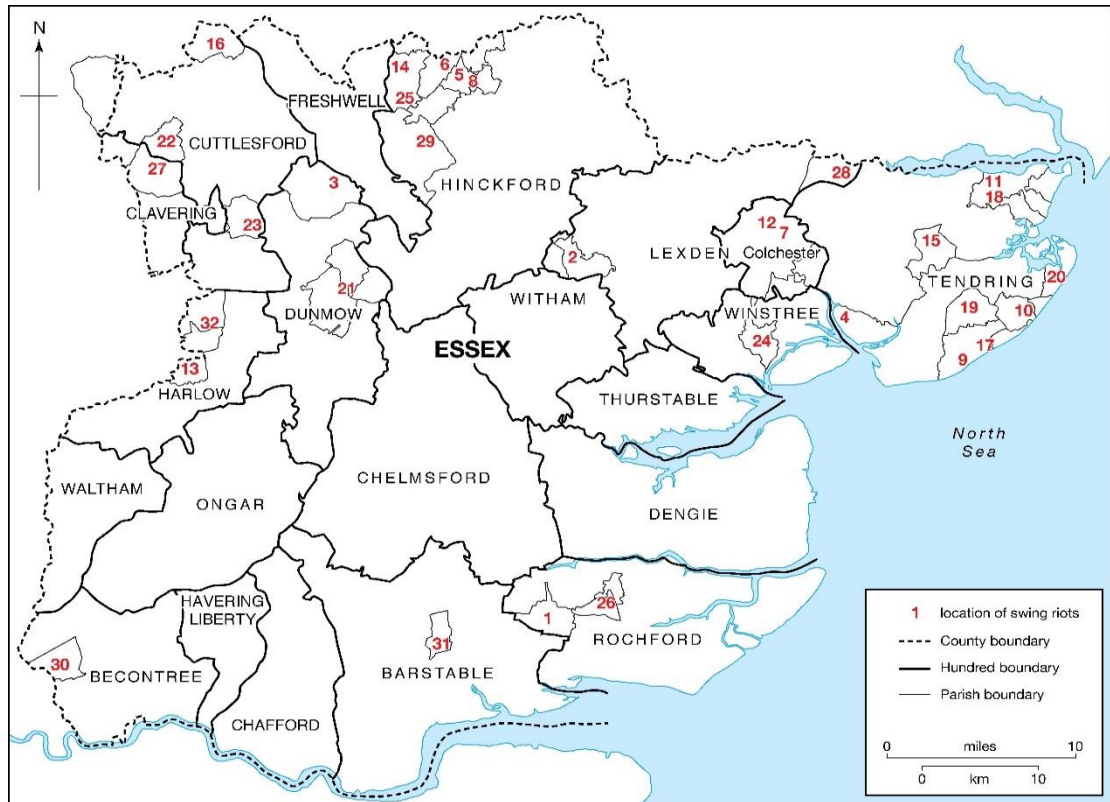
<sup>96</sup> I. Taylor, 'One for the (farm) workers? Perpetrator risk and victim risk transfer during the 'Sevenoaks Fires' of 1830', *Rural History* 28, 2 (2017), pp.137-159.

<sup>97</sup> Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp.178-89, quoted in Armstrong and Huzel, 'Labour II: Food, Shelter and Self-Help', p.829.

<b>Incident Number</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Hundred</b>
1	5 <sup>th</sup> November 1830	Rayleigh	Rochford
2	22 <sup>nd</sup> November 1830	Coggeshall	Lexden
3	24 <sup>th</sup> November 1830	Thaxted	Dunmow
4	30 <sup>th</sup> November 1830	Brightlingsea	Tendring
5	1 <sup>st</sup> December 1830	Ridgewell	Hinckford
6	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> December 1830	Birdbrook	Hinckford
7		St. Michael	Colchester
8		Ridgewell	Hinckford
9		Great Clacton	Tendring
10		Great Holland	Tendring
11		Ramsey	Tendring
12	6 <sup>th</sup> December 1830	St. Michael	Colchester
13		Sheering	Harlow
14		Steeple Bumpstead	Hinckford
15		Tendring	Tendring
16	7 <sup>th</sup> December 1830	Chesterford	Uttlesford
17		Great Clacton	Tendring
18		Ramsey	Tendring
19	8 <sup>th</sup> December 1830	Little Clacton	Tendring
20		Walton Le Soken	Tendring
21	9 <sup>th</sup> December 1830	Dunmow	Dunmow
22	10 <sup>th</sup> December 1830	Arkesden	Uttlesford
23		Henham	Uttlesford
24		Peldon	Winstree
25		Steeple Bumpstead	Hinckford
26		Hawkwell	Rochford
27	11 <sup>th</sup> December 1830	Clavering	Clavering
28	14 <sup>th</sup> December 1830	Dedham	Lexden
29		Finchingfield	Hinckford
30		Leyton	Becontree
31	2 <sup>nd</sup> January 1831	Basildon	Barstable
32	20 <sup>th</sup> January 1831	Great Hallingbury	Harlow

**Table 4.10: List of Swing Riot Incidents in Essex.<sup>98</sup>**

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

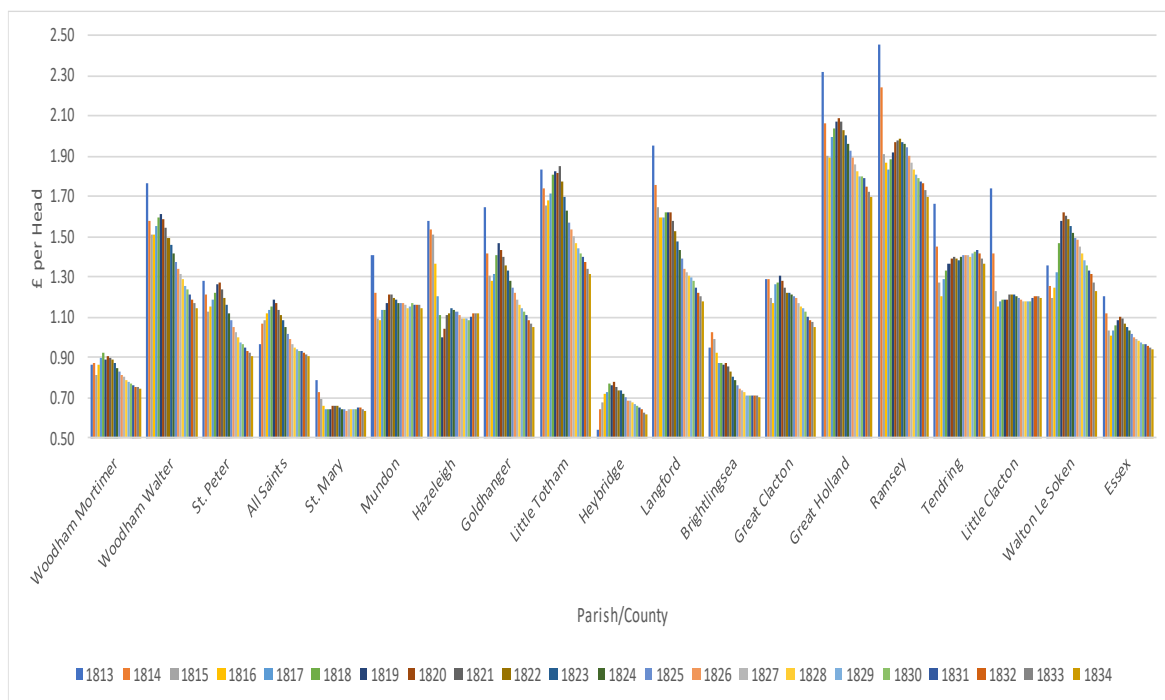


**Map 4.1: Essex Hundreds' Map Indicating Where Swing Riots Occurred (for parish names see Table 4.10).<sup>99</sup>**

To explore whether there was a difference in the patterns of relief provision in the Tendring parishes that experienced riots and selected ones from the Extended Maldon Area, central data was used to compare the two sets of parishes. Despite the potential inaccuracy and aggregate nature of the centrally reported relief figures, they nevertheless provide a reasonable proxy for this modelling. Chart 4.18 provides statistical context by plotting the relief payments from 1813 to 1834.

The chart makes it clear that poor relief fell for all parishes and for Essex overall during the period. The shape of the bar clusters is similar for most parishes, whether they were in the Maldon or Tendring district. For example, Great Holland and Ramsey exhibit similar features to Langford and Woodham Walter. The following chart was produced to show the percentage change for each parish and the county during the period.

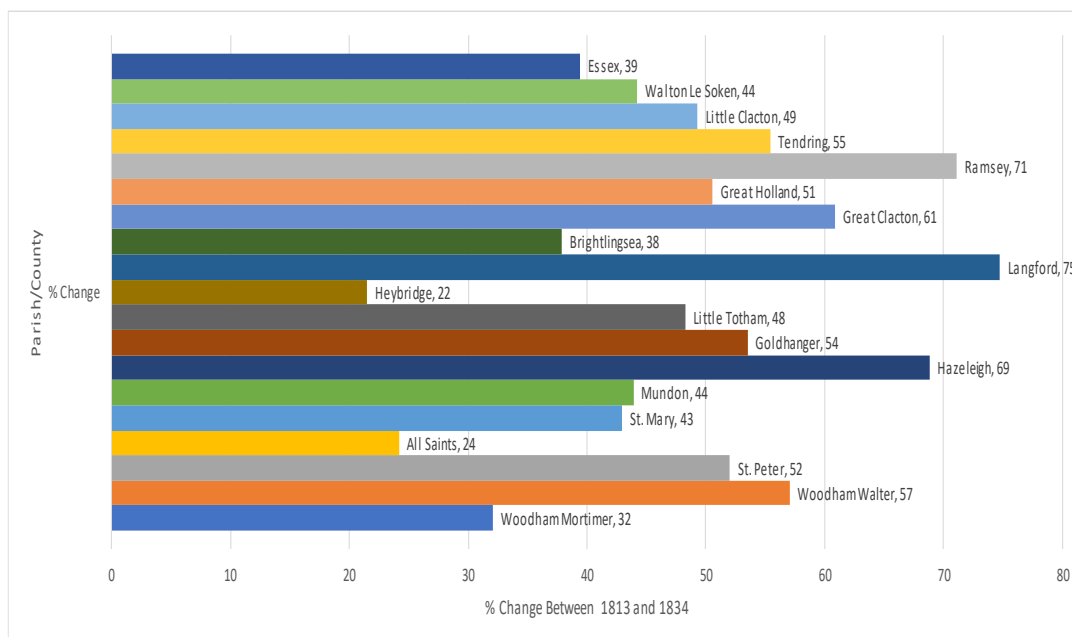
<sup>99</sup> Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp.308-58.



**Chart 4.18: Expenditure per Head of Population for Parishes in the Extended Maldon Area, those in the Tendring Hundred Where Swing Riots Took Place, and Essex Overall for the Period 1813 to 1834.<sup>100</sup>**

Chart 4.19 clearly reveals that relief did not obviously decline more severely in the Tendring parishes that experienced riots than it did in the Extended Maldon Area. For example, it fell significantly by 71% in the Tendring parish of Ramsey, but even more so in the Extended Maldon parish of Langford. Chart 4.20 shows the overall picture for these areas.

<sup>100</sup> ProQuest, 1818 (82), Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns; 1822 (556), Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns. 1825 (334), Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns; 1830-31 (83), Poor Rate Returns: An Account of the money expended for the maintenance and relief of the poor in every parish, township in England and Wales; 1835 (444), Poor Rate Returns: An Account of the money expended for the maintenance and relief of the poor in every parish, township in England and Wales. The population data was taken from the census data from 1801 to 1841; 1801 (140), Abstract presented to the House of Commons of the Answers and Returns made to the Population Act of 41<sup>st</sup> Geo. III. &c.; 1812 (316), Abstract of the answers and returns made pursuant to an act, passed in the fifty-first year of His Majesty King George III; 1822 (502), Abstract of the Answers and Returns made pursuant to an act, passed in the first year of His Majesty King George IV; 1833 (149), Abstract of the answers and returns; 1843 (496), Abstract of the answers and returns made pursuant to acts 3&4 Vic. c. 99 and Vic. c.7. The population figures used for calculating the poor relief for any year were calculated by linearly interpolating between the population figures provided for the previous and next census.



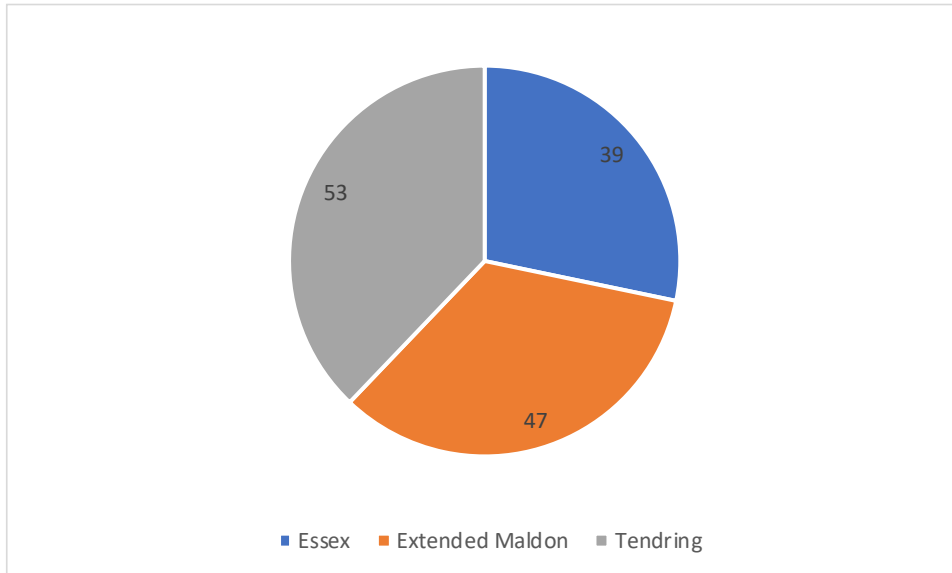
**Chart 4.19: The Percentage Change in Relief Payments for the Parishes in the Extended Maldon Area, the Tendring Parishes where Swing Riots Occurred and Essex Between 1813 and 1834.<sup>101</sup>**

Relief payments for both the Tendring group and the Extended Maldon Area fell by more than Essex as a whole, with the first falling by 6% more than the second. This difference may be regarded as insignificant given the large falls during the period and if the Swing riots were directly attributable to economic deprivation alone, it seems likely that they would have occurred somewhere in the Extended Maldon Area and also more widely in Essex.

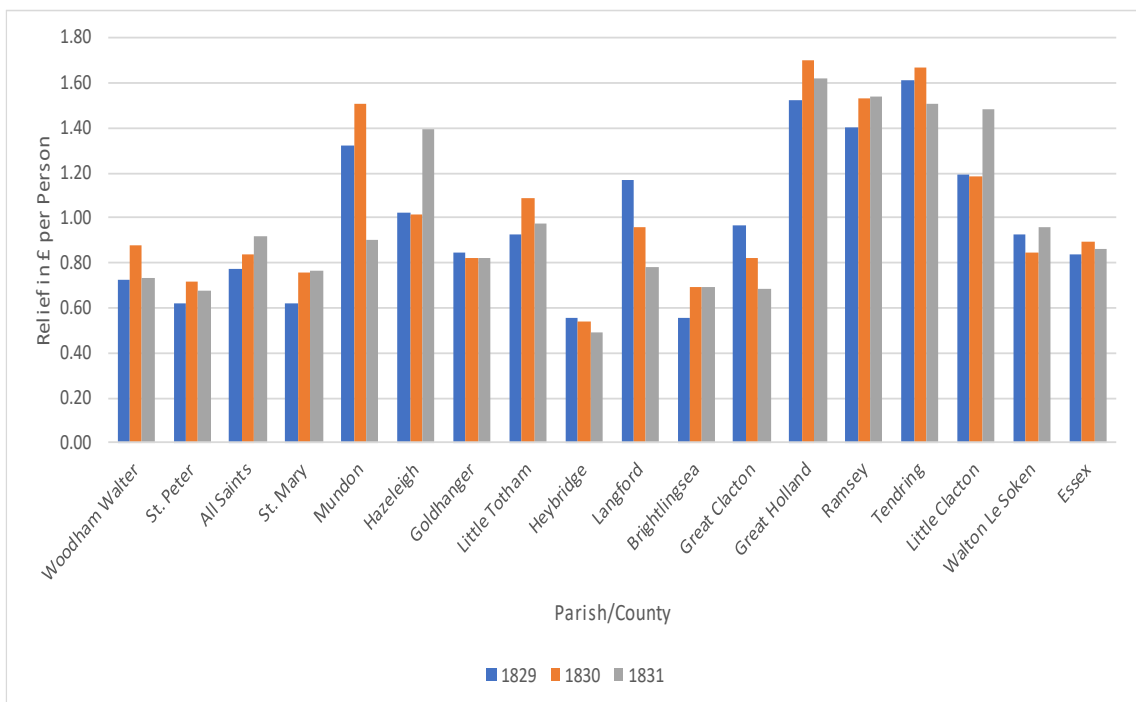
It is possible that severe reductions in relief payments between 1829 and 1830/1, when the riots took place, may have provoked incidents even though the overall trend had been downwards for some time. The charts considered to date do not show any obvious anomalies in this period, but to ensure this was the case, the short period 1829 to 1831 was examined more closely in Chart 4.21.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.





**Chart 4.20: Average of the Average Percentage Falls in Relief Payments for the Extended Maldon Area, the Tendring Hundred Parishes where Swing Riots Occurred, and Essex Between 1813 and 1834.<sup>102</sup>**



**Chart 4.21: Expenditure per Head of Population for Parishes in the Extended Maldon Area, those in the Tendring Hundred Where Swing Riots Took Place, and Essex Overall for the Period 1829 to 1831.<sup>103</sup>**

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

In the Tendring parishes, relief per person declined between 1829 and 1830 in Great Clacton, Little Clacton and Walton Le Soken, but rose in Brightlingsea, Great Holland, Ramsey and Tendring. Even in the parishes where it declined, the largest change was only £0.14 in Great Clacton. It seems, therefore, that there was no obvious reduction in relief payments which could have provoked riots. Neither did parish size seem to make any difference as to whether riots occurred. For example, based on the 1831 census, Brightlingsea and Great Clacton had quite large populations of 1,784 and 1,149 respectively, whereas Great Holland and Walton Le Soken had fairly small ones of 425 and 469.<sup>104</sup> Therefore, it may be seen that Hobsbawm and Rudé's suggestion that larger parishes were more likely to experience riots was not the case, and equally that there was no obvious correlation with poor relief provision.

It was also the case that some areas such as Tendring were clearly affected by other factors which led to an increased likelihood of disturbance. In the prelude to the Swing riots, incidents of arson had occurred in the 1820s, particularly in Great Clacton.<sup>105</sup> The use of threshing machines was one of the causes of unrest during the period and many farmers were threatened to stop them being used. This led to 'machine breaking', with multiple occurrences in the Tendring Hundred in December 1830.<sup>106</sup> A key question, therefore, is whether the introduction of threshing machines in the Tendring Hundred at that date was unusual for Essex agriculture. If so, then this may explain the disturbances in that area. Macdonald presented largely anecdotal evidence that their use was confined to mainly the lowlands of Scotland and the north-east of England until the 1840s. This was because the smaller machines, which were the only ones affordable for the size of farms in south-east England, were unreliable. Also, that the system of poor relief in the south-east operated in a way whereby whatever the farmers saved in labour costs from using machines, they were required to pay in increased 'allowances to the able-bodied'.<sup>107</sup> This view was echoed by Brown and Beecham, who added the point that there was plentiful supply of cheap labour in south-east England which meant that the

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<sup>104</sup> ProQuest, 1833 (149).

<sup>105</sup> S. W. Amos, 'Social Discontent and Agrarian Disturbances in Essex, 1795-1850' (MA Thesis, Durham University, 1971), pp.96-8.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> S. Macdonald, 'The Progress of the Early Threshing Machine', *Agricultural History Review*, 22. 1 (1975), pp.63-77.

machines only became economically viable when grain production increased to the point where the labour supply was insufficient by the 1840s.<sup>108</sup>

It is possible that the introduction of the machines in Tendring had prompted the disturbances, but Amos provided evidence that their use was more widespread. If this was the case, it is important to understand why riots did not also take place in these areas outside of Tendring. She noted that in Tendring several of the major perpetrators of the riots had received previous sentences for minor criminal activity and may have been more belligerent than was generally the case among farm labourers elsewhere. It is possible, therefore, that the rioting that occurred in Tendring may have occurred due to a more aggressive approach towards labour saving machinery on the part of the perpetrators. Comyns provided confirmation that the attitude towards machines was nuanced, for when providing evidence to the Select Committee on Agricultural Distress in 1836 he stated that although after the riots fewer farmers used the machines, nevertheless some were still deployed.<sup>109</sup>

Whilst the Swing riots reinforce the impression of the poor state of the agricultural economy in Essex and elsewhere by the 1830s, it seems likely that they were triggered by activism, as suggested by Griffin, rather than economic circumstances that were even worse than the norm. Most importantly, the poor relief safety valve appeared to operate in a similar manner in Tendring Hundred to the Extended Maldon Area. Relief payments made in the Swing riot years of 1830 and 1831, were not noticeably lower either before or after the disturbances occurred.

#### *4.6 The Profile of Businesses in Maldon Town*

Whilst the downturn in the agrarian economy in the Extended Maldon Area, and Essex as a whole, affected farmers and their workers, it is important to also understand the extent to which this impacted Maldon's urban financial system. By the 1830s it seems probable that whilst Maldon would have had some reliance upon the economic success of its rural neighbours, not least because of duties derived from exports, its economy was not wholly tied to the performance of agriculture. To show the range of businesses in the town, *Robson's Trade Directory* (1838), the closest by date to the period studied, has been analysed in Table 4.11.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> J. Brown and H.A. Beecham, 'Farming Techniques: Implements and Machines, in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part I: 1750-1850*, ed. by G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), pp.303-11.

<sup>109</sup> Amos, 'Social Discontent and Agrarian Disturbances in Essex', p.125.

<sup>110</sup> W. Robson, *Robson's Directory of the Home Counties* (London: Richard Studley, 1838), pp.75-8.

<b>Businesses Directly Linked to Agriculture</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Businesses Largely Independent from Agriculture</b>	<b>Number</b>
Basket Makers	2	Auctioneers	1
Boot and Shoemakers	8	Bakers	7
Brewer	1	Bankers	1
Butchers	9	Beer Retailers	3
Corn Merchants	3	Baths	1
Currier	1	Booksellers	1
Farrier	1	Breeches' Makers	2
Flour Dealer	1	Bricklayers	6
Glovers (assuming the use of leather from farmed animals)	2	Cabinet Makers	3
Land Agent	2	Carpenters	6
Maltster	1	Carriers	1
Miller	1	Chemists	4
Millwright	1	Chins and Glass Dealers	3
Pork Butcher	1	Cashiers	3
Saddle and Harness Makers (as Glovers)	4	Coach Builders	2
Smiths	5	Coach Office	1
Straw Hat Manufacturers	2	Coal Merchants	4
Wild Fowl Dealer	1	Coal Meter	1
		Coopers	3
		Chandlers	2
		Fishmonger	1
		Furniture Broker	1
		Gardeners	2
		Grocers	8
		Gun Manufacturer	1
		Hairdressers	3
		Hardware	1
		Hatters	3
		Hosier	1
		Iron Founder	1
		Ironmonger	3
		Jeweller	1
		Library	1
		Marine Store	1

<b>Businesses Directly Linked to Agriculture</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Businesses Largely Independent from Agriculture</b>	<b>Number</b>
		Milliners	5
		Nail Manufacturer	1
		Oil Merchant	1
		Plumbers	5
		Post House Masters	3
		Printers	2
		Schools	4
		Ship Owner	1
		Soap Manufacturer	1
		Solicitors	5
		Stationers	1
		Stay and Corset Manufacturers	1
		Stone Masons	1
		Surgeons	4
		Tailors	6
		Taverns	15
		Timber Merchants	
		Tobacco Pipe Maker	1
		Turner	1
		Veterinary Surgeons	2
		Watch and Clock Makers	4
		Wharfinger	1
		Wine and Sprit Merchant	2
		Woollen Draper	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>

**Table 4.11: The Distribution of Businesses in Maldon in 1838.<sup>111</sup>**

If businesses were immediate consumers of products from local agriculture, they have been classed as directly linked to the Extended Maldon Area. So, for example, for the purposes of this analysis it has been assumed that butchers and boot makers used produce that was from neighbouring farms. Clearly this is not a precise definition, because it is possible that they processed imported goods as well,

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

and not just those from Maldon. Nevertheless, this approximation provides a sense of the level of interconnectivity between the urban and rural parts of the area.<sup>112</sup>

This methodology classified forty-six of the 199 businesses (23%), as having had direct connectivity with the rural part of the community. Clearly, there were indirect relationships as well, but these are impossible to determine. Some would have resulted from the amount of money available to people working in agriculture to spend with businesses in the town. Indirect relationships would have increased the dependency of the urban population on the prosperity of the rural one.

The breadth of businesses was significant and demonstrated that the town was only partly reliant on the nearby rural economy. Maldon's maritime links were clearly shown by the presence of chandlers, a marine store, ship owner and wharfinger. Also, it is improbable that as many as fifteen taverns would have been viable without the passing trade from sailors and others connected with shipping.

The number of professional based services firms suggested that by 1838 there was the basis of a sophisticated modern economy in place. A bank, five solicitors, four surgeons and two veterinary surgeons suggests that the local economy generated sufficient need for these services and the funds to pay for them. Also, there were businesses that were selling goods and services that in an earlier time would have been considered non-essential. Examples were hairdressers, hatters, jewellers and milliner. It is unlikely that the average workers from the community would have been able to afford to shop at these places, so their presence suggests that there were quite a number of wealthier persons in the community who could.

The overall impression of Maldon is that its diverse economy would have been well placed to withstand agricultural downturns. This is not to say that some businesses that were both directly and indirectly linked with farming would not have been affected. It is important to understand if the agrarian recession of 1834/5 impacted poor relief distribution in the town in the way it did in Woodham Walter, where 'allowances to the able-bodied' increased. The next three sections, therefore, examine three enterprises that were located in the Extended Maldon Area or nearby, to determine if they were adversely affected, in order to gain insight into the state of the urban economy.

As discussed above, any adverse impact they experienced would probably have been proportionate to their level of connectivity with farming. Consequently, the

businesses studied were varied and included those which had direct (milling), limited (building), and indirect (blacksmith) connections to agriculture.

#### 4.7 *The Milling Business*

Clearly, the price of corn was the main determinant of the price of flour and therefore bread, although there could be a lag between changes in the wheat price and that of flour as observed earlier in this chapter. Whilst corn farming and marketing has been the subject of major research and historiography no 'major scholarly business histories of milling firms have been published'. Jennifer Tann noting that the sole-trader style of business, with the industry 'widely dispersed' in the countryside, probably accounted for the lack of records.<sup>113</sup>

She also observed that mills used a variety of natural power sources such as wind and water and that some had used steam engines with the advent of mechanisation. Yet, the industry was largely unchanged by the industrial revolution and very few large-scale companies had emerged. Collins explained this by pointing out that the advantages of the steam engine over 'the sail or water wheel' were not clear cut. The economics of using steam engines worked only when production took place on large scale, whereas the local business model had continued with small scale operations.<sup>114</sup> Some Essex mills took advantage of mechanical innovations from the industrial revolution, such as 'Beville' gears, but this was largely for existing mills with no change to the power source.<sup>115</sup> It is unclear whether firms did not consolidate because of a failure to develop technology which worked for large scale production of flour, or that rural society had been resistant to changing its way of working.

The Maldon agency book of the Essex and Suffolk Equitable Insurance Society seems to confirm Collins' summary. The following table gives details of insured mills.

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<sup>113</sup> J. Tann, 'The Agricultural Servicing and Processing Industries: Corn Milling', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part I: 1750-1850*, ed. by G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), p.397-8.

<sup>114</sup> E.J.T. Collins, 'The Agricultural Servicing and Processing Industries: Introduction', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part I: 1750-1850*, ed. by G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), p.396.

<sup>115</sup> J. Booker, *Essex and the Industrial Revolution* (Chelmsford: Essex Record Office, 1974), pp.79-93.

<b>Location</b>	<b>In the Extended Maldon Area</b>	<b>Mill Type</b>
Heybridge	Yes	Water
West Thurrock	No	Wind and steam
Mayland	No	Wind
Woodham Walter	Yes	Water
Langford	Yes	Water
Witham	No	Water
Felsted	No	Water
Hazeleigh	Yes	Wind
Stebbing	No	Water
Purleigh	Yes	Wind
Tolleshunt Major	No	Wind

**Table 4.12: Sample List of Flour Mills from a Maldon Insurance Agency.<sup>116</sup>**

This list is not intended to be comprehensive, but indicative only. Even so, it is possible to detect the pattern suggested by Collins – there were five mills listed in the Maldon area and none of these was powered by a steam engine. The only mill with a steam engine listed in the agency book was at West Thurrock and it had a windmill in addition. A search of the ERO also confirms Tann’s statement about the limited availability of business records for milling companies. Nevertheless, records for the financial years 1832 to 1835 exist for the milling business at Springfield gaol, which is only eight miles from the Extended Maldon Area.

The gaol used a treadmill, to drive the grinding stones which turned wheat into flour. It sold the flour that was produced and other by-products, and from the records available suggest it made a profit from doing so. An abstract of the accounts from January 1835 to November 1836 is available, so this covers three months of the 1835 financial year and may reflect the downturn in wheat/flour prices at that time. It is not known why these accounts covered a period of almost two years, but it may have been because of the reduced business activity. Also, another account survives for 1830, which whilst outside the period studied provides a point of comparison. Tables 4.13 and 4.14 summarise the abstracts.

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<sup>116</sup> ERO, D/F21/3 and D/F 21/9, Records of the Essex and Suffolk Equitable Insurance Society. Maldon Agency, Agency Instruction Books, 1819-22 and 1840-43 respectively.



Ledger Category	Sales Amounts	Sales Units	Unit Price	Costs Amounts	Cost Units
	Flour - £1,198 15s	418 sacks	55s		
	Offal - £79 4s				
	Grist - £13 18s				
	Sweepings £1				
	Wheat on hand - £18 14s 10d				
<b>Total Sales</b>	<b>£1,311 13s 10d</b>				
				Flour on hand - £49 10s	
				Wheat purchased - £1,081 7s 4d	319 quarters
				Millers wages - £54 12s	
				Disbursements - 13 12s 2d	
				<b>Profit - £112 12s 4d</b>	
<b>Total Costs/Profit</b>				<b>£1,311 13s 10d</b>	

**Table 4.13: Summary of the Accounts for the Springfield Gaol Milling Business for the Calendar Year 1830.<sup>117</sup>**

<sup>117</sup> ERO, Q/SBb 503/43, an abstract of the accounts for Springfield Gaol milling business, 1830.

Ledger Category	Sales Amounts	Sales Units	Unit Price		Cost Units
	Flour - £904 15s	524 sacks			
	Offal - £44 14s				
	Grist - £22 18s				
	Sweepings £1 2s				
	Flour on hand - £42	21 sacks			
	Wheat on hand - £74 10s				
<b>Total Sales</b>	<b>£1,089 19s</b>				
				Flour on hand - £12 12s	9 sacks
				Wheat on hand - £53 19s	
				Wheat purchased - £873 3s 8d	
				Millers wages - £53 6s	
				Disbursements - 16 7s 8d	
				<b>Profit - £80 0s 8d</b>	
<b>Total Costs/Profit</b>				<b>£1,089 19s</b>	

**Table 4.14: Summary of the Accounts for the Springfield Gaol Milling Business for the Period January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1835 to November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1836.<sup>118</sup>**

<sup>118</sup> ERO, Q/SBb 527/59, an abstract of the accounts for Springfield Gaol milling business, 1835-6.

The account summaries show how much the profitability of the business deteriorated between 1830 and 1836. The profit for a single year was over £112 in 1830, but only £80 for the near two-year period to the end of November 1836. The 524 sacks of flour sold in the two-year period was pro rata 65% lower than the 418 that had been sold in 1830, perhaps reflecting that as the profit derived from each sack fell, they produced less. In 1830 the average price per sack was 57s, whereas it had fallen to approximately 34s 6d in 1835/6, matching the fall in the wheat price 66s in 1830 to 40s at the end of 1835.<sup>119</sup>

There are some anomalies in the account abstracts which should be noted, although they do not alter the inference that the business' profitability had declined between the two periods. Firstly, the unit price for a sack of flour in the 1830 accounts was shown as 55s, whereas the average was in fact 57s. Secondly, the values shown in the 1835/6 accounts for both the debit and credit for 'flour on hand' had an average price per sack of 40s and 28s. This difference from the sold average, remains unexplained. Finally, it is unclear why values for 'flour on hand' and 'wheat on hand' were shown as credit and debit values in the 1835/6 accounts.

It is not possible to determine whether the Springfield gaol mill accounts were representative of corn milling operations in the Maldon area. The amount of wheat it used was small when compared to the quantities shipped to London from Maldon port, although this was probably true of milling firms generally, as previously discussed. For example, over 28,000 quarters were shipped from the port in 1835 compared to the 319 the mill processed in 1835/6. Nevertheless, it does fit the pattern of agricultural distress that started in 1834 and continued into 1835 and beyond. Therefore, it seems probable that the milling businesses in the Extended Maldon Area were similarly affected.

#### *4.8 The Sadd Building and Timber Business*

In contrast to millers, there was no direct link between a building and timber merchant's business, such as that operated by the Sadds, and agrarian prosperity. John Sadd senior and junior were both listed as carpenters in the 1826 electors poll book for Maldon.<sup>120</sup> Carpentry was probably how the Sadd business started, but by 1830 its accounts demonstrate that it had developed into a substantial concern. Also, both Sadd senior and junior became members of the local elite in the parish of St.

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<sup>119</sup> John, 'Statistical Appendix', p.975.

<sup>120</sup> ERO, D/B 3/10/5.

Peter and of its vestry from 1829 until 1835.<sup>121</sup> Both of them were also members of the borough council from 1829 until at least 1838.<sup>122</sup>

The copious firm's trade ledger lists business lines for: timber trade - labour, timber trade – materials, sawing, cement portorage, timber portorage, coffin making, timber wharf operation, in addition to multiple projects for individuals and businesses. These projects demonstrated how well-connected the business was with senior members of the local Whig elite such as Lord Charles Western, who had previously been the MP for Maldon, and John Payne, who acted as agent for Thomas Barrett-Lennard the Whig candidate for the Maldon seat in the 1826 and 1830 general election.<sup>123</sup> The Sadd business undertook a multi-year construction project for Western at his manor house (Felix Hall), built a dais and seating for the Barret-Lennard election committee and also extensive construction for John Payne.<sup>124</sup>

The ledger lists every item of expenditure and income from 1830 to 1841, but does not provide any summary information, except brought and carry forward totals for each ledger page. There are many tens of thousands of entries, so it is too large to be analysed in detail within the scope of this thesis. However, it appeared that John Sadd junior was doing well from the business. In 1832, the company started work on building a new house for him. Construction continued through the agricultural downturn in 1834/5, and by the end of 1835 approximately £105 had been invoiced by the company. Although Sadd junior did not clear all of the bills immediately, he made substantial payments during the period and only £13 was due at the end of 1835.<sup>125</sup> This suggests that if Sadd's business was affected by the poor profitability of local farming, it had not had a severe impact.

The business line of 'timber – labour' was likely to have been as sensitive as any of the others to agricultural recession. Farmers may have had little choice but to purchase materials or pay for wharfing fees, but as has been discussed already they were compelled to save on labour that was not tied to maintaining basic operations. Whilst it seems plausible that farms may have used carpentry services from time to time for new constructions or repair work, there is no way of knowing how much this contributed to Sadd's business.

For the calendar years 1831 to 1835, the following revenues were recorded for the 'timber-labour' line respectively: £138 5s 3d, £111 3s 7d, £116 14s, £116 7s 4d, and £104 14s 1d. Overall, there was a fall of around 24% from 1831 to 1835, but

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<sup>121</sup> ERO, D/P 201, Minutes of the Vestry for St. Peter's Maldon, 1818-35.

<sup>122</sup> ERO, D/B 3/5/3,4, Maldon Council Minute Books, 1829-38.

<sup>123</sup> BNA, 'Maldon Independent Club', *Essex Herald*, Chelmsford, 20<sup>th</sup> July 1830.

<sup>124</sup> ERO, D/F 4/3, Sadd Trade Ledger, 1830-41.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

the revenue was fairly stable in the intervening years. It is possible that the fall in revenue in 1835 was due to agricultural spending constraint, but the difference was not large enough to be conclusive and it may have been because of normal business volatility. Even if the 1835 revenue reduction was caused by reduced expenditure by farmers, the figures show that the business was not highly dependent on rural economic circumstances.

#### ***4.9 The Wingrave Family's Blacksmith and Wheelwright Business***

Whilst it is possible that Sadd didn't derive much of its business from farmers, it is probable that a wheelwright/blacksmith would have been more dependent upon such a trade. Although there are no business accounts for this trade available for the Extended Maldon Area, they exist for the Wingrave family business at Brook Street, Brentwood, Essex. Brentwood is a small town in mid-Essex, which had a population of 1,642 in 1831 where only sixty-four of 352 families were employed in agriculture.<sup>126</sup> Although, like Maldon, it was surrounded by rural parishes, Brentwood was less than half the size and the range of businesses was slightly less diverse, as shown in Table 4.15.

Forty-four of the 152 businesses (29%), had a direct connection with agriculture which was a slightly higher proportion than in Maldon. Overall, the towns had similar commercial profiles, although Brentwood did not have Maldon's coastal trade and it had less manufacturing. Wingrave's, therefore, appears to be a reasonable proxy for a Maldon based business.

The business account book listed every transaction that took place for the period 1823 to 1838.<sup>127</sup> These records showed that the best customers were farmers in the adjacent parishes of Shenfield and South-Weald. In 1831 these parishes had populations of 665 and 1,183 respectively, both with over 60% of families employed in agriculture.<sup>128</sup>

Between 1831 and 1835 six farmers accounted for over 80% of Wingrave's revenue and their purchases were captured for the five-year period. These were: Joseph Lescher, Richard Walmsley, Henry Moss, Edward Kemp, Charles Siggs and Richard Gardner. All were farmers in South-Weald, except for Walmsley, who farmed in Shenfield.<sup>129</sup> Lescher, Walmsley and Kemp were also considered members of the

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<sup>126</sup> ProQuest, 1833 (149).

<sup>127</sup> ERO, D/DU 119/4, Account Book of Blacksmith's and Wheelwright's Business, 1823-1838.

<sup>128</sup> ProQuest, 1833 (149).

<sup>129</sup> ERO, D/CT 316B, Shenfield Tithe Map, 1837; ERO, D/CT 388/1-2A, B, South-Weald Tithe Map, 1838-9.

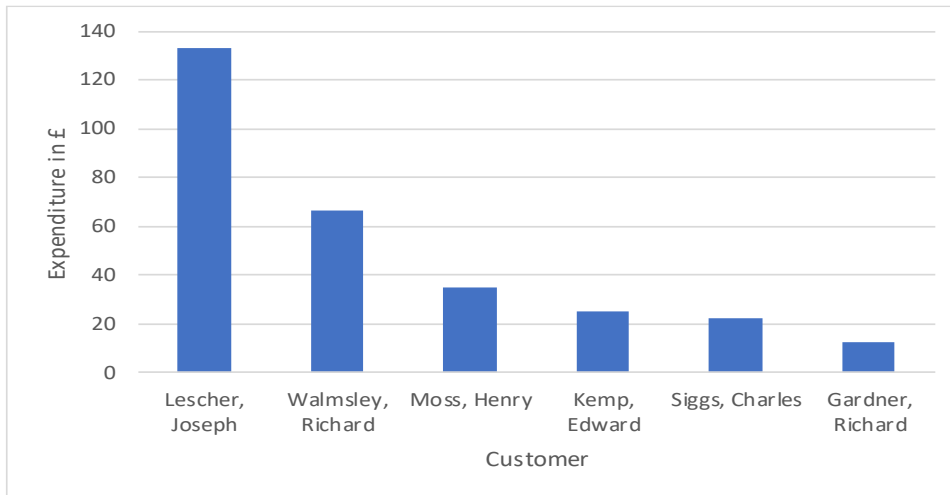
gentry, so it seems probable that Wingrave's business represented a cross-section of the local elite.<sup>130</sup> Their expenditure for the period is shown in Chart 4.22.

<b>Businesses Linked to Agriculture</b>	<b>Number of Entries</b>	<b>Businesses Largely Independent of Agriculture</b>	<b>Number of Entries</b>
Bootmakers	14	Academies and Schools	10
Brewers and Maltsters	1	Attorneys	4
Butchers	10	Bakers	14
Corn Dealer	2	Bankers	2
Currier	1	Booksellers	3
Glovers	2	Carpenters	10
Horse Dealers	2	Chemists	2
Millers	3	Coach Builder	1
Nursery and Seedsmen	2	Confectioners	5
Saddlers	3	Fire and Office Agents	6
Smiths	4	Grocers	11
		Inns	20
		Linen and Woollen Drapers	5
		Milliners	3
		Painters, Plumbers, Glaziers N	2
		Shopkeepers	3
		Surgeons	2
		Tailors	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>

**Table 4.15: The Distribution of Businesses in Brentwood in 1839.**<sup>131</sup>

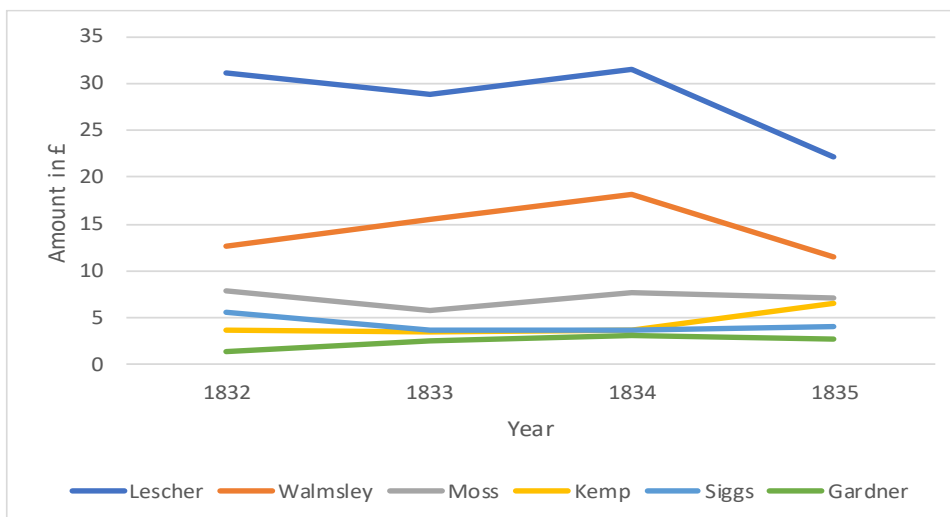
<sup>130</sup> *Pigot's Dir.*, pp.12-13.

<sup>131</sup> J. Pigot, *Pigot and Co.'s National and Commercial Directory and Topography of the Counties of Essex, Herts. And Middlesex* (London: J. Pigot and Co., 1839), pp.12-13.



**Chart 4.22: Total Expenditure for the Six Highest Spending Customers for Wingrave’s Blacksmith and Wheelwright Business for the Period 1831 to 1835.<sup>132</sup>**

Clearly, the highest spending customer was Lescher who spent about double that of the next highest, Walmsley. The first time that book entries appeared for both of these men was in May 1831, so this year has been discarded from the individuals’ expenditure series depicted as follows.

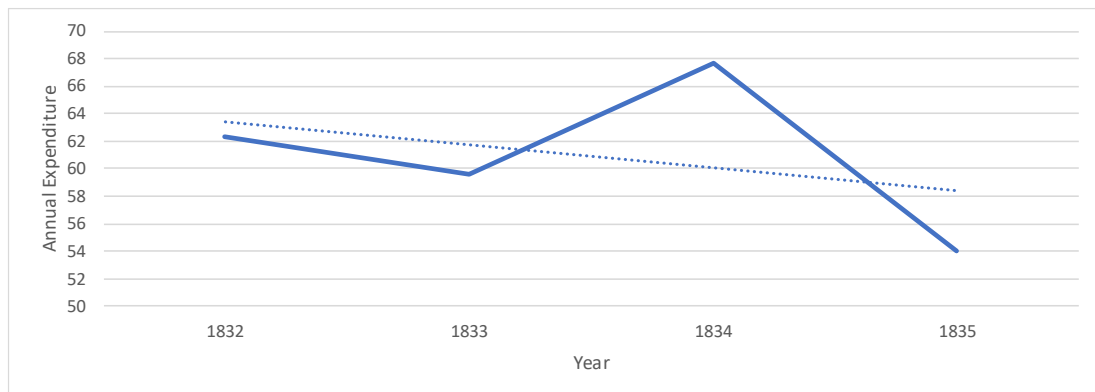


**Chart 4.23: Expenditure by Year and Customer for the Six Highest Spending Customers for Wingrave’s Blacksmith and Wheelwright Business for the Period 1832 to 1835.<sup>133</sup>**

<sup>132</sup> ERO, D/DU 119/4.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

Lescher and Walmsley's expenditure was reduced by approximately 30% and 37% respectively between 1834 and 1835. Both Moss and Garner also reduced their spending, but less significantly, by 5% and 12%. Conversely, Kemp spent almost 81% more and Siggs spending increased slightly at 8% for the same period, albeit from much lower bases. The overall pattern is shown by the following line-graph.



**Chart 4.24: Total Expenditure by Year for the Six Highest Spending Customers for Wingrave's Blacksmith and Wheelwright Business for the Period 1832 to 1835.<sup>134</sup>**

There was a fall of around 20% in overall expenditure between 1834 and 1835 with 1835 having the lowest overall figure between 1832 and 1835. Whilst this may possibly reflect the straitened economic circumstances caused by the falling price of wheat, 1835 must also be considered relative to other years as well. For example, whilst spending in 1835 was £5 10s lower than it had been in 1833, the difference is only around 10%. Nevertheless, there were some costs that were not optional and shoeing of horses and repairing wheels could be considered amongst these. Consequently, the fluctuation in Wingrave's revenue from leading local farmers may have been due to natural volatility rather than the change in economic circumstances.

#### *4.10 The Overall State of the Local Economy in the 1830s*

The Extended Maldon Area had experienced a decline in farming profitability since the end of the Napoleonic wars and, therefore, may be regarded as a

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.



microcosm of Essex and south-east England in general. Also, it has been demonstrated that in this arable farming area, the price of wheat was the critical economic factor affecting prosperity. The Bourne farm microstudy and the Maldon exports macro level analysis show that the price fall to 41s a quarter in 1835 was the nadir at the end of twenty years of decline. Reducing revenues were accompanied by a high cost base with significant components being rents, tithes and labour costs. With these economic challenges it seems likely that farmers would have sought not only the abatement of tithes and rents, but also to use the system of poor relief to maintain labour costs at the minimum possible level. The downturn was probably at least a contributory factor to the Swing riots that occurred in 1830/1, because the poor economic circumstances created an environment for political activism to thrive. This was the backdrop which led to the landed elite becoming concerned about a diminution of their wealth, influence and social unrest.<sup>135</sup> At the same time, it seems probable that the demand for outdoor relief from the able-bodied in rural parishes would have increased at the same time as poor relief costs were being blamed for reductions in farm profits.

The urban economy was not generally affected in the same way, except, unsurprisingly, the mill accounts having shown a close correlation with the agricultural downturn. For Sadd's building business, there was no evidence it was adversely affected by the economic decline in farming, and equally this was not manifest for Wingrave's wheelwright one. This conclusion aligns with Peter Clark's findings that 'the long eighteenth century' saw an increase in professional, services industries and other commercial activity in small towns that largely insulated them from decline in the local hinterland.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Amos, 'Social Discontent and Agrarian Disturbances in Essex', p.21.

<sup>136</sup> P. Clark, 'Small towns 1700-1840', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Volume II: 1540-1850*, ed. P. Clark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 [2008]), pp.733-73.

## 5 Poor Relief in Woodham Walter, 1830-1835

It has been established from analysis of the central sources in Chapter 2 that both the gross level of poor law expenditure and the expenditure per head of population for the parishes in the Extended Maldon area fell from around 1820 up until, and after, the 1834 Act. Also, that if the incomplete data from the surveys of 1825 and 1834 is considered representative of the agricultural parishes in that area, then much of this expenditure was based upon the payment of allowances.<sup>1</sup> When these trends are combined with that of gradual population growth, it is possible to broadly support the theories of the revisionist historians that the payment of 'allowances to the able-bodied' neither resulted in an overall increase in poor law expenditure nor an increase in the level of population.

As argued in Chapter 2, the data from these central sources were often sparse and/or high-level, meaning that judgements based upon them are open to question. To fully understand the pattern of poor relief it is necessary to analyse local data because this allows the categories of relief to be analysed. Detailed local data is also needed to comprehend the social and economic characteristics of the system/s of poor relief that existed in both the agricultural and urban parishes of the Extended Maldon Area. Such an analysis must include factors such as the classes of the relief that were provided; how much each of the relief expenditure these classes consumed; how often relief was claimed and for how long; and how levels of relief fluctuated throughout the year. Woodham Walter was chosen as the rural parish from the Extended Maldon Area for detailed analysis because detailed overseers' accounts exist from September 1830 until September 1835.<sup>2</sup> These provide significant insight into the categories of poor relief utilised and also cover a period when there was an agricultural recession as discussed in Chapter 4.

Whilst this approach captured data from the overseers' accounts at the most detailed level available, no attempt has been made to use this information to understand the extent to which there was an 'economy of makeshifts' developed by the poor of Woodham Walter, or those in St. Peter, which are analysed in Chapter 6. As noted briefly in Chapter 1, analysis of 'the economy of makeshifts' enhances historical understanding by developing a deeper understanding of the plights of individuals and families, alongside the strategies they used to survive and how these

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<sup>1</sup> ProQuest, 1825 (299), Abstract Return; 1834 (44), Answers to Rural Queries.

<sup>2</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3, Woodham Walter Overseers' Accounts 1830-35.

changed over time. This type of research greatly enhances social understanding, but a full analysis of the 'economy of makeshifts' is outside of the scope of this study, which is concerned primarily with using granular local data to identify patterns and for comparison to economic data for correlation analysis.

Woodham Walter lies within Dengie Hundred and was predominantly agricultural, as shown by the 1831 Census which classified eighty-one families out of 102 as chiefly employed in agriculture.<sup>3</sup> Hence, it conformed closely to the type of rural parish that was the primary focus of the 1834 Report, with the single parish of St. Michael which had a rectory valued at £12 13s 1½ d and providing a net income of £437 per annum.<sup>4</sup> The accounts are organised by financial year, which ran from the day after Lady's Day (25<sup>th</sup> March) *until the same day the following calendar year.*<sup>5</sup> *They are further sub-divided by half year*, the first half being from the day after Lady's Day until Michaelmas (29<sup>th</sup> September), the second being from then until Lady's Day (financial years will now be referred to as years, unless otherwise specified).<sup>6</sup> The accounts list every receipt and disbursement and each entry provides the name of the payer or recipient and sometimes supplementary information such as the purpose of a payment.

For each half year the overseers' accounts provide a summary of monies received and paid and the calculated surplus or deficit, which is carried over to the next period. Along with this summary they also list the amounts paid to persons under the heading of 'weekly collection'. The total of the 'weekly collection' is also a line item in the disbursement accounts, for example the total 'weekly collection' for the period ended Michaelmas 1831 was £43 13s 6d.<sup>7</sup> Whilst no entries of receipts were recorded for 'weekly collections', the fact the recipients were listed separately at the end of an accounting period indicates that the payments that were planned and consistent.

The term 'weekly collection' derived from the practice of organising alms giving for the poor, which started in the mid-sixteenth century. The collection was intended to finance relief for the 'impotent' and 'control all charitable giving through a "common box" in every parish', although by the nineteenth-century it was usually

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<sup>3</sup> ProQuest 1833 (149), Abstract of the answers and returns made pursuant to an act, passed in the eleventh year of the reign of His Majesty King George IV, intituled, "an act for taking an account of the population of Great Britain, and of the increase or diminution thereof." Enumeration abstract. Vol. I. M. DCCC.XXXI.

<sup>4</sup> S. Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of England, Volume IV* (London: S. Lewis & Co., 1844), pp.641-2.

<sup>5</sup> W. C. Howe, F.J Ogden, *The Overseers' Handbook: Calendar Relating to Overseers' Duties* (London: Butterworth and Co., 1925 [date of first edition unknown]), p. 468.

<sup>6</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

collected as a part of the regular poor tax.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the continued practice of distinguishing the 'weekly collection' from poor relief payments demonstrates the vestry continued to use this nomenclature for payments to the impotent in the same way as when the money had been collected separately. As this distinction was clearly of importance to its members, the entries for each recipient from the end of period summary table were entered into the database and classified as having been paid from the 'weekly collection' to enable analysis by this classification.<sup>9</sup>

Clearly, the granularity of the accounts presents the opportunity of providing a clear insight into relief provision, but this also presents a challenge in terms of how to classify these in a way they can be subjected to quantitative analysis. In the methodology adopted, qualitative criteria were applied to each account item in order to assign an analysis category before it was entered into an Excel Spreadsheet. The following table lists the lowest level analysis categories, a super-category for each and also explains the criteria used for the assignment of account items.

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<sup>8</sup> P. Slack, *The English Poor Law: 1531-1782* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995 [1900]), p. 9. Slack quoted G.R. Elton, 'An Early Tudor Poor Law', *Economic History Review*, 6, 1 (1953), pp.55-67.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

Category	Super- Group	Assignment Criteria
Allowance to the Able-bodied	Poor Relief out	Man's name with no prefix stating 'Old', or other such description
Child pension	Poor Relief out	Name prefixed by 'boy', 'girl', children or similar
Funeral cost	Poor relief out	Possible to infer from the description, e.g. burial, coffin etc.
Illness mental	Poor relief out	Specifically described
Illness physical	Poor relief out	Some of these are specific, but others have been inferred from the name of the payee. For example, 'Mr. Thorpe' was a doctor from Maldon town <sup>10</sup>
Loan	Poor relief out	Specifically described
Old Age Pensions	Poor relief out	Name prefixed by 'Old'
Paid benefit	Poor relief out	The description explains the benefit awarded, often naming the recipient but sometimes being for the whole community
Pension Other	Poor relief out	Woman's name, or man's name listed under 'Weekly Collection'
Widows Pensions	Poor relief out	Name prefixed by 'Widow'
Poorhouse cost	Poor relief in	Specifically described
Constable costs	Other	Specifically described
County rate	Other	Specifically described
Lost rates	Other	Specifically described
Other	Other	Any item which was not attributable to the other categories
Overseer salary	Relief administration	Specifically described
Settlement cost	Relief administration	Several types of item where it may be inferred that they related to settlement, e.g. letters, settlement expenses

**Table 5.1: Poor Relief Analysis Categories and Assignment Criteria.<sup>11</sup>**

<sup>10</sup> ERO, D/P 201/8/1, Parish Records, Minutes of The Select Vestry for St. Peter's Maldon, 1818-1833; The occupations were established from: TNA, HO 107/345, 1841 Census; ERO, D/B 3/10/5, Printed Poll Book for the Maldon Election of 1826; W. Robson, *Robson's Directory of the Home Counties* (London: Richard Studley, 1838), pp.75-8.

<sup>11</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3. Cost items such as the 'County Rate' are anomalous and reflect the administrative processes followed by Overseers rather than line items which are genuine costs for the relief of the poor. The same is true of 'Constable Costs', 'Lost Rates' and most, if

## 5.1 Breakdown of Poor Relief Costs, Woodham Walter, 1832-35

The following table shows the breakdown of poor relief costs for Woodham Walter for the four complete years for which data exists, which are March 1832 to March 1835 using the classification approach described above. The quantitative relief data presented in this chapter and Chapter 6 are for a fairly short period of four years, so the figures have not been adjusted for the possible effect of inflation because it was decided it was most important to ensure the series could be directly reconciled with the overseers' accounts. However, for longer time series of data some consideration should be given to presenting an amended view that shows the impact of inflation to allow for accurate interpretation of changes in relief over time.

Category	March 1832	March 1833	March 1834	March 1835	Totals
Allowance to Able Bodied	88.50	92.22	99.58	131.30	<b>411.59</b>
County Rate	76.96	76.99	59.33	56.21	<b>269.49</b>
Pension Other	77.03	76.85	44.48	60.06	<b>258.41</b>
Lost Rates	55.88	37.75	63.13	61.43	<b>218.18</b>
Paid Benefit	57.91	50.46	50.01	35.55	<b>193.92</b>
Child Pension	16.63	26.03	39.16	44.89	<b>126.70</b>
Illness Physical	25.10	24.00	28.60	20.45	<b>98.15</b>
Widow Pension	18.95	19.73	32.15	24.50	<b>95.33</b>
Other	17.87	11.61	15.36	36.41	<b>81.25</b>
Overseer Salary	10.00	10.58	10.00	10.00	<b>40.58</b>
Old Age Pension	13.46	14.73	4.35	4.15	<b>36.69</b>
Funeral Cost	7.28	9.07	8.18	4.85	<b>29.38</b>
Constable Costs	6.93	6.01	6.08	6.40	<b>25.41</b>
Poor House Cost	3.27	7.27	2.60	0.52	<b>13.65</b>
Settlement Cost	0.77	0.15	4.10	2.05	<b>7.07</b>
Loan	0.63	0.38	2.10		<b>3.10</b>
Illness Mental			0.50	0.25	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>477.14</b>	<b>463.81</b>	<b>469.68</b>	<b>499.01</b>	<b>1,909.63</b>

**Table 5.2: Woodham Walter, Poor Relief by Category in £ for the Years Ending 1832-1835.<sup>12</sup>**

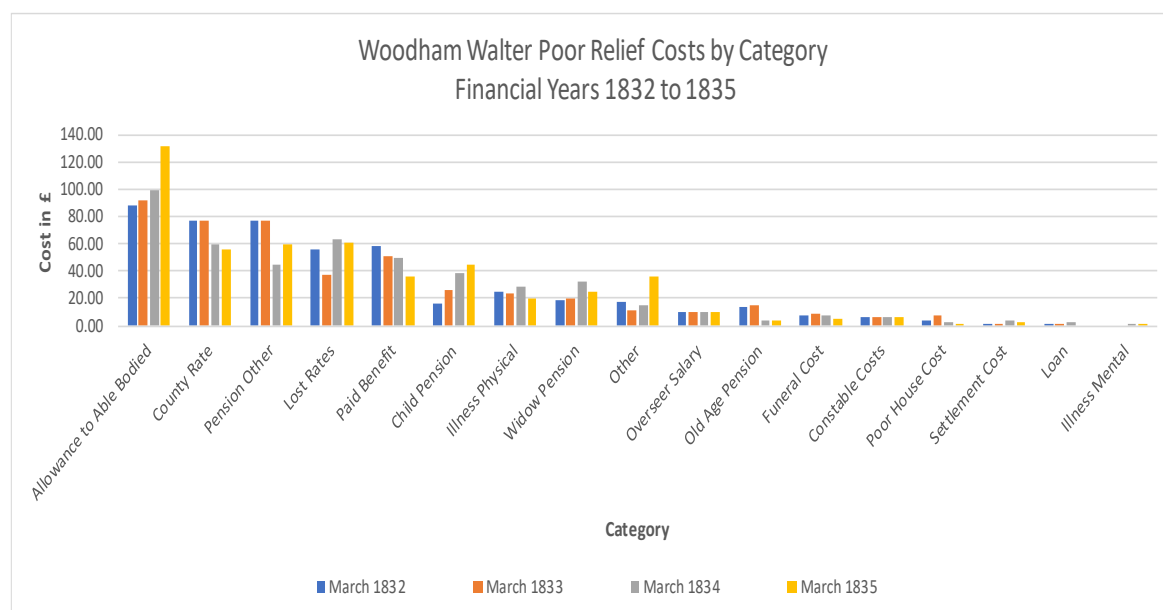
This table was created by the use of Pivot Analysis applied to approximately four thousand entries entered from the Overseers' Accounts for disbursements and

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not all 'Other' costs. These line items have therefore, been allocated to a super category of 'Other'.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

weekly collection entries. The trends for the period included are more easily seen in the following bar chart which was created from the above table.

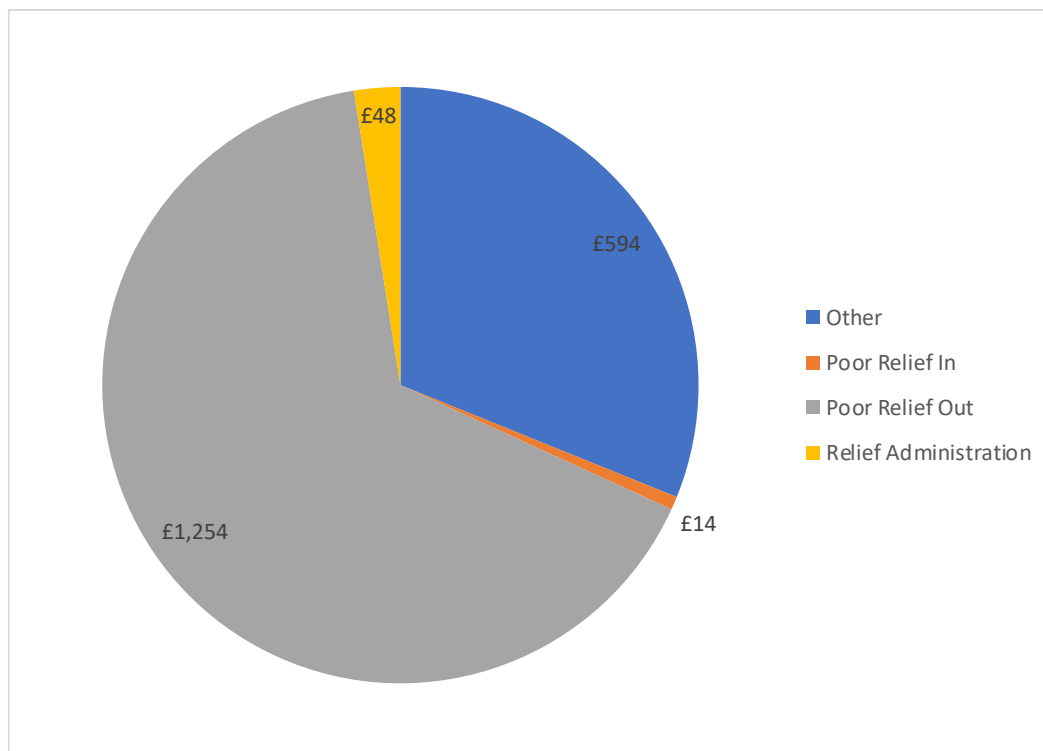


**Chart 5.1: Woodham Walter, Poor Relief by Category for the Years 1832-1835.**

Chart 5.1 sorts the categories in order, highest to lowest, so the costliest category was for ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ and the least costly was for ‘mental illness’. The use of this method means that the cost for some categories may be higher than others in specific years, even though the overall ranking of the other category is higher. For example, ‘pension other’ had a higher cost in 1835 than ‘County Rate’, but ‘County Rate’ had a higher total cost for the four years. The level of expenditure for the super category of ‘Other’ was substantial as reflected in the Chart 5.2.

The costliest form of poor relief was outdoor relief at £1,254, followed by other expenses (see table 5.1 for the definitions). David Eastwood suggested some parishes developed a ‘fiscal sovereignty of ratepayers’ as a means of efficiently managing the financial resources of the parish through the office of overseer and the accounts he produced.<sup>13</sup> This may explain why the Woodham Walter vestry chose to raise the funds to pay for items such as the county rate through the poor rates. However, it is evident from the poor relief returns that were made to Parliament that it did not regard all the monies expended from the poor rates as poor relief.

<sup>13</sup> D. Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government 1780-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Books, 1994 [2003]), pp.24-42.



**Chart 5.2: Woodham Walter, Poor Relief by Super Category for the Years' 1832-1835.<sup>14</sup>**

The following table shows the poor relief costs for Woodham Walter from the central returns compared to those from the overseers' accounts.

	From Central Return	Full Amount from Accounts	Amount from Accounts less the 'Other' Super Category
<b>1832</b>	387	477	320
<b>1833</b>	417	464	331
<b>1834</b>	403	470	326
<b>1835</b>	No Data	499	339

**Table 5.3: Woodham Walter, Poor Relief in £ from Central Returns Compared to Local Data.<sup>15</sup>**

<sup>14</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

<sup>15</sup> The poor relief expenditure figures from 1830 to 1834, have been taken from parliamentary returns: ProQuest, 1830-31 (83), Poor Rate Returns, 1835 (444). No data is available from parliamentary returns for the year 1835, probably because following the 1834 Act the new system for poor relief was supposed to be operational even though this clearly was not the case for some parishes.



Clearly the amounts shown in Table 5.3 from local data do not agree with the figures that the officials from Woodham Walter provided to Parliament. This is probably because they recognised that some of the disbursements in the overseers' accounts could not accurately be classed as poor relief costs. The persons who prepared the parliamentary returns did not simply exclude all of the disbursements that were not obviously related to poor relief. As Table 5.3 shows that the figures provided for the central returns were always lower than the full amount from the accounts, but higher than the calculated figure when the value for the 'Other' super category is subtracted from the overseers' account totals. This demonstrates that the data provided in the returns to Parliament had been subjected to qualitative selection before completion by the returning officers. There is no way of knowing what criteria they applied to their data selection, but it illustrates the caution that must be exercised when analysing the central data because, at least in the case of Woodham Walter, it seems to have been adjusted before having been entered on the return.

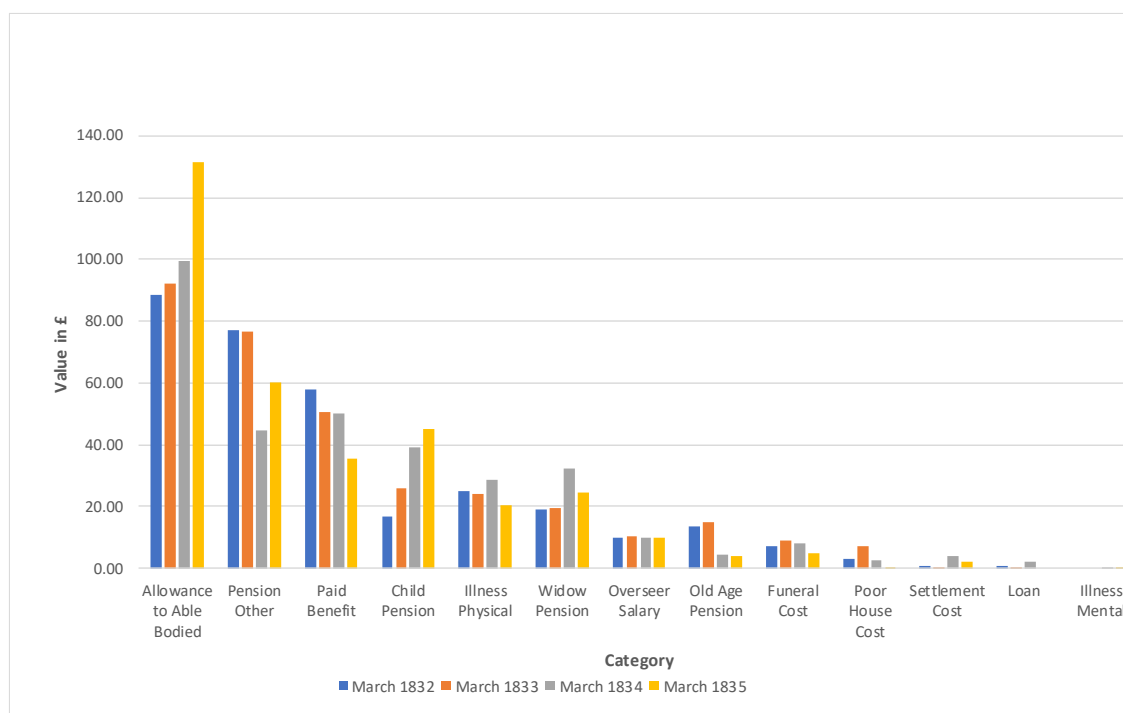
Items for the super category of 'Other' were excluded before carrying out further analysis of the Woodham Walter overseers' accounts, because the significant ones, such as the county rate, did not relate to relief of the poor and it is not possible to determine whether others were for relief or not. The Table 5.4 shows the breakdown of poor relief costs by category following removal of items with a super category of 'Other'.

	Financial Year Ending				Totals	% of Total
	March 1832	March 1833	March 1834	March 1835		
Allowance to Able Bodied	88.50	92.22	99.53	131.30	411.54	31.29
Pension Other	77.03	76.85	44.48	60.06	258.41	19.65
Paid Benefit	57.91	50.46	50.01	35.55	193.92	14.74
Child Pension	16.63	26.03	39.16	44.89	126.70	9.63
Illness Physical	25.10	24.00	28.60	20.45	98.15	7.46
Widow Pension	18.95	19.73	32.15	24.50	95.33	7.25
Overseer Salary	10.00	10.58	10.00	10.00	40.58	3.08
Old Age Pension	13.46	14.73	4.35	4.15	36.69	2.79
Funeral Cost	7.28	9.07	8.18	4.85	29.38	2.23
Poor House Cost	3.27	7.27	2.60	0.52	13.65	1.04
Settlement Cost	0.77	0.15	4.10	2.05	7.07	0.54
Loan	0.63	0.38	2.10		3.10	0.24
Illness Mental			0.50	0.25	0.75	0.06
<b>Totals</b>	<b>319.51</b>	<b>331.45</b>	<b>325.74</b>	<b>338.56</b>	<b>1,315.26</b>	

**Table 5.4: Woodham Walter, Poor Relief by Category Excluding Non-Poor Relief for Years 1832-1835.<sup>16</sup>**

<sup>16</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

The trends may be seen more easily in the following bar chart.



**Chart 5.3: Woodham Walter, Poor Relief by Category Excluding Non-Poor Relief for Years 1832-1835.**

This analysis provides an insight into the poor relief trends for these four years, which was not possible to gain from the central figures. Whilst the overall level of poor relief was fairly stable for the four years, the category of relief which most concerned the authors of the 1834 report, of ‘allowances to the able-bodied’, rose in each year for which data is available. The following table shows this in summary.

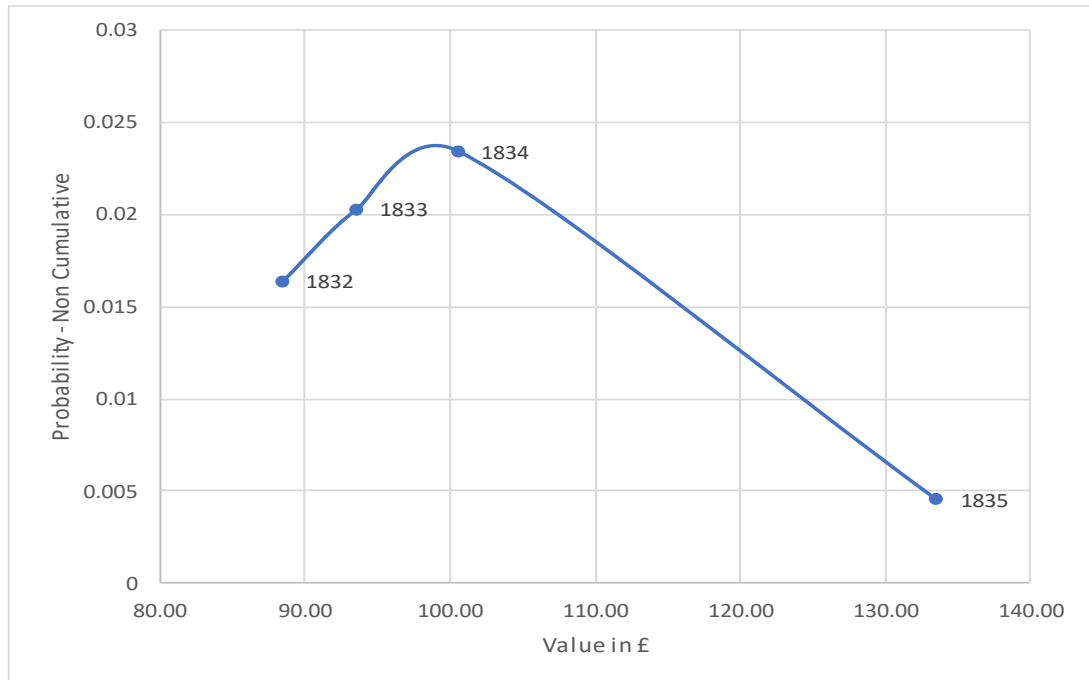
	March 1832	March 1833	March 1834	March 1835
<b>Allowance to Able Bodied</b>	88.50	92.22	99.53	131.30
<b>Total Poor Relief for Year</b>	319.51	331.45	325.74	338.56
<b>Percentage of Total</b>	27.70	27.82	30.55	38.78

**Table 5.5: Woodham Walter, Allowances to the Able-bodied for 1832-1835.<sup>17</sup>**

The table shows that as well as addition to the annual rises of the allowances to the able-bodied, there was sharp rise between 1834 and 1835. To show how

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

statistically significant this rise was the (non-cumulative) probability distribution was calculated using the Excel NORM.DIST function.



**Chart 5.4: Woodham Walter, Allowances to the Able-bodied for the Years 1832-1835, Non- Cumulative Normal Distribution.**

The distribution shows the non-cumulative probability that the amount of allowance payment would occur, calculated by using the mean and the standard deviation. This illustrates clearly how low the probability was of the level of allowance for the able-bodied in 1835 occurring. The sample size is only four years but there is a clear right skew to the distribution due to the level of increase from £100.53 in 1834 to £133.54 in 1835. The allowance was just over 27% of the total poor relief expenditure in 1832 but had jumped to over 39% by 1835. Whilst total poor relief costs had increased during the same period, the increase was only by just over 3.5%. Also, the overall increase in total costs did not appear to be a continuous trend because after rising in 1833 they had fallen in 1834, before rising again in 1835. In contrast, it is clear that the trend in the payment of ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ was one of continuous increase from 1832 with a significant jump in 1835. The different trends for overall relief and relief to the able-bodied illustrate one of the concerns that was expressed in Chapter 2, that the numbers available from central returns are too summarised for wholly accurate and informative analysis.

Despite the significant increase in ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ between 1832 and 1835 the overall level of poor relief remained comparatively constant as observed above. Consequently, some other relief payments must have been lowered in order to retain the observed stability in expenditure. Table 5.4 shows that the values of the categories ‘paid benefit’ and ‘illness physical’ fell although other categories, such as ‘child pension’, rose. It is important to understand how these competing calls upon the poor relief budget of Woodham Walter were dealt with by the vestry officials in order to form an opinion of how they were influenced by social, economic and cultural factors. To achieve this, the major categories of poor relief will be examined in more detail starting with the ‘allowances to the able-bodied’.

## 5.2 Woodham Walter ‘Allowances to the Able-Bodied’

There were 105 people who received ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ between 1832 and 1835 with total payments ranging from over £29 to just a few pence. Analysis shows that although there was a rise in the cost of this type of relief the number of recipients was fairly constant, which is confirmed by the following table.

	March 1832	March 1833	March 1834	March 1835
Recipients	53	53	54	55
Amount per Person	1.67	1.74	1.84	2.39

**Table 5.6: Woodham Walter, Allowances Paid to the Able-Bodied per Recipient.<sup>18</sup>**

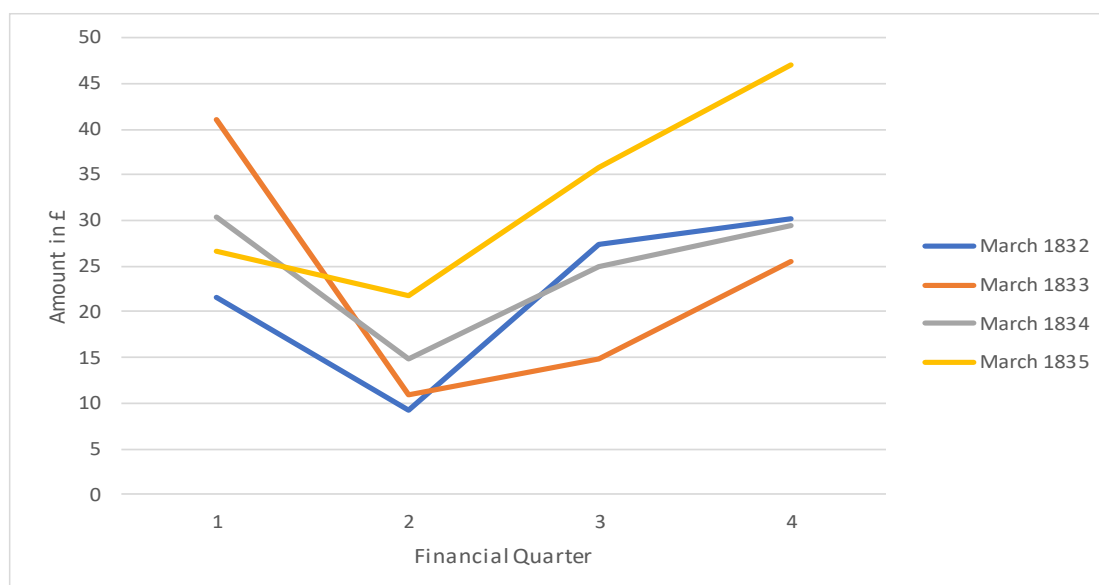
The average amount of relief paid per person rose from 1832 with a sharp rise from 1834 to 1835. This would suggest that people were claiming more often during the year or they were receiving higher payments because of lower levels of wages, or a combination of both these factors. To further understand the relief profile these figures have been further analysed by each quarter for the years 1832 to 1835.

The first quarter of each financial year ran from April to June, the second July to September, the third October to December and the fourth January to March. Consequently, it would be expected that both the lowest number of recipients of

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<sup>18</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3. The rows showing the calculated indices for the number of recipients and the amount per person have used the financial year ending March 1832 as the base year, with a value of 100.

relief and the lowest cost would be for the second quarter coincident with the harvest. The following line graph shows that this expectation is correct for the cost of 'allowances to the able-bodied'.



**Chart 5.5: Woodham Walter, Allowances Paid to the Able-Bodied by Financial Quarter for 1832 to 1835.<sup>19</sup>**

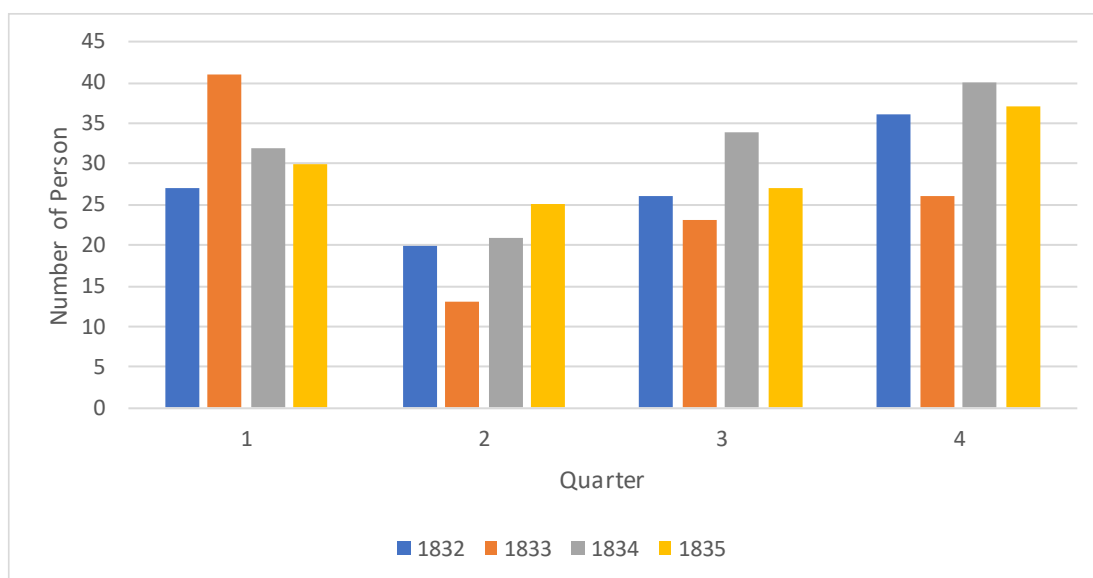
Even though the allowances were always at their lowest in the second quarter the extent to which they fell from the first quarter and then rose in the third was inconsistent, although the broad pattern of relief was clear. For example, in the financial year ending in 1833 the cost of allowances fell by approximately £30 from just over £40 to just over £10. Whereas, in the 1835 financial year the cost of the allowances had been only just above £25 and fell only slightly to over £20. This variation would suggest that during the first quarter of the financial year ended March 1833 (i.e. April to June 1832) there was insufficient work for the agricultural labourers, while the low level of allowances during the second quarter might suggest that there was a bumper harvest during the summer. The converse suggestion is true for the financial year 1835. The production index for wheat barley and oats, measured in thousands of quarters, provided by John showed figures of 11,900 and 13,605 respectively for these years.<sup>20</sup> If these production figures were consistent with those for the farms in Woodham Walter then they do not support the assumptions that the harvest was much better in 1832 than it was in 1834. Clearly, it is possible

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> A.H. John, 'Statistical Appendix', p. 1055.

that the agricultural production in Woodham Walter was out of line with the national figures quoted by John and consequently the national production index was an invalid proxy. Alternatively, it may have been the case that there was a more complex relationship between agricultural production and the payments of allowances to able-bodied workers that cannot be understood from production indexes on their own. It is therefore important to explore the patterns of allowance payments in even greater depth.

The quarterly allowance costs were therefore analysed further by breaking down the number of recipients of relief and the amount paid per person by financial quarter. The following bar chart shows the number of recipients of allowances by financial quarter.



**Chart 5.6: Woodham Walter, Number of Recipients of Allowances Paid to the Able-Bodied by Financial Quarter for 1832 to 1835.<sup>21</sup>**

This chart is broadly consistent with the previous line graph. Forty-one persons received allowances in the first quarter of the 1833 financial year and thirty in the 1835 financial year. This compared with thirteen and twenty-five respectively for the second quarters of these years. So, although there was a marked difference between the first and second quarters it is not as pronounced when considering the number of recipients as it was for the cost of relief. As with Chart 5.7, the second quarter shows the lowest level of demand for allowances with all the other three

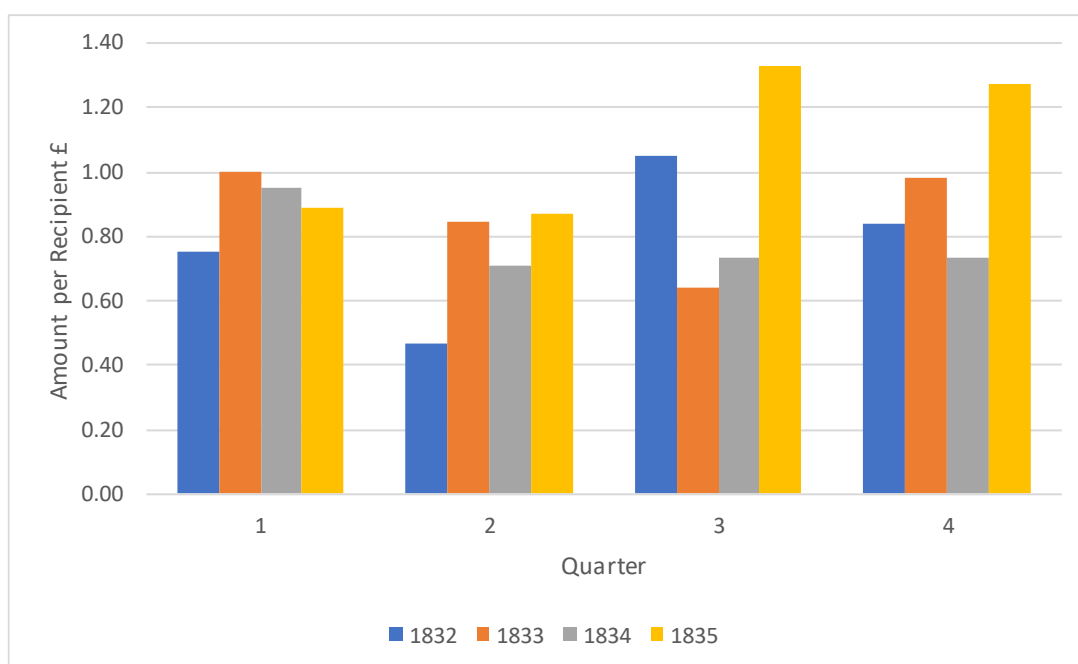
<sup>21</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

quarters having an average of over twenty claimants. The following table provides these numbers and the average number of claimants per quarter.

	Relief Recipients per Quarter			
	Quarter			
	1	2	3	4
<b>1832</b>	27	20	26	36
<b>1833</b>	41	13	23	26
<b>1834</b>	32	21	34	40
<b>1835</b>	30	25	27	37
<b>Average</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>35</b>

**Table 5.7: Woodham Walter, Number of Recipients Per Quarter.<sup>22</sup>**

The two quarters which saw, on average, the greatest number of claimants were the first and the fourth. To determine whether this pattern was consistent with the economics of the allowances paid, the amount paid per person has been plotted in the following bar chart.



**Chart 5.7: Woodham Walter, Amount Paid per Recipient by Financial Quarter for 1832 to 1835.<sup>23</sup>**

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

The following table provides the figures for the calculated amount per person and the average of these by quarter.

	Quarter			
	1	2	3	4
<b>1832</b>	0.75	0.47	1.05	0.84
<b>1833</b>	1.00	0.84	0.64	0.98
<b>1834</b>	0.95	0.71	0.73	0.73
<b>1835</b>	0.89	0.87	1.33	1.27
<b>Average</b>	0.90	0.72	0.94	0.96

**Table 5.8: Woodham Walter, 'Allowances to the Able-Bodied' in £ per Recipient.<sup>24</sup>**

When the 'allowances to the able-bodied' are considered in terms of the allowance paid per person it is the third and fourth quarters which had the highest-level average amounts. This would seem logical as it is these quarters which span the coldest winter months, but even so the first quarter had an average amount per person of £0.90 which is only £0.04 behind that of the third. As with the total amount paid per quarter and the number of recipients the lowest figures are for the second quarter. The average amount paid per person is £0.72, although it should be noted that this average has been reduced significantly by the low amount of £0.47 per person for 1832. The most notable amounts within the analysis are those for the third and fourth quarters of the financial year 1835. These amounts of £1.33 and £1.27 were, respectively, 1.24 and 1.35 standard deviations away from the means for quarters three and four.<sup>25</sup> The distribution sample size is small (only four years) so these measures of standard deviations from the mean should be considered high and indicate that the increase of payments to the able-bodied was exceptional for the third and fourth quarters of 1835.

To better understand the differences in the pattern of allowances for these quarters, the top six recipients were charted. These persons received allowance payments of over £20 between 1832 and 1835 and were selected based upon the assumption that those who received the higher payments were likely to have the

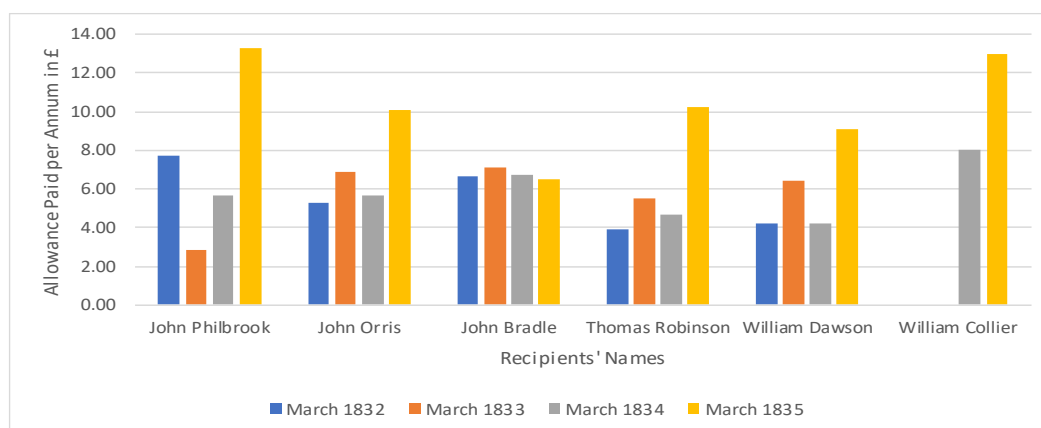
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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> The number of standard deviations from the mean was calculated by use of the Z score formula which is (Quarterly value - Mean for a quarter for all years in the distribution)/ Standard Deviation for a quarter for all years in the distribution.



most data related to them. The following bar chart provides a clear picture of the relief pattern for the six people who received the highest amounts of outdoor allowances during the period ranked by total received.



**Chart 5.8: Woodham Walter, Payments to Individuals per Financial Year from 1832 to 1835.<sup>26</sup>**

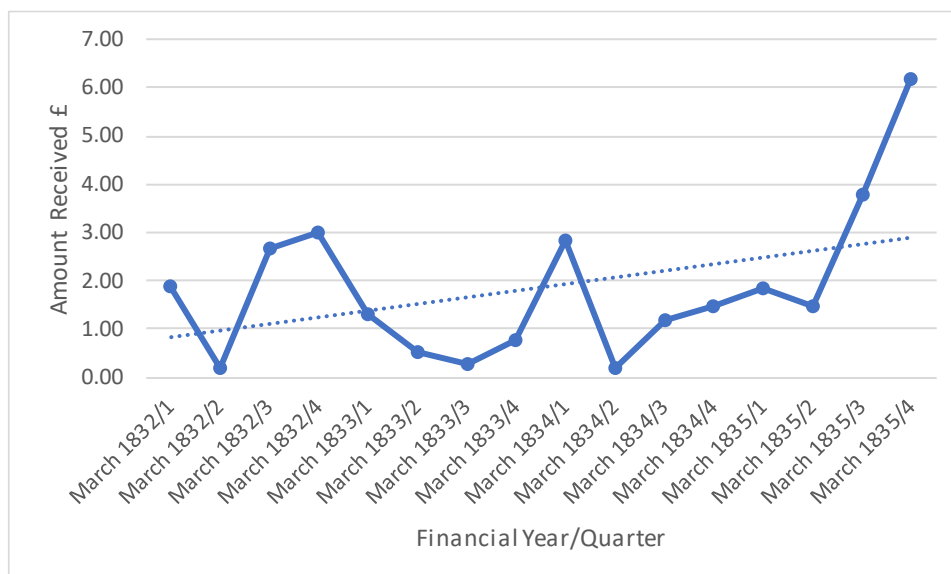
All of these people received relief for the whole period with the exception of William Collier who benefited for the years 1834 and 1835 only. He was born in 1791 and although the 1841 census stated he had been born in Essex it did not specify where. So, it is possible he either moved to or returned to Woodham Walter during the period studied. This would explain why, as an agricultural labourer, he had claimed no allowances before the financial year ending March 1834.<sup>27</sup> The broad trend that showed an increase in allowance payments was common to all of the individuals except for John Bradle, whose pattern of relief differed from the other five people.

The person receiving the highest level of outdoor relief for the period, at £29.54, was John Philbrook. He was born in 1804 and his profession was listed as that of an agricultural labourer in the 1841 census.<sup>28</sup> The following line graph shows the outdoor relief payments he received between 1832 and 1835, clearly showing the inconsistency of the payments.

<sup>26</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

<sup>27</sup> TNA, HO 107/327, 1841 Census. Woodham Walter.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



**Chart 5.9: Line Graph of Outdoor Relief Paid to John Philbrook of Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835.**<sup>29</sup>

Philbrook followed the overall trend for the payment of outdoor relief insofar as he normally received the lowest level of payment in the second quarter of the financial year – harvest time. The only exception occurred in the financial year 1833, when his payments fell slightly between the second and third quarters. That year was generally a good one for him in terms of employment because he received a low level of allowance, even in the third and fourth quarters - £0.28 and £0.78 respectively. Notably, as with the overall trend, the allowances received by Philbrook increased significantly in the third and fourth quarters of 1835 to £3.80 and £6.20.

When Philbrook’s outdoor relief payments are examined week to week, it is evident that they varied considerably, and it seems probable that they were calculated to a scale designed to top up his wages. For example, the sequence of payments made to him in June 1833 is shown in Table 5.9. This was a typical pattern for most of the period studied and there were weeks when he received no payment at all, such as between 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1832 and 1<sup>st</sup> September 1832 when he was presumably working on the harvest full time. This pattern changed significantly in the third and fourth quarters of the 1835 financial year, when both the size of amounts paid and their frequency increased. In the third quarter there were three payments made of 12s and two of 13s, in the fourth quarter this increased to seven of 12s, one of 10s, one of 9s 6d, one of 8s 6d. Therefore, it seems that Philbrook was probably

<sup>29</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

unable to obtain work due to some climatic or economic event that caused a reduction in the farmers' ability to hire labour during the period and the concomitant increase of payments to the able-bodied.

Date	Amount
1 <sup>st</sup> June 1833	3s 6d
8 <sup>th</sup> June 1833	1s
15 <sup>th</sup> June 1833	6s 6d
22 <sup>nd</sup> June 1833	11s
29 <sup>th</sup> June 1833	2s 6d

**Table 5.9: Example Outdoor Relief Payments Made to John Philbrook of Woodham Walter – June 1833.<sup>30</sup>**

One way to assess the generosity of relief payments made to Philbrook is to compare these to agricultural wage records for the area, although none are available for Woodham Walter between 1831 and 1835. In the absence of these data, the wages records from Oxley Parker estate between 1838 and 1842 have been used as a proxy because they commenced only three years after the end of the period studied and they apply to the adjoining parish of Woodham Mortimer.<sup>31</sup> The wage records are not straightforward to interpret, because individual items usually comprised payments to multiple individuals and these were often for less than a full week's work. However, for the entries for the week ending October 13<sup>th</sup> 1838 it is possible to ascertain that the wages for adult males ranged from 7s to 16s.<sup>32</sup> The range was probably due to the level of experience and expertise required to perform a particular task, but it is not possible to determine this specifically from the Oxley Parker wages records. The key point is that Philbrook was often paid an allowance that was approximately at the median point of the wages range and therefore could be considered generous.

The top six recipients of outdoor relief, except for John Bradle, showed similar relief payments trends so it would be repetitive to study all of them in detail (Bradle excepted). To ensure that the data for Philbrook was not anomalous, the second highest recipient, John Orris', data was also examined. Orris was born in

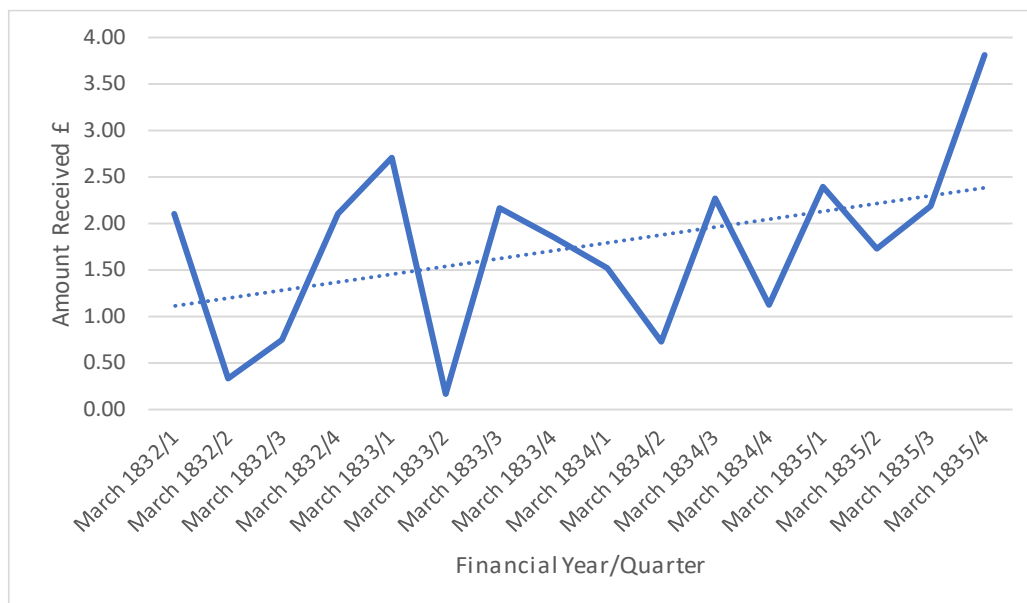
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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> ERO, D/DOP E17, Wages Records for the Oxley Parker Estate 1838-1842.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

1803 and was listed as an agricultural labourer in the 1841 census.<sup>33</sup> The following table shows the allowances he received by financial quarter for the years 1832 to 1835. As with John Philbrook these payments varied considerably through the period, as illustrated by the following line graph.



**Chart 5.10: Line Graph of Outdoor Relief Paid to John Orris of Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>34</sup>**

The payments made to Orris followed a similar pattern to those made to Philbrook. The second financial quarter was, as with the overall trend, the period when allowances were at their lowest for both men. Also, there several quarters before the 1835 financial year when high levels of outdoor relief were received by Philbrook and Orris, as illustrated by the following table.

Financial Quarter	John Philbrook Receipts in £	John Orris Receipts in £
March 1832/1	1.88	2.10
March 1832/4	2.99	2.10
March 1834/1	2.83	1.53

**Table 5.10: High Level Outdoor Relief Payments for Philbrook and Orris – Excluding 1835.<sup>35</sup>**

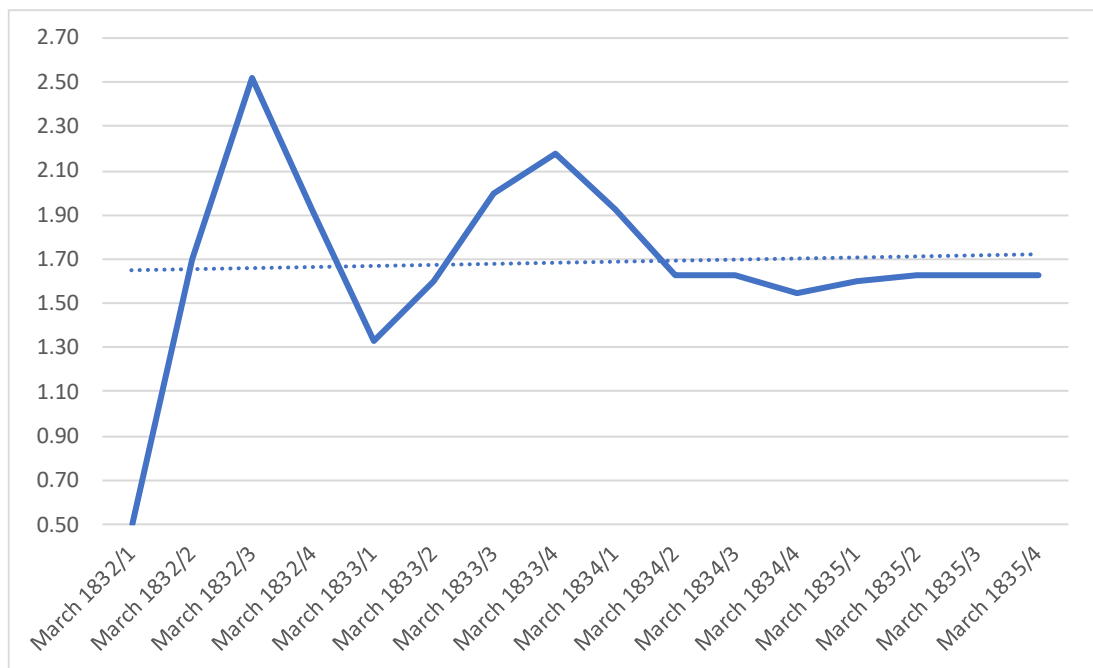
<sup>33</sup> TNA, HO 107/327.

<sup>34</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., payments over £1.50 have been selected.

The allowances paid to them were not always high at the same time. For example, in the third quarter of the 1832 financial year Philbrook received £2.68 but Orris only £0.75 and in the first quarter of the 1833 financial year Orris received £2.71 but Philbrook only £1.30. Whilst both men largely followed seasonal and annual trends the pattern for paying allowances was more complex: clearly, payments were also affected by the individuals' circumstances, their key skills, or a combination of the two. This suggests that the allowance system was a sophisticated way of balancing persons' income as an integral part of ensuring an adequate supply of labour in way that was not understood by proponents of the 1834 Act.

Orris' payments increased, as they had for Philbrook, sharply in 1835. In contrast, John Bradle's outdoor relief receipts did not follow this overall trend. He received similar payment amounts during each of the years 1832 to 1835 and slightly less in 1835 than 1834. The trendline on the following line graph demonstrates how consistent Bradle's receipt of outdoor relief was during the period.



**Chart 5.11: Line Graph of Outdoor Relief Paid to John Bradle of Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>36</sup>**

<sup>36</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

A John Bradle was listed in the 1841 census as a resident of Stanway in the Lexden hundred in Essex.<sup>37</sup> He was forty-eight years old in 1841 and his occupation was listed as an agricultural labourer. The Woodham Walter burial register has no record of his death, so it seems possible that he moved from Woodham Walter to Lexden between 1835 and 1841.<sup>38</sup> He received relief almost every week for the whole period except for the first quarter of 1832 as can be seen from the following table.

<b>Financial Quarter</b>	<b>Number of Payments</b>
March 1832/1	4.00
March 1832/2	12.00
March 1832/3	13.00
March 1832/4	12.00
March 1833/1	11.00
March 1833/2	13.00
March 1833/3	12.00
March 1833/4	13.00
March 1834/1	13.00
March 1834/2	13.00
March 1834/3	13.00
March 1834/4	12.00
March 1835/1	13.00
March 1835/2	13.00
March 1835/3	13.00
March 1835/4	13.00

**Table 5.11: Frequency of Relief Payments made to John Bradle of Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 1835.<sup>39</sup>**

This payment pattern would suggest that he was able to work throughout the period, but his wages were insufficient to subsist and he was therefore provided with a regular allowance. Understanding how the overseers determined the size of allowances would provide insight into the payments made to him and the other 104 recipients of outdoor relief between 1832 and 1835. There are no records of scales of poor relief for Woodham Walter in the nineteenth century prior to the 1834 Act, or for adjacent parishes such as Woodham Mortimer and the Maldon parishes, but in 1821 the magistrates for the Chelmsford Division set such a scale. This is earlier

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<sup>37</sup> TNA, HO 107/327.

<sup>38</sup> ERO, D/P 101/1/12, Burial Register for Woodham Walter 1813 to 1893.

<sup>39</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

than the period studied and Chelmsford Division was not responsible for Woodham Walter, but it provides a reasonable indication of how relief scales probably worked elsewhere in Essex.<sup>40</sup> The scale was handwritten rather than printed which would suggest that it had not been distributed to all the parish overseers within the Chelmsford Division. There were two variables in the scale, firstly the price per peck of flour and secondly the number of people in the family of the person receiving relief. The price of flour was incremented by 3d from a starting value of 1s 6d up to 7s and the number of people in the family ranges from two to ten. The first two lines of the scale are provided in the following table and clearly demonstrate how the allowances to be paid rose with the price of flour and the number of family members.

	Number of Persons in the Family								
Peck Price	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1s 6d	3s 2d	4s 3d	5s 0d	5s 10d	7s 0d	8s 2d	9s 4d	10s 6d	11s 8d
1s 9d	3s 5d	4s 7½d	5s 6d	6s 5½d	7s 9d	9s 0½d	10s 11d	11s 7d	12s 11d

**Table 5.12: Example from the Poor Relief Allowance Scale Set by Chelmsford Division in 1821.**<sup>41</sup>

This scale of allowances was similar in its intent to the one designed by the magistrates in Speenhamland Berkshire in 1795. It demonstrated that the Chelmsford magistrates, like their colleagues in Berkshire, had a significant role in defining the level of poor relief applied in parishes. Also, that they supported a parameter based approach toward the determination of poor relief for everybody including the able-bodied, even at a time when the government was expressing disapprobation with the allowance system.<sup>42</sup> Given the range of outdoor relief payments made within Woodham Walter (sometimes over 11s per week to Philbrook and Orris, but normally around 2s 6d to Bradle), it seems likely that a scaled system was also used there. This in turn would suggest that Bradle was either single or had a small family whilst Philbrook and Orris had large families.

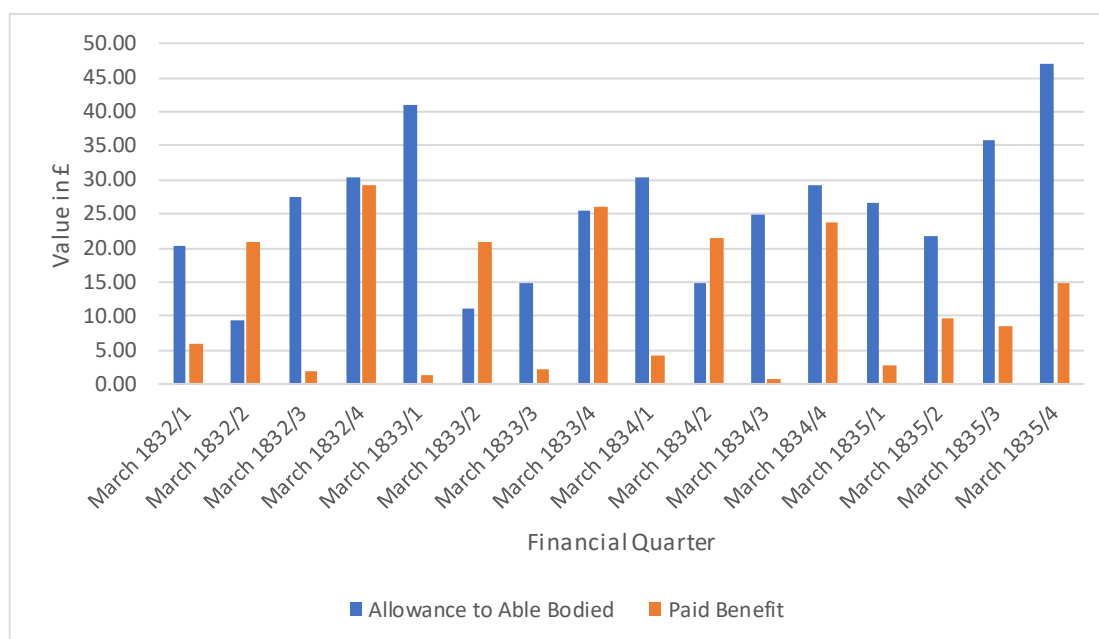
<sup>40</sup> ERO, D/DU 139/3/1, Records of Samuel Shaen of Hatfield Peverel – Lawyer, Scale of Poor Relief for the Chelmsford Division, 1821.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> M. Neuman, *The Speenhamland County: Poverty and the Poor Laws in Berkshire 1782-1834* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1982), p.99.

### 5.3 Paid Benefits and Illness at Woodham Walter

The second highest category of poor relief paid, after ‘allowances to the able-bodied’, was ‘paid benefit’ at 19.27% of relief paid – see Table 5.4 above. This category is more informative than ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ about the generosity and social aspect of poor relief, because the latter was instigated to supplement workers’ wages whereas ‘paid benefit’ was given purely out of conscience. The categories of ‘physical’ and ‘mental illness’ will be considered in conjunction with ‘paid benefit’ because they similarly demonstrated a caring attitude rather than a response to economic exigency. It was noted earlier in the chapter that although the costs for ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ increased in the years 1832 to 1834 and sharply so in 1835, the overall cost of poor relief was fairly consistent. Consequently, it is important to compare ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ to ‘paid relief’ to establish whether the latter was reduced to compensate for increases in the former.



**Chart 5.12: Bar Chart Comparing Paid Relief and Allowances to the Able-Bodied at Woodham Walter for 1832 to 1835.<sup>43</sup>**

As Chart 5.12 shows, the cost of ‘paid relief’ was higher than that for ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ in the second quarter for the years 1832 to 1834.

<sup>43</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.



'Allowances to the able-bodied' were lower because of the increased requirement for labour during the summer months. Apparently, the parish vestry used the lower allowances during these periods as an opportunity to show generosity to the poor by the provision of clothing, food, rent support and other payments in kind. Even so, it was evident that this generosity was reduced when 'allowances to the able-bodied' increased. In the second quarter of 1835 'paid benefits' were reduced to less than £10 when in the previous three equivalent quarters over £20 had been paid. An average of just under £12 had been paid as 'allowances to the able-bodied' in the three second financial quarters from 1832 until 1834. In the year ending March 1835 this amount jumped to almost £22 which was compensated for by the reduction of £10 in 'paid benefit'. This pattern was repeated in other quarters as well. For example, in the fourth quarters of 1832 to 1834 the amounts spent on allowances and 'paid benefit' all lay between £20 and £30, whereas in the fourth quarter of 1835 the value of allowance payments rose to £47 and the 'paid benefit' fell to approximately £15. While this reduction in 'paid benefit' in the fourth quarter of 1835 did not cover the whole of the increase for outdoor relief to the able-bodied, it nevertheless demonstrates that there were times in the parish poor relief cycle when generosity gave way to economic expediency.

It seems, therefore, that a close relationship existed between the payment of 'allowances to the able-bodied' and 'paid benefit'. When the allowance payments became too high there was either insufficient financial resource to continue 'paid benefits' at previous levels or a lack of preparedness by the vestry to increase the poor rate further. To understand the impact that the 'paid benefits' had upon the lives of the poor the nature of these will now be examined in more detail, by further analysis in the categories detailed in Table 5.13, whilst Chart 5.13 provides a breakdown by 'paid benefit' category for the years 1832 to 1835.

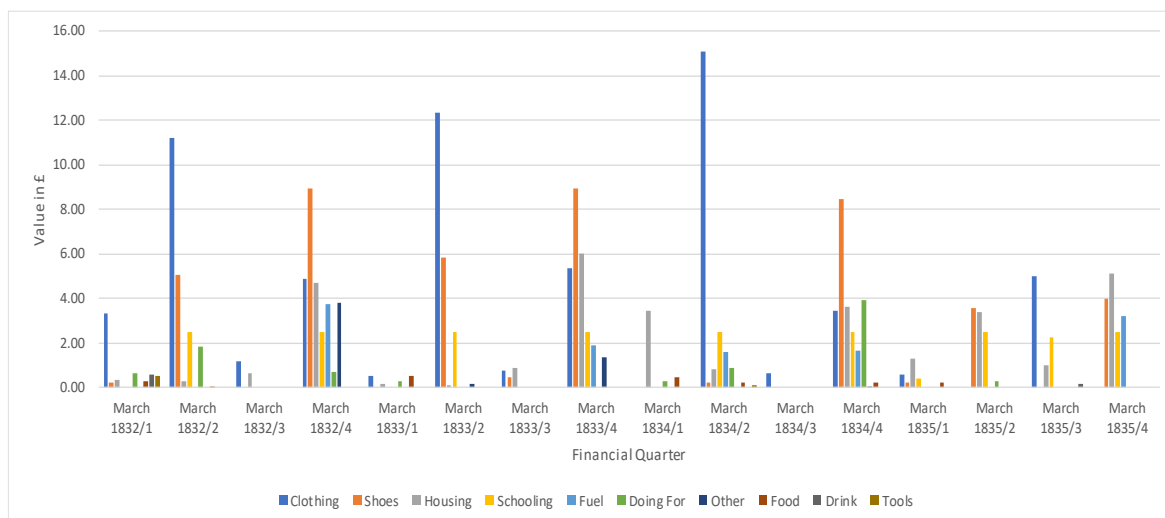
The combination of clothing and shoes accounted for almost 57% of the 'paid benefit' payments in the parish. The vestry appeared to have used the lower 'allowance to the able-bodied' payments in the second quarter of the years 1832 to 1834 as an opportunity to provide quite generous payments for clothing. No similar generosity was shown in the second quarter of 1835. Slight compensation was made by the payment of £5 in the third quarter, but generally the poor had to make do. Similarly, approximately £14 had been spent on shoes in 1832 and 1833, but this fell to nearly £9 and £8 in 1834 and 1835 respectively. It was clear, therefore, that whilst the vestry normally prioritised providing clothing and shoes to the poor the payments for these items were reduced when outdoor relief to the able-bodied increased.

<b>Paid benefit Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
Clothing	Items of clothing were purchased for individuals, but there were also regular payments to suppliers. It is not known whether these were for bulk orders of clothes or payments for the provision of clothing made retrospectively.
Shoes	The provision of shoes to the parish poor followed a pattern that was similar to that of clothing.
Housing	Ad hoc payments of rent were made to specified individuals.
Schooling	The parish made regular payments for Sunday School teaching. Also, there were some ad hoc schooling payments.
Fuel	These payments were sometimes for the bulk provision of fuel (mainly coal) but also occurred on an ad hoc basis.
'Doing For'	On some occasions women from the parish were paid for 'doing for' a man from the parish who was not a part of their family, either because of illness or other unspecified reasons.
Other	There are some entries in the overseers' accounts where it is not made clear what the reason for payment was.
Food	Payments for food happened on an ad hoc basis and were usually for meat such as mutton. It is not clear what prompted these.
Drink	All of the payments for drink were for alcoholic beverages such as Porter. Again, it is not clear what gave rise to these.
Tools	There were a small number of payments for tools such as scythes.

**Table 5.13: Categorisation of the 'Paid Benefits' at Woodham Walter.<sup>44</sup>**

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.



**Chart 5.13: Bar Chart Showing the Breakdown of ‘Paid benefits’ at Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1834 by Quarter.<sup>45</sup>**

From the first quarter of the financial year ending in March 1832 significant bills were paid to clothing suppliers on a semi-annual basis until 1834. The following table provides the details of these payments.

Financial Quarter	£	Financial Year	£
1832 Q2	4.53		
1832 Q4	2.78	1832	7.31
1833 Q2	3.58		
1833 Q4	3.88	1833	7.46
1834 Q2	3.93		
1834 Q4	1.29	1834	5.22

**Table 5.14: Payments to Clothing Suppliers by Woodham Walter Vestry from 1832 to 1834.<sup>46</sup>**

As above, it is unknown whether these payments were made in order to settle the accounts for clothing provided to individuals during a period or whether the parish made bulk orders for miscellaneous items of clothing (Table 5.13). Nevertheless, it is clear that the overseers knew that they would not be able to afford such payments in 1835 and they ceased completely.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

In addition to the payments to suppliers, occasional payments for clothing were made for individuals and what appeared to be to families. Quite often the payments made to individuals were substantial given the economic context of the parish. For example, the parish bought clothes for children which cost as much or more than an agricultural worker's weekly wages, e.g. Girl Robinson £1 6s in March 1832 and Girl Bowls 15s in March 1833.<sup>47</sup> In September 1832 Dan Percy received £3 for clothing, which was as much as some of the parish clothing supplier bills, so it seems likely that the payment was to buy clothing for his whole family.<sup>48</sup>

Of the top six recipients of allowances to the able-bodied, three people or family members also received payments for clothing between 1832 and 1834. These were John Philbrook, Thomas Robinson and William Collier. This suggests that some of Woodham Walter's families were heavily reliant upon aid from the parish and that, when they could afford to, the overseers were prepared to supplement allowances in support of wages with additional types of relief. The parish made payments for shoes from suppliers in a similar fashion to those for clothing. The following table summarise these payments between 1832 and 1835.

Financial Quarter	£	Financial Year	£
1832 Q2	4.53		
1832 Q4	8.68	1832	13.21
1833 Q2	5.73		
1833 Q4	8.21	1833	13.94
1834 Q2	5.08		
1834 Q4	8.43	1834	13.51
1835 Q2	3.43		
1835 Q4	3.97	1835	7.40

**Table 5.15: Payments to Shoe Suppliers by Woodham Walter Vestry - Years 1832 to 1834.**<sup>49</sup>

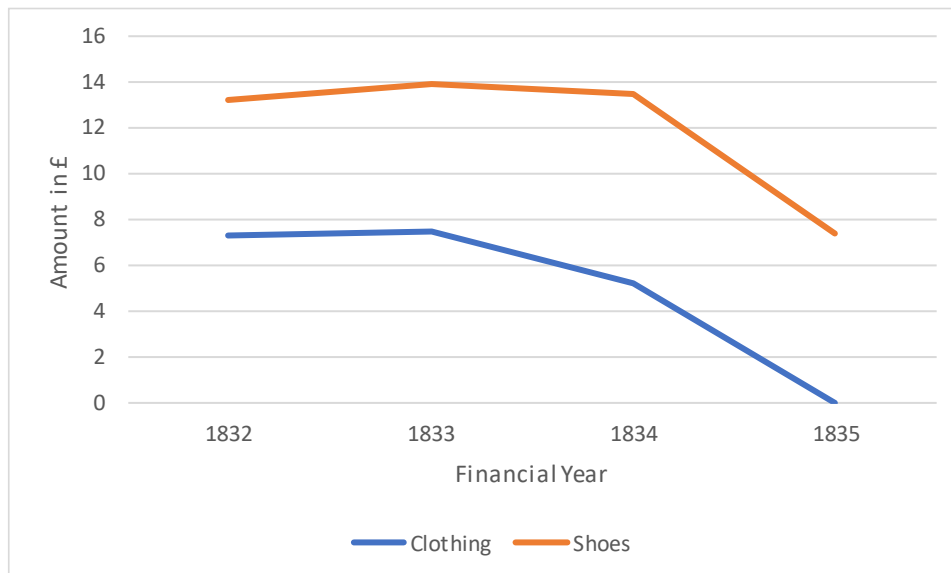
This similarity is apparent when the payments to suppliers and shoes are compared in the following line graph.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.



**Chart 5.14: Comparison Between Payments to Suppliers of Clothing and Shoes at Woodham Walter for 1832 to 1835.**

This chart shows that, even though the parish spent more on clothing allowances than it had had on shoe allowances, because of the occasional generous payments to individuals, it recognised that shoes were more of a necessity than new clothes. Not only did the overseers spend considerably more with shoe suppliers between 1831 and 1834, but they continued to order shoes in 1835 when clothing orders were discontinued. Payments to individuals for shoes did take place but they were less frequent than those for clothing. The block nature of the shoe payments does not enable identification of the recipients, so it is not possible to conclude that the beneficiaries of the ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ also received shoes. However, this would seem probable because of the few individuals who received specific allowances for shoes were usually people who had received ‘allowances for the able-bodied’, such as John Philbrook in the second quarter of the 1832 financial year and Isaac Enefer in the first quarter of 1835.<sup>50</sup>

Analysis of the ‘paid benefits’ provided by the parish in the years 1832 to 1835 makes it possible to build an impression of the priorities of the vestry members. They were prepared to give quite generous allowances for clothing and shoes, but if there was insufficient money they were prepared to reduce or stop these payments in favour of increasing allowances in support of wages. When they had to limit expenditure on clothes and shoes, they further prioritised by continuing some

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

payments to suppliers for shoes but stopping those for clothes. This was probably based upon the assumption that the poor could survive if their clothes were shabby but needed shoes to get around and to work. The prevailing sense is that the vestry had a generally benign attitude towards poor relief which was sometimes tempered by economic circumstances.

This impression is supported by the payments that were made to the poor for fuel between 1831 and 1835. In each of the years 1832 to 1835, the parish paid suppliers for coal in the fourth quarter as shown in the following table.

Financial Year	Amount in £
1832	2.81
1833	1.90
1834	1.66
1835	3.14

**Table 5.16: Payments to Fuel Suppliers by Woodham Walter Vestry - Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>51</sup>**

The vestry clearly regarded the provision of fuel as a necessity in the same way as it had shoes because it not only maintained but increased these payments in 1835. This perhaps suggests that the winter of 1834/5 had been harsher than the previous three and that the parish responded by providing additional fuel. Consequently, the view that the vestry had a compassionate attitude towards the poor is enhanced because they were prepared to act to minimise distress even when the available funds were reduced.

The 'paid relief' category of schooling gives a further insight into the attitudes and priorities of the vestry. Payments for schooling were all for Sunday school tuition. Payments were made by the overseers of £2 10s in both the second and fourth financial quarters in every year from 1832 to 1835. Also, in 1835 additional payments were made in the first and third financial quarters which amounted to over £2 10s, even though 1835 was a year when funds for anything other than 'allowances to the able-bodied' were scarce. It was clear therefore, that the vestry regarded the teaching of the scriptures as a necessity in the same way that it had shoes and fuel.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

All the other sub-categories of 'paid benefit': 'doing for', 'food', 'drink' and other, were paid ad hoc and it is difficult to identify any patterns, although they do demonstrate the high-level engagement that the vestry had with people's lives. The practice of paying a female resident to 'do for' a male resident was fairly frequent for some of the years 1832 to 1835 and cost the parish almost 4.5% of the total paid benefits paid. The payments were not consistent and presumably varied by the amount of time spent and the difficulty of the task. Payments for food and drink were given to very few of the residents, but some received these on multiple occasions. For example, Mrs Brown received 3s, 3s and 2s in consecutive weeks for porter in the first quarter of 1832. Thomas Robinson received eight payments for mutton between the second quarter of 1832 and the fourth of 1834, which ranged in value from 1s to 3s 9d. It seems improbable that the payments to Mrs Brown and Thomas Robinson can be considered as for subsistence. Consequently, it seems likely that they were provided for some special reason such as for a reward or perhaps because it was believed the drink or food would act as restoratives. Apparently, the vestry was prepared to pay for more than bare necessities when funds allowed, revealing that it was sometimes altruistic in character.<sup>52</sup>

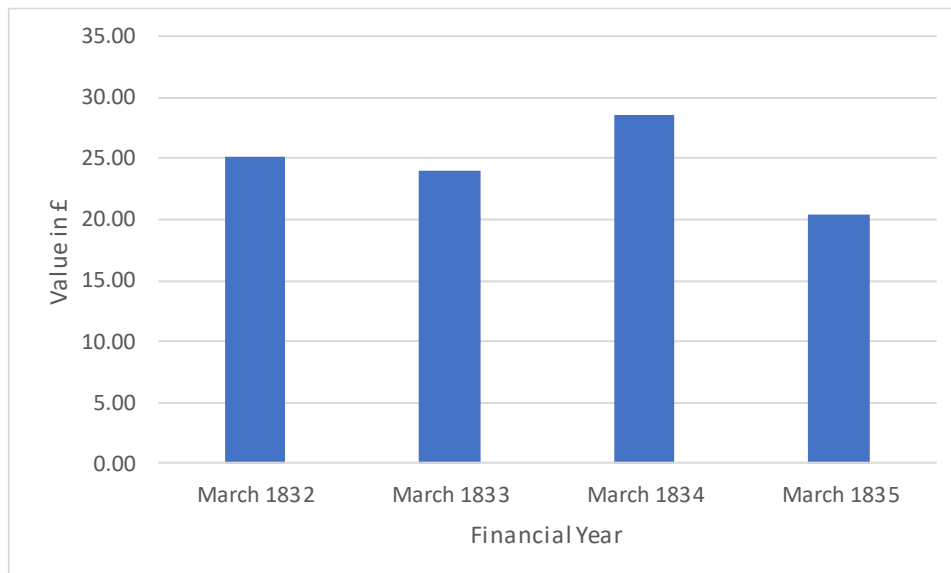
The provisions that the parish made for illness confirm its general concern for the poor. Two categories of illness were recognised. Firstly, mental illness when the only payments made were the administrative ones of 5s each for the compilation of the idiot lists in the second quarters of the years 1834/5 and the lunatic list in the second quarter of 1834. Secondly, support provided for physical illness which was the fifth highest category of poor relief for the years 1832 to 1835. Chart 15 shows the payments that were made for each financial year during the period.

The payments made were over £20 per annum and although the lowest occurred in 1835, it was nevertheless substantial. These data confirm the consistent pattern, that whilst the overseers recognised that they had to reduce relief for some categories in 1835 they were not prepared to do so in a way that deprived the poor of a tolerable level of existence. For example, the Maldon doctor Mr. Thorpe was paid £20 in the fourth financial quarter for each year in the period except 1833 when he was paid £23. He was also paid expenses for the journeys he undertook to care for his patients.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.



**Chart 5.15: Payments Made for Physical Illness at Woodham Walter for Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>54</sup>**

Other items were varied and included nursing care, additional allowances and on one occasion an expense paid to Guy's hospital. In August 1833 the parish paid a bill of £3 11s and 6d for care for Girl Orris there. This was a substantial outlay from the poor relief funds and reinforces the impression that Woodham Walter was a parish that was concerned for the poor. Also, it is worth noting that Girl Orris was a member of the same family as John Orris, discussed earlier in this chapter, who was a major recipient of 'allowances to the able-bodied'.<sup>55</sup> This emphasises how dependent some of the parish families were upon a range of types of relief. This raises the question of how generous the parish was when it came to care for the poor who were not, or at least no longer, a part of the labour force. So, the poor relief category of 'pension other', which was the second highest by value, will now be examined in some detail.

#### *5.4 'Pension Other' at Woodham Walter*

As previously noted in this chapter, items in the overseers' accounts sometimes provided only the name of a person. This presented the challenge of how to allocate the appropriate category to them within the database. Arthur Brown

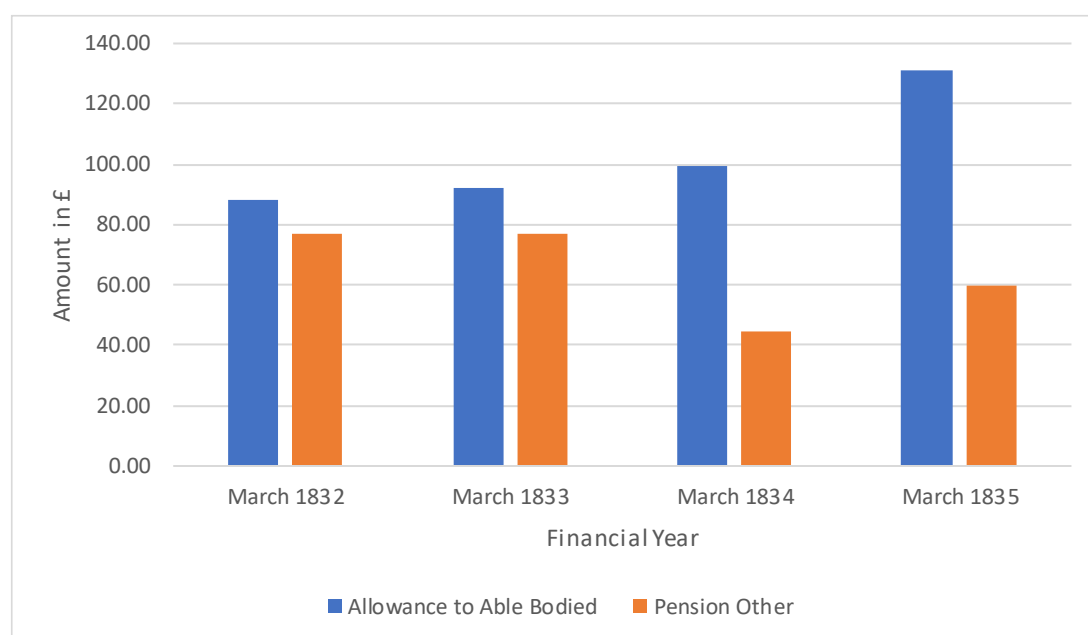
<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> TNA, HO 107/327. The three Orris girls listed in this census were Maryann (born 1830), Mary (born 1833) and Amelia (born 1834).



observed that only a few women were employed in agriculture in Essex, and ‘as a whole domestic service was the only major form of female employment’.<sup>56</sup> In addition, given the over-supply of labour that had existed in rural communities since the Napoleonic Wars had ended, it was considered unlikely that ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ would have been paid to women. It was decided, therefore, to adopt an approach where payments to women in the accounts which were not prefixed by ‘widow’ or ‘old’ were classified as ‘pension other’. Also, for male recipients of relief, payments were treated as ‘allowances to the able-bodied’; except when either the name was prefixed by ‘old’, when they were treated as ‘old age pensions’, or the relief was classified as having been paid from the weekly collection (considered as relieving the impotent), when it was categorised as ‘pension other’.

For the years 1832 to 1835 there were 273 items within the ‘pension other’ category. The costs by year have been analysed in the following bar chart and compared to the cost for ‘allowances to the able-bodied’.



**Chart 5.16: ‘Pension Other’ Payments Compared to Allowances to the Able-Bodied at Woodham Walter for Years 1832 and 1835.<sup>57</sup>**

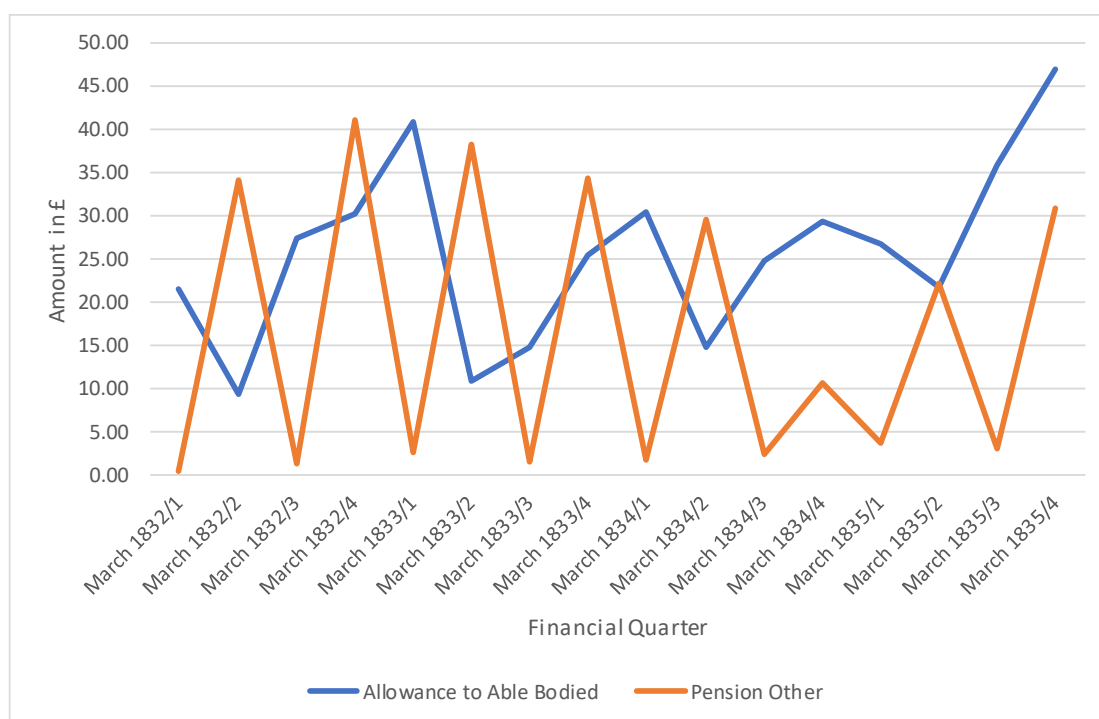
The costs were broadly similar in 1832 and 1833 at just under £80 per annum. As the income support costs rose in 1834 and 1835, the ‘pension other’

<sup>56</sup> A.F.J. Brown, *Meagre Harvest: The Essex Farm Workers’ Struggle Against Poverty, 1790-1914* (Chelmsford: Essex Record Office, 1990), pp.21, 156.

<sup>57</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

costs fell. The 'pension other' figure was higher in 1835 than it had been in 1834 even though the 'allowances to the able-bodied' cost was higher. While the vestry recognised that it had to reduce the value of items of poor relief to compensate for increases to 'allowances to the able-bodied', it apparently also saw the need to prioritise relief to some of the people within the 'pension other' category.

To further understand the profile 'pension other' costs in relation to 'allowances to the able-bodied' costs, these categories of relief have been analysed by financial quarter.



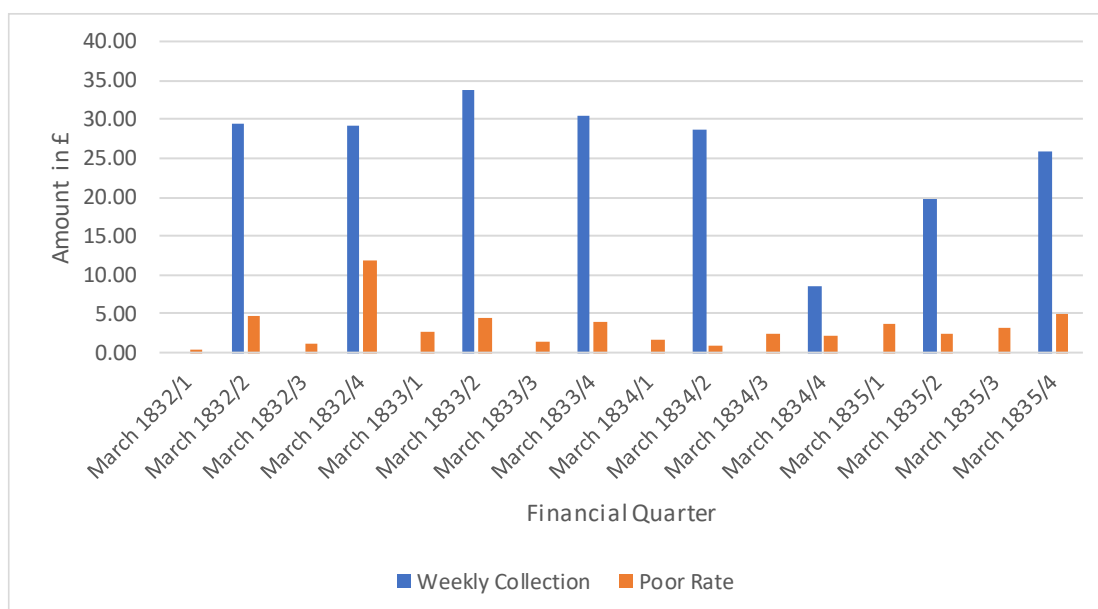
**Chart 5.17: 'Pension Other' Payments Compared to Allowances to the Able-Bodied at Woodham Walter by Financial Quarter for the Years 1832 and 1835.<sup>58</sup>**

At first glance this graph indicates an almost perfect negative correlation between these categories, i.e. when income support fell in the second financial quarter (for the seasonal reasons already discussed) the 'pension other' costs rose. The graph also shows that as well as for the second quarter, 'pension other' costs rose sharply in the fourth quarter, but this does not accurately depict the distribution of relief because a great deal of the 'pension other' payments were made from the weekly collections. The distributions from weekly collections were summarised semi-annually in the overseers' accounts so were included at the end of the second and

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

fourth quarters. These summarised entries simply provided the total that had been paid to each recipient for the previous half year. For example, £29.58 was listed as having been paid from the weekly collections at the end of September 1831 (so the end of the second quarter of the financial year ending March 1832). This amount makes up the majority of the £34.68 that had been distributed in the first and second quarters, but because it was not recorded when it was distributed it gives an inaccurate impression of the timing of payments.<sup>59</sup>

Overall, the parish was generous in its provision of ‘pension other’, although most of this was classified as having been paid from weekly collections. The following bar chart shows the proportion off relief to the impotent paid from the weekly collection and poor rate funds respectively.



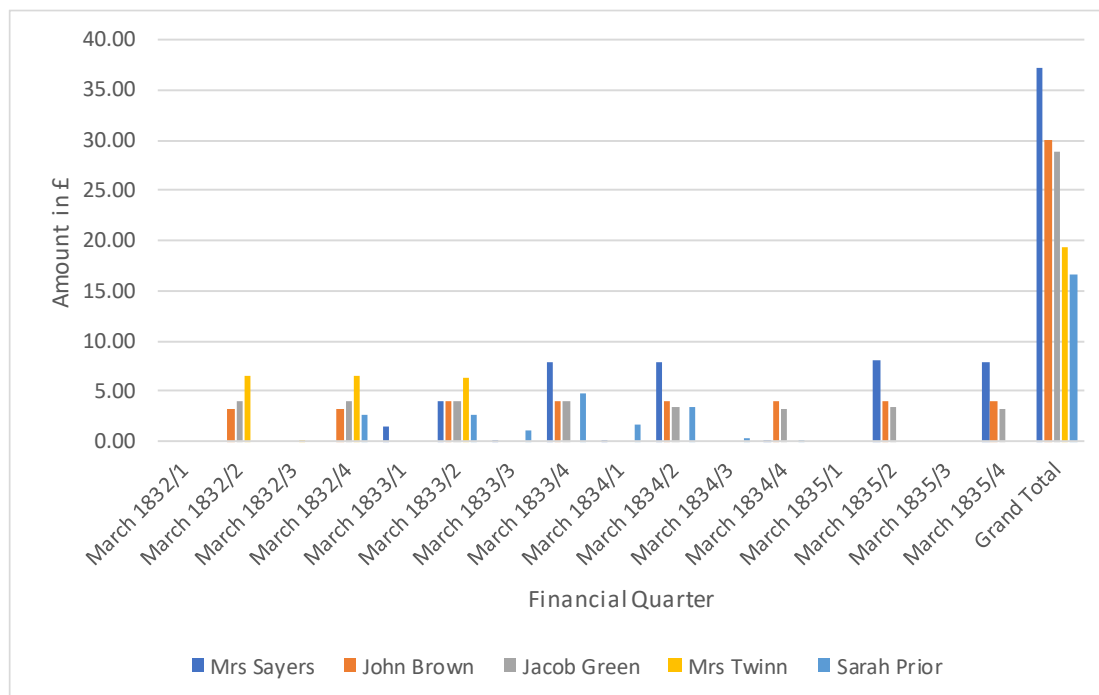
**Chart 5.18: ‘Pension Other’ – Weekly Collection Compared to Poor Rate Funds for Financial Quarter at Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 and 1835.<sup>60</sup>**

The total payments for the period classed as weekly collections and poor rate, were £205.96 and £52.45 respectively. Thus, whilst the total weekly payments to the impotent (weekly collection) was the larger amount, the overseers were prepared to supplement this from time to time with additional awards from the general fund.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Understanding of how the ‘pension other’ relief was distributed is improved by considering the pattern for some of the main recipients. Almost 57% of ‘pension other’ relief for the period was paid to the top six recipients. Chart 5.19 shows the distribution between these for the years 1832 to 1835.



**Chart 5.19: ‘Pension Other’ – The Top Six Recipients at Woodham Walter by Financial Quarter for the Years 1832 and 1835.<sup>61</sup>**

Mrs Sayers received the most relief during the period at £37.23, even though she did not receive her first payment until the first quarter of 1832. There is no record of Mrs Sayers or any person with the family name Sayers in the 1841 census, so it is not known how old she was or how many children she had.<sup>62</sup> She received £1 11s in the first quarter of the 1833 financial year, which was made up of five consecutive payments, the first of 7s on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1832 followed by four payments of 6s. None of these was shown as being from the weekly collection, which was presumably because the overseers recognised the situation was temporary.<sup>63</sup>

It seems probable that Mrs Sayers had children because the payments were similar to those recommended by the Chelmsford scale (provided in Table 5.13) for families of five to six people. It is not known whether the Chelmsford or a similar

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> TNA, HO 107/327, 1841 Census for Woodham Walter.

<sup>63</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

scale was used in Woodham Walter, but as previously discussed the pattern of relief payments would suggest a similar approach.<sup>64</sup>

Mrs Sayers requirement for poor relief, which the overseers may have adjudged as temporary, continued into the second quarter and she received 6s each during this period, all of which were classified as have been paid from the general fund. The next time that the overseers' accounts showed a relief payment to her was in the fourth quarter for £7 16s from weekly collections. This equated to her receiving 6s weekly in the third and fourth quarters and demonstrated that the overseers initially assessed the claims for relief in the 'pension other' category on their merits and independently of considering the fund from which they would be paid. Later, it seems that they used some criteria to determine when payments should be switched from the general fund to weekly collections. It seems probable that two of the criteria reflected when the overseers considered that the payments would be consistent and made on a long-term basis. Mrs Sayers' continued to receive £7 16s from the weekly collection, shown semi-annually in the accounts in either the second or fourth financial quarter, until the end of 1835, except in the fourth quarter of 1834. For this quarter, there were only three payments from the weekly collection with a total value of £8.45 recorded in the accounts, compared to ten payments valuing £30.40 and seven payments valuing £25.85 in the fourth quarters of 1833 and 1835 respectively.<sup>65</sup> It seems, therefore, that this quarter was anomalous for Mrs Sayers and other recipients of relief from the weekly collection; however no obvious explanation has been uncovered.

Although Mrs Sayers was moved from being paid her main allowance from the general fund to the weekly collection, she continued to receive occasional minor payments from the general fund. For example, she was paid 2s in the first quarter of the 1834 financial year. Whilst these sorts of payments to Mrs Sayers amounted to only a little over 5s for the period, they demonstrated the finely tuned nature of Woodham Walter's relief system. For Mrs Sayers, the ad hoc payment of 2s would probably have been important and it showed that the overseers were sensitive to her needs insofar as they were prepared to grant additional relief, albeit at a minor level.<sup>66</sup>

The next highest recipients of relief from 'pension other' were John Brown and Jacob Green. Both men received payments from the weekly collection recorded in the accounts in the second and fourth quarters for the years 1832 to 1835. For

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<sup>64</sup> ERO, D/DU 139/3/1.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

Brown, these payments started at 2s 6d a week in 1832 and then increased to 3s a week from 1833. Green's relief payments followed the opposite trend and were 3s a week for 1832 and 1833 but fell to 2s 6d in 1834.<sup>67</sup>

Even though Brown and Green's relief was paid from the weekly collection, the overseers appeared to have used a scale of payment that allowed them to adjust the sums provided according to some formulae. Slight changes to the inputs to the formulae would explain why Green and Brown received the same weekly allowances but at different times during the period. The reason why they received relief from the weekly collection is unknown but could have been due to several circumstances such as disability or long-term illness.

Mrs Twinn and Sarah Prior, who were the next two main recipients both received a combination of payments from the poor rate and the weekly collection similarly to Mrs Sayers. In the case of Sarah Prior, the payments made to her from the general fund were much more frequent than they were for Mrs Sayers or Mrs Twinn. In the fourth quarter of the 1833 financial year, she had received 2s a week from the weekly collection but also received twelve payments from the poor rate (for the fourth quarter) from the poor rate which ranged from 2s 6d to 5s. The total of the payments from the poor rate was £2 10s, so was almost as much as her allowance from the weekly collection for the half year. The balancing of relief payments between the two sources for Sarah Prior is intriguing but given the generally systematic approach taken by the overseers it was probably based upon some methodological approach. Whilst it is difficult to understand how the overseers chose to split the payments, it does seem that they wanted to ensure she was provided with sufficient relief.<sup>68</sup>

Outside of these five people, there were others who received some smaller allowances from the weekly collection not supplemented by any other payments from the poor rates. For example, Hannah Drane received 1s 6d a week for the half year which ended in the fourth quarter of 1832 and 1s 3d a week for the half year ending a year later.<sup>69</sup> As she received no payments from the poor rate to supplement these meagre amounts, she was presumably assisted by family members or by charity from other sources. This illustrates the specific nature of the parish's relief system. Even though there appeared to be scales and patterns of relief, their application was multi-faceted concerning what to pay, how long to maintain payments and which fund to pay them from.

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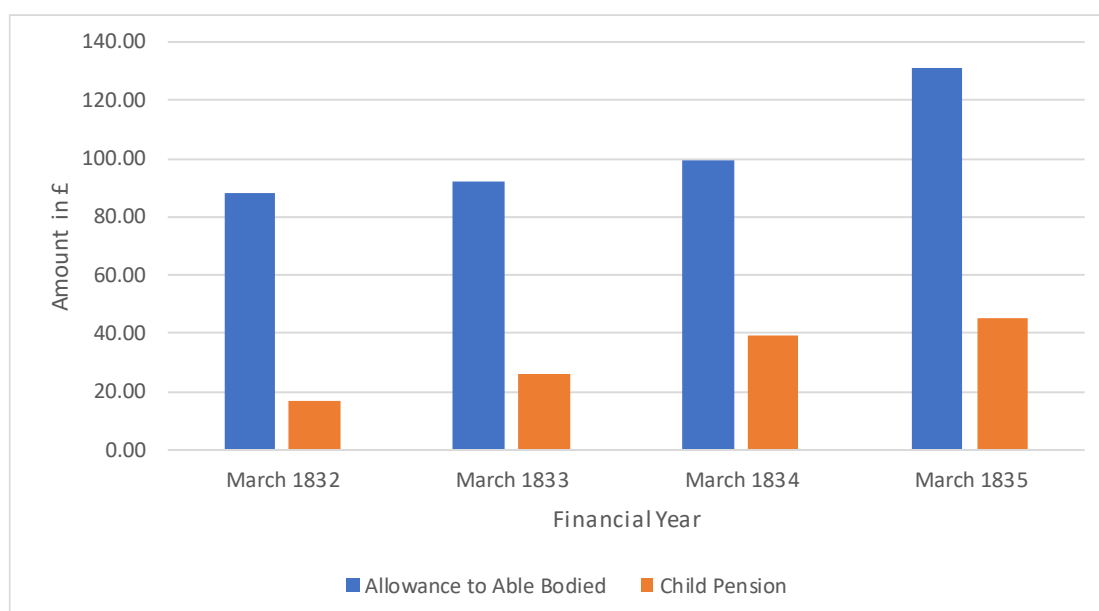
<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

## 5.5 Payment of 'Child Pensions' in Woodham Walter

The weekly collection fund was also used for to support pensions for children, widows and the elderly as well as poor people who have been categorised as 'pension other'. The children who received relief were sometimes those of persons who received other forms of relief, particularly 'allowances to the able-bodied', but at other times appear to have been orphans. The parish overseers' accounts prefixed relief entries for children by 'boy', 'girl', 'baby', or other similar words that clearly indicating that the payment was for a child. As with the paid benefit and 'pension other' categories, 'child pensions' have been compared to 'allowances paid to the able-bodied' between 1832 and 1835:

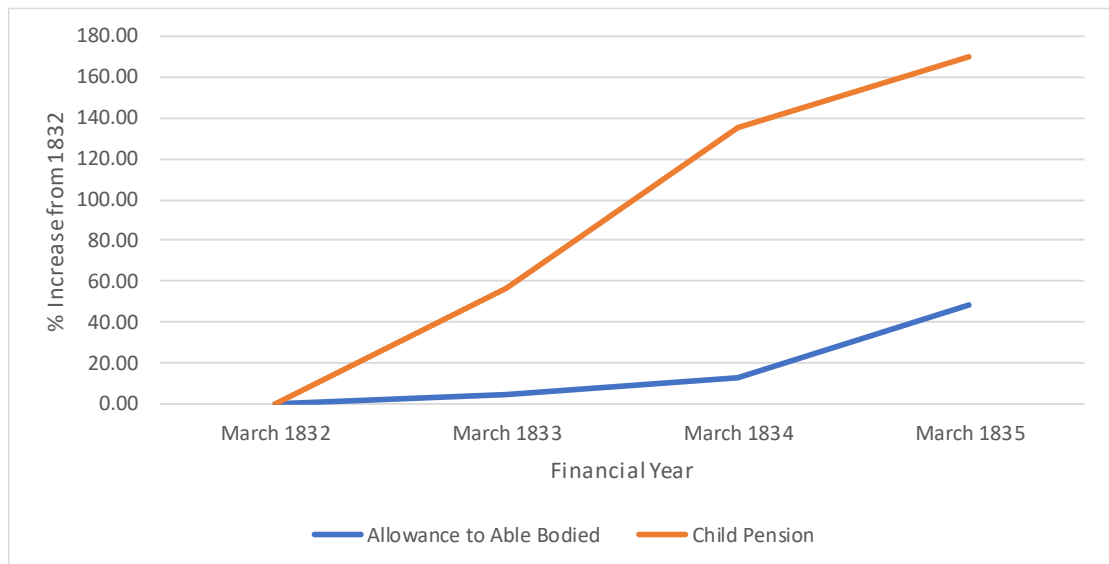


**Chart 5.20: 'Child Pensions' Compared to Allowances to the Able-Bodied at Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>70</sup>**

The amount paid for 'child pensions' increased yearly from 1832 to 1835, in the latter year despite the significant increase of payment to the able-bodied. So, it would seem that the payment of relief to support children was prioritised by the parish elite in this period.

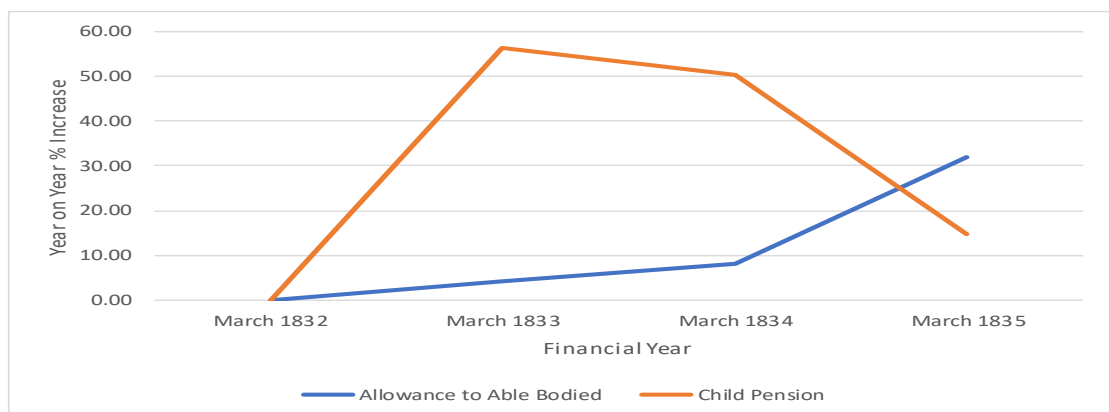
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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.



**Chart 5.21: A Comparison of the Percentage Increases from 1832 of ‘Child Pensions’ and Allowances to the Able-Bodied at Woodham Walter for Years 1833 to 1835.<sup>71</sup>**

Chart 5.21 shows that the rate of increase of ‘child pensions’ was significantly faster than it was for ‘allowances to the able-bodied’. Whilst the annual outdoor relief paid to the able-bodied was almost 50% higher in 1835 than it had been in 1832, the payment for ‘child pensions’ increased by 170% during the same period. Yet, when the percentage increase is calculated year on year as opposed to from the base year of 1832, a different picture emerges as shown by the following chart.



**Chart 5.22: A Comparison of the Year on Year Increases of ‘Child Pensions’ and Allowances to the Able-Bodied at Woodham Walter for Years 1833 to 1835.<sup>72</sup>**

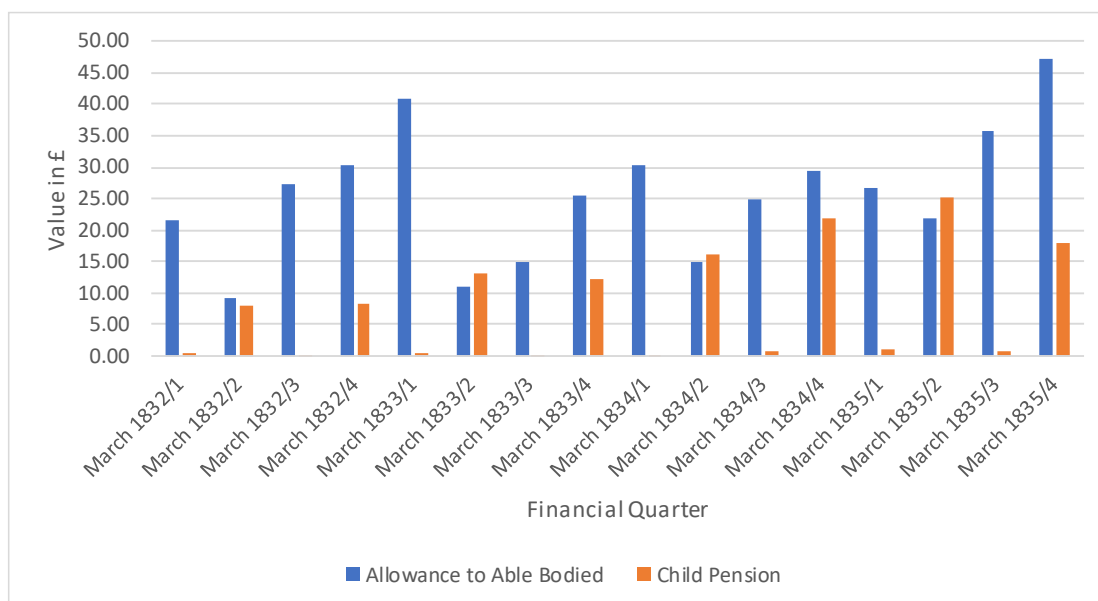
<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.



After a sharp increase between 1832 and 1833, the rate of increase in 'child pensions' declined slightly between 1833 and 1834 from over 56% to over 50%. Whilst they still increased in 1835, they did so at the more modest rate of 14.6%. Conversely, the year on year increase of 'allowances to the able-bodied' between 1834 and 1835 was almost 32%, compared to almost 8% from 1833 to 1834. These movements suggest that the circumstances of children in the parish led the vestry to support a continuous increase in child support during the period, although the rate of this slowed down in 1835. It seems probable, however, that whatever circumstances led to the need to increase the 'allowances to the able-bodied' in it 1835 limited the parish's ability to increase 'child pensions' by the same amount as in previous years.

As with the 'pension other' category of relief, the weekly collection provided significant funds for 'child pensions'. Due to the overseers' practice of showing the weekly collection disbursements semi-annually, at the end of the second and fourth financial quarters, it appears as if the expenditure peaked in these quarters. In reality, the 'weekly collection' was distributed evenly through weekly payments as was made clear in the descriptions of the line items.<sup>73</sup> The following bar chart illustrates this feature.



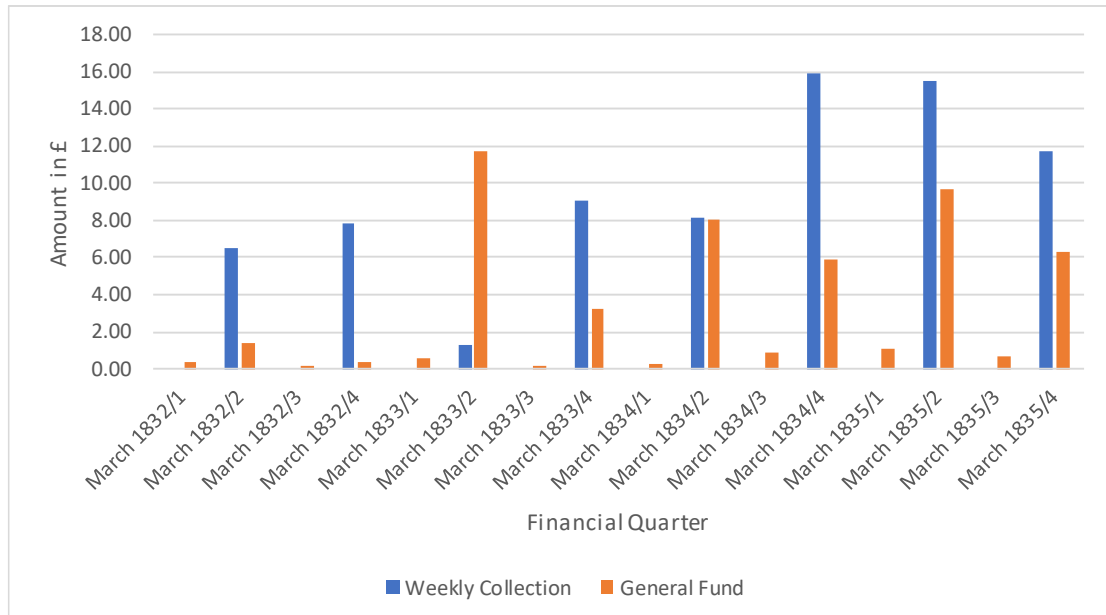
**Chart 5.23: A Comparison of 'Child Pensions' and 'Allowances to the Able-Bodied' at Woodham Walter by Financial Quarter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>74</sup>**

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

The chart provides some insight into why the rate of increase of ‘child pensions’ from 1834 to 1835 was lower than it had been for the previous year. The level of payment fell from approximately £25 to £18 between the second and fourth quarter in 1835. This decrease coincided with the spike for ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ to just over £47 and supports the contention that the financial resources within the parish were stretched by the increase to allowances, which in turn led to savings being made elsewhere. The ‘child pension’ payment made in the fourth quarter of 1835 was some £11 lower than it had been in the equivalent quarter of 1834 and ran counter to the overall trend. This suggests that whatever the altruistic intentions of the vestry, these had to be tempered by economic reality.

This inverse relationship between ‘child pensions’ and ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ in the fourth quarter of 1835 implies that a higher percentage of the ‘child pension’ payments were made from the poor rate than was the case for ‘pension other’. This is because no payments of ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ should have been made from the weekly collection, so reducing the ‘child pensions’ paid from this fund would not have freed monies to pay for an increase in these allowances. The following bar chart shows the split of how ‘child pensions’ were funded for the period.



**Chart 5.24: ‘Child Pensions’ for the Years 1832 to 1835 at Woodham Walter Split Between the Weekly Collection and General Fund.<sup>75</sup>**

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

This chart presents a different picture from its equivalent for the ‘pension other’ category. In the latter case there was only one occasion, in the fourth quarter of 1832, when the payments from the general fund exceeded £5. By comparison, there were five occasions during the period when the payment from the general fund for ‘child pensions’ rose above £5. In the second quarter of 1835 general fund funding was almost £10, so it was possible to reduce this to just over £6 in the fourth quarter to equalise some of the increase for ‘allowances to the able-bodied’. The payment from the weekly collection was also reduced by approximately £4 between the second and fourth quarters of 1835. Over this period, all the children had their payments reduced from the second to fourth quarter as shown in the following table.

Name	Second Quarter Payment	Fourth Quarter Payment	Difference
Boy Lucking	£2 0s 6d	£1 19s	1s 6d
Girl Prior	£2 14s	£1 19s	15s
Girl Stowers	£2 14s	£1 19s	15s
Girl Curtis	£2 14s	£1 19s	15s
Girls Twinn	£5 8s	£3 18s	£1 10s

**Table 5.17: ‘Child Pension’ Payments from the Weekly Collection in the Second and Fourth Quarters at Woodham Walter of the Financial Year 1835.<sup>76</sup>**

The total reduction was £3 16s 6d, very close to the amount paid to John Faircloth of £3 15s. The only other relief payment that Faircloth received was for £1 10s in the second quarter of 1835 when this had been paid from the general fund and not from the weekly collection and has therefore been categorised as ‘allowances to the able-bodied’.<sup>77</sup> He was not listed in the 1841 census, so it is not possible to determine his age or his profession.<sup>78</sup> The reduction in ‘child pensions’, along with a reduction of the widows pension paid to Mrs. Kemp of 1s 6d, compensated exactly for the payment to Faircloth.<sup>79</sup> Consequently, it seems possible that the overseers had used ‘weekly collection’ funds to make an ‘allowance to the able-bodied’ payment at the expense of ‘child’ and ‘widows’ pension. If this was the case, it gives focus to the financial pressure that the overseers must have been

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

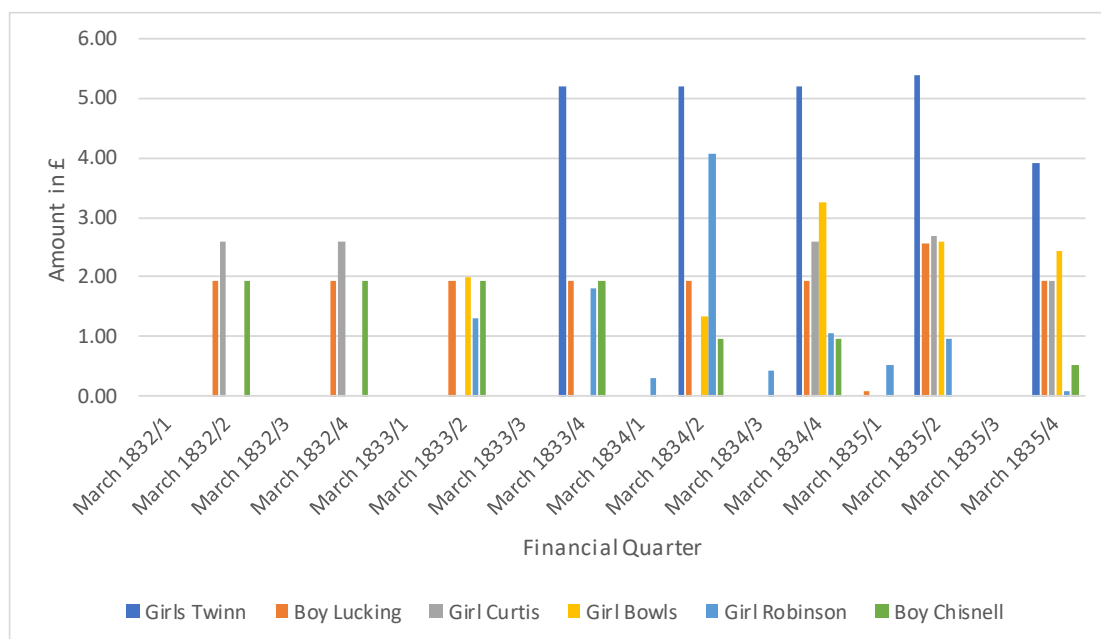
<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> TNA, HO 107/327.

<sup>79</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

under during the fourth quarter of 1835 to finance the increase in ‘allowances to the able-bodied’.

To understand the adequacy of the ‘child pensions’ provided by the parish, some of the children who received the highest total payments during the period will be considered in more detail. The following bar chart shows the six highest recipients of ‘child pensions’.



**Chart 5.25: The Six Highest Recipients of ‘Child Pensions’ at Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>80</sup>**

The Girls Twinn received the highest ‘child pension’ for the period, although as the overseers’ accounts noted there were two of them, so the payments were double that of individual children. They received 2s each per week between September 1832 and the end of March 1834, a little more than this until the end of September 1834 and only 1s 6d each until the end of March 1835 (because of the reduction already noted).<sup>81</sup> There is no mention of the girls in the 1841 census, so it is not straightforward to determine their age.<sup>82</sup> It is, however, possible to develop some impression of the girls’ situation based upon information in the overseers’ accounts. Mrs Twinn received just under £20 of relief between 1832 and 1833, and her last payment in September 1832 (1833 financial year), coincided with the date

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> TNA, HO 107/327.

when the Twinn girls started to receive 'child pensions'.<sup>83</sup> There is no record of Mrs Twinn's death in the burial register, but for whatever the reason the parish assumed the burden for the girls support.<sup>84</sup> When the sufficiency of the pensions which the girls received is considered, the Chelmsford scale again provides a useful guideline despite the fact it made no specific provision for payments to orphaned children. The 3s to 4s the girls received a week between them was close to the rate of 3s 6d per week it specified for a family of two people, so their pensions were in line with what the justices considered to be reasonable for subsistence.<sup>85</sup>

There were some children who received pensions where there was no record of any other family members receiving poor relief, such as Boy Lucking. The overseers' accounts recorded semi-annually, in the second and fourth quarters, that he received £1 19s from the weekly collection for every half year except for the one ending in September 1832, when the same payment was made from the poor rate. Also, for the half year which ended in the second quarter of 1835 he received the slightly higher sum of £2 0s 6d. Thus, he was consistently paid 1s 6d a week and slightly more than this for the first half of the 1835 financial year.<sup>86</sup>

In the 1835 financial year Lucking received additional payments which totalled 15s. These were paid for some weeks at 1s 6d a week, but the accounts provided no explanation. Despite the absence of an explanation for these additional payments, it demonstrates that the overseers blended the use of the weekly collection fund and the poor rate in order to meet the welfare needs of the poor when deemed necessary. As has been discussed, their financial resources were strained during the 1835 financial year, but they still managed to fund additional payments to Boy Lucking.<sup>87</sup>

Boy Lucking was probably an orphan, which is likely to be the reason why he, or the family who were charged with his care, received regular payments from the weekly collection.<sup>88</sup> Other children received pensions, which were paid exclusively from the poor rate. The accounts showed that £10.51 'child pension' was paid to Girl Robinson during the period. There were three Robinson girls listed in the 1834 census, so these payments were likely to have been made to more than one of these girls. Lucy, Eliza and Sophia Robinson who were born in 1826, 1829 and 1832

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<sup>83</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

<sup>84</sup> ERO, D/P 101/1/12, Burial Register from 1813 to 1893.

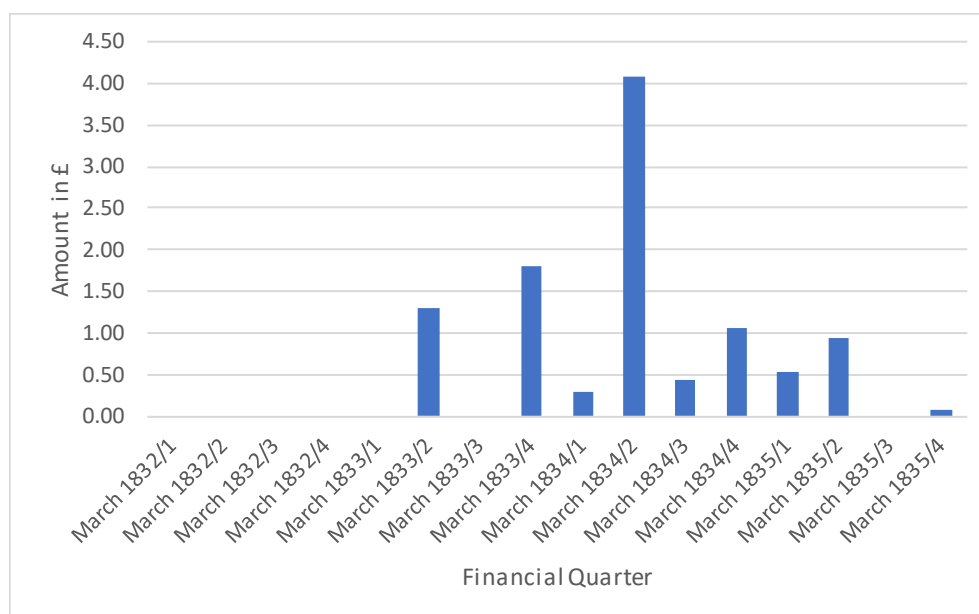
<sup>85</sup> ERO, D/DU 139/3/1.

<sup>86</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> This is based upon the assumption that the weekly collection was intended mainly for providing support for people that were particularly vulnerable.

respectively, the daughters of Thomas who was the fourth highest recipient of 'allowances paid to the able-bodied' (see above, Table 5.11).<sup>89</sup> The payments made to the girls fluctuated considerably as shown on the following bar chart.



**Chart 5.26: Girl Robinson Pension Payments by Financial Quarter at Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>90</sup>**

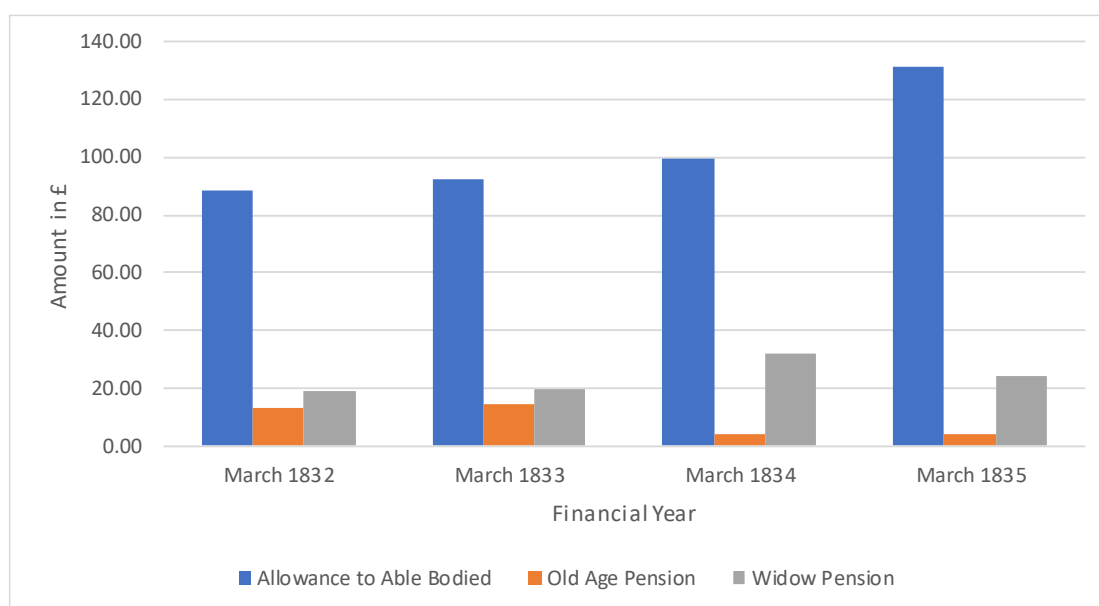
The volatile pattern of the pensions paid to Girl Robinson, coupled with the fact that these payments were made from the poor rate rather than the weekly collection, suggests that the overseers were reacting to temporary situations. They would have known what Thomas Robinson earned on a weekly basis and what allowances he was given, so the 'child pensions' appear to have been provided to meet the specific needs of the girls. It is not possible to determine if the payments made to the girls were intended to provide additional support to the Robinson family as a whole or were targeted specifically for them. Nonetheless, they do emphasise the attention to detail that the overseers exercised with the provision of poor relief in the parish.

<sup>89</sup> TNA, HO 107/327.

<sup>90</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

## 5.6 'Old Age and Widows Pensions' at Woodham Walter

To date this chapter has examined the relief provided to the able-bodied working men, the 'pension other' category, which was often for women with families, and 'child pensions'. These categories mainly covered the people who were young or middle-aged, so those who were older will now be considered. There were relatively few people who were paid 'old age pensions' or 'widows' pensions' in Woodham Walter, so these two categories will be considered together because they have the common characteristic of being non-working adults probably without dependents. Once again, the annual costs of 'old age pensions' and 'widows pensions' have been compared with 'allowances paid to the able-bodied'. If it is accepted that the latter was essentially driven by economic circumstances, it is also important to understand how this weighed with relief provided to the impotent, as follows.



**Chart 5.27: 'Old Age and Widows Pensions' Compared to 'Allowances to the Able-Bodied' at Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>91</sup>**

Chart 5.27 shows that both 'old age pensions' and 'widows' pensions' were fairly constant for the years 1832 and 1833. Following this, in 1834, 'widows pensions' rose significantly from almost £20 to over £30 and 'old age pensions' fell from nearly £15 to less than £5. In 1835, the cost of 'widows pensions' fell further by

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

approximately 25% whilst the cost of 'old age pensions' remained at the low level it had been in 1835.

To help understand the reasons for these fluctuations the following table shows the number of people who received relief for each year and the amount received.

Financial Year	Old Age		Widows	
	Persons Relieved	Amount per Person in £	Persons Relieved	Amount per Person in £
1832	4	3.37	4	4.74
1833	4	3.68	4	4.93
1834	2	2.18	6	5.36
1835	1	4.15	5	4.90

**Table 5.18: 'Old Age and Widows Pensions' - Number of Persons Relieved and Amount Received per Person at Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>92</sup>**

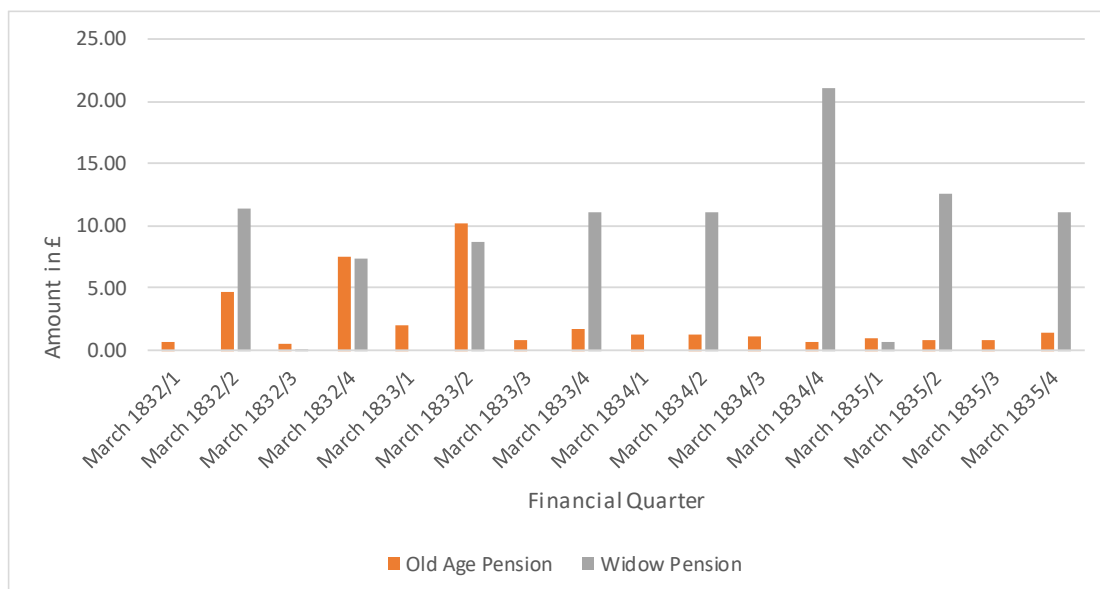
The significant fall in the cost of 'old age pensions' between 1833 and 1834 is easily explained by the reduction in the number of recipients from four to two. The low amount paid per person of £2.18 for 1834 is misleading because whilst most of the cost was for Old Webb, who received £4.10 for the year, Old Paveley received £0.25 in the first quarter, so this distorted the average. The 'widows' pension' costs per person were fairly consistent for 1832, 1833 and 1835 but the cost per person rose in 1834, by over 10% on average for the other three years.

The analysis of the 'pension other' and 'child pension' categories showed the trend that the overseers' accounts usually showed total values for these semi-annually in the second and fourth quarters accounts, even though they had been paid weekly. The following bar chart provides the distribution of costs for 'old age and widows pensions' by financial quarter, which demonstrates the same approach was adopted for these categories of relief.

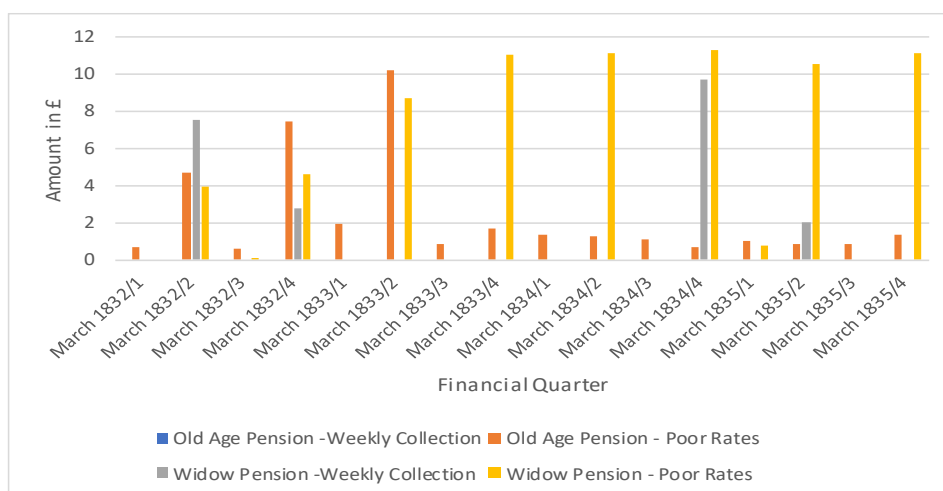
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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.





**Chart 5.28: 'Old Age and Widows Pensions' at Woodham Walter by Quarter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>93</sup>**



**Chart 5.29: 'Old Age and Widows Pensions' at Woodham Walter Split by Fund by Financial Quarter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>94</sup>**

Chart 5.29 presents a very different picture from that seen for 'pension other' and 'child pensions'. All of the 'old age pensions' of £36.69 were paid from the poor rates, not the weekly collection, and £73.25 of the £95.33 'widows' pensions' was also paid from the poor rate fund. There is no obvious reason, that can be discerned from this summary, why the vestry members chose to fund these two categories of

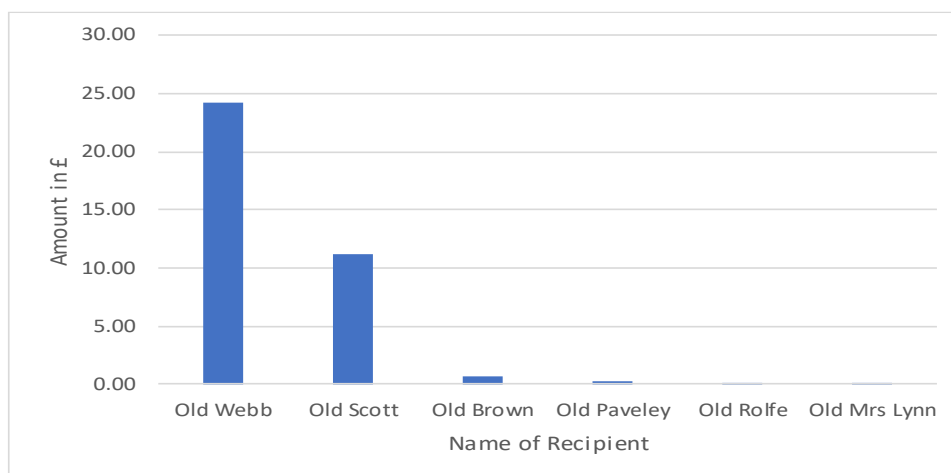
<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

relief predominantly from the poor rates, although it is clear that they were prepared to use this fund and the weekly collection in concert when economic circumstances required. For example, they used both of these funds in the fourth quarter of 1834, when the requirement for ‘widows’ pensions’ was at its highest.

The overseers’ accounts for ‘old age and widows’ pensions’ followed a similar pattern of recording to that of the weekly collection, even when making payments from the poor rates, insofar as they provided summary figures semi-annually. This was presumably for convenience because the majority of payments did not vary weekly. The overall impression from these analyses by financial quarter was that ‘old age and ‘widows’ pensions’ were treated in similar fashion to ‘pension other’ and ‘child pensions’, if these categories are considered purely in terms of the payment distribution. The greater use of the poor rates to fund them shows that they were considered differently by the parish vestry. To improve the insight into this issue and also to understand the reasons for the increase in ‘widows’ pensions’ in 1834, ‘old age and widows’ pensions’ have also been analysed by individual.

The following bar chart shows the ‘old age pensions’ by individual, sorted in the order of amount received in descending order.



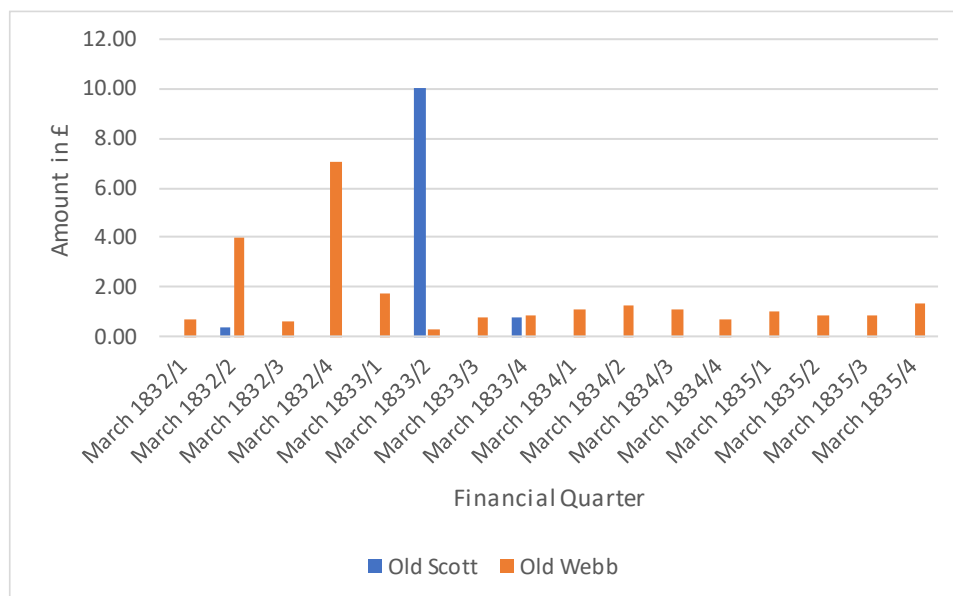
**Chart 5.30: ‘Old Age Pensions’ Received per Person at Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>95</sup>**

There were only two significant recipients of ‘old age pensions’ during the period – Old Webb and Old Scott. The other four people all received less than £1 and this must be considered to have been minor relief provided on an ad hoc basis, presumably to cater for temporary crises. For example, Old Brown received two

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

payments, for 4s 6d and 8s 3d, in September 1831 and March 1832. These payments were sufficiently large that they probably covered multiple weeks, but Old Brown was clearly not reliant upon a pension from the parish for his subsistence for most of the period.<sup>96</sup>

The payments received by Old Webb and Old Scott have been analysed by financial quarter in order to determine if there was a consistent pattern for how these were made.



**Chart 5.31: ‘Old Age Pensions’ Payments to Old Scott and Old Webb at Woodham Walter by Financial Quarter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>97</sup>**

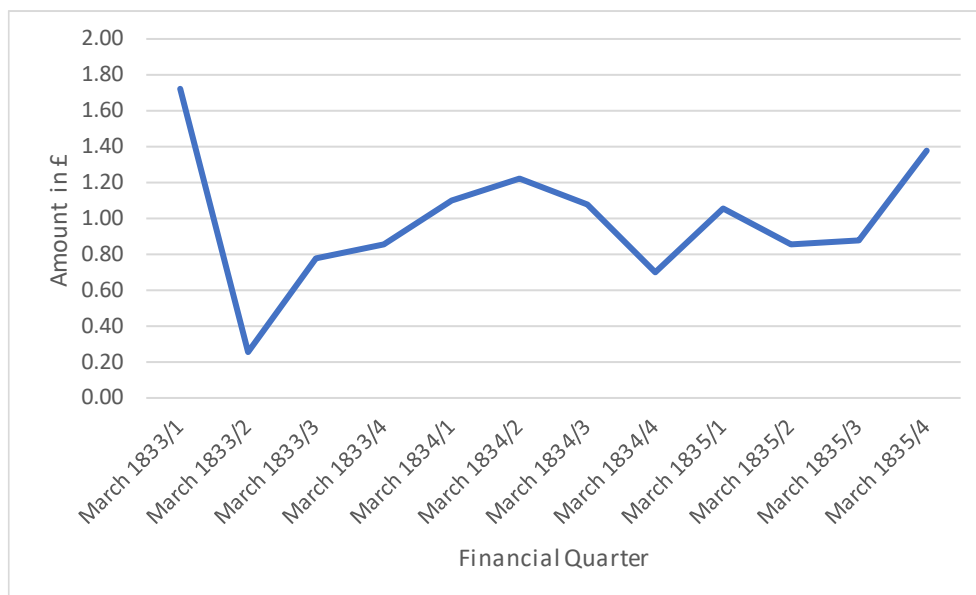
There were only three payments recorded for Old Scott and one of these was for the large sum of £10 in the second quarter of the 1833 financial year. The previous payment made to him was for 8s the previous year, so it seems likely that the £10 represented the total relief he had received during that period. This would have equated to a little less than 4s a week, higher than would be expected for a single person, but the specific circumstances of Old Scott are not known so it is possible that he was married, and the payment was recorded in his name only.

Similarly, a large payment of £7.08 was made to Old Webb in the fourth quarter of 1832 and again it seems likely that this was for the total relief received for the previous year. The overseers’ accounts contain only these two examples of large

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

payments for 'old age pensions' and after the one to Old Scott payments were recorded on a quarterly basis. These were all made to Old Webb from the first quarter of the 1833 financial year and varied every quarter between £1.73 in the first quarter of 1833 to £0.25 for the second quarter of the same year. The following line graph shows the volatility of these payments very clearly.



**Chart 5.32: 'Old Age Pensions' Payments to Old Webb at Woodham Walter by Financial Quarter for the Years 1833 to 1835.<sup>98</sup>**

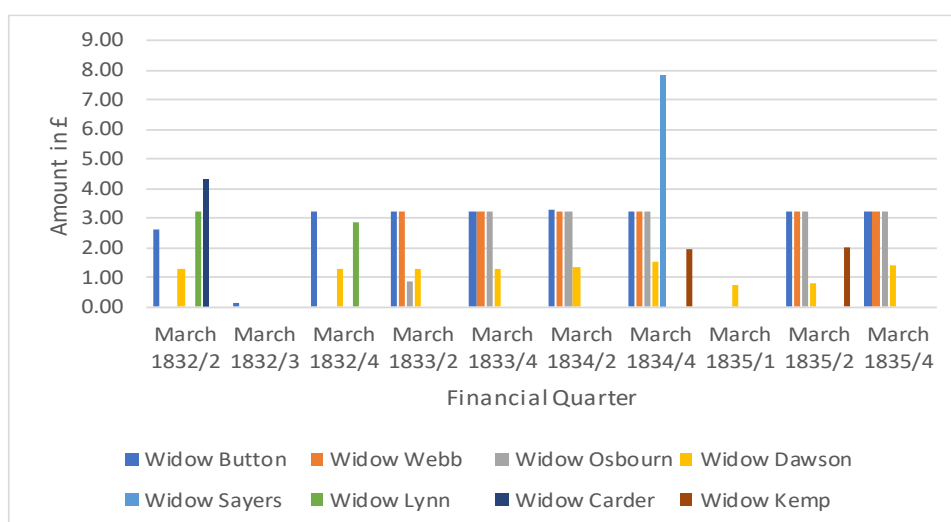
The ad hoc nature of relief provided to all of the old people, except Old Webb, during the period, coupled with the volatility of the payments made to Old Webb, provides some insight into why the vestry relieved this category from the poor rates rather than the weekly collection. The payments were clearly made with the intention of providing relief on a temporary basis or to supplement other sources of support. For example, even for Old Webb, who received some level of relief for most of the period, the relief provided would have been insufficient for him to subsist. Consequently, it is probable that the vestry assumed that old people's families, or some other source, would support them for most of the time. So, perhaps 'old age pensions' could be described more aptly as 'old age support'.

Old Webb (James) was eighty-five years of age in 1841, so it is unlikely that he was able to engage in sufficient manual work to be able to support himself and would therefore have had to rely upon support from his family and other sources.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

The regularity of the relief payments to Old Webb probably reflected the fact that this was insufficient support for him to survive without additional poor relief from the parish.<sup>99</sup> The 1841 census two other persons with the name of Webb: Mary Webb, who was thirty-four in 1831 and Thomas Webb, who was five. Both of these people were bracketed with James, whose occupation was shown as an agricultural labourer, so it appears they were related, although the precise relationship is unknown.

As noted earlier, ‘widows’ pensions’ were sometimes paid from the weekly collection, but the majority were paid from the poor rate. This gives rise to the question of whether it is possible to discern any difference between the two types of payments. The following bar chart shows the widows pensions for the period split by financial quarter.



**Chart 5.33: ‘Widows Pensions’ by Quarter at Woodham Walter for the Years 1833 to 1835.<sup>100</sup>**

Taking the examples of Widows Button, Webb, Dawson and Osborn, they all received regular pensions between the second quarter of 1833 and the fourth quarter of 1835. However, all of these payments were made from the poor rate not the weekly collection. This is despite the fact that they were consistent and regular, so if they had followed the pattern shown for ‘child pensions’ and ‘pension other’, would have been paid from the weekly collection. However, two further widows, Sayers and Kemp, did and these payments are summarised in the following table.

<sup>99</sup> TNA, HO 107/327.

<sup>100</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

Financial Quarter	Name	Amount
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 1834	Widow Sayers	£7 16s
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 1834	Widow Kemp	£1 19s
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter 1835	Widow Kemp	£2 0s 6d

**Table 5.19: ‘Widows Pensions’ at Woodham Walter Paid from the Weekly Collection Between the Second Quarter 1833 and the Fourth Quarter 1835.<sup>101</sup>**

The overseers’ accounts did not specify how many weeks Widows Sayers and Kemp were paid; but they were clearly for half a year or more, particularly so for Widow Sayers. Thus, these payments were similar to the payments made to Widow Button et al. insofar as they were not ad hoc. There is no obvious explanation of why the vestry decided to pay four widows their pension from the poor rate and two from the weekly collection. Based upon the previously observed usage of the weekly collection it is possible that there was some convention which informed the vestry’s decision which is not discernible from the data available. Nevertheless, examination of ‘old age and widows’ pensions’ has revealed that the parish vestry was prepared to support the poor in these two categories, even at times when the funds available were stretched.

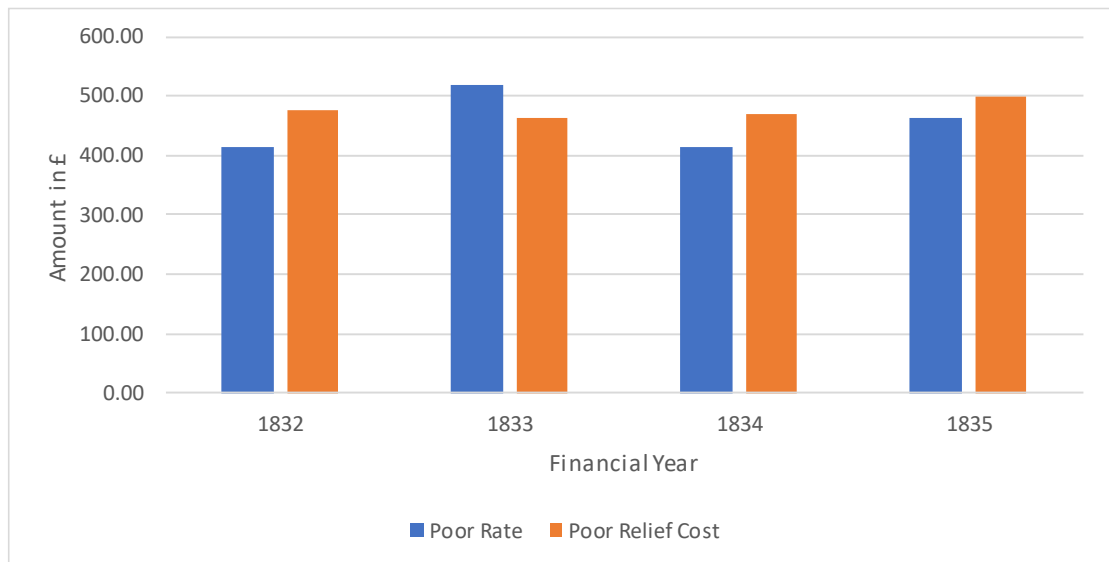
### *5.7 Funds Raised to Pay the Woodham Walter Poor, 1832-1835*

To complete this overall impression of a parish which was generous but financially aware, it is important to consider the funds raised as well as what was spent. Poor relief expenditure, therefore, has been summarised by financial year and compared to the totals paid for the years 1832 and 1835.

It must be noted that payments that were not for poor relief, such as the County Rate, have been included in the poor relief cost in Chart 5.34 to ensure a like for like comparison to the funds raised. Costs exceeded expenditure in every year except 1833, because the overseers prepared the accounts on a cash basis and there were always some ratepayers who paid late.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.



**Chart 5.34: Poor Relief Funds Raised at Woodham Walter Compared to the Costs for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>102</sup>**

The calculation for the poor rate itself was based upon a value in the pound for the rental value of land within the parish.<sup>103</sup> Samantha Williams observed that the national average rate for 1813-15 was 3s 6d per annum, whilst the average for Bedfordshire was 35.5 % higher at 4s 4¼ d for the same period. She went on to state that this was also the case for other counties in the south-east of England, including Essex. Williams was commenting on a period that was just over fifteen years earlier than the one studied here for Woodham Walter, although her detailed table for Shefford showed that the Bedfordshire rate was still 4s in 1820.<sup>104</sup> Eastwood made a similar observation about Oxfordshire for the same period, where the rate was 4s 5d, some 39.7 % above the national average.<sup>105</sup> In his view, this higher level of relief was caused by the high number of workers that claimed outdoor relief.

The central sources did not provide a breakdown of the poor rate raised after 1815, but the returns made to Parliament published in 1818, provided the total monies raised by the poor rate for the years 1813-1815 and the total rateable value of land for each parish in England and Wales.<sup>106</sup> The easy availability of figures for

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> S. Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle Under the English Poor Law 1760-1834* (Woodbridge Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2011), p.70.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp.70-1.

<sup>105</sup> Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Tradition and Transformation in Local*, p.145.

<sup>106</sup> ProQuest, 1818 (82), Abridgement of Abstract of Answers and Returns relative to the Expence and Maintenance of the Poor of England and Wales.

this period is clearly the reason why both Williams and Eastwood cited them, but this was at the end of the Napoleonic war and the relief provided was generally higher during the war and immediately afterwards. Relief fell in the early 1820s and continued at this lower level until after the passage of the 1834 Act, as discussed above in Chapter 2.

The rates charged for Woodham Walter for the 1813-1815 period were as follows, based upon the annual rental value returned as at 1815 of £4,435.

Year	Rates in £	Rate charged per £ Rental Value	Rate Charged per £ Essex
1813	771	3s 5½d	4s 9½d
1814	643	2s 9d	4s 3½d
1815	666	3s	3s 6½d

**Table 5.20: Poor Rates for Woodham Walter for the Years 1813 to 1815.**<sup>107</sup>

The poor rate in the pound for Essex was higher than the national average for the period so it may be regarded as a generally high spending county as Williams suggested. For Woodham Walter, the average rate of 3s 1d was lower than that for Essex as a whole for each of these years and also lower than the Essex average of 4s 2½d. So, the parish was an outlier for not only the county but also nationally.

For the years 1832 to 1835, the poor rates per pound for Woodham Walter have been summarised in Table 5.21. As noted above, the rates charged had fallen from £771 in 1813 to the range of £413 to £518 between 1832 and 1835, but the amount charged in the pound rose from less than 3s per pound in 1814 to 5s per pound in 1833. This means that the annual rental value of the land within Woodham Walter must have fallen from the £4,435 reported in 1815 to less than half that value in 1832. The agricultural depression that had been experienced since the early 1820s had led to rent abatements by landowners to prevent farmers from bankruptcy and ensure some level of revenue for them. Comyns Parker, who was a successful land agent as well as being a lessee of farming land in several parishes, provided evidence of falling rents in his testimony to the Select Committee on Agriculture in 1836. As he was a rate payer in Woodham Walter, his testimony was particularly germane. He stated that the 'condition of farmers in his area was particularly bad'.

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.



As a consequence of reduced revenues this had led to rent abatements that ranged from 10% at the lower end to over 50% at the higher. Even then, many of these rent payments had been paid out of capital rather than from profit.<sup>108</sup>

Financial Year	Quarter	Rates in £ - Quarter	Rate Charged per £ Rental Value - Quarter	Rates in £ - Year	Rate Charged per £ Rental Value -Year
1832	1	-	-		
	2	155.18	1s 6d		
	3	155.18	1s 6d		
	4	103.45	1s	4s	413.73
1833	1	155.48	1s 6d		
	2	103.65	1s		
	3	155.48	1s 6d		
	4	103.65	1s	5s	518.26
1834	1				
	2	154.95	1s 6d		
	3	154.95	1s 6d		
	4	103.3	1s	4s	413.20
1835	1				
	2	154.35	1s 6d		
	3	159	1s 6d		
	4	159	1s 6d	4s 6d	462.15

**Table 5.21: Poor Rates for Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835, Analysed by Quarter and Annually.<sup>109</sup>**

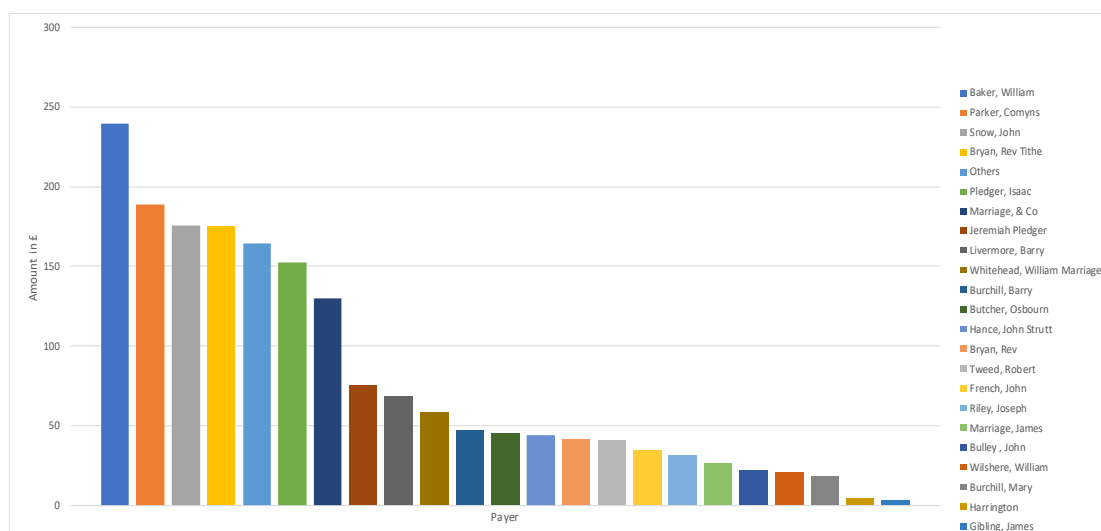
There were always more than 110 people listed as ratepayers in Woodham Walter, which represented around 20% of the population of the parish in 1831.<sup>110</sup> The majority of these were listed as having to pay the minimum amount of 3s and most of the rate was paid by only a few persons who rented large areas of the land. Unsurprisingly, these few were normally the senior members of the vestry and made

<sup>108</sup> J. Oxley Parker, *The Oxley Parker Papers* (Colchester: Benham and Company Ltd., 1964), pp. 139-40.

<sup>109</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

<sup>110</sup> ProQuest, 1833 (149).

the decisions about setting the level of rates and disbursement to the poor. The following chart provides a breakdown of the ratepayers who paid more than £1 during the period.



**Chart 5.35: Ratepayers at Woodham Walter who Paid More than £1 for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>111</sup>**

The Woodham Walter vestry was examined in detail in Chapter 3, but at this point it is helpful to again refer to the composition of the elite as shown in Table 5.22. It is apparent that only five of the top ratepayers were not members of the vestry. Of these four, one represented miscellaneous people who were not named individually. Two were for the Reverend Guy Bryan (split because of his personal contribution and that from church tithes collected), who was not listed in the vestry members but probably attended in his status as parish minister. John Strutt Hance was not listed, but was a member of the vestries of St. Peter and All Saints in Maldon, so may have been too busy to attend another vestry meeting. Finally, William Whitehead, had Marriage as one of his names so it seems possible that he was represented by one of the other Marriage family attendees.

The majority of the vestry members were farmers or part-time farmers, and the other occupation of miller was closely related to arable farming. So, it was clear that the people who mainly funded poor relief kept a tight control over how it was disbursed. They made the decisions that determined the balance between the economic need to support the labour force and their social conscience toward those

<sup>111</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3. All of the rate-payers who paid less than £1 during the period were grouped into the bar titled 'others.'

who needed relief but were not workers. Also, the vestry continually involved the Dengie magistrates in their decision making. Either Joseph Pattison or Charles Matthews, who were Justices of the Peace within the Dengie Division, provided their signed authority for every account summary within the overseers' accounts for the period.<sup>112</sup>

<b>Name</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Vestry Member</b>
Baker, William	Farmer	Yes
Bryan, Revd Guy	Vicar	No
Bryan, Revd Guy - Tithe	Vicar	No
Burchill, Barry	Farmer	Yes
Butcher, Osbourn	Farmer	Yes
French, John	Farmer	Yes
Hance, John Strutt	Independent Means and Farmer	No
Livermore, Barry	Farmer	Yes
Marriage & co	Miller	Yes
Marriage, James	Farmer	Yes
Miscellaneous, unnamed people	N/A	No
Parker, Comyns	Land Agent and Farmer	Yes
Pledger, Isaac	Farmer	Yes
Pledger, Jeremiah	Farmer	Yes
Riley, Joseph	Miller	Yes
Snow, John	Farmer	Yes
Tweed, Robert	Farmer	Yes
Whitehead, William Marriage	Unknown	No

**Table 5.22: Details of the Top Eighteen Rate Payers at Woodham Walter.**<sup>113</sup>

<sup>112</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

<sup>113</sup> ERO, D/P 201/8/1, Parish Records, Minutes of The Select Vestry (St. Peter's Maldon): 1818-1833; the occupations were established from: TNA, HO 107/345; ERO, D/B 3/10/5, Printed Poll Book for the Maldon Election of 1826; W. Robson, *Robson's Directory of the Home Counties* (London: Richard Studley, 1838), pp.75-8.

## 5.8 *The Culture of Relief in Woodham Walter*

The Woodham Walter overseers' accounts are extremely well organised and detailed. Analysis of these conveys the sense that the administration of poor relief in the parish was equally systematic. Whilst it is not possible to comprehend the reasons behind every payment made, the system followed appeared rational. People who were unable to fend for themselves in the long term were considered impotent and relief was provided from the notional 'weekly collection'. This recognised the tradition of relief and demonstrated the clear obligation that vestry members felt towards this class of the poor. The vestry also demonstrated that it was empathetic to specific circumstances, for example on the occasions when persons paid from the 'weekly collection' were provided with additional payments in the weekly disbursements. Also, the administrators sometimes displayed generosity, beyond relief just for subsistence, in the form of 'paid benefits' and assistance for the sick.

The overall impression, therefore, is one where the parish elite ensured at least subsistence living for the wider population implemented through a methodical approach sophisticated enough to adapt to changing social circumstances. Whilst the allowance system was evidently a mainstay of the micro-economy of Woodham Walter, the generosity of the vestry extended beyond this and regular additional payments were made for sundry items of support such as shoes, clothing and fuel. These payments were scaled back at times of economic stress such as 1834 and 1835, but they were often made to the same people who received allowances in support of wages. Tomkins' research suggested that 'there was no stable relationship between the poor who were taking regular weekly or monthly relief and the people who received occasional monies for rent, fuel and other necessaries'.<sup>114</sup> Yet, Tomkins was studying the eighteenth century and urban parishes as opposed to an agricultural parish in the first half of the nineteenth century, so it is not a like for like comparison. It does suggest, though, that Woodham Walter was a parish that displayed generosity when it was financially capable of doing so.

The major ratepayers were also the employers of those who received support from the system of allowances in support of wages. Significant provision was made for those who were unable to work. The total expenditure on the categories of 'pension other', 'child pensions', 'widows' pensions' and 'old age pensions' for the

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<sup>114</sup> A. Tomkins, 'The experience of urban poverty – a comparison of Oxford and Shrewsbury 1740 to 1770' (DPhil Thesis, Oxford University, 1994); chapter 4 suggests that 'medical relief', broadly defined, was not typically distributed to dependent parish paupers; quoted in King and Tomkins, 'Introduction – Historiography of Parish Poor Relief', pp.5, 32.

years 1832 to 1835 was over £584. This was more than what was spent on allowances to the able-bodied and represented almost 44.5 % of the expenditure on pure poor relief.

Nevertheless, relief provision was sensitive to economic change. When prices fell, particularly that of wheat, profits were reduced as discussed Chapter 4. When this occurred, 'allowances to the able-bodied' increased because farmers were unable to hire as many workers or possibly pay them as much. The payment of 'allowances to the able-bodied' was a fundamental part of the local economy. Between 1832 and 1835 over fifty people received outdoor relief per financial year, so almost two thirds of the eighty-two families employed in agriculture were in some way dependent upon them.<sup>115</sup> Analysis of the payments made for this relief category showed that they were adjusted frequently and that this was probably because they were made based upon a commonly used allowance scale. Also, it is evident that the vestry was not prepared to increase the poor rate to provide the funds to make these additional payments. This inelasticity was likely to have been because the vestry members understood, better than anybody, they could not afford to incur additional cost. In these circumstances, relief payments beyond those required for subsistence were pared back to ensure the books balanced.

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<sup>115</sup> ProQuest 1833 (149).

## 6 Maldon's Urban Economy and the Relief of the Poor

As was discussed for Woodham Walter in Chapter 5, overall poor relief expenditure could be maintained at a fairly consistent level in adverse circumstances, and the same situation will now be analysed for the Maldon parish of St. Peter. Chapter 5 identified three main principles that the parish vestry adopted in the administration of relief. These were, firstly, that there was a category of relief for the 'impotent' that was mainly paid from relief funds called the weekly collection. Secondly, when there was a requirement to increase relief to the able-bodied other forms of relief payment were reduced. Thirdly, that the overall level of relief paid was maintained at a consistent level despite cost fluctuations for individual categories of relief.

Whilst Woodham Walter was a parish with an economy based upon agriculture, the economy of St. Peter was more mixed and urbanised. Agriculture existed alongside other activities including maritime trade, manufacturing, mercantilism, finance and professional services.<sup>1</sup> The important question is, therefore, whether the more diverse economic profile of St. Peter influenced the vestry in adopting a different approach towards relieving the poor. Or, alternatively, whether there were social and economic links between the two parishes that caused them to operate in similar ways.

St. Peter lies adjacent to Woodham Walter and is the largest of the three parishes within the borough of Maldon. The living was the vicarage of All Saints, 'with that of St. Peter annexed', valued in the king's books at £10 with a net income of £319 per annum.<sup>2</sup> The 1831 census stated that the population was 1,870, spilt across 303 families. Of these, 66 were employed in agriculture (so almost 22%), 121 (nearly 40%) in trade or manufacturing and 116 (approximately 38%) in other occupations. Maldon's occupational diversity was reflected by the composition of the vestry between 1831 and 1835, when there were thirty occupations across the vestry members compared to just seven within Woodham Walter where most of the members were farmers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J.R. Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800: a Golden Age* (Studley: Brewin Books, 2013), pp.150-346.

<sup>2</sup> S. Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of England, Volume III* (London: S. Lewis & Co., 1844), pp.209-210.

<sup>3</sup> ProQuest, 1833 (149). Members of the St. Peter vestry were ascertained from: ERO, D/P 201/8/1,2, St. Peter's Vestry Minutes, 1818-1901; Members of the Woodham Walter vestry were ascertained from: ERO, D/P 201/12/3, Overseers' Accounts, 1830-1835 Occupations

St. Peter operated in close collaboration with the other two Maldon parishes regarding poor relief administration. In April 1829 vestry members had agreed to establish a select vestry for St. Peter, All Saints and St. Mary, under the provisions of the Sturges Bourne Act of 1819.<sup>4</sup> The development was possibly intended to enable easier management of the Maldon poorhouse by a combined vestry.<sup>5</sup> The members of the vestry were often involved with the government of Maldon as a borough town, and it seems likely that the aims and objectives they held in common in this role would also have made them supportive of a common approach towards the relief of the poor.

### 6.1 Overview of St. Peter's Overseers' Accounts

As with Woodham Walter, detailed overseers' accounts exist for St. Peter. Day book accounts for the period 1811 to 1833, which listed disbursements and receipts in date order, comprise tens of thousands of items even when restricted to the years 1832 to 1835 (the period analysed).<sup>6</sup> There were no accounting period summaries by financial period, so their use would have prevented the reconciliation of the detailed analysis with the accounts that were signed off by the vestry officials. Instead, the following analysis has been based upon the overseers' ledger for the period 1829 to 1835 which does provide the raw material in a form that allowed for a similar methodological approach to that used to analyse Woodham Walter's overseers' accounts.<sup>7</sup>

The general ledger provided all the disbursements in detail, but also gave a summary for each financial half year. Additionally, it contains detailed accounts by individual relief recipient and the categories of weekly allowances, the poorhouse and clothing. Each of these accounts had a folio number and the total for each period was reflected in the general ledger with the folio number provided as a reference. For example, John Overall received £13 6s 6d in the financial half year which ended in Michaelmas 1832 and this was posted to the general ledger with the folio number 222.<sup>8</sup> However, items that were: payments to suppliers, administrative costs, rates, constable costs etc., appeared in the general ledger individually. There

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were established from: TNA, HO 107/345; ERO, D/B 3/10/5, Printed Poll Book for the Maldon Election of 1826; W. Robson, *Robson's Directory of the Home Counties* (London: Richard Studley, 1838), pp.75-8.

<sup>4</sup> ERO, D/P 201/8/1, Minutes of the Select Vestry for the Maldon Parishes 1829-30.

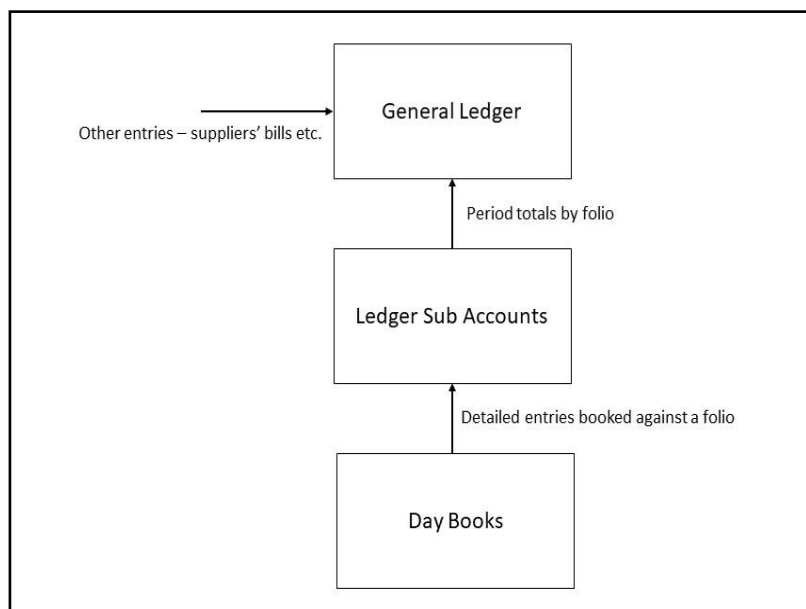
<sup>5</sup> Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800*, pp. 362-4.

<sup>6</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/6,7,8, St. Peter's Accounts, 1811-1833.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, D/P 201/12/9, St. Peter's Overseers' Account Ledger, 1811-1833.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

were also some ad hoc relief items posted to the general ledger directly rather than through a subordinate account. To clarify the above description of the overseers' accounts the following shows their structure diagrammatically.



**Diagram 6.1: The Structure of St. Peter's Overseers' Accounts.<sup>9</sup>**

All of the items from the ledger for the years 1832 to 1835 were input into an Excel spreadsheet and classified using the categories described in Chapter 5, with additional categories of: 'borough rate', 'county gaol', 'people on the tramp/pass', 'suppliers bills' and 'weekly allowances'. For analyses that required a finer grain of detail than was available from the general ledger, such as for individual relief recipients, the sub accounts were used.

Entries were assigned to the new categories based upon the entry description from the overseers' general ledger, except for those which were listed as the payments of bills from suppliers. For the latter disbursements, the supplier names from the ledger were used to create a list used as a dropdown for the input sheet, to ensure that they were captured consistently. Then to enable categorisation of these payments, the types of the suppliers' businesses were added to the list of names. Categories were assigned to each business type and accordingly the ledger entries were classified based upon the following table. Where the relief category

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., ERO, D/P 201/12/6,7,8, St. Peter's Accounts, 1811-1833.



could not be clearly determined from the trade of the supplier, it was given that of 'suppliers bills' i.e. was considered some form of poor relief provided by a supplier to the parish.

<b>Trade/Profession</b>	<b>Assigned Category/Sub-Category</b>
Baker	'Paid benefit'/'Food'
Basket Maker	'Suppliers' Bills'
Bookseller	'Suppliers' Bills'
Bootmaker	'Paid benefit'/'Shoes'
Blacksmith	'Suppliers' Bills'
Brewer	'Paid benefit'/'Drink'
Bricklayer	'Suppliers' Bills'
Cabinet Maker	'Suppliers' Bills'
Carpenter	'Suppliers' Bills'
Chemist	'Illness Physical'
Clerk	'Relief Administration'
Coal Merchant	'Paid benefit'/'Fuel'
Cooper	'Suppliers' Bills'
Corn Merchant	'Paid benefit'/'Food'
Currier	'Suppliers' Bills'
Draper	'Suppliers' Bills'
Farmer	'Paid benefit'/'Food'
Gaoler	'County Gaol'
Grocer	'Paid benefit'/'Food'
Hairdresser	'Paid benefit'/'Other'
Hatter	'Paid benefit'/'Clothing'
Husbandman	'Paid benefit'/'Food'
Ironmonger	'Suppliers' Bills'
Lawyer	'Relief Administration'
Merchant	'Suppliers' Bills'
Miller	'Paid benefit'/'Food'
Plumber	'Suppliers' Bills'
Publican	'Suppliers' Bills'
Sawyer	'Suppliers' Bills'
Shipwright	'Suppliers' Bills'
Soap Manufacturer	'Suppliers' Bills'

Surgeon	'Illness Physical'
Tailor	'Paid benefit'/'Clothing'
Teacher	'Suppliers' Bills'
Timber Merchant	'Suppliers' Bills'
Unknown	'Suppliers' Bills'
Victualler	'Suppliers' Bills'
Vicar	'Suppliers' Bills'
Wine Merchant	'Paid benefit'/'Drink'
Workhouse Master	'Poorhouse Costs'

**Table 6.1: St. Peter, Maldon, Categorisation of Suppliers Bills.<sup>10</sup>**

The approach described above has allowed the accounts to be analysed using Excel pivot tables, as they were for Woodham Walter. One limitation to the analysis has been that the sub accounts for the 'weekly allowance' category (termed 'weekly collection' in Woodham Walter) did not provide any detail of the individuals relieved, just the weekly amount. Consequently, it was not possible to determine the specific categories of relief within the weekly allowances.

## *6.2 The Overall Pattern of Relief for St. Peter, Maldon*

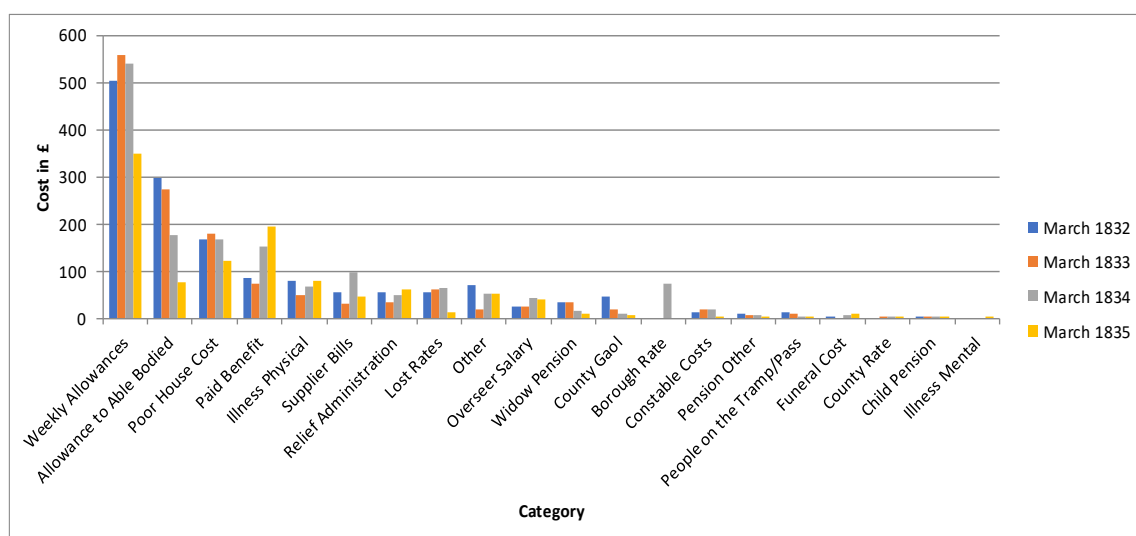
Table 6.2 provides the breakdown of disbursements from the overseers' accounts for the period. It has been provided in addition to Chart 6.1 because it provides the totals by year and category along with the percentage of the total for each category (not shown on the bar chart). Inclusion of the totals on the bar chart would have required the use of a higher point at the top of the vertical axis and would therefore have made it less clear, particularly for the lower value categories.

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<sup>10</sup> ERO, D/P 201/8/1, Parish Records, Minutes of The Select Vestry St. Peter's Maldon, 1818-1833. The occupations were established from: TNA, HO 107/345; ERO, D/B 3/10/5, Printed Poll Book for the Maldon Election of 1826; W. Robson, *Robson's Directory of the Home Counties* (London: Richard Studley, 1838), pp.75-8.

	Financial Years Ending				Totals	% of Total
	March 1832	March 1833	March 1834	March 1835		
Weekly Allowances	504	558	539	350	1,951	35.24
Allowance to Able Bodied	298	272	176	78	824	14.88
Poor House Cost	166	181	167	122	637	11.50
Paid Benefit	87	74	152	195	507	9.16
Illness Physical	79	50	68	78	275	4.97
Supplier Bills	56	32	97	45	230	4.15
Relief Administration	56	33	50	61	200	3.61
Lost Rates	56	63	64	14	197	3.56
Other	71	19	53	53	195	3.53
Overseer Salary	26	26	45	40	136	2.46
Widow Pension	33	35	17	9	94	1.70
County Gaol	46	19	10	7	82	1.47
Borough Rate	0	0	75	0	75	1.36
Constable Costs	12	20	18	5	55	0.99
Pension Other	11	6	6	5	28	0.51
People on the Tramp/Pass	12	9	2	4	27	0.48
Funeral Cost	1	0	6	11	18	0.33
County Rate	0	2	0	0	3	0.06
Child Pension	1	0	1	1	3	0.05
Illness Mental	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,514</b>	<b>1,399</b>	<b>1,546</b>	<b>1,079</b>	<b>5,538</b>	<b>100.00</b>

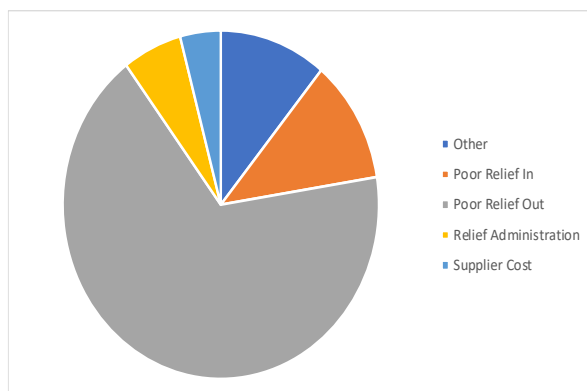
**Table 6.2: St. Peter's Overseers' Accounts Disbursements by Category for the Years 1832-1835.<sup>11</sup>**



**Chart 6.1: St. Peter's, Maldon, Overseers' Accounts Disbursements by Category for the Years 1832-1835.**

<sup>11</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/9.

The detailed cost categories shown in Chart 4 were allocated to super categories to provide a higher-level profile. The super category of 'supplier cost' was created – many of the line items within this category clearly related to poor relief, such as doctors' bills, so they have not been categorised as 'other'.



**Chart 6.2: The Analysis of St. Peter, Maldon, Overseers' Accounts by Super Category for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>12</sup>**

The following table compares the percentage split by super category for St. Peter and Woodham Walter to provide an overall impression of whether the patterns of relief were similar or not.

	St Peter %	Woodham Walter %
Other	10.96	31.12
Poor Relief In	11.49	0.72
Poor Relief Out	67.32	65.67
Relief Administration	6.07	2.49
Supplier Cost	4.15	0.00

**Table 6.3: Comparison of the Percentage Distribution by Super Category for St. Peter, Maldon, and Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>13</sup>**

The percentages for out relief, the largest super category of relief for both parishes, diverged by less than 2%, so it is evident that there was some degree of similarity. The percentages of the relief expenditure for all the other super categories

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., ERO, D/P/101/12/3, Woodham Walter Overseers' Accounts 1830-35.

were proportionally somewhat different and these will be analysed in more detail later in the chapter.

A key question is whether these high-level figures were different from those reported to Parliament. The super category of 'other' may have partially explained any differences in the figures reported to the government and those recorded in the accounts, because it was not relief of the poor. Only 10.96% was recorded for this category in St. Peter, whereas it was 31.12% for Woodham Walter, so it might be expected that St. Peter's central returns would be closer to the numbers in the overseers' accounts than those for Woodham Walter. Table 6.4 provides a comparison between the central and local records for the two parishes, showing the figures from the overseers' accounts both with and without items categorised as 'other'.

The numbers from St. Peter's accounts show that they were indeed closer to those from the central returns when 'other' items are subtracted for every year when central figures are available. Conversely, it was only in 1832 that Woodham Walter's numbers were closer to the central records when 'other' was excluded. Table 6.4 therefore suggests that there is no straightforward way of determining how the local accounts can be reconciled with the returns that were made to Parliament and adds weight to the critical analysis of central records in Chapter 2.

Year Ending	St. Peter					Woodham Walter				
	Central Return £	Full Amount - Local Accounts £	Local Accounts Less Other Category £	Difference Between Central and Local £	Percentage Difference %	Central Return £	Full Amount - Local Accounts £	Local Accounts Less Other Category £	Difference Between Central and Local £	Percentage Difference %
March 1832	1,349	1,514	1,330	19	1.41	387	477	320	67	17.31
March 1833	1,170	1,399	1,276	-106	-9.06	417	464	331	86	20.62
March 1834	1,070	1,546	1,325	-255	-23.83	403	470	326	77	19.11
March 1835	N/A	1,079	1,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	499	339	N/A	N/A

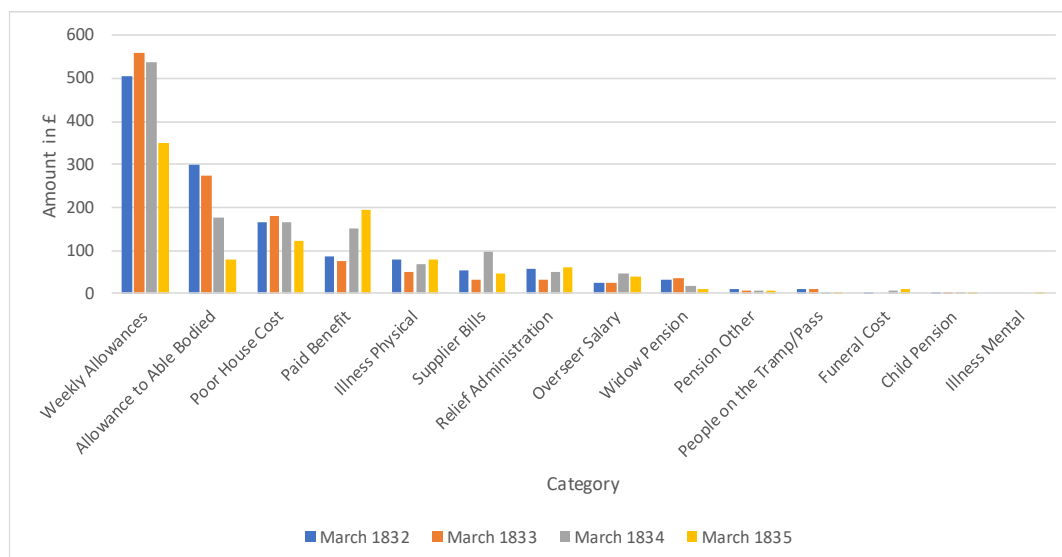
**Table 6.4: Comparison of the Annual Poor Relief from Central Sources for St. Peter and Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>14</sup>**

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. The poor relief expenditure figures from 1830 to 1834, have been taken from parliamentary returns: ProQuest, 1830-31 (83), Poor Rate Returns, 1835 (444). No data is available from parliamentary returns for the year 1835, probably because following the 1834 Act the new system for poor relief was supposed to be operational even though this clearly was not the case for some parishes.

The same exclusion of the category 'other' was also applied to the more fine-grained analysis by category to provide a picture of the breakdown that was not skewed by non-poor relief numbers. The following table and bar chart summarise this by financial year.

	Financial Year Ending				Totals	% of Total
	March 1832	March 1833	March 1834	March 1835		
Weekly Allowances	504	558	539	350	1951	39.57
Allowance to Able Bodied	298	272	176	78	824	16.71
Poor House Cost	166	181	167	122	637	12.91
Paid Benefit	87	74	152	195	507	10.29
Illness Physical	79	50	68	78	275	5.58
Supplier Bills	56	32	97	45	230	4.66
Relief Administration	56	33	50	61	200	4.05
Overseer Salary	26	26	45	40	136	2.76
Widow Pension	33	35	17	9	94	1.91
Pension Other	11	6	6	5	28	0.58
People on the Tramp/Pass	12	9	2	4	27	0.54
Funeral Cost	1	0	6	11	18	0.37
Child Pension	1	0	1	1	3	0.05
Illness Mental				0	0	0.01
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1330</b>	<b>1276</b>	<b>1325</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>4931</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 6.5: St. Peter's Overseers' Accounts Disbursements by Category with the Category of Other Excluded for the Years 1832-1835.<sup>15</sup>**



**Chart 6.3: St. Peter's, Maldon, Overseers' Accounts Disbursements by Category, Excluding 'Other' for the Years 1832-1835.**

<sup>15</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/9.

For the years 1832 to 1834 the total expenditure per annum was fairly consistent, but this was not the case for 1835. For that year the relief cost was almost 24% lower than it had been for the previous one. For the two major categories of relief it was lower by around 35% for the 'weekly allowances' and over 55% for 'allowances to the able-bodied'. Thus, the trend at St. Peter for outdoor relief payments to working men was the opposite of the sharp rise that occurred in this category in Woodham Walter. It seems implausible that this reduction in relief took place because there was a lower requirement, so it is important to consider what may have occurred.

The timing of the reduction, which followed the 1834 Act passing into law, suggests that the payments may have been lower because some of these were provided by the new Maldon Union. Nevertheless, this seems unlikely because the first meeting of the Board of Guardians was not held until December 1835, after the close of the financial year in March 1835.<sup>16</sup> The processes necessary to administer the provision of poor relief were developed over several meetings of the board, so it would not have been in any position to provide relief until approximately a year after the 1835 financial year end.

The rates that were raised for the 1835 calendar year amounted to over £462, compared to £413 for the previous year.<sup>17</sup> So, it was clear that the ratepayers were still paying their dues for the poor and it therefore seems probable that the poor were being relieved somehow. The vestry minutes provided some indication that poor relief was provided in addition to the disbursements recorded in the overseers' accounts, which had been approved by the poor law commissioners. For example, in the select vestry meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> September 1834 it was recorded that 'the overseers are desired not to attend to any orders that may be given by magistrates for relief, except to poor persons not settled nor usually residing in the parish. Also, at the same meeting there were several references to payments that were recommended by the vestry, but which required the additional approval of the poor law commissioners.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, it seems likely that some form of interim accounting record was maintained, which unfortunately has not been preserved, and that this could explain the low level of relief recorded in the overseers' accounts for the financial year ending in March 1835.

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<sup>16</sup> ERO, G/M M1A, Minutes of the Maldon Union Board of Guardians.

<sup>17</sup> ERO, D DOp/B39/57, Summary of the Annual Poor Rates.

<sup>18</sup> ERO, D/P 201/8/2, Minutes of the Combined Select Vestry of St. Peter, All Saints and St. Mary.

A significant difference in the distribution of relief compared to Woodham Walter was that the highest category of cost was for 'weekly allowances'. Although this category was not broken down by individual or specific relief category it may reasonably be assumed that it was for the relief of the impotent and would therefore have covered 'child, 'pension other', 'widows' pensions' and 'old age pensions'. There were also ad hoc payments shown in the ledger for these types of relief and if the percentages paid for each of these are added to the 39.09% for weekly allowances, this shows that almost 43.75% of relief was paid to the vulnerable, close to the 39.82% for the same categories in Woodham Walter.<sup>19</sup>

'Allowances to the able-bodied' was the second highest category of relief at 16.71% of the total, compared to 31.29% for Woodham Walter (where it had been the highest category). It seems reasonable to expect that the mixed economy of St. Peter would have been less sensitive to seasonal fluctuations of the farming economy than Woodham Walter and that this was the reason for the difference. Nevertheless, these allowances were still a significant part of the relief system. The category will be considered in detail later in this chapter, but it is worth noting that this type of relief must still have been considered appropriate by the vestry even though indoor relief was a more realistic possibility in Maldon than it was for Woodham Walter.

Woodham Walter had only a small poorhouse and the vestry found it impractical to provide indoor relief for most claimants.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, there was a larger poorhouse in Maldon which had been established in the early eighteenth century from funds bequeathed by Dr. Thomas Plume. This served the three parishes in Maldon and continued to operate after the 1834 Act, until a new facility was built in 1873.<sup>21</sup> Clearly, this offered greater capacity for indoor relief than was available to the Woodham Walter vestry and this was reflected by almost 13% of St. Peter's expenditure on poor relief taking the form of indoor relief.

The sum of £27 paid to 'people on the tramp/pass' during the period represented less than 1% of the total, but it is instructive. It demonstrates that the parish attracted non-resident paupers, perhaps attracted by opportunities provided by its relatively diverse economy. Also, that the vestry was prepared to provide allowances, albeit at a low level, to such strangers. Despite the low financial impact

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<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>20</sup> P.M. Ryan, *Woodham Walter: A Village History* (Maldon: The Plume Press, 1989), p.61.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800*, pp. 362-4; P. Edmond, *Maldon Workhouse, 1719-1875* (Heybridge: M. Edmond, 1999), p.39.



of payments made to 'people on the tramp/pass', this category of relief will be considered in more detail later in the chapter for these reasons.

### 6.3 *Payments to Suppliers*

The role of local suppliers in the provision of goods and services, as a part of providing relief to the poor, was also an important characteristic of the parish's economic and social culture because of the close links that existed between local poverty, commerce and government. The general ledger listed payments to eighty-three different suppliers for the years 1832 to 1835. All the entries gave the name of the supplier, but only occasionally the details of what the payment was for, so the methodology described earlier was used to assign categories to suppliers' payments. Table 6.6 provides the breakdown by trade/profession for the whole period. Over a quarter of the payments were to surgeons and have been categorised as 'illness physical'. The second highest amount was for legal services. This cost was categorised as 'relief administration' and represented approximately three quarters of the value of this category. It represented approximately 4% of the total relief paid for the period for St. Peter compared to only 0.54% for Woodham Walter. The higher percentage may have been caused by the more diversified community of St. Peter producing more circumstances when legal intervention was required. Later in this chapter the Maldon quarter sessions records will be considered to see if they provide further evidence of what caused the difference between the two parishes.

The quarter sessions records will also be used to determine why people from the parish were sent to gaol. Payments to suppliers for gaoling people was the third highest category at over £81 and was therefore significant. This cost was given its own relief category because it suggested a level of confrontation existed between the elite and the populace not identified in Woodham Walter. There were two suppliers who were identified as gaolers in the accounts – Mr. Brown and Mr. Clark. Both individuals had other occupations, Brown was a farrier and Clark was a bootmaker, but payments to them were classified on their work described in the ledger.<sup>22</sup> The remainder of the payments were allocated across the categories of 'paid benefit', 'suppliers bills' and 'poorhouse cost'. The total amount of relief excepting the first three categories was over £540 and demonstrated a generous

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. Robson, *Robson's Directory*, pp.75-8.

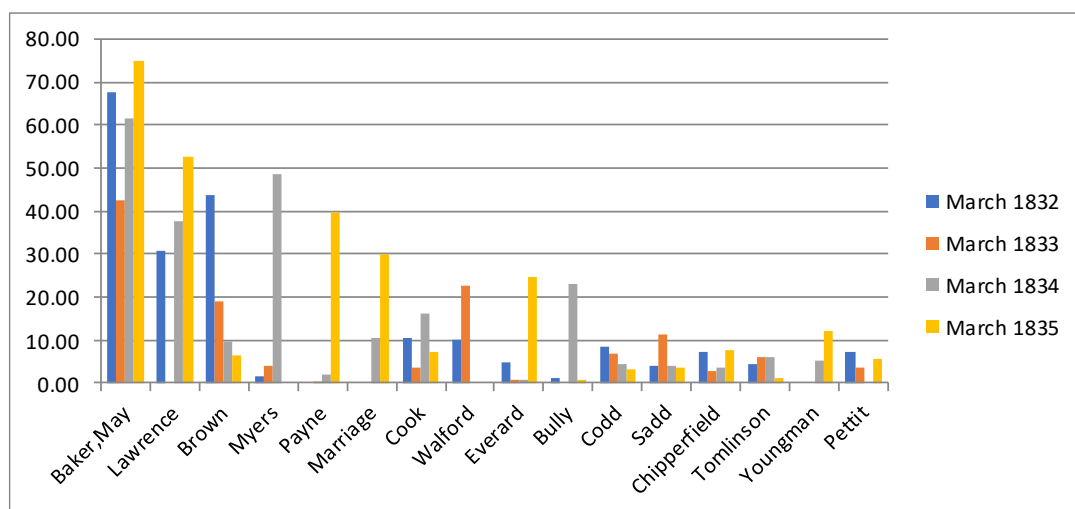
contribution towards the relief of the poor, over and above the payments made through pensions and 'allowances to the able-bodied'.

Trade	Amount in £	Percentage of Total
Surgeon	270.91	25.84
Lawyer	153.45	14.64
Gaoler	81.62	7.79
Unknown	78.80	7.52
Carpenter	67.43	6.43
Bootmaker	61.49	5.87
Merchant	43.08	4.11
Miller	40.45	3.86
Clerk	32.63	3.11
Grocer	28.75	2.74
Tailor	27.84	2.66
Baker	23.49	2.24
Timber Merchant	22.71	2.17
Bookseller	17.43	1.66
Hairdresser	16.80	1.60
Currier	11.07	1.06
Publican	10.89	1.04
Ironmonger	10.28	0.98
Brewer	7.43	0.71
Bricklayer	7.20	0.69
Blacksmith	4.46	0.43
Cabinet Maker	4.40	0.42
Victualler	3.91	0.37
Draper	3.07	0.29
Husbandman	3.02	0.29
Basket Maker	2.03	0.19
Workhouse Master	1.93	0.18
Hatter	1.75	0.17
Corn Merchant	1.73	0.16
Chemist	1.70	0.16
Farmer	1.50	0.14
Cooper	1.41	0.13
Sawyer	1.00	0.10
Wine Merchant	0.80	0.08
Teacher	0.45	0.04
Coal Merchant	0.38	0.04
Soap Manufacturer	0.35	0.03
Vicar	0.30	0.03
Plumber	0.25	0.02
Shipwright	0.05	0.00
	<b>1048.22</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 6.6: St. Peter, Maldon, Payments to Supplier by Trade/Profession for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>23</sup>**

<sup>23</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/9.

The evidence suggests that there was a different economic dynamic within mixed economy parishes like St. Peter and farming based ones like Woodham Walter. By providing relief to the poor in Woodham Walter the elite farmers were both fulfilling their legal obligation and ensuring a guaranteed availability of the workers to run their businesses. Within St. Peter the parish elite held the same legal obligation, but they did not necessarily gain benefit from ensuring the availability of labour. However, a secondary benefit they derived was the effect that payments from the poor relief funds had on bolstering the local economy. For some vestry members, this benefited them directly. The following bar chart shows payments made to those suppliers who received more than £15 for each financial year.



**Chart 6.4: St. Peter, Maldon, Payments Made to the Top Ten Suppliers by Financial Year for the Years 1832-1835.<sup>24</sup>**

The surgeons, Baker and May, received considerable income from treating the poor of over £60 for every year except that ending in March 1833 when it was only just over £40. Similarly, Lawrence, a lawyer, received over £30 for each of the years 1832, 1834 and 1835. Table 6.7 gives the occupation of each of these suppliers and whether they were members of the vestry or officials within the corporation.

All the top paid suppliers except Myers and Youngman held positions of influence Corporation or parish government. These were: St. Peter's vestry; All Saints' vestry; Maldon Corporation; or Woodham Walter vestry. The positions held demonstrate the socio-economic interconnectedness that existed between the

<sup>24</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/9.

Maldon parishes, which also had a combined select vestry, and Maldon Corporation. The payments to Marriage are also an indication that the intra-Maldon economic connections extended to at least one of the adjacent parishes.

Clearly many of those who supplied the parish also paid substantial poor rates. The contributions of individuals to the poor rates and the constitution of the vestry is therefore a key factor when considering the socio-economic dynamics of St. Peter. This will be examined in some detail in a subsequent section, but before this it is important to turn to the records of the Quarter Sessions to understand the reasons for the levels of illegal activity and imprisonment in the town and the concomitant costs shown in the overseers' accounts.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Vestry Member or Official</b>
Baker	Surgeon	Vestry Member
May	Surgeon	Vestry Member
Lawrence	Lawyer	Maldon Mayor
Brown	Gaoler/Farrier	All Saints Constable
Myers	Unknown	
Payne	Merchant	Vestry Member and Overseer
Marriage	Miller	Member of Woodham Walter Vestry and Overseer
Cook	Carpenter	Vestry Member
Walford	Clerk	Assessor
Everard	Bootmaker	Vestry Member
Bully	Tailor	Vestry Member
Codd	Lawyer	Maldon Town Clerk
Sadd	Timber Merchant	Vestry Member
Chipperfield	Grocer	Vestry Member
Tomlinson	Surgeon	Member of All Saints Vestry
Youngman	Bookseller	
Pettit	Hairdresser	Vestry Member

**Table 6.7: Occupations, Vestry membership or Position of the Top Suppliers to St. Peter, Maldon, for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>25</sup>**

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<sup>25</sup> ERO, D/P 201/8/1,2; D/P 201/12/3 Overseers Accounts and Vestry Minutes for All Saints, Maldon, 1813-1835; D/B 3/5/3, Maldon Council Minute Book, 1829-1831; D/B 3/5/4, Maldon Council Minute Book, 1835-1838; D/P 201/12/3.

## 6.4 Maldon Quarter Sessions, Showing Convictions, 1826-1835

Charlesworth identified that the most common reasons for sending persons to gaol within the context of the administration of poor relief were: vagrancy, begging and non-payment of the poor rate.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, an analysis of the Maldon Quarter Sessions did not identify any of these offences as having led to imprisonment in this period, as shown in Table 6.8.

Quarter Session	Offence	Parish Committed	Name of Offender/s	Parish, Offender	Poor Relief	Sentence
October 1826	Stealing a sovereign from James Wheeler	St. Mary	Jacob Dowsett	St. Mary	Not known	One month in borough gaol
	Stealing various chattels from William Gentry	St. Peter	William Smith	Latchingdon	Not known	Two months in borough gaol
April 1827	Assisting in the counterfeit of coins of the realm	Not known	Samuel Appleby and Thomas Irving	Not known	Not known	One year in borough gaol
July 1829	Stealing four quarts of beer from John Strutt Hance	St. Peter	John Overall and William Jarvis	St. Peter	Yes	Unspecified, but gaol is assumed based upon other sentences.
	Stealing one pair of irons from George Whitbread	St. Peter	William Belsher	St. Mary	Not known	Six weeks in borough gaol

<sup>26</sup> L. Charlesworth, *Welfare's Forgotten Past: A Socio-Legal History of the Poor Law* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011[2010]), pp.42-4.

Quarter Session	Offence	Parish Committed	Name of Offender/s	Parish, Offender	Poor Relief	Sentence
June 1831	Stealing grain from Henry Weston Eve	St. Peter	James Freeman and Moses Brabrook	St. Peter	Yes	One month in borough gaol
	Receiving the stolen grain as above	St. Peter	Robert Devenish	St. Peter	Yes	Two months in borough gaol
October 1831	Stealing sheep from Abraham Johnson	Not known	James Grady	Not known	Not known	One week in borough gaol
April 1832	Stealing river piles from Benjamin Baker	St. Peter	Samuel Shelshire	Not known	No	One week in borough gaol and whipped
	Stealing silver spoon from William Hammond	St. Peter	Thomas Perkins	Not known	No	One month in borough gaol
	Stealing a purse containing 7s 6d from Quiller Edwick	Not known	Margaret Jordan	Not known	Not known	One month in borough gaol
December 1832	Stealing knives, boot tops and other items from Charles How	Not known	Samuel Unwin and Samuel Shelshire	Unwin St. Peter, Shelshire not known	Not known	Six months and hard labour at the Springfield gaol and twelve months with hard labour at the same respectively

<b>Quarter Session</b>	<b>Offence</b>	<b>Parish Committed</b>	<b>Name of Offender/s</b>	<b>Parish, Offender</b>	<b>Poor Relief</b>	<b>Sentence</b>
April 1833	Stealing hay from Widow Griggs	Not known	John Sutton and John Thoroughgood	Not known	Not known	One month with hard labour at the Springfield gaol for both
July 1833	Stealing printed cotton from John Wilmhurst	Not known	Elizabeth Davis	Not known	Not known	One month in borough gaol
	Stealing shoes from Benjamin Gentlous	St. Peter	Elizabeth Davis	Not known	No	One month in borough gaol to run concurrently with the above
	Receiving goods stolen from Widow Griggs	Not known	William Riches	Not known	Not known	Three months and hard labour at the Springfield gaol
October 1833	Stealing 7s 6d from Joseph Clements	Not known	Anne Jackson	Not known	Not known	Three months and hard labour at the Springfield gaol
	Stealing shoes from Stephen Clarke	St. Peter	James Pegg and William Hickford	Not known	No	Three months and hard labour at the Springfield gaol and six weeks in the borough gaol respectively
	Stealing 3s 6d from	St. Mary	George Taylor	Not known	Not known	Two months and hard

Quarter Session	Offence	Parish Committed	Name of Offender/s	Parish, Offender	Poor Relief	Sentence
	Joseph Brewster					labour at the Springfield gaol
January 1834	Stealing combs from Joseph Verlander	Not known	John Caroll and Benjamin Johnson	Not known	Not known	Six months and hard labour at the Springfield gaol
	Assault upon Joseph Verlander	Not known	James Riley	Not known	Not known	One month in borough gaol
April 1834	Stealing five gold half sovereigns from Edward Rolfe	St. Peter	Abraham Dowsett	St. Peter	Yes	Six months and hard labour at the Springfield gaol

**Table 6.8: Convictions Leading to Imprisonment at the Maldon Quarter Sessions for the Years 1826 to 1835.<sup>27</sup>**

Table 6.8 includes offences committed from 1826, to establish if the level of offending was similar to that for financial years 1832 to 1835. There were quarter sessions held in October 1829 and January 1830, as well as those shown, but there were no convictions made. The list includes all the convictions that resulted in a sentence of imprisonment for the period, even if it is not known whether the offence was committed in St. Peter or the offender was from St. Peter. All the offences were for stealing or handling stolen goods, except for the assault by James Riley on Joseph Verlander which was tried at the January 1834 Quarter Session.

It is therefore unclear why gaol costs appeared within the overseers' accounts. Was this simply another case of the poor rates having been used to pay for other items or was there some other subtle linkage? There were instances when recipients of poor relief were also convicted of stealing or handling stolen goods. It is possible, therefore, that the vestry considered its remit extended to funding the

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<sup>27</sup> ERO, D/B 3/2/15, Maldon Quarter Sessions Record Book 1826-1882. The residency, when available, was obtained from the 1841 Census, TNA, HO 107/345.



punishment of misdeeds by the poor as well supporting them. James Freeman, Moses Brabrook and Robert Devenish all received 'allowances to the able-bodied' during the period and were sentenced to gaol terms for stealing, or in the case of Devenish, receiving stolen goods. These men had stolen both wheat and barley from Henry Weston Eve, who was a substantial landowner within the parish and a corn merchant.<sup>28</sup> Eve was also a member of the vestry and probably exercised considerable influence over the administration of poor relief alongside the co-members of the Grand Jury that convicted Freeman, Brabrook and Devenish. The jurymen included John Payne, Edward Bright and John Sadd, and nine others of the fifteen-man jury who were also members of St. Peter's vestry.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, it is clear that the local elite who made decisions about the provision of poor relief, were often the same people deciding convictions and sentences. Evidently, these spheres of influence were intertwined in a way whereby this ruling group regarded itself as both philosophically and practically responsible for all aspects of local social policy.

It has not been possible to identify the resident parish for over 60% of the offenders listed in the above table or confirm if they received any income from working or other parish sources, so it seems probable that they were poor. It is possible that they were itinerant and had received small allowances from being classed as 'people on the pass/tramp', or alternatively that they were given relief by one of the other two Maldon parishes. Whatever income they derived from these potential sources it is unlikely that it was sufficient for their subsistence. As such they could be considered as falling within the 'economy of makeshifts', a term first coined by Olwen Hufton in her seminal book on the poor in France in the forty years leading to the French Revolution.<sup>30</sup>

In Hufton's opinion, there was a direct relationship between poverty and theft as it was 'usually a corrupting process' and 'rarely conducive to honest living'.<sup>31</sup> Heather Shore also proposed that poverty and crime were inextricably linked because the poor often found themselves in situations where they had no alternative but to commit crimes in order to survive. In her view, whilst 'elite perceptions' drew a barrier between poverty and criminality, such divisions ignored the reality on the ground for many poor people.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Robson, *Robson's Directory*, p.77.

<sup>29</sup> ERO, D/B 2/3/15. ERO, D/P 201/12/9.

<sup>30</sup> O. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France 1750-1789* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p.69.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.245.

<sup>32</sup> H. Shore, 'Crime, criminal networks and the survival strategies of the poor in early eighteenth-century London', in *The Poor in England 1700-1850: An Economy of Makeshifts*, ed. by S. King and A. Tomkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 140.

The Maldon elite were evidently prepared to punish crimes severely regardless of the possibly impoverished state of the perpetrators. Sentences varied between a week to a month in the town gaol and a month to twelve months with hard labour at the gaol in Springfield (Chelmsford), which was used for the most serious or repeat offences. For example, Samuel Shelshire was given a one-week term in the borough gaol for stealing piles at the Quarter Sessions in April 1832 (although this was accompanied by being whipped). When he was convicted of stealing several items at the sessions in December 1832, he was sentenced to twelve months of hard labour at Springfield, a significant uplift on his earlier sentence.

Punishment was an important feature of the culture of treating the poor within St. Peter and was a counterpoint to the system of allowances and pensions. As a deterrent it was effective, because there were never more than three convictions involving sentences of imprisonment at any of the Quarter Sessions for the period. There were other sentences imposed by the sessions, which are detailed in Table 6.9.

Quarter Session	Offence	Offender/s	Parish of Offender/s	Sentence
April 1827	Assault on John Darby	Samuel Hurricks	Unknown	Fined 1s
	Stealing a key	Thomas Brown	Unknown	To be whipped and then discharged
	Assault on John Mandley	George Wade	St. Peter	Fined 1s
July 1829	Stealing four quarts of beer from John Strutt Hance	John Overall and William Jarvis	St. Peter	The sentence was not specified. Possibly this was related to John Strutt Hance having been a member of the local elite
October 1832	Failure to comply with a summons for the Grand Jury	Thomas Felton and John Walford	St. Peter	Fined £5 each
April 1834	Failure to respond to a summons	John Sadd Jr. and Henry Weston Eve	St. Peter	Fined £5 each
	Bastardy Order	Charles Willingale	St. Peter	Ordered to pay 1s 6d a week from October to next January and thereafter 2s a week for seven years

**Table 6.9: Non-imprisonment sentences at the Maldon Quarter Sessions for the Years 1826 to 1835.<sup>33</sup>**

<sup>33</sup> ERO, D/B 2/3/15.

The above table shows that there was little that affected the poor decided at the Quarter Sessions beyond the criminal convictions already discussed, other than the bastardy order imposed upon Charles Willingale. The fines ordered to Felton, Walford, Sadd Jr. and Eve for their failures to comply with their summons' were no more than administrative matters for the court. Although they did demonstrate that the parish was disciplined, because all these men were members of the vestry and were not exempted from their duty even though they were members of St. Peter's elite.

### 6.5 *An Analysis of Poor Rates and Ratepayers*

The relative positions of persons within the local elite was likely to have been affected by the amount they paid to the poor rate and this will now be examined to better understand the parish hierarchy. Eastwood observed that within more 'parochial parishes' there was often a 'striking correlation' between the size of individuals' contributions to the poor rates and the influence that they exerted within the vestry.<sup>34</sup> This relationship between revenue and power was reinforced by the Sturges Bourne Act of 1818, because every £25 of rateable value afforded the land holder with an additional vote up to a maximum of six votes.<sup>35</sup> Eastwood was mainly referring to rural parishes, where farmers dominated vestries because of the rateable value of their land. Nevertheless, at St. Peter this was still partially true because of the amount of cultivatable land that existed within the parish. Table 6.10 shows the persons contributing the most to the poor rate for the first half of the 1832 financial year, which has been used as a proxy for the whole period.

The table shows a more diverse picture than existed for the rural parish of Woodham Walter, where the occupations of all the major ratepayers were based upon agriculture except for one clergyman and one unknown. In contrast, at St. Peter, while five of the major ratepayers were farmers, two were of unknown occupation and eight had non-agriculturally based occupations. Even then, two of the ratepayers classed as farmers were not exclusively so employed. John Strutt Hance and Joseph Pattison were of independent means and their families had created their wealth from being merchants and grocers respectively, in addition to farming.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> D. Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government 1780-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002[1994]), pp.34-5.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800*, p.10.

Surname	First Name	Occupation	Official Position	£ Decimal	% of Total
Hance	John Strutt	Farmer/Independent Means	Vestry Member	54.75	7.94
Polley	John	Merchant	Vestry Member	48.00	6.96
Baker	Benjamin	Surgeon/Land Owner	Vestry Member	42.65	6.19
Wedd	Frederic	Tanner	Vestry Member	40.00	5.80
Pledger	Richard Isaac	Farmer	Vestry Member	36.50	5.29
Pattisson	Joseph	Farmer/Independent Means	Vestry Member	28.40	4.12
Read	William	Farmer	Vestry Member	26.40	3.83
Payne	John	Merchant	Vestry Member	20.90	3.03
Eve	Henry	Corn Merchant	Vestry Member	19.00	2.76
Sadd Snr	John	Timber Merchant	Vestry Member	16.30	2.36
Nairn	Joseph	Farmer	Vestry Member	13.00	1.89
Bygrave	John	Wine Merchant	Vestry Member	12.00	1.74
Annis	William	Unknown	None	11.00	1.60
Lawrence	William	Lawyer	Mayor	10.80	1.57
Coape	Henry	Landowner/Sugar Refiner	None	8.10	1.17

**Table 6.10: St. Peter's Main Contributors to the Poor Rate for the First half of the 1832 Financial Year.<sup>37</sup>**

For those who provided the highest percentage payments to the poor rate, their relative contributions were not so much greater that it led to a few individuals clearly dominating proceedings. Hance paid the most with his 7.94% contribution, but it seems improbable that he held significantly more sway than, for example, Pattisson, who made a 4.12% contribution. The difference between the payments was not sufficiently large for there to have been a credible dominant individual. It seems likely that this diversity of interests led to a more balanced debate than would have been the case in many parishes focused more exclusively on farming.

The select vestry minutes demonstrated that the members operated in a consensual manner. For example, John Sadd Sr. requested that he be allowed to build a brick wall between a building on land owned by the poorhouse charity to replace a wooden fence. Sadd contributed 2.3% of the poor rate and was the tenth largest payer for this period. He was, therefore, probably influential within the vestry, but his request was not simply accepted. The vestry agreed that a sub-committee

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<sup>37</sup> ERO, D/DU 627/19, Abstract of Will and Codicils of Henry Coape; *Goldhanger - Past*, <http://www.churchside1.plus.com/Goldhanger-past/Coape.htm> [accessed on 11th May 2020]; ERO, D/P 201/12/6,7,8, St. Peter's Accounts: 1811-1833. The rate payer entries were selected based on including all persons that contributed £5 or more for the half year to the end of March 1832.

should be established to ensure that the detail of the work proposed by Sadd was of an acceptable standard. Also, this sub-committee was granted a budget of £20 so that it could decide to mend the existing fence if it rejected Sadd's plans.<sup>38</sup>

The above example indicates that the vestry was not only run in a democratic manner, but it also exercised its powers diligently. The vestry was not prepared to allow Sadd free rein to build as he wanted and was prepared to stop him building at all if he did not meet the standards requested. Consequently, it seems likely that this diligence would have extended to how the vestry granted poor relief. Particularly for categories of relief that were to an extent discretionary, such as 'allowances to the able-bodied, it seems probable that the vestry would have exercised prudence alongside its duty towards the claimants. To consider this question further, this category will now be considered in more detail.

## 6.6 'Allowances to the Able-Bodied' in St. Peter, Maldon

As observed earlier in this chapter, 'allowances to the able-bodied' represented 16.71% of the total poor relief costs when the super category of 'other' was excluded. One hundred and sixteen people received such allowances during the period, representing just over 6% of the population as opposed to the 19.5% who received such relief in Woodham Walter.<sup>39</sup> The difference may be expected given the different economies of the two parishes, but there was also a disparity between the ratios for the number people who received relief of just over three to one, and of the amount claimed which was not quite two to one. The contrasts will be considered in more detail when the recipients of relief are examined, later in this section.

The following table shows the amounts paid and the percentages by financial year.

	March 1832	March 1833	March 1834	March 1835
Allowance to Able Bodied in £	298	272	176	78
Total by Year in £	1,330	1,276	1,325	1,000
Percentage by Year	22.43	21.34	13.24	7.80

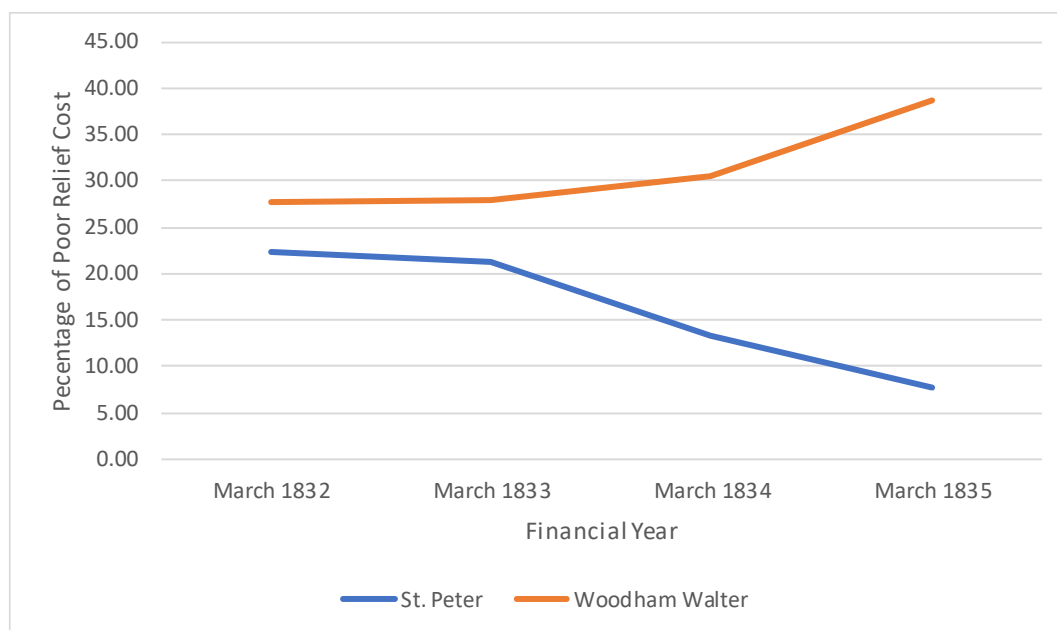
**Table 6.11: St. Peter, Maldon, 'Allowance Paid to the Able-bodied' for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>40</sup>**

<sup>38</sup> ERO, D/P 201/8/1.

<sup>39</sup> ProQuest, 1833 (149), Abstract of the answers and returns.

<sup>40</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/9.

The percentages of poor relief costs for ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ were consistent for 1832 and 1833 at 22.43% and 21.34% respectively. In 1834, there was a sharp reduction to 13.24% which was followed by a further reduction to 7.8% in 1835. As noted earlier, it is possible that the accounts for 1835 were incomplete, but nevertheless the reduction was significant and showed the trend to that experienced in Woodham Walter, as illustrated in the following line graph.



**Chart 6.5: Comparison of the Percentage for ‘Allowances to the Able-bodied’ of Poor Relief Costs Between St. Peter and Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>41</sup>**

The two data series had close to a complete negative correlation of -0.93%, a striking finding because whilst the increase in payments in Woodham Walter suggests that there were adverse conditions in the parish, the fall in St. Peter implies the opposite.<sup>42</sup> Aside from the fall in total relief costs in 1835, where it has already been suggested that the accounts were incomplete, the total relief costs were consistent between 1832 and 1834 at: £1,330, £1,276 and £1,325 respectively. So, allowance payments were evidently not following the same trend as that for overall relief.

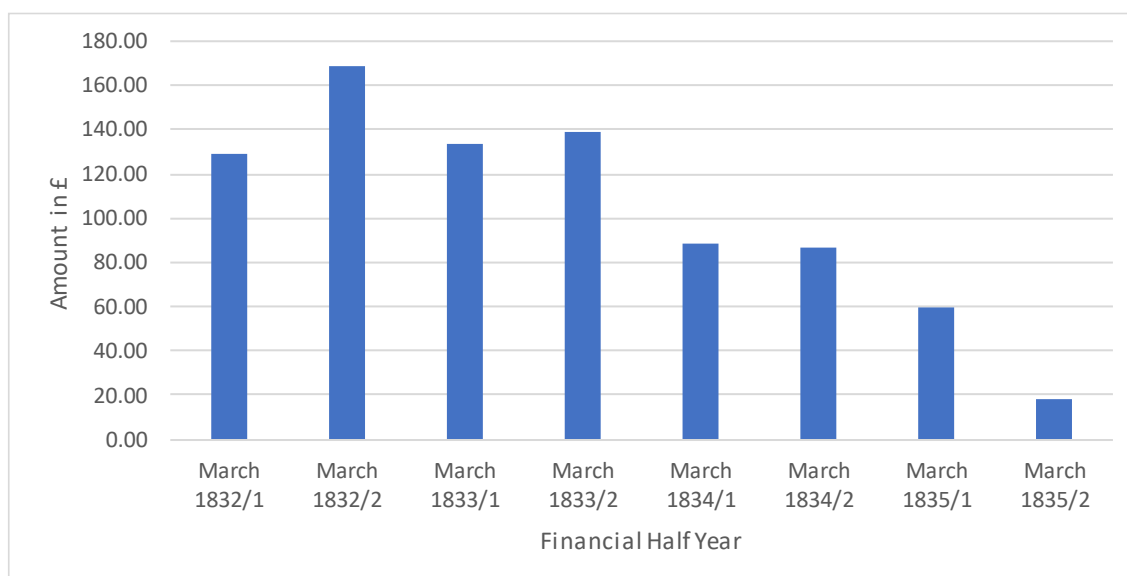
It is possible that the different nature of the economies of the two parishes explained the contrasting trends. Alternatively, it is possible that the elite of St. Peter

<sup>41</sup> Ibid; ERO, D/P/101/12/3, Woodham Walter Overseers’ Accounts 1830-35.

<sup>42</sup> This was calculated using the Excel CORREL function.

recognised the antipathy toward the allowance system embodied within the 1834 Report and Act and decided to reduce allowances ahead of the new system of administration. If this was the case, it is improbable that the elite of Woodham Walter would have failed to interpret the forthcoming changes in the same way. As has been discussed in Chapter 3, there were many links between the decision makers of the two parishes. So, it is reasonable to expect that the parish vestries would have responded to the upcoming change to poor relief in a comparable way, unless the specific requirements of Woodham Walter's farming-based economy meant that this was impossible.

The allowance figures paid by St. Peter have been analysed by financial half year as shown in the bar chart below to see if they fluctuated seasonally in similar fashion to Woodham Walter.



**Chart 6.6: 'Allowances to the Able-bodied' for St. Peter, Analysed by Financial Half Year for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>43</sup>**

If there had been an increase in 'allowances to the able-bodied' caused by seasonal fluctuations to agricultural labour requirements in St. Peter's economy, it would be expected to occur in the second half of the financial year, i.e. from October to March. The payments did follow this expected pattern for 1832 and 1833, although the differences of approximately £40 and £6 for these years were not significant. In 1834 there was a slight difference between the two half years and in 1835 the

<sup>43</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/9.

second half was lower than the first, although this may have had more to do with missing records than genuine expenditure.

A possible interpretation is that the first half of the period was somewhat consistent with the pattern expected for an economy with some agricultural component, but that this changed in the second half when the vestry decided to reduce allowance payments in line with the national agenda. To attempt to improve understanding of the basis behind St. Peter's vestry attitude to 'allowances to the able-bodied', these have been analysed by recipient for the period. The following table gives the relief received by half year for all those people who received more than £20 during the period.

	March 1832/1	March 1832/2	March 1833/1	March 1833/2	March 1834/1	March 1834/2	March 1835/1	March 1835/2	Grand Total	% Of Total	
Smith, John	2.22	8.82	15.15	7.83	10.80	1.63	1.53		47.97	5.82	
Overall, John		8.70	9.58	14.28	8.46	2.78	1.45	0.40	45.65	5.54	
Bell, William		3.80	8.50	11.71	8.23	2.14	2.25	1.27	37.89	4.60	
Bright, John		4.95	2.88	3.88	5.00	0.85	6.00	2.10	6.50	32.15	3.90
Tediman, S		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	6.00		8.00	1.35	31.35	3.80
Foster, William		7.85	5.03	9.78	5.53	1.43				29.61	3.59
Ward, Thomas		13.66			7.15		5.36			26.17	3.18
Freeman, Thomas			5.83	2.60	8.00	4.13	2.25	2.33	0.40	25.53	3.10
Bones, William		3.65	6.99	1.43	2.13	2.68	3.70	3.23	1.33	25.12	3.05
Strutt, John		2.05	2.45	2.50	4.75	5.10	4.25	1.75	1.15	24.00	2.91
Brown, Joseph		3.74	5.50	4.63	3.35	1.88	4.25	0.20		23.54	2.86
Crow, General		0.98	4.68	4.40	4.88	4.28	2.35	0.93		22.48	2.73
Devenish, Robert			3.75	0.75	1.60	4.13	5.35	5.28		20.85	2.53
Holt, John		3.55	4.50	4.55	4.18	2.95	0.35		0.50	20.58	2.50

**Table 6.12: 'Allowances Paid to the Able-bodied' in St. Peter by Recipient for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>44</sup>**

In 1832 and 1833, the highest paid recipients were paid significant amounts when compared to those in Woodham Walter. The following table compares these for the top six recipients for these years.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.



St. Peter				Woodham Walter			
Person	March 1832	March 1833	Total	Person	March 1832	March 1833	Total
Smith, John	11.04	22.98	34.02	John Philbrook	7.74	2.85	10.59
Overall, John	18.28	22.74	41.02	John Orris	5.29	6.87	12.16
Bell, William	12.30	19.93	32.24	John Bradle	6.65	7.10	13.75
Bright, John	7.83	8.88	16.70	Thomas Robinson	3.88	5.53	9.40
Tediman, S	8.00	8.00	16.00	William Dawson	4.23	6.45	10.68
Foster, William	12.88	15.31	28.18	James Ham	1.75	4.83	6.58

**Table 6.13: A Comparison of the Payments of ‘Allowances to the Able-bodied’ for the Six Highest Recipients in St. Peter and Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 and 1833.<sup>45</sup>**

These data are revealing about the level of allowances for the two parishes. The lowest amount of £16 for the top six recipients in St. Peter was paid to Tediman for the two years. This was over £2 more than the £13 15s paid to John Bradle from Woodham Walter for the same period. John Overall received over £41 for the period, which was roughly three times what had been paid to Bradle.

The differences in the payments was so great that it seems improbable that it can be accounted for by higher ‘paid benefits’ provided to the individuals concerned in Woodham Walter. The most obvious possible explanations are, firstly that either the cost of living for residents of St. Peter was significantly higher than that of Woodham Walter and that the vestry paid higher allowances in recognition. Or, secondly, that the individuals in St. Peter worked in higher paid occupations than the agricultural labourers from Woodham Walter and were consequently paid at a higher rate than the scale used there. A third alternative is that those workers who did receive allowances did so on a more regular basis than those in Woodham Walter

If the first of these possible explanations was true, it raises the question of how these people coped when the allowances were reduced so severely in 1835. It is possible that there were higher levels of employment during this period, but it seems unlikely that this would have been the case for all of those within the top six recipients for the previous two years. Investigation of the second possible explanation raises a major methodological challenge: that the poor of St. Peter are largely impossible to identify from the 1841 Census, so it is difficult to determine their occupations.<sup>46</sup> As an illustration, none of the people in the top six recipients of

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. ERO, D/P/101/12/3. The individuals were selected based upon their ranking for the whole of the period, not just 1833 and 1834. Consequently, the table is not ordered by the totals for these years.

<sup>46</sup> TNA, HO 107/345.

'allowances to the able-bodied' can be found registered in any of the three Maldon Parishes in the 1841 Census. It seems likely that they moved elsewhere and people with the same names can certainly be identified as registered in other Essex parishes. For example, there was somebody with the name John Overall registered in Great Bradfield in the 1841 Census. He was born in 1796 and had the occupation of carpenter, but there is no way of knowing whether this was the same John Overall who received poor relief between 1832 and 1835 in St. Peter without undertaking significant family reconstruction work (which has not been a principal objective of this thesis).

The detailed accounts that were maintained for people who received 'allowances to the able-bodied' provided no clues to their occupations or the circumstances under which their relief was given, but they did show the regularity of payments. For some recipients, the payments appeared to have been made on an almost daily basis rather than weekly and invariably were described as 'relief'. For example, between 19<sup>th</sup> June 1832 and 25<sup>th</sup> June 1832, John Overall received six payments which totalled 9s 6d and ranging from 1 to 3s 6d in value. The listing of payments suggests that the overseers required daily application, which may have been a technique to restrict relief payments to working men. Although, in the case of claimants such as Overall it did not successfully restrict the relief he received, but simply added to the overseers' workload. The total weekly payments made to Overall for the months June to August 1832, to take that period as an example, ranged from 8s to 13s 6d. This was in line with the level of payment that was made to men with large families in Woodham Walter.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the most likely reason for the highest paid recipients of 'allowances to the able-bodied' in St. Peter receiving amounts larger than in Woodham Walter is that they were paid more often.

There is no specific information concerning the circumstances of persons such as John Overall, so it is not possible to draw conclusions about either him or other individuals. Nevertheless, some general observations can be made about the pattern of usage for 'allowances to the able-bodied' within St. Peter, at least for 1832 and 1834. There were fewer people who received these allowances than there were in Woodham Walter, but the vestry must have regarded the highest paid recipients deserving because they were paid more often than their equivalents in Woodham Walter and because of this they received higher total amounts. Even though the relief amounts were by daily application and payment, it suggests an environment where unemployment was less common, but where the vestry regarded 'allowances

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<sup>47</sup> ERO, D/DU 139/3/1, Records of Samuel Shaen of Hatfield Peverel – Lawyer, Scale of Poor Relief for the Chelmsford Division, 1821.

to the able-bodied' as an expedient way of providing poor relief, at least until 1834, and was prepared to be generous when individual circumstances so justified.

## 6.7 People on the Tramp/Pass

A facet of poor relief existing with St. Peter, but not found in the Woodham Walter accounts, was the payment of relief to itinerants. This type of relief assists in defining the character of St. Peter. Overall, only 0.5% of poor relief payments were made to persons who had no right of settlement in St. Peter, so the cost cannot be considered to have been a severe burden upon the poor rates. The following table shows how this varied during the period.

	March 1832	March 1833	March 1834	March 1835	Total
People on the Tramp/Pass - £	12	9	2	4	27
Totals - £	1,330	1,276	1,325	1,000	4,931
Percentage of Total	0.88	0.69	0.17	0.41	0.54

**Table 6.14: St. Peter, Maldon, Payment Made to People on the Pass/Tramp for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>48</sup>**

Table 6.14 shows that the percentage of the total cost was higher in 1832 and 1833 at 0.88% and 0.69% respectively and fell sharply to 0.17% in 1834, before recovering to 0.41% in 1835. Whilst the financial sums concerned were not significant, the treatment of this category of poor by the St. Peter vestry is revealing of its social and economic attitudes.

Eastwood argued that the Laws of Settlement were less of a constraint upon the 'free circulation of labour' than contemporary commentators, such as Malthus and Smith, had claimed. He suggested that although many parishes conducted settlement examinations to monitor the immigration of people, some did not automatically expel those who they judged were genuinely seeking work as opposed to those who were classed as vagrants.<sup>49</sup> Eastwood's view contrasts with David Green's findings, in his study of London parishes, that overseers and vestries were invariably eager to move on people without the right of settlement because of the cost burden it placed upon their funds.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/9.

<sup>49</sup> Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, pp.24-5.

<sup>50</sup> D.R. Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790-1870* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2010), pp.72-3.

Smith's history of Maldon, mainly concerned with the eighteenth century, described the harsh treatment, particularly for the able-bodied, that was normally meted out to unemployed people without settled status. This often-involved whippings and/or imprisonment.<sup>51</sup> By the 1830s, however, St. Peter's vestry seemed have changed their attitude towards people on the tramp to one which was more akin to that suggested by Eastwood. There are no archived settlement orders for the years 1832 to 1835 and, as discussed earlier in the chapter, imprisonment and corporal punishment was restricted to cases of stealing or assault. It is not possible to be sure if this altered attitude was caused by a change in social perception, or the vestry having recognised the economic benefits of using itinerant workers to meet peaks in labour requirements, or a combination of these factors.

In 1832 and 1833 frequent payments were made to poor people who were not classed as resident. These were always small sums, often a few pennies and rarely more than a shilling. They were normally described in terms of the number of persons relieved, their sex and whether they were children. For example, there was an entry on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1833 in which '1 woman, 2 children' were relieved with the sum of 1s.<sup>52</sup> Given the paltry nature of these sums, it seems probable that they were intended to provide relief for little more than a single day, but the frequency with which they were provided in the first two years of this period demonstrated that the vestry was prepared to show some level of concern for the claimants.

It seems probable that the fall in the level of relief to itinerants in 1834 was related to the impending Poor Law Act. The vestry may have been concerned that such payments would have been deemed unacceptable by the new commissioners, but if this was their reason, they had reversed their view by the 1835 financial year. The amount of this type of relief increased again and may have done so further than shown in the accounts, because the records were probably incomplete. That their view changed is confirmed by an item in the vestry minutes stating that the overseers were instructed not to implement any relief order from magistrates except 'to poor persons not settled nor usually residing in the parish'. The vestry members were already engaged in discussion with the poor law commissioners because the minutes went on to refer to their responses to questions that had been raised.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, it seems likely that by then they knew that the provision of relief to non-residents was considered acceptable, albeit in a limited fashion.

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<sup>51</sup> Smith, *The Borough of Maldon 1688-1800*, p.84.

<sup>52</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/9.

<sup>53</sup> ERO, D/P 201/8/2, 10<sup>th</sup> September 1834.

## 6.8 Weekly Allowances

The vestry minutes also noted the approval to continue paying ‘weekly allowances’. As observed earlier in the chapter, St. Peter’s overseers’ account recorded regular payments of a category of poor relief named ‘weekly allowances’, which was the generic category for relief to the impotent and included; ‘child pensions’, ‘old age pensions’, pensions other’ and ‘widows’ pensions. These weekly payments were the equivalent of ‘weekly collection’ payments in Woodham Walter and the specific types of relief were not recorded’. However, ad hoc payments to the impotent were analysed by the four detailed categories listed above. The following table analyses relief to the impotent for the period in St. Peter.

	1832	1833	1834	1835	Totals
Weekly Allowances in £	504	558	539	350	1,951
Additional payments to the impotent in £	45	41	23	15	125
<b>Total payment to the impotent in £</b>	549	599	562	365	2,077
Total Relief less 'Other' in £	1,330	1,276	1,325	1,000	4,931
Percentage of Total Weekly Allowances Only	37.91	43.71	40.66	35.00	39.57
Percentage of Total including Additional Payments	41.29	46.93	42.40	36.51	42.11

**Table 6.15: Payments to the Impotent in St. Peter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>54</sup>**

The payments for these categories of relief were remarkably consistent for the period, even in 1834 when the vestry had changed its behaviour toward payment of ‘allowances to the able-bodied’. It seems that the elite were clear that the provision of relief to those who could not take care of themselves was not in contravention of the new legislation. The high percentages of relief that were paid to the vulnerable demonstrated the vestry held a keen sense of duty to these people. This was reinforced by its preparedness to make additional ad hoc payments when circumstances required.

These levels of payment were similar in percentage terms to those within Woodham Walter for the same period, as is shown by the following table.

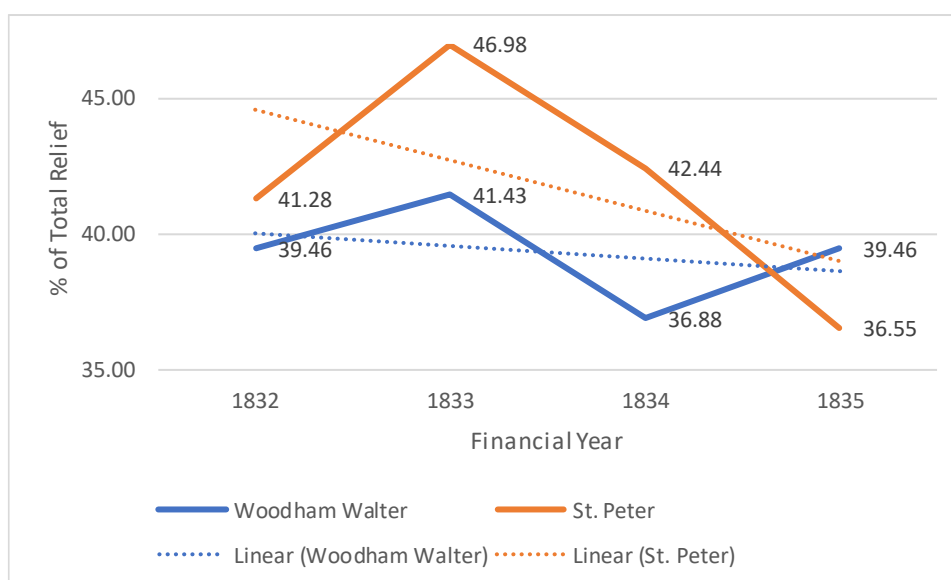
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<sup>54</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/9. The percentage of total relief was slightly lower for 1835, but as noted previously the accounts were probably not complete for this year.

	1832	1833	1834	1835	Totals
Child Pension	17	26	39	45	133
Old Age Pension	13	15	4	4	45
Pension Other	77	77	44	60	290
Widow Pension	19	20	32	25	106
<b>Total</b>	126	137	120	134	574
Relief Total	320	331	326	339	1,315
Percentage of Relief Total %	39.46	41.43	36.88	39.46	43.61

**Table 6.16: Payments to the Impotent in Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>55</sup>**

There was some similarity in the pattern of relief paid to the impotent in the two parishes, as demonstrated by the following line graph.



**Chart 6.7: Payments to the Impotent Shown as Percentages of Total Relief in St. Peter and Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>56</sup>**

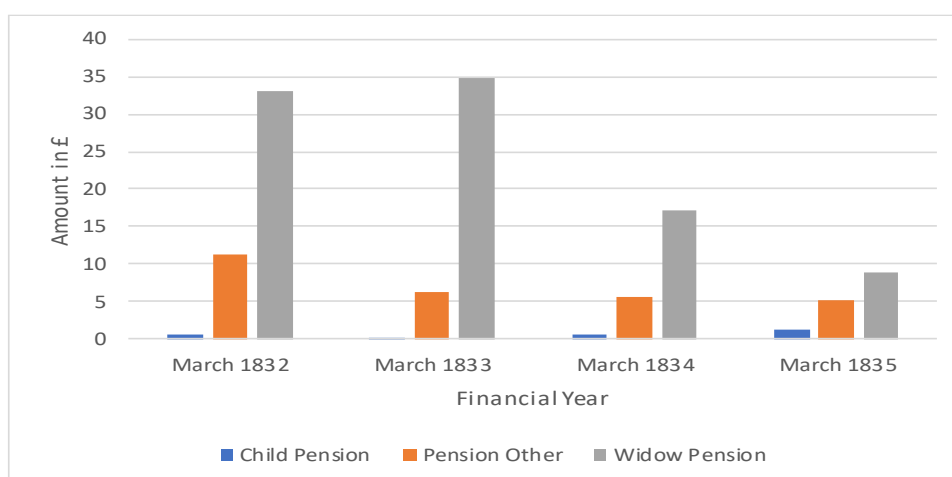
In 1832, both parishes paid around 40% of the total relief to the impotent. This increased in both in 1833, albeit more sharply in St. Peter which had also started at a slightly higher percentage from the previous year. The percentage fall in 1834 from over 41% to just under 37% in Woodham Walter was caused by the savings that were made to cover the cost of increased ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ for the same period. Instructively, St. Peter witnessed a similar fall, although

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., D/P/101/12/3.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., D/P/101/12/3.

at over 42% the level of relief was still higher than it had been in 1832. The graph shows that relief to the impotent recovered in Woodham Walter in 1835, but it appears that it continued to fall in St. Peter, which is probably due to the missing data discussed earlier in this chapter.

The ad hoc payments of relief to the impotent have been analysed in Chart 6.8 to see if this reveals anything further about how St. Peter's poor relief administrators regarded people in this category. There were no ad hoc payments for 'old age pensions' in St. Peter, and in Woodham Walter they were quite low at 2.79% of total relief. For the other three categories, the highest in Woodham Walter had been 'pension other' at 19.65%, the next 'child pensions' at 9.63% and the lowest 'widows' pensions' at 7.25%.<sup>57</sup>



**Chart 6.8: Ad Hoc Payments to the Impotent in St. Peter Split by More Detailed Category for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>58</sup>**

Ad hoc payments by category were strikingly different between the two parishes. The amounts paid for 'child pensions' in St. Peter were very low in 1832, 1834, and 1835, and non-existent in 1833. Also, the level of 'pension other' was comparatively low to that paid in Woodham Walter. The different pattern is noteworthy, so it is important to attempt to rationalise why the occasional payments differed in the two parishes.

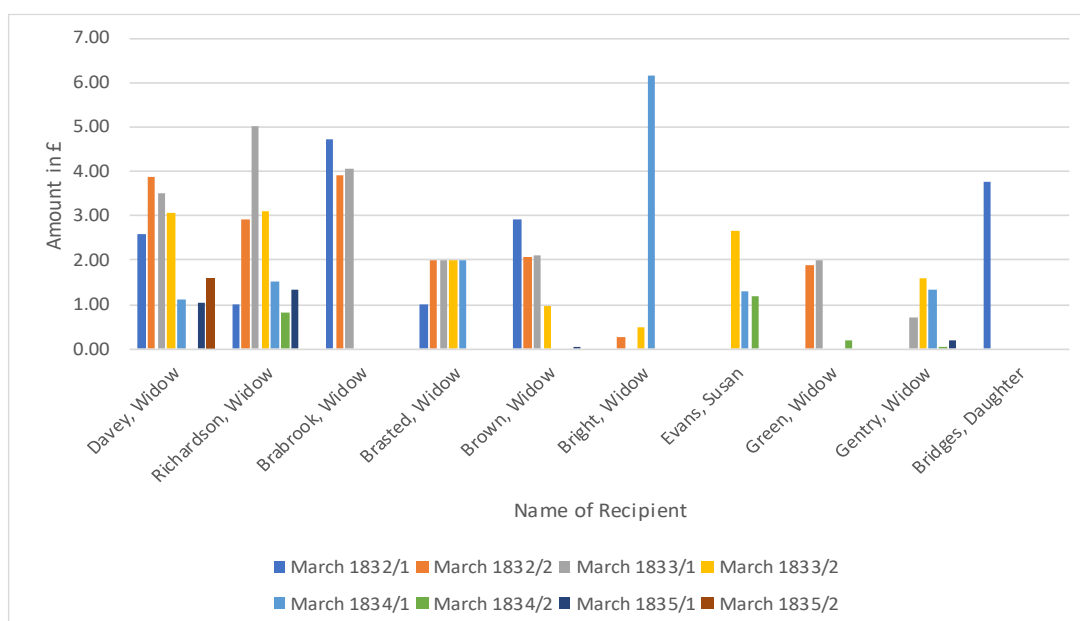
A key distinguishing feature between St. Peter and Woodham Walter, was that the former's vestry had the ability to use a poorhouse when necessary. It is

<sup>57</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

<sup>58</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/9.

possible that although the vestry was happy to make regular allowances to children or to people who fell into the 'pension other' category, it used the poorhouse as a form of release valve when circumstances would have required additional payments to be made to these claimants. Equally, it may be that the vestry did not want to send widows to the poorhouse, perhaps because of how they were regarded within the community. The ad hoc payments will now be examined in more detail to attempt to understand what prompted these to be made.

The following bar chart shows the top ten recipients of ad hoc payments in the impotent categories for the period.



**Chart 6.9: The Top Ten Recipients of Ad Hoc Payments to the Impotent in St. Peter for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>59</sup>**

Analysis by category for these ad hoc payments had shown that widows were the main beneficiaries and the breakdown of the ten highest value recipients was in line with this finding, with eight out of ten being for this class, the other two being for the 'pensions other' category.<sup>60</sup> Of the sixty impotent people who received these additional payments of poor relief, twenty-nine were widows and twenty-four were categorised as 'pension other'. So, the numbers of people relieved for these two categories were close, but the average amounts they received differed. Widows

<sup>59</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/9. The top ten recipients were chosen based upon the total amount they received during the period.

<sup>60</sup> These were typically women, or men who were unable to work, as defined in the explanation of the categories in Chapter 5.



received an average of approximately £3 5s, whilst for 'pension other' recipients it was only £2 2s. There were only seven children in the group and the average they received was a paltry 8s.<sup>61</sup>

Ad hoc payments to widows were quite large but infrequent. For example, the top two people by value, Widow Davey and Widow Richardson, received single payments of £2 11s 6d and £1 respectively in the first half of the financial year ending in March 1832.<sup>62</sup> It could have been the case that the entries in the general ledger were summations of smaller value entries, but the normal practice for the St. Peter's overseers was to provide a breakdown elsewhere in the accounts, which they had not. Widow Davey received a single payment in each of seven of the eight half years during the period, ranging from just over £1 to almost £4. In Woodham Walter, the widows' pensions paid were generally over £3 a financial quarter so it seems unlikely that the amounts paid to Widow Davey would have been all she received.<sup>63</sup> It seems probable that she was paid mainly from the weekly allowances and that the additional payments were for what the vestry adjudged as some exceptional circumstances.

Consequently, it is clear that the vestry decided not to use the poorhouse as a way of handling such circumstances for widows. The 'poorhouse cost' was the third highest category of relief, so there were situations when the elite considered that its use was appropriate. In order to develop an understanding of what these were, this category will now be considered in more detail.

## 6.9 *Poorhouse Costs*

The Maldon poorhouse had been built in 1719 using funds bequeathed by Dr. Thomas Plume. Originally the house could accommodate around thirty people, although its capacity had been increased to around 100 by the early nineteenth century.<sup>64</sup> This increase in capacity demonstrated that the elite of the three Maldon parishes, that shared its management, regarded it as having a key role to play in the administration of poor relief. Its capacity continued to be expanded after the new poor law administration was put in place in 1835, and it was capable of accommodating 350 people by 1873.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/9.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

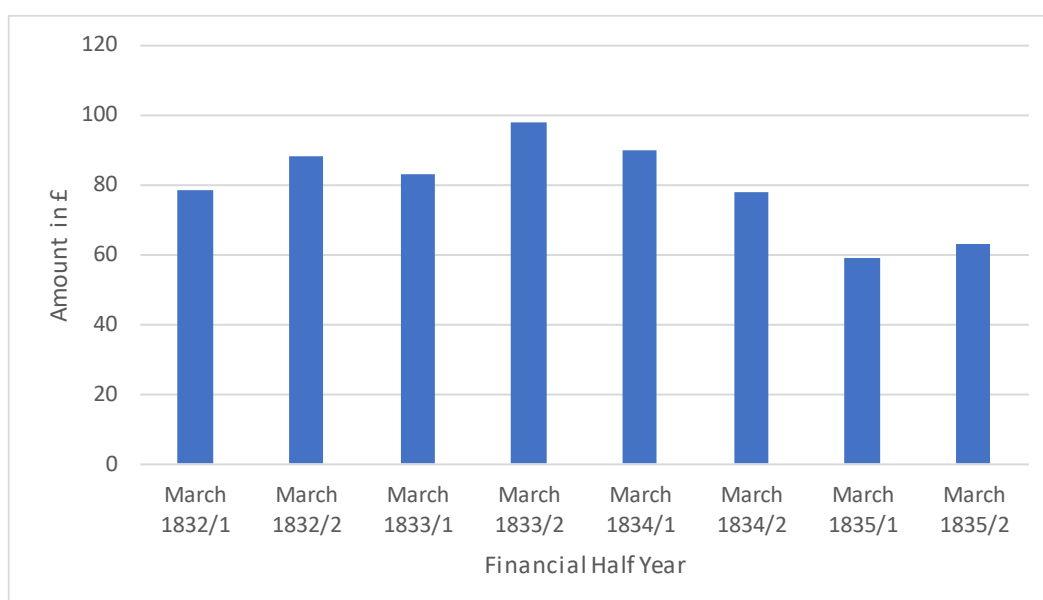
<sup>63</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

<sup>64</sup> J. Drury, *Essex Workhouses* (Felsted: Farthings Publications, 2006), pp.180-1; P. Edmond, *Maldon Workhouse 1719-1875: An Architectural History 1719-1997* (Maldon: M. Edmond, 1999), p. ii.

<sup>65</sup> Edmond, *Maldon Workhouse*, p. ii.

In order to continue to develop the understanding of the culture of poor relief in St. Peter, it would be helpful to understand whether there was a rationale behind how the vestry determined those poor who were to be relieved in the poorhouse. Drury suggested that peaks of occupancy in Maldon's poorhouse occurred during winter months, when agricultural labourers were unable to work.<sup>66</sup> He did not offer any evidence to support this assertion and there are no occupancy lists available in the ERO from the building of the poorhouse until after the 1834 Act, so his suggestion has to be questioned.<sup>67</sup>

The analysis of indoor relief by half year will help to understand if there were peaks during the winter months which were caused by agricultural workers being unable to find work.



**Chart 6.10: Maldon Poorhouse, Cost of Indoor Relief for the Half Years 1832 to 1835.**<sup>68</sup>

If this had been the case it would be expected that indoor relief costs would have been significantly higher in the second half of the years. Although, they were slightly higher in 1832 and 1833, lower in 1834 and a little higher in 1835, in which

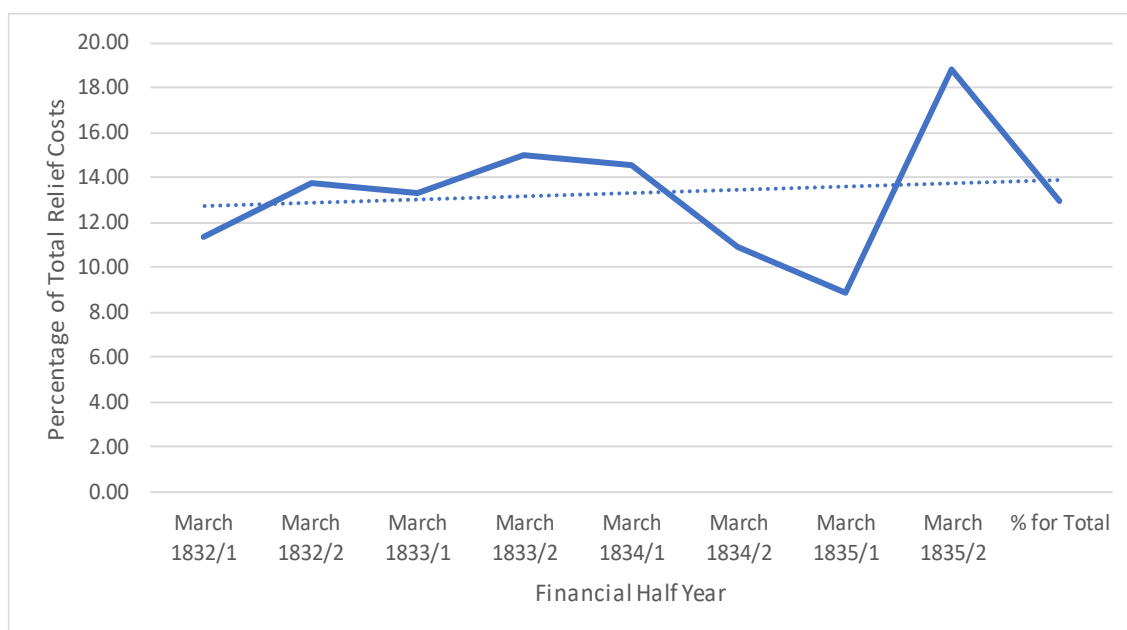
<sup>66</sup> Drury, *Essex Workhouses*, p.181.

<sup>67</sup> The ERO system SEAX was searched for the years 1720 to 1840 in order to discover if lists of the poor in the poorhouse were available. The search returned only ERO, D/P 384/19/1, Quarterly Lists of Paupers 1836; ERO, D/P 197/19/2, Quarterly Lists of Paupers 1837; ERO, G/M W4, Indoor Relief List 1839-1840.

<sup>68</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/9.

year the accounts were possibly incomplete, the discrepancies are not large enough to provide definitive support for Drury's proposition.

An alternative way to analyse the pattern of indoor relief is to view it as a percentage of the total relief costs, as shown on Chart 6.11. This percentage was fairly consistent between 1832 and 1834, but in 1835 the two plots were outliers compared to the trend line. In the first half of 1835 the percentage of total cost was about four percentage points below trend and in the second it was almost five points above. Again, this is not compelling evidence to support the theory that the dip and spike in the graph was caused by the seasonality of agricultural labour. These abnormal data points occurred at the point the 1834 Act was in the process of being implemented and were therefore observed in exceptional circumstances. The volatility may have been an aberration caused by incomplete accounts, or it is possible that the vestry's policy was influenced by the preference for indoor relief that had been articulated in the 1834 Act.



**Chart 6.11: Maldon Poorhouse, Indoor Relief Costs as a Percentage of Total Relief for the Half Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>69</sup>**

As already noted, there are no surviving occupancy lists for the poorhouse, which makes it methodologically hard to determine the types of poor person relieved there. It appears that the select vestry for the three Maldon parishes was not

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. The total relief costs excluded the super category 'other'.

regularly involved in making decisions about who was admitted to the house. On 28<sup>th</sup> April 1829, the select vestry made the decision to dismiss the governor of the poorhouse, James Byford, from 30<sup>th</sup> July of that year because he had been accepting people into the house who were not residents within the terms of Dr. Plume's legacy, which allowed persons settled in the three Maldon and neighbouring parishes.<sup>70</sup>

The vestry minutes did not explain how the governor's inappropriate behaviour had been brought to its attention. The fact it was clearly a surprise, suggests that the vestry did not monitor the occupancy of the poorhouse as a matter of course. It perhaps operated as a type of semi-open service facility for the poor where the governor was granted significant autonomy about who he accepted as recipients of relief. Byford's term of office was temporarily extended by two months and at the end of September 1829, John Beal was appointed as the new governor of the poorhouse.<sup>71</sup> Given the misconduct of Byford, which would have cost the Maldon parishes money, it might have been expected that some rules may have been defined relating to how the poorhouse should have been managed. There were no such rules detailed or referred to in the vestry minutes and it appears from the accounts that poorhouse continued to be run in much the same way it had before Byford's dismissal.

John Beal continued to be the governor of the workhouse throughout the period studied and the detailed poorhouse accounts show that he submitted a bill for the poorhouse costs on a monthly basis. For example, the following amounts were recorded for the first half of the financial year that ended in March 1834.

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<sup>70</sup> ERO, D/P 201/8/1. ERO, T/P 77/1, Copy of the will of Dr. Plume with annotations, 1704.

<sup>71</sup> ERO, D/P 201/8/1.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Amount</b>
April 1833	£12 0s 4d
May 1833	£12 15s
June 1833	£14 2s 2d
July 1833	£11 14s 11d
August 1833	£10 14s
September 1833	£12 6s 9d
<b>Total</b>	<b>£89 10s 11d</b>

**Table 6.17: Payments from the Maldon Poorhouse Account for the First Half of the Financial Year 1834.<sup>72</sup>**

The total for each half year was posted to the general ledger and this has been included in the figures analysed earlier in this section. The 9s 1d difference between the total recorded in the poorhouse account and the £90 shown in the earlier analysis, was for land tax.<sup>73</sup> Beal's poorhouse accounts suggest that the monthly invoices raised by the governor were based upon some formula, presumably related to the number of people relieved for the period. Also, that additional expenses were invoiced and entered into the ledger as they arose. It is possible that the overseers referred relief claimants to the poorhouse, rather than offer out relief. If this was the case, it was not recorded in the vestry minutes. The detail in the latter related mainly to listing specific requests for allowances and whether they had been granted or not. Other than the, already mentioned, discussion that took place about the governor, entries that related the poorhouse were rare. Those entries that did occur, related to agreeing to repairs or the provision of materials for work such as sack-making at the meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> September 1834.<sup>74</sup>

The absence of any recorded discussion by the vestry about which poor relief claimants should be sent to the poorhouse, may suggest that there was no overall policy on the issue. This is potentially important for what it may imply about their moral stance concerning the administration of poor relief. If, like some contemporaries, the elite of Maldon had regarded the state of poverty as some form of misdeed, it seems likely that they would have frequently referenced the need to put people to work in the poorhouse rather than continue to agree to allowances and 'paid benefits'. Instead, the Maldon poorhouse appeared to be managed somewhat

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<sup>72</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/9.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> ERO, D/P 201/8/2.

separately from the main thrust of relief policy, almost as a catch all or relief provider of last resort. As Kathryn Morrison suggested, the use of poorhouses was highly diversified, and they were often populated by the impotent because vestries often found this the most convenient way of dealing with this category of relief claimant.<sup>75</sup>

### *6.10 The Culture of Poor Relief in Maldon*

There were some clear differences in poor relief provision between St. Peter and Woodham Walter. The first of these was the result of travellers passing through the town, which meant that the vestry provided temporary relief to non-resident people. The amounts involved were small, but the practice demonstrated that vestry held some duty of care towards persons that were not a member of their community. Secondly, due to the larger and more open nature of the community, the poor relief officers were engaged in sending offenders to gaol. The accounting for the associated costs was included in the overseers' records, and it appears that the vestry members assumed the role of law enforcement for the town in addition to that of poor relief. Finally, the select vestry for the three Maldon parishes was able to provide fairly extensive indoor relief, because of the bequest of the Dr. Plume, which could be used in some circumstances. However, there is no evidence that the vestry members were aligned with the philosophical thinking that influenced the framers of the 1834 Act as to how this facility should be used.

The economic analyses provided in Chapter 4 demonstrated that Maldon's economy was not dominated by the same factors as, such as the corn price, as its rural neighbours. Also, due to agriculture forming only a small part of the town's economy, there was no apparent surplus of agricultural labour necessitating 'allowances to the able-bodied' having to be increased when farms' profitability deteriorated. Nevertheless, outdoor relief was provided in St. Peter, probably because this form of relief was a convenient and sympathetic way of supporting claimants, rather than being a supplement to wages. To this extent therefore, the relationship between the economy and poor relief provision differed between St. Peter and Woodham Walter, as the welfare system was not a hybrid of social care and unemployment support. Nevertheless, in terms of how relief was provided to the impotent, both parishes clearly operated regimes that were apparently comprehensive and relatively generous when considered nationally. These

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<sup>75</sup> K. Morrison, *The Workhouse, a Study of Poor Law Buildings in England* (Swindon: English Heritage, 1999), p.21.

conclusions are further expanded in Chapter 7, which also presents a comparative financial model for the two parishes and measures their similarity in numerical terms.

## 7 Conclusion

An overarching objective, discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, was to develop a quantitative framework to enable the analysis of overseers' accounts alongside relevant economic data. The poor relief data populated within the model was obtained through two detailed analyses of overseers' records that were used to build a database that could be employed to determine patterns of relief rather than to develop pauper histories. The format of this database has enabled detailed investigations within the datasets, for example between different relief categories, but also to establish comparisons between parishes and central sources, along with correlations to economic data. This approach has, therefore, provided the empirical basis for responding to the key research questions posed in the introduction. Clearly, quantitative examination was not always the most appropriate tool to evaluate the way in which relief was provided, and consequently an examination of the local elite has also been undertaken to explore the social, cultural, religious and political context that underpinned the attitudes toward poor relief.

The period chosen for the detailed quantitative analysis was 1831 to 1835, for two reasons. Firstly, it immediately preceded the implementation of the new poor law and therefore gave an indication of how well the old law worked at the point parliament decided to change it. Secondly, the year 1835 was probably the lowest point in the agricultural downturn that followed the Napoleonic wars, and consequently most likely to highlight any linkage between relief payments and economic circumstances. In contrast, the summarised nature of relief data available from central sources meant that it was possible to examine all of these from 1803. They do not provide the same breakdown by person and week, which enables the forensic study that is possible at a local level. However, this has allowed longer term trends to be modelled, which provides important context for in depth study.

### *7.1 Comparing Central and Local Sources for Poor Relief*

Whilst central records of poor relief are insufficiently granular to determine the categories of relief, they are extensive because they were collected nationally and frequently. There are two main types of these, partially qualitative surveys such as those from 1825 and 1834, and a larger number which gave annual expenditure figures.<sup>1</sup> The surveys from 1825 and 1834 provide insight into the attitudes of the

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<sup>1</sup> ProQuest, 1825 (299), Abstract Return on Practice of paying Wages of Labour out of Poor Rates, (hereinafter called the 1825 return); 1834 (44), Royal Commission of Inquiry into



respondents, although they probably do not portray the reality of poor relief provision or the wages paid to agricultural labourers. For example, the return for the Dengie hundred in the 1825 survey denied that poor relief was paid to supplement wages, which was certainly not true but illustrated that, more likely, the respondent wanted to provide an answer the authorities found acceptable.<sup>2</sup> This sort of inaccuracy was also prevalent in the 1834 Rural Query responses, along with apparent inconsistencies in much of the financial data provided. When this is considered alongside of the poor coverage of the surveys (only approximately 12% of Essex parishes were included in 1834), they provided an imperfect picture for the contemporary lawmakers.

The central sources which give annual expenditure figures for poor relief appear more reliable, because they were probably provided based upon information extracted from overseers' accounts. Nevertheless, there are still issues with these records which must be considered, and studies based upon them must be evaluated in light of these questions. Firstly, only the records for 1803 and 1813-15 provide any analysis of the annual expenditure. These split the figures by children, indoor and outdoor relief for 1803 and indoor/outdoor only for 1813-15. Given the apparent inaccuracy of the centrally provided numbers explained in Chapter 2, these additional analyses must be treated with caution. Secondly, there are discrepancies in the total relief figures between the central records and the numbers arrived at from detailed examination of local overseers' accounts. Whilst these could be quite small, such as 1.41% for St. Peter in the financial year which ended in 1832, they were normally much larger such as almost 24% for the same parish in 1834. Thirdly, and most importantly, the returns after 1815 give aggregate numbers only. Without identifying the specific categories of relief, it is impossible to determine the real nature of relief provision. For example, to truly understand the socio-cultural attitudes of the elite which made decisions about relief it is essential to understand how they treated the impotent, such as children, the elderly widows, unmarried mothers etc. Also, whether they provided any additional benefits over and above monetary

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Administration and Practical Operation of Poor Laws, Appendix B1 Answers to Rural Queries; 1818 (82), Abridgement of Abstract of Answers and Returns relative to the Expence and Maintenance of the Poor of England and Wales; 1803 (Bills), A Bill, Intituled, An Act for procuring Returns relative to the Expence and Maintenance of the Poor in England; 1818 (82), Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns; 1822 (556), Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns; 1825 (334), Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns; 1830-31 (83), Poor Rate Returns: An Account of the money expended for the maintenance and relief of the poor in every parish, township in England and Wales; 1835 (444), Poor Rate Returns: An Account of the money expended for the maintenance and relief of the poor in every parish, township in England and Wales.

<sup>2</sup> ProQuest, 1825 (299), Abstract Returns.

payments and, if they did, whether this changed in times of economic hardship. Alongside the socio-cultural perspective, it is also essential to understand if the pattern of relief changed based upon economic circumstances. Particularly, if 'allowances to the able-bodied' varied with economic changes, and if this had any knock-on impact on other categories of relief.

A key example of how the aggregate nature of the central sources could lead to incorrect conclusions was shown in Blaug's revisionist article on the old poor law.<sup>3</sup> He concluded that there was a positive correlation between the price of wheat and the level of poor relief in those counties where arable farming was the dominant source of agricultural revenue. His graph showed that both the price of wheat and the level of poor relief fell sharply from 1832 until 1835.<sup>4</sup> Blaug's explanation for this was that when the harvests were good the supply of wheat increased and therefore the price of wheat fell. Also, that as harvests increased the requirement for labour did so commensurately, which resulted in less need for poor relief. Nevertheless, Blaug's analysis has the obvious flaw that the total relief figures included amounts which were not related to agricultural workers, such as pensions to widows and children, which distorted the correlation between the price of wheat and overall relief. The existence of a correlation between the price of wheat and outdoor relief to the able-bodied is more compelling because the latter was specifically related to the requirement for labour.

Turning to the case study of Woodham Walter in this thesis, the parish's economy was based upon arable farming and much of the crop grown was wheat.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it seems reasonable to expect that the parish would have been an exemplar of arable farming parishes throughout England and that there would have been a similar relationship between the price of wheat and the cost of poor relief, and particularly the price of wheat and 'allowances paid to the able-bodied'. The following table shows the changing price of wheat compared to the total cost of poor relief and the allowances paid to the able-bodied, in Woodham Walter.

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<sup>3</sup> M. Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New', *Journal of Economic History*, XXIII (1963), pp.162-3.

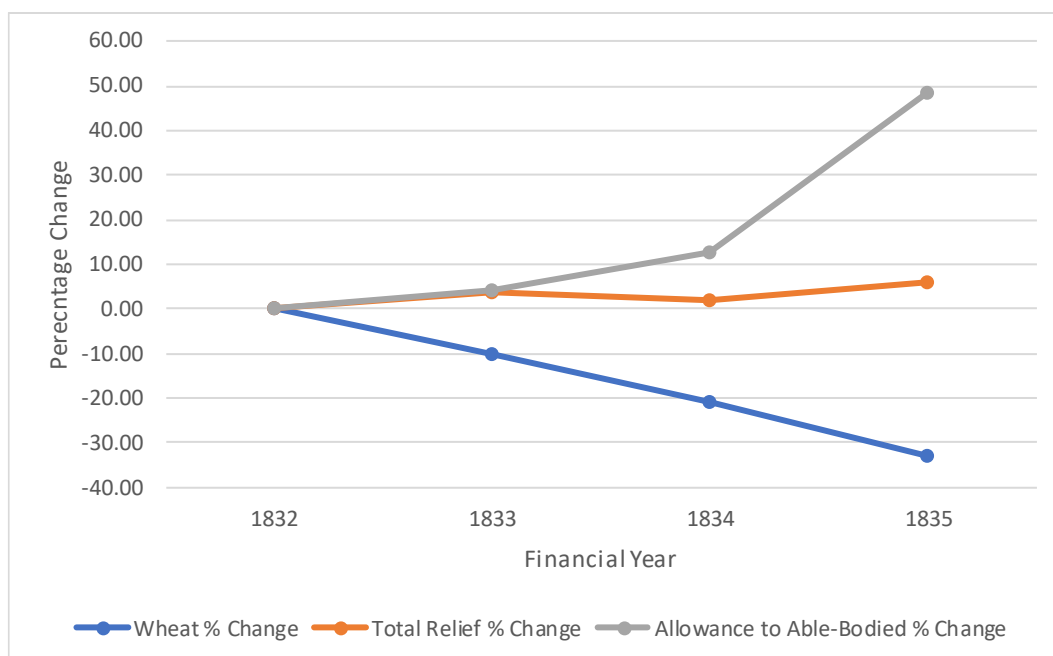
<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> P.M. Ryan, *Woodham Walter: A Village History* (Maldon: The Plume Press, 1989), p.53.

	Wheat Price S	Total Relief Cost £	Allowance to Able Bodied £	Wheat % Change	Total Relief % Change	Allowance to Able-Bodied % Change
<b>1832</b>	58.40	319.51	88.50	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>1833</b>	52.55	331.45	92.22	-10.02	3.74	4.21
<b>1834</b>	46.10	325.74	99.53	-21.06	1.95	12.46
<b>1835</b>	39.20	338.56	131.30	-32.88	5.96	48.37

**Table 7.1: The Price of Wheat per Imperial Quarters in £ Compared to Total Poor Relief Costs and Allowances to the Able-Bodied in £, for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>6</sup>**

The following chart plots the percentage changes.



**Chart 7.1: The Percentage Change in the Price of Wheat Compared to Total Poor Relief Costs and Allowances to the Able-Bodied at Woodham Walter for the Years 1832 to 1835.**

The chart refutes Blaug's analysis, at least insofar as Woodham Walter was concerned. Total poor relief costs remained fairly consistent during the period although the price of wheat fell, whilst the outdoor relief paid to the able-bodied rose.

<sup>6</sup> ERO, D/P/101/12/3 for the allowance numbers; the wheat prices were taken from A.H. John, 'Statistical Appendix', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VI, Part I: 1750-1850*, ed. by G.E. Mingay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [2011]), p.975.

This relationship is the exact opposite of what Blaug's analysis had shown and there was close to a perfect negative correlation of  $-0.91^7$  between the data series, as opposed to the positive relationship that he noted.<sup>8</sup>

It is also important to test Blaug's assertion that there was a straightforward relationship between the price of wheat and its supply.<sup>9</sup> The following table compares the price of wheat to its estimated production in England and Wales along with imports in order to test the relationships.

		<b>Domestic Production 000's Quarters</b>	<b>Imports 00's of Quarters</b>
	<b>Wheat Price</b>		
<b>1832</b>	58.40	11,900	12,544
<b>1833</b>	52.55	12,911	11,665
<b>1834</b>	46.10	13,605	9,815
<b>1835</b>	39.20	14,179	7,508
<b>1836</b>	48.60	15,859	8,612

**Table 7.2: The Price of Wheat in per Imperial Quarters in £ Compared to Domestic Production and Imports.<sup>10</sup>**

For the period 1832 to 1835 the correlation between the price of wheat and domestic production was  $-0.98$  and would suggest that as production increased the price of wheat fell commensurately, as suggested by Blaug. However, the figures for 1836 have been included to show that in that year this correlation was reversed, i.e. production rose and so did the price of wheat. This would suggest that the relationship between these economic factors was more complex than the direct relationship between production and price. For example, it is unknown whether there were differences in quality of the wheat from year to year, or whether a percentage of the production was stored rather than made available for immediate sale.

A further comparison between the figures derived from central records, Woodham Walter's and St. Peter's overseers' accounts and local economic data is shown in the indices calculated from these sources as shown in the following chart.

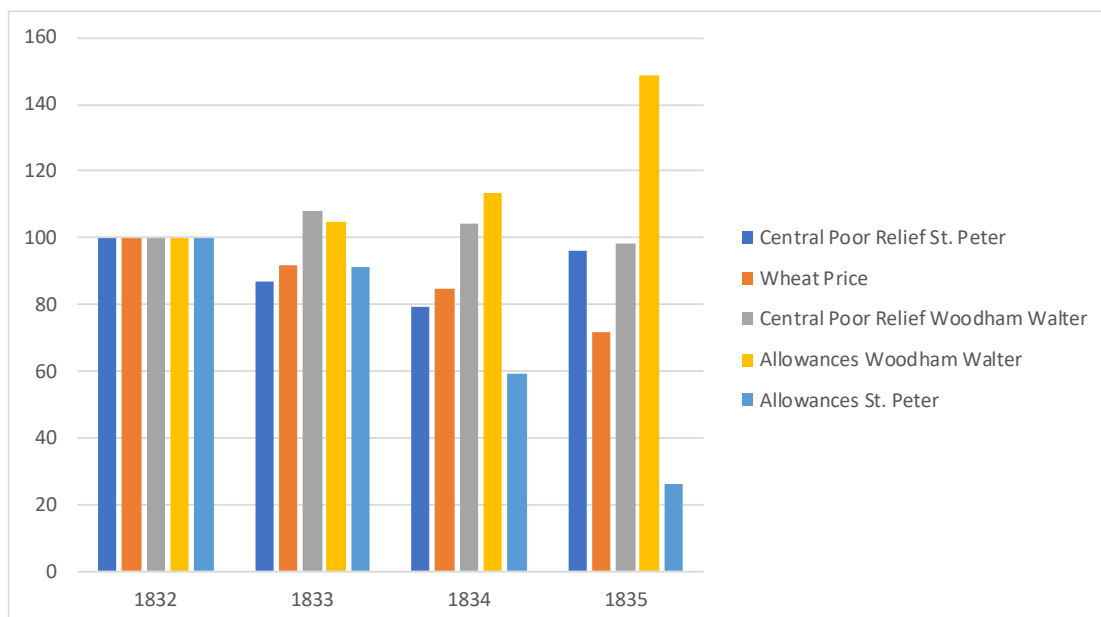
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<sup>7</sup> This was calculated using the Excel CORREL function, where 1 represents a perfect positive correlation and  $-1$  a perfect negative correlation.

<sup>8</sup> M. Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old poor law and the Making of the New', p.163.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.162.

<sup>10</sup> A.H. John, 'Statistical Appendix', pp.975, 1012-3, 1055.



**Chart 7.2: A Comparison of the Price of Wheat to the Allowances to the Able-bodied and Centrally Reported Poor Relief Figures for Woodham Walter and St. Peter, for the Years 1832 to 1835.<sup>11</sup>**

The base year for the index in Chart 7.2 was 1832, so all of the bars are 100 for that year. To ensure an accurate annual comparison between the ‘allowances to the able-bodied’, total central poor relief returns and the wheat price, the average annual wheat price was calculated from the time series. The chart clearly shows the problems with using numbers from the central sources for historical interpretation. As discussed above, it clearly highlights that as the wheat price declined the payment of ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ in Woodham Walter increased. The central relief figures for Woodham Walter did not move much from their base, whereas those for St. Peter fell to almost 87 in 1833 and under 80 in 1834, before returning to 96 in 1835. As discussed in Chapter 6, the ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ fell in 1834 and 1835 in St. Peter, possibly because the vestry was reacting to the content of the 1834 Report and Act. Conversely, the allowances increased in Woodham Walter in those two years, slightly to 115 in 1834 and then sharply to over 150 in 1835.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. ERO, D/P/101/12/3, Woodham Walter Overseers’ Accounts 1830-35. ERO, D/P 201/12/6,7,8, St. Peter’s Accounts: 1811-1833. The poor relief expenditure figures from 1830 to 1834 have been taken from parliamentary returns, ProQuest, 1830-31 (83); Poor Rate Returns, 1835 (444). No figure was published centrally for 1835, so this was calculated by linearly interpolating between the figure for 1834 and the 1836 number which was taken from the poor law commission’s annual report, 1836 (595). The price of wheat was taken from *The Essex Standard*, shipped quantities and prices from the London Corn Averages, Chelmsford, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1831 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1835. The data series was only captured up until the end of the 1835 financial year.

Overall, it seems probable that if this analysis was extended to additional parishes it would affirm similar issues with using the central returns to those discussed above. The conclusion must be that the data they provide is too aggregated to be used to compare with wider economic data for correlative purposes and fails to provide any insight into how relief was distributed for the same reason.

## *7.2 The Social Context Provided by the Elite*

Understanding the categories of the poor allows an appreciation to be gained of how relief was administered from a socio-cultural perspective, as well as economically. For example, whether the local elite were aligned with contemporary philosophers and legislators in believing that out-relief was iniquitous, particularly for able-bodied males. Indeed, the most striking aspect of local poor relief administration is that there is no evidence of any engagement with the philosophical debate that preceded the 1834 Act. Whilst the passage of the legislation and a factual overview of its content was presented in Essex newspapers, there was no discoverable commentary either in favour of or against the new law. In stark contrast, the state of agriculture in Essex was the subject of considerable attention in the newspapers and political speeches.

Leading Tories from the area, such as Christopher Comyns Parker and John Strutt-Hance, had significant interests in agriculture. Unsurprisingly their agenda was dominated by issues that affected farming revenues such as the malt tax and the corn laws. The farming interest was not just the sole preserve of the Tories, because leading local Whigs such as John Sadd and Joseph Pattisson operated farms as well as their mercantile businesses. The Whig candidate for the Maldon seats for the 1835 election was Thomas Barrett-Lennard, and he owned substantial areas of land as well as being a farmer and therefore had the same vested interest. So, from an overall economic perspective the interests of the Whigs and Tories were aligned. While this was not true over such issues as parliamentary reform and catholic emancipation, when working alongside each other on vestries or other parts of local government they appeared to do so in harmony. As already observed, the parishes in the area acted sympathetically towards the impotent poor whether they lived in the town or country.

The generous attitude towards the poor, was probably strengthened in the town because of the involvement in local government by the Maldon Congregationalists. These were mainly Whigs and therefore held liberal values, but

their religion also preached a strong sense of duty towards the disadvantaged and the poor.<sup>12</sup> Five members of the church held positions on the St. Peter's or All Saints' vestries, so it seems likely their opinions were influential in the formation of poor relief policy. In the rural parishes there was the additional aspect of the economic efficacy of 'allowances to the able-bodied'. The detailed study of Woodham Walter in Chapter 5 established the sensitivity of this category of relief to economic factors, particularly the price of wheat. 'Allowances to the able-bodied' seemed to be correlated with farms' profitability, which was reduced when the corn price fell. When profits fell, farmers restricted their hiring and the under-employed claimed allowances to subsist, which strongly suggests that there was no validity in the suggestion from the proponents of the 1834 Act that these payments promoted indolence or acted as a brake on wages. Rather, that it was an effective mechanism for supporting labourers and their families when there was insufficient work for them. The practice of paying these allowances continued in the Maldon Union, and probably many others, after the new poor law was in full operation, which is testament to its practical value.

### *7.3 The Effect of Change in the Local Economy*

When he responded to an instruction from the poor law commissioners to stop the practice of paying 'allowances to the able-bodied', Comyns explained how important they were as a safety mechanism to prevent severe distress in agrarian communities.<sup>13</sup> In Comyns opinion, there had been an agricultural depression for as long as he could remember and outdoor relief had assisted in maintaining social stability.<sup>14</sup> The twentieth century historian Fussell, also asserted that farming had experienced a depression since the end of the Napoleonic wars. He noted the Board of Agriculture in 1816 enquiry on this subject and the five select committees that had been formed to review it from 1819 to 1836. In his view, the national malaise had affected Essex as badly as 'other counties'.<sup>15</sup> Edward Collins disagreed with Fussell and suggested that, at least in Essex, the contemporary pamphlets and press had exaggerated the extent of the poor state of agriculture.<sup>16</sup> The problem with both

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<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 3, section 3.4.

<sup>13</sup> ERO, D/DOp B123/878A, Letters of the Oxley Parker Family.

<sup>14</sup> J. Oxley Parker, *The Oxley Parker Papers* (Colchester: Benham and Company Ltd, 1964), p.4.

<sup>15</sup> G.E. Fussell, 'Essex Farming 1809-1832: The Evidence of a St. Osyth Account Book', in *Essex Review*, LV (1946), pp.19-27.

<sup>16</sup> ERO, T/Z 561/13/1, E.J.T. Collins, 'Mid-Essex Agrarian Economy 1790-1830' (BA Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1957).

Fussell's and Collins' studies, was that they lacked detailed quantitative evidence to support their conclusions. As Fussell observed, the Osyth account book that he based his article upon, contained 'no records of sales so that is impossible to how much profit' was made.<sup>17</sup>

It is certainly true that few sets of complete farm accounts survive, but if the limited series of records for Bourne farm are considered as representative of mid-Essex farms, then it is possible to draw some conclusions about the perceived agricultural depression. Firstly, the price of wheat was the main factor which determined the level of revenue. Secondly, Bourne farm was still able to make a gross profit of approaching 30% of income in the second half of 1833 and the whole of 1834, even though the price of wheat had fallen to 53s and 46s respectively.<sup>18</sup> Finally, the only other time that the wheat price had fallen below 50s since the end of the Napoleonic wars was in 1822 when it fell to 44s.<sup>19</sup>

Clearly, there were factors other than the price of wheat which could have affected farmers' revenue, such as crop yields. Nevertheless, it seems improbable that mid-Essex farming had experienced a genuine agricultural depression since 1815. From the Bourne farm evidence, and also from the macro economic analysis of Maldon exports, it was only when the wheat price dropped towards 40s that profits turned to break even or loss. This is not to imply that the fortunes of farmers had not deteriorated since the wheat price had peaked at 126s in 1812 before this, simply that well-run farms could still make a profit until the wheat price fell below 50s.

It was apparent from the evidence of rent abatements having been agreed from as early as 1829, that has been discussed in this thesis, that the rent and tithe increases agreed during the wars were not sustainable. Both the contemporary Essex commentators Tormentor and Rusticus had suggested this problem, as described earlier Chapter 4. The abatement of tithes and rents may be considered as a market mechanism by which their price was elastic and could be reduced as demand for land fell because of reduced profitability from farming. Rent was a high proportion of farmers' costs, at over 30% for Bourne farm, when adjusted for late payment, and over 6% for tithes. Also, tithes were regarded as an outmoded tax where there was no benefit for the payer.

Conversely, the poor rate represented less than 5% of Bourne farm's expenses. In adverse economic circumstances, it would have made the most sense for farmers to focus upon obtaining reductions to expenses that were, firstly of the

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<sup>17</sup> Fussell, 'Essex Farming 1809-1832', p.19.

<sup>18</sup> John, 'Statistical Appendix', p.975.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. This was also observed by Collins in *Mid-Essex Agrarian Economy*.



highest value and secondly those not detrimental to the social health of their community. So, after saving what they could on rent and tithe payments, farmers that had variable labour costs would probably have reluctantly reduced hiring, which in turn increased demand for 'allowances to the able-bodied'.

This explanation is similar to that of revisionist historians such as Boyer, who suggested that outdoor relief was used as a way of responding to 'low wages and seasonal unemployment'.<sup>20</sup> Unlike tithe payments, farmers probably regarded payment of the poor rate as a form of income insurance for workers as well as a social obligation. Outdoor relief payments allowed them to maintain a contingent workforce they could leverage when they required more labour, so it served as a form of economic pressure valve. For the landowners and tithe holders, reductions in rent and tithes had a negative impact on their income and the publication of central statistics on poor relief showed that it had 'doubled since 1783'.<sup>21</sup> The economic reality of a reduction in revenue coupled with this revelation, may have prompted landlords to blame the increase in poor relief for their tenants' malaise and join the calls from many contemporary commentators for radical change to the poor laws.

#### *7.4 Poor Relief Provision in Woodham Walter*

Solar recognised significant benefits in the English poor relief system when compared to its European equivalent.<sup>22</sup> His work focused upon the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but is nevertheless relevant to nineteenth century practice. He suggested that from the late eighteenth-century farmers moved away from providing annual contracts to a more flexible system where outdoor relief was used to smooth the weekly income through seasonal and other cycles. Solar argued that the allowance system enabled a contingent labour force to remain within a parish which in turn allowed farmers to always have adequate resource to meet their needs.<sup>23</sup> As King and Tomkins pointed out, Solar provided little empirical evidence to support his thesis.<sup>24</sup> Also, he assumed that there was uniformity in the way the English and

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<sup>20</sup> Boyer, *An Economic History of The English Poor Law 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.84.

<sup>21</sup> A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p.40.

<sup>22</sup> P.M. Solar, 'Poor Relief and English Economic Development Before the Industrial Revolution', *Economic History Review*, 48 (1995).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>24</sup> S. King and A. Tomkins, 'Introduction – Historiography of Parish Poor Relief', in *The Poor in England 1700-1850*, ed. by S. King and A. Tomkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003 pp. 4-5).

European systems were administered, which seems unlikely.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the quantitative model that has been developed for Woodham Walter is supportive of Solar's suggestion that a flexible labour model existed for purely practical reasons.

Boyer similarly suggested that 'the major function of poor relief in rural parishes from 1795 to 1834 was the payment of unemployment benefits to seasonally unemployed agricultural labourers'.<sup>26</sup> Williams disagreed with this view and pointed out that the 'major function of poor relief' in the two parishes that she had studied, Campton and Shefford, was to provide 'regular pensions to the elderly and to lone parents'.<sup>27</sup> She provided figures that showed 44.8% of persons relieved were unemployed males and 33.4% of the value spent was on unemployment benefit, during the period 1830-34.<sup>28</sup> The figure of 33.4% quoted by Williams is similar to the 31.44% paid in 'allowances to the able-bodied' for Woodham Walter. When other categories of relief for Woodham Walter are aggregated, they are greater than the percentage that was spent on outdoor relief, so Williams disagreement with Boyer's phrasing is justified. Nevertheless, this does not alter the fact that 'allowances to the able-bodied' were an important feature of poor relief in both the Essex and Bedfordshire parishes.

Williams recognised that unemployment for men was very seasonal, and particularly so in the 1830s, so this also corresponds with the data for Woodham Walter. However, in the parish of Campton unemployment was so severe that some workers were unemployed during the summer as well as during periods when low levels employment would be expected.<sup>29</sup> The level of wages in Bedfordshire was lower than in Essex and ranged between 6s and 9s a week compared to around 8s to 12s in Essex, and the relief paid was between 2s 6d and 9s in Bedfordshire against 2s 6d to 11s in Essex.<sup>30</sup> Williams did not attempt to explain this disparity in relief payments between individuals which, as she acknowledged, left some men with pitiful amounts of income.<sup>31</sup> It is possible, therefore, that some unemployed men in Campton and Shefford experienced greater hardship than their equivalents in Woodham Walter. This type of comparison based upon local data, provides an invaluable opportunity to compare the management of poor relief across English

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<sup>25</sup> Solar, 'Poor Relief and English Economic Development Before the Industrial Revolution', p.2.

<sup>26</sup> G. Boyer quoted in S. Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle Under the English Poor Law 1760-1834* (Woodbridge Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2011), p.136.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.134.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.136.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* Also see Chapter 2, section 2.3 for Essex wages data and Chapter 5, section 5.2 for Essex relief data.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

parishes and identify similarities as well as differences. Extension of such analyses, would in turn assist in identifying wider areas than the parish where the pattern of poor relief management was consistent, as has been suggested by Steven King.<sup>32</sup>

At Woodham Walter a system was deployed whereby the vestry made payments from the general poor rate fund or the weekly collection fund, and sometimes both of these. Regular payments made to the 'impotent' were most commonly made from the weekly collection, in line with the original purpose of this type of charitable source of relief.<sup>33</sup> For example, orphans were an example of particularly vulnerable persons and they were almost exclusively relieved from the weekly collection. Evidence of how the weekly collection was used suggests that a key principle for how the vestry decided how to relieve those who were not capable of working, was by assessing their degree of vulnerability.

Another principle applied by the vestry was to provide those forms of relief that were considered essential at the expense of items considered as optional. So, when outdoor relief to the able-bodied was increased in 1835 it was mainly 'paid benefits' that were reduced in order to compensate. This leads to a third principle, which was that the total level of relief was to remain fairly consistent, as in all years between 1832 and 1835 despite fluctuations to categories within the relief budget. Whilst the amounts levied during financial years was not consistent for the period, this was probably to match cash flow requirements.

Beyond allowances in support of wages and the three main principles listed above, there would undoubtedly have been some variation on a case by case basis. There was certainly some additional complexity concerning 'old age pensions'. Historians such as Lyn Botelho and Susannah Ottaway have highlighted the diversity with which the elderly were treated by parishes within England and Wales and also the considerable difference of opinion that exists between historians on this subject. Ottaway made the point that the law expected families to take care of the elderly within their families, but that many contemporary commentators in the eighteenth century had expressed the view that there was a moral duty to care for the vulnerable, including the old.<sup>34</sup> Botelho stressed the importance of understanding the differing local treatments of the elderly in the context of how rich parishes were, and

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<sup>32</sup> S. King, 'Welfare Regimes and Welfare Regions in Britain and Europe, c. 1750s to 1860s', *Journal of Modern European History*, 9.3 (2011), pp.42-66.

<sup>33</sup> P. Slack, *The English Poor Law: 1531-1782* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995 [1900]), p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> S.R. Ottaway, *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007 [2004]), pp.174-6.

explained that apparently similar levels of relief were actually quite different when the relative wealth of communities was taken into account.<sup>35</sup>

In Woodham Walter only one person was paid a regular 'old age pension' and this from the poor rate fund. It suggests that the vestry expected families to care for their elderly, as Ottaway suggested, unless there was no family to do so, when the parish would step in. The ad hoc payments that were made to other old people suggest that the vestry were also prepared to supplement family support when circumstances so required, confirming the impression that the parish elite were generous but operated within a framework of principles. Therefore, it seems reasonable to believe that a fourth principle adhered to by the vestry was that 'old age pensions' would not be paid as matter of course, but only when there was no family support available.

### *7.5 Economic Context and Provision of Relief - St. Peter, Maldon*

St. Peter's economy reflected its status as a port, with strong mercantile, services based and manufacturing businesses. Of the 199 businesses analysed from the 1838 version of *Robson's Directory* only forty-six had a direct connection with agriculture and it seems probable that the town's economy would have been sufficiently diverse to cope with an agricultural downturn.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, many of the socially elite persons living in the town or having interests there would have been concerned by the state of farming because they owned or operated farms.

The poor relief category of 'allowances to the able-bodied' did not operate in the same way as it did in rural parishes, where it worked as a type of social insurance against insufficient work and where there was no alternative source of employment for the workforce. Although there was some farming activity within the boundaries of Maldon borough, this was just part of the business diversity and there is no evidence of any correlation with key factors of the agricultural economy such as the price of wheat.

Aside from how 'allowances to the able-bodied' was affected by economic circumstances the profile of poor relief provision in Woodham Walter and St. Peter in some respects was similar, therefore, St. Peter's approach towards relieving the poor is best summarised by a comparison between the two parishes. They were both broadly in line with the south-eastern relief profile of fairly generous provision. Their

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<sup>35</sup> L.A. Botelho, *Old Age and the English Poor Law, 1500-1700* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press 2004), pp.72-3.

<sup>36</sup> W. Robson, *Robson's Directory of the Home Counties* (London: Richard Studley, 1838), pp.75-8.

treatment of the impotent was similar and could also be considered empathetic. Also, both were prepared to provide support that was over and above allowances in the form of 'paid benefits' and 'illness physical'.

However, before engaging further with this comparison it is appropriate to consider whether evidence presented in this study supports Lynn Hollen Lees opinion, discussed briefly in Chapter 1, that in the last thirty to forty years of the old poor law attitudes to relieving the poor hardened and that this was also reflected in parish relief administration. As noted above, both rural Woodham Walter and urban St. Peter appeared to have a broadly sympathetic attitude towards the needy which was demonstrated by their support of the impotent. In this respect, therefore, this study does not support Hollen Lees view. Also, concerning 'allowances to the able-bodied', the correlation of this category of relief with the falling price of wheat, suggests that the parish elite regarded this as an economic safety valve rather than a payment to be viewed with 'revulsion' as suggested by Hollen Lees.<sup>37</sup>

St. Peter was more cosmopolitan than Woodham Walter, and because of this there were aspects of poor relief that were either non-existent or less prevalent in the rural parish, such as 'suppliers' payments', payments to 'people on the tramp/pass' and the cost of incarcerating people in gaol. These were small differences and the reasons for them may be largely explained by town versus country. However, more importantly, St Peter provided 'indoor relief' quite extensively, which was not the case in Woodham Walter.

It is important to try to understand the reasons why St. Peter spent much more on 'indoor relief' than Woodham Walter, because it might be indicative of a different social character between the parishes. If the reasons were practical, then they support the overall impression that the parishes held similar views of how the poor should be treated. Conversely, if the differences in expenditure were due to different philosophical perspectives there may have been reasons other than social conscience for the similarities in the parishes' relief profiles. Any policy differences would have been especially poignant given the period of this detailed study of poor relief in the two parishes. During the years 1832 to 1835 there was the intense national debate about poor relief that preceded the Royal Commission, the publication of the commission's 1834 Report, closely followed by the 1834 Act.

The use of workhouses or poorhouses lay at the very heart of this debate. Edwin Chadwick, whose attitudes towards relieving the poor had been heavily influenced by the writings of Jeremy Bentham, strongly espoused the view that the

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<sup>37</sup> L Hollen Lees, *The Solidarity of Strangers, The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.111.

payment of any allowances to the able-bodied was iniquitous and that relief should only be granted in 'well run' workhouses.<sup>38</sup> This prescription, which was fully endorsed in the 1834 Report and encapsulated in the 1834 Act, would probably have meant that the families of these paupers would also have received 'indoor relief'. The workhouse was construed by many as a form of prison, within which the liberties of the inhabitants were severely restricted and where the poor received punishment rather than support. As discussed in Chapter 1, an extreme design for any building that restricted persons' liberty, named the Panopticon, was proposed by Bentham where all inmates could be seen at all times. The power of this type of construction as a motif, was emphasised by later philosophers such as Michel Foucault, who extended the meaning of 'Panopticism' to an abstraction for the all-seeing nature of the developed State.<sup>39</sup> Even though this design was never implemented, it may have presented images of families being punished due to inability to find sufficient work.

Opponents of the principle of workhouses did not express their opposition in precisely these terms, but nevertheless those who were concerned for the welfare of the poor were vehemently opposed to their use. Samuel Whitbread was a leading campaigner and MP who attempted to amend the poor relief law in a way which, without actually banning workhouses, ensured that they were used as a last resort and that their conditions were strictly controlled.<sup>40</sup> Whitbread's view was widely held, but it was not only the contemporary debates about poor relief that were concerned with the principles of indoor versus outdoor relief. In some parishes, particularly urban ones, the balance between indoor and outdoor relief fluctuated as perceptions and beliefs changed during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>41</sup> As Jeremy Boulton observed, it was a continuous pattern in which outdoor relief existed alongside indoor relief, and it was extremely difficult to ascertain why one form of relief rather than the other was used.<sup>42</sup>

That was the pattern at St. Peter in Maldon, where outdoor relief of the impotent and 'allowances to the able-bodied' both represented a higher percentage of total relief than indoor relief. Also, even as the debate on poor relief reform raged

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<sup>38</sup> N.C. Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement: 1834-44* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), p.7.

<sup>39</sup> M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 1991 [1975]), pp.195-201.

<sup>40</sup> S. Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle Under the English Poor Law: 1760-1834* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), p.96.

<sup>41</sup> J. Boulton, 'Indoors or Outdoors? Welfare Priorities and Pauper Choices in the Metropolis under the Old Poor Law, 1718-1824', in *Population, Welfare and Economic Change in Britain: 1290-1834*, ed. C. Briggs, P.M. Kitson and S.J. Thompson (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), pp.153-88.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

at a national level, there was nothing in St. Peter's vestry minutes or in the area's newspapers which suggested that the elite were inclined towards increasing the level of indoor relief in order to fall in line with the sentiments of the Poor Law Commission. This may suggest that there was no philosophical reason why the parish vestry spent as much as it did on indoor relief and that the explanation lay elsewhere.

It was not only the social philosophy of poor relief which determined such choices, as there were also the questions of cost and practicality. During his campaign to amend the poor law, Whitbread pointed out that aside from the moral issues of providing relief in workhouses, the cost of providing indoor relief was much higher than outdoor relief.<sup>43</sup> It is difficult to confirm whether indoor relief costs were truly higher than outdoor relief costs for St. Peter, because there is no record of the number of workhouse inhabitants or of the number of recipients of relief for the impotent. However, it is possible to develop an indicative scenario which, based upon some reasonable assumptions, suggests indoor relief may have been chosen as a method for providing support for practical rather than ideological reasons. The highest indoor relief cost was in the second half of the 1833 financial year, at almost £100. If it is assumed that the workhouse was at full capacity of one-hundred as suggested by Drury during this period, it would suggest a cost of £2 a year per occupant.<sup>44</sup> This compares to just over £7 per recipient of 'allowances to the able-bodied', although this figure would have been provided for the whole family not just the named recipient. So, if the average family size is assumed to have been four, the provision of indoor relief would have been more expensive than outdoor relief at £8 against £7. This form of relief was, therefore, economically viable and straightforward to manage for families that were self-sufficient as long as they received regular financial relief. For people who required support beyond monetary assistance, such as the elderly with no family or orphaned children, it is possible that the vestry considered indoor relief as expedient both practically and financially.

Richard Smith was able to find lists of workhouse inmates for the parish of Terling in Essex for the late eighteenth century, which support this suggestion. Based upon these, he showed that there was 'a clear sense' that infirm elderly people were moved to the workhouse when their outdoor relief became too high.<sup>45</sup> Susannah Ottaway's study of the vestry minutes for the same parish, also from the

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<sup>43</sup> Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle Under the English Poor Law*, p.96.

<sup>44</sup> Drury, *Essex Workhouses*, p. ii. ERO, D/P 201/12/9.

<sup>45</sup> R.M. Smith, 'Ageing and Well-being in Early Modern England: Pension Trends and Gender Preferences Under the English Old poor law, c. 1650-1800', in *Old Age From Antiquity to Post-Modernity*, ed. By P. Johnson and P. Thane (Abingdon: Routledge, 1998), pp.64-95.

end of the eighteenth century, supported this finding and demonstrated the vestry considered the use of the workhouse to be an effective way of providing relief to the impotent elderly.<sup>46</sup>

Smith's and Ottaway's studies were focused on the provision of relief to the elderly, but if parishes such as Terling moved persons from outdoor to indoor relief when the economics made sense, it seems logical that they would have not restricted this to one class of poor but extended this approach to other classes. There is no direct evidence that this cost saving approach was used in St. Peter and also it is possible that the practice changed between the end of the eighteenth century and the 1830s. Nevertheless, it is possible that the St. Peter elite did offer indoor relief in specific cases to save money because it was simply easier to provide care inside the poorhouse than it was outside.

## *7.6 A Quantitative Comparative Model for Poor Relief*

Steven King has proposed an analytical framework employing a 'series of key yardsticks' as the basis of a qualitative assessment of types of welfare regimes. King suggested that the synthesis of these 'yardsticks' allowed regimes to be conceptualised as four 'ideal-types': 'entitling regimes', 'exclusionist regimes', 'obligatory regimes' and 'disciplinary regimes'. The qualitative criteria he proposed as the basis of classification were nuanced and concerned with the process of relief decision-making as well as the outcome. The four 'ideal-types' may be divided into two philosophies of how regimes viewed the provision of poor relief. The 'entitling regimes' and 'obligatory regimes' were favourable towards the deserving poor and the 'exclusionist' and 'disciplinary' regimes were intent upon minimising the expense of poor relief.<sup>47</sup>

King's method broadly classified regions of England for illustrative purposes, based upon his own research and understanding of the work of other historians. He suggested that, in general terms, the 'industrial northwest' had a preponderance of 'exclusionist regimes', rural counties close to London 'obligatory regimes', the east and south-east 'entitlement regimes', whilst the ideal-types of 'disciplinary' and 'exclusionist' were most common in the west. King's brief application of his method to England demonstrated that the value of a classificatory approach lies in providing a systematic way of grouping the essential features of 'welfare spaces'. It provides

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<sup>46</sup> Ottaway, *The Decline of Life*, p.190-1, 202-3.

<sup>47</sup> S. King, 'Welfare Regimes and Welfare Regions in Britain and Europe, c. 1750s to 1860s', *Journal of Modern European History*, 9.3 (2011), pp.57-63.



historians with a framework of understanding of why different areas reacted to changes of circumstance in the way that they did and can thus be a consequent reference point for the numerous micro-histories.<sup>48</sup>

As King explained, the use of classification methods to provide these benefits, is more important than the precise method used so long as it is coherent and logical.<sup>49</sup> Given the extent and granularity of the data that has been collected, classified and systemised in this thesis, it is proposed that this can be deployed to develop a quantitative model to complement the qualitative one designed by King. Clearly, such an approach will not provide the same level of insight into the way that regimes operated that comes with considering the evaluation criteria embodied in King's model. Despite this, it would provide a check upon whether the financial reality of the relief given matched the intentions, or whether economic circumstances sometimes superseded underlying objectives and philosophies. Also, a quantitative statement provides a frame of reference which assists in identification of exceptions. For example, within this study why did 'allowances to the able-bodied' sharply increase in 1834/5 in Woodham Walter and fall in St. Peter during the same period? Identification of exceptions also provides a trigger for further research to attempt to comprehend why they occurred and, therefore, contributes towards a more textured understanding.

The categories of relief used to analyse the overseers' accounts of Woodham Walter and St. Peter provide the base data for developing a quantitative model. Nevertheless, even within these detailed datasets there were challenges presented due to their not being 'ideal data matrices'.<sup>50</sup> For example, the total values by category were not in themselves useful, but rather it is the amount paid to each recipient which indicated whether the regime was generous or not. The number of recipients was not always recorded in the accounts, such as for the weekly allowances in St. Peter, so the population of each parish had to be used as a proxy to determine the amount paid per person. Table 7.3 explains how the quantitative model was developed. It explains whether a category was included or not and gives the reasons why some categories were excluded. Also, the methods used to calculate the key metrics are provided. Table 7.4 gives the results of the comparative model using the methodology defined in Table 7.3. Using the metric of 'relief to the impotent per head', St. Peter was a slightly more generous regime than Woodham

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> R. Floud, *An Introduction to Quantitative Methods for Historians* (London: Methuen, 1979 [1973]), p.164.

Walter because it paid £1.11 per head of population for the period against £0.99 in Woodham Walter, which was almost 15.53% higher. This was compensated somewhat by Woodham Walter having paid higher amounts for the categories of 'paid benefit' and 'illness physical' of £0.36 and £0.18 respectively, against £0.27 and £0.15 for St. Peter. If a larger sample of data was available, it would be possible to comment upon the significance of these differences in statistical terms. Intuitively, the relief metrics seem close enough that the differences were caused by natural variations that were due to differences between the demographic profiles of the parishes which resulted in differing relief requirements, rather than policy differences on the part of the elite.

Model Key Metric/Major Category	Relief Category	Explanation
Relief to the Impotent	Weekly Allowances	St. Peter had a category titled 'weekly allowances, that did not exist in the Woodham Walter accounts. So, all of the relief categories that were sub-categories of 'weekly allowances' have been summed under the model category of 'relief to the impotent'. As the number of recipients of 'weekly allowances' is not available in the St. Peter accounts, the key metric has been calculated by dividing the total of 'relief to the impotent' by the population from the 1831 census.
	Child Pension	
	Pension Other	
	Old Age Pension	
	Widows' Pension	
Poorhouse	As major category	Again, the number of persons relieved is not known for either parish, so the key metric has been calculated using the population (1831).
Allowances to the Able-bodied	As major category	The key metric was calculated by dividing the total of 'allowances to the able-bodied' for the period by the number of recipients. An additional metric was calculated by dividing the total by the population (1831), for comparative purposes
Paid benefit	As major category	The key metric was calculated by dividing the total 'paid benefit' by the population (1831), because the number of recipients is not available for either parish.
Illness Physical	As major category	The key metric was calculated by dividing the total 'illness physical' by the population (1831), because the number of recipients is not available for either parish.
Excluded from the Model	Overseer Salary	Regarded as administrative and therefore not indicative of regime generosity.
	Relief Administration	
	Settlement Cost	
	People on the Tramp/Pass	There is no equivalent for Woodham Walter, so it has been excluded for the purposes of this study.
	Supplier Bills	It was not possible to categorise many of these bills, so they have been excluded
	Loan	By value, these are minor items and have been excluded.
	Illness Mental	
	Funeral Cost	

**Table 7.3: Explanation of How the Metrics in the Model Were Calculated for Woodham Walter and St. Peter, and then used to Determine how Similar in their Poor Relief Policy.**

Model Main Category	Relief Category	St. Peter			Woodham Walter			% Difference
		Sub-Value	Value	Key/Additional Metric - £	Sub-Value	Value	Key/Additional Metric - £	
Total Relief to the Impotent - £			2,076	1.11		517	0.96	15.53
	Weekly Allowances - £	1,951			N/A			
	Child Pension - £	3			127			
	Pension Other - £	28			258			
	Old Age Pension - £	0			37			
	Widows Pension - £	94			95			
Poor House - £			637	0.34		14	0.03	1209.04
Allowances to the Able Bodied -£			824			412		
Allowances to the Able Bodied - Number of Recipients			116			105		
Allowances to the Able Bodied per recipient				7.10			3.92	81.03
Allowances to the Able Bodied per head of population				0.44			0.77	-42.46
Paid Benefit - £			507	0.27		194	0.36	-24.81
Illness Physical - £			275	0.15		98	0.18	-19.27
<b>Note: Parish Populations (1831)</b>								
Woodham Walter		538						
St. Peter		1,870						

**Table 7.4: Key and Additional Metrics Calculated for the Comparative Model.<sup>51</sup>**

Differences in relief per head for indoor relief between St. Peter and Woodham Walter were substantial, being £0.34 and £0.03 respectively. This 1,209% difference is misleading, however, because the Woodham Walter vestry was limited in how much relief it could provide by the size of its poorhouse. This further emphasises the care that must be exercised when analysing metrics calculated using population size for small samples, as in the case for Woodham Walter. Nevertheless, the difference should not be ignored because it does demonstrate that there was some cultural difference between the parishes regarding their relative attitudes toward the provision of indoor relief. Whilst Woodham Walter may not have been the beneficiary of a bequest to build a poorhouse, as was St. Peter, the vestry could have sought ways to construct a larger facility if it had perceived that there was real benefit in providing indoor relief.<sup>52</sup> This difference will be discussed in more detail in the final section of the chapter.

The ‘allowances to the able-bodied’ category was complicated to understand. The amount paid per recipient was 81% higher in St. Peter compared to Woodham Walter, but when calculated per head of population it was over 42% higher in Woodham Walter than in St. Peter. This demonstrates one of the problems with using the population as a proxy for the number of relief recipients. The value per head was higher in Woodham Walter simply because a greater percentage of the

<sup>51</sup> ProQuest, 1833 (149); ERO, D/P 201/12/9; ERO, D/P/101/12/3.

<sup>52</sup> Ryan, *Woodham Walter: A Village History*, p.61.

population claimed this relief, thereby increasing the aggregate relative to the population size. So, as noted earlier in this chapter, 19.5% of the population received this type of allowance during the period, namely 105 people. If the percentage had been identical to St. Peter (6%), this would have reduced the number who claimed relief by seventy-three people, equating to £286.16. This in turn would have given a figure of £0.23 per head as opposed to £0.77, so it is evident that in pure terms St. Peter was the more generous parish for this relief category as well as that of 'relief to the impotent'.

Consequently, the most accurate form of quantitative model would always be based upon the total relief by category divided by the number of recipients for that category. If there was a larger database containing such information, it would be possible to estimate the numbers of recipients, because such a dataset would probably be normally distributed and it would, therefore, be possible to infer estimated numbers of recipients.<sup>53</sup>

A more extensive dataset would also provide the opportunity to calibrate key metrics based upon different criteria. For example, one criterion might be regionality and if the metrics that have been calculated for St. Peter and Woodham Walter were captured for other parishes in Essex, the south-east and other regions, it would be possible to develop a scale for each metric which could provide a measure of generosity of relief for each region. As King implied, such a data source would be invaluable to historians as it would obviate the necessity of them having to 'rely on aggregate statistics' which were often based upon erroneous submissions to the central collators and merged distinct categories of relief.<sup>54</sup>

## *7.7 Using the Quantitative Methodology for Broader Analyses*

It is believed that, to date, no extensive exercise to systemise the local research of historians of the old poor law has occurred. The available records with the broadest coverage are still those that were based upon central returns. In order to illustrate how a relief scale could be developed to compare poor relief quantitatively for different categories, analysed by further data attributes such as region or county, a simple example has been built using these crude central sources. Obviously, in this case there is only one relief category which is total relief. The regions have been selected based upon King's suggestion of how they matched the 'ideal-types' from his qualitative model.

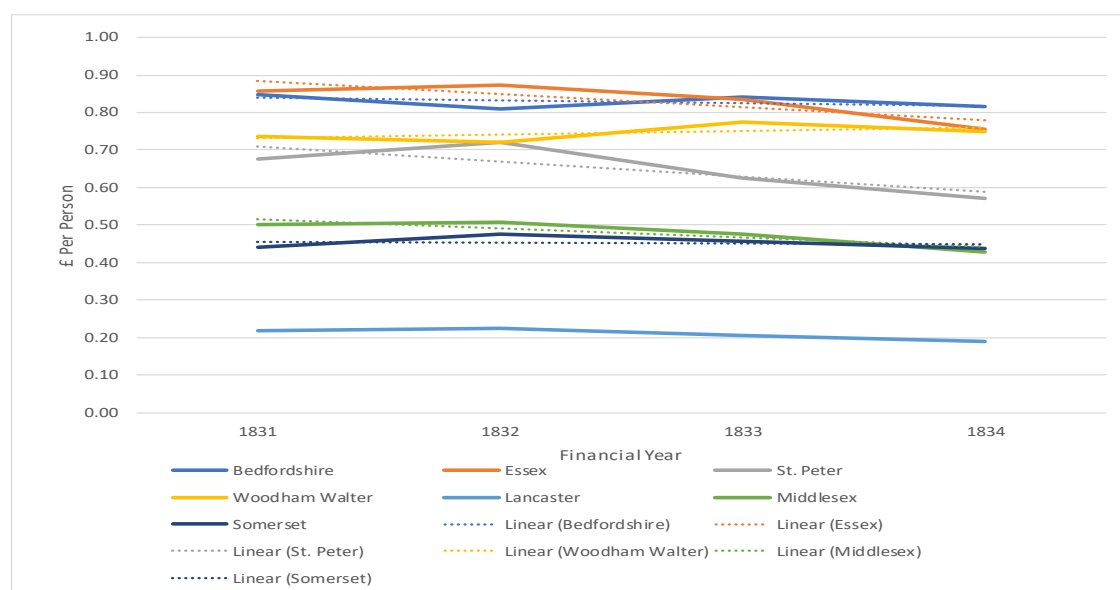
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<sup>53</sup> Floud, *An Introduction to Quantitative Methods*, pp.169-182.

<sup>54</sup> S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.144.

So, St. Peter, Woodham Walter, Essex and Bedfordshire have been used to represent the south-east; Middlesex for rural counties near London; Lancashire for the north-west; and Somerset for the west.<sup>55</sup>

Chart 7.3 shows that poor relief for St. Peter was lower than it was for Woodham Walter and Essex for the whole period. This provides a clear example of how the central records do not give a reliable view, because a more detailed study of local records has demonstrated that, overall, St. Peter was a more generous parish than Woodham Walter. The picture given by the central records was distorted by St. Peter under-reporting the levels of relief for 1833 and 1834 and Woodham Walter over-reporting for these two years (as well as 1832). Also, the precision provided by classifying the local records, as well as allowing a granular level of analysis, enabled the exclusion of items which were not truly reflective of whether relief was generous or not, such as administration costs. Whereas, the centrally reported figures were clouded by the inclusion of such items, the extent of which varied from parish to parish and year to year.



**Chart 7.3: Poor Relief Costs for Essex, Bedfordshire, Middlesex, Lancaster and Somerset Based Upon Central Sources.<sup>56</sup>**

<sup>55</sup> King, 'Welfare Regimes and Welfare Regions in Britain and Europe', pp.42-66.

<sup>56</sup> ProQuest, 1830-31 (83), Poor Rate Returns, 1835 (444); 1833 (149). No central figures are available for the 1835 financial year, so 1831 has been added to the plots so that the trends may be seen for a four-year period.

Nevertheless, the margin of error was not so great that the use of the central sources is wholly invalidated. Chart 7.3 shows that King was mainly correct in his assessment of how his qualitative model explained different regional patterns.

The figures used to create Chart 7.3 are for the early nineteenth century, but the regional commonality they suggest is in direct contrast to the 'highly localized nature of social provision' observed by Hindle for the mid seventeenth century.<sup>57</sup> Despite the approximately 200 year gap between the analyses, intuitively a common approach across parishes makes sense because landowners usually held interests in multiple places and would, therefore, have influenced poor relief decision making across a wider area than any single parish. It is possible that the thirty-nine Warwickshire parishes that submitted the returns analysed by Hindle were atypical, or possibly there was some fundamental difference in the way that administration of relief was conducted in the seventeenth century from the nineteenth.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, it would be informative to use a wider sample than that used by Hindle to further examine the question of regional patterns for the seventeenth century.

Lancaster from the north-west did provide the lowest level of relief, the counties/parishes in the south-east were the most generous, Somerset in the west was less generous than the south-east, and in the latter region perhaps only Middlesex was a lower payer than might have been expected.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, it can be seen that this simple example provides a calibrated scale of relief generosity for England. The lowest point may be represented by Lancaster at around £0.2 per head – ungenerous, the mid-point is Somerset and Middlesex at £0.45 to £0.50 per head – median, and the high points are Essex and Bedfordshire at £0.75 to £0.90 per head – generous. Clearly, more points in the scale could be derived as further records by region are analysed and a complete and more nuanced regional pattern developed.

Although the central records provide a useful calibrated scale when considering differences between major regions, it is important to note that if the figures produced from local records for St. Peter and Woodham Walter were typical, the differences between the two sets of figures can provide a false impression within a region. The average annual relief per head from the overseers' accounts for St. Peter was £0.66 and for Woodham Walter £0.61, compared to £0.64 and £0.75 respectively calculated from the central records. Thus, although both parishes would

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<sup>57</sup> S. Hindle, *On the Parish: The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England, c. 1550-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 [2004]), p.249.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>59</sup> King, 'Welfare Regimes and Welfare Regions in Britain and Europe', pp.42-66.

be considered generous in terms of poor relief provision on a national basis, their relative positions are reversed when considered in terms of the more accurate figures arising from analysis of local records.<sup>60</sup>

The research methodology employed in this thesis was necessarily laborious and time consuming, even though it covered only a limited area and short time period. Nevertheless, it is believed that this data-driven approach has demonstrated many benefits, and these would only increase if the dataset were to be widened. Firstly, the data is captured at the parish level which is the lowest possible and as such allows for aggregation. Secondly, the bottom-up structure means that aggregations may be used to identify common patterns at a regional or sub-regional level. Thirdly, the classification into categories of poor relief within the database, allows historians to discover what really took place, without the disbenefits of sometimes inaccurate and opaque contemporary and published sources. Finally, the form and structure of the source material (such as overseers' accounts) is suited for comparisons with other data series for the purposes of identifying correlations or developing regression analyses. For example, local economic data has been used to identify correlations with relief data in this document. It is therefore suggested that modern database and analytical technology could be used to develop a distributed database which could be populated by local research effort. In time this might have the potential to create a regional or even national resource for historians.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> ERO, D/P 201/12/9; D/P/101/12/3.

<sup>61</sup> Modern technologies such as distributed ledger ('Block Chain') and the cloud could be used to facilitate such an exercise.



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