

Local government, welfare
provision and social activism, 1798
to 1914 [OLE3039]

20 November 2024

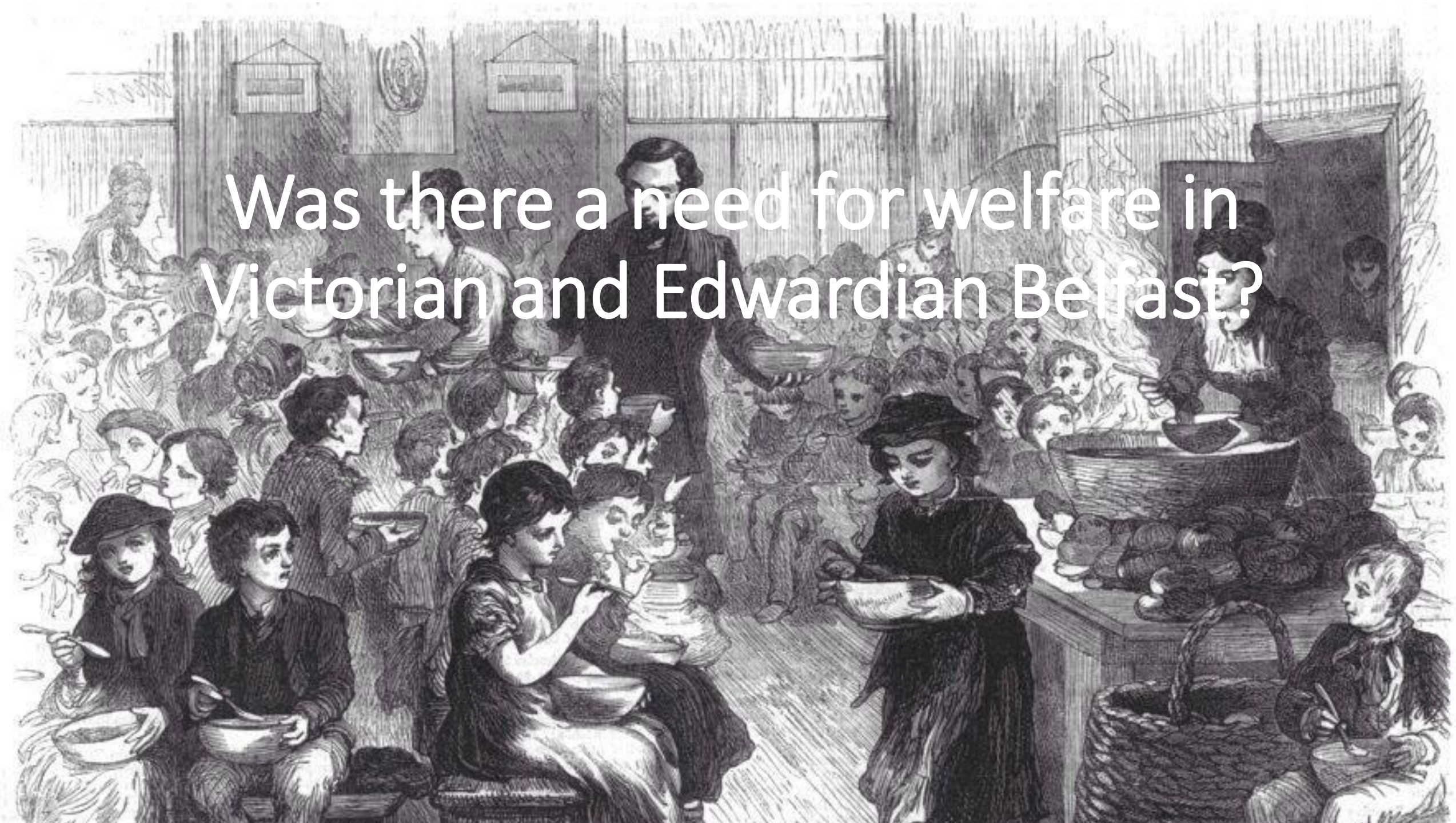
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Contents

- Was there a need for welfare?
- Explore Victorian and Edwardian **attitudes** to poverty and welfare
- Consider **state response** to welfare provision.
- Examine **charitable and private responses** to social issues and poverty.



Was there a need for welfare in
Victorian and Edwardian Belfast?



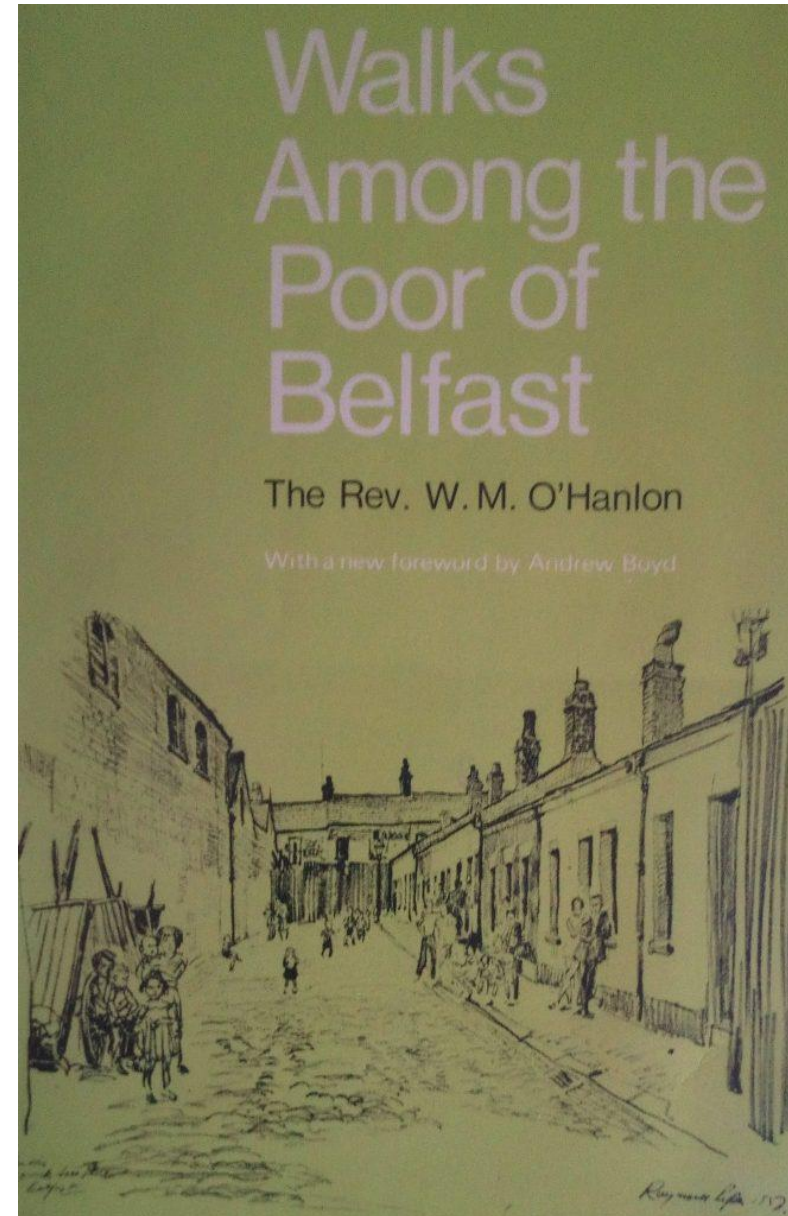
Weavers' income in the early 19th century

- In 1811, weavers earnt around 12 to 15 shillings.
- In 1824, this had fallen to 7 or 8 shillings a week.
- The Belfast Newsletter reported that weavers Ballymacarrett in 1830 were living on 'Indian meal' 'unfit for cattle'.



William Murphy O'Hanlon

- Born 1809, Newry. Father barrister.
- While Parents in India, O'Hanlon was schooled at Creighton's boarding school.
- O'Hanlon trained as a vicar. Ordained in 1837 and became minister at Hollinghead Church, Chorley Lancashire.
- O'Hanlon was appointed minister of the Congregational Church in Donegall Street.
- Published Walks Among the Poor of Belfast as a survey of poverty, living conditions and 'ordinary life' for the poor citizen of the city.
- 1854, O'Hanlon was recalled to England; becoming a pastor in Barnley. Died in 1855.



LETTER I.

SIR,—Permit me to call the earnest attention of the more affluent, respectable, and especially the Christian public of Belfast, to the deplorable condition of the poor who inhabit the back streets, courts, and alleys, of our rapidly extending and populous town. Amid the perhaps unavoidable conflicts of party and opinion, it is somewhat refreshing to feel, that this is a subject, which, while second to none in its bearing upon our welfare as a community, may yet be pursued apart altogether from sectarian principles, either in religion or politics.

It has often struck me, how little either the idle or the busy, as they move along the great thoroughfares of our cities and towns, seem to know or think of the social misery, vice, and squalid poverty, which lurk in obscure dens, within, it may be, a few hundred yards of these more open ways. And it is extraordinary, how many years we may inhabit a particular locality, and yet never once penetrate the dark and noisome haunts which lie in our immediate neighbourhood. My conviction is, that there is enough of benevolence in most minds to lead them to set on foot some methods

O'Hanlon in 1840s and state 60 years later

‘The houses are in a state of great dilapidation, though not quite so far gone as the houses in Upper Kent-street, celebrated in my last letter. But the point to which public notice should be called, especially at the present movement, the total absence of any sewerage...’



Beatty's Entry off Hamil Street, 1912

Julius Rodenberg (1831-1914)

- Jewish German poet and author.
- Featured Belfast in *A Pilgrimage Through Ireland on the Island of the Saints* (London, 1860)
- Notes and describes poverty in Belfast.



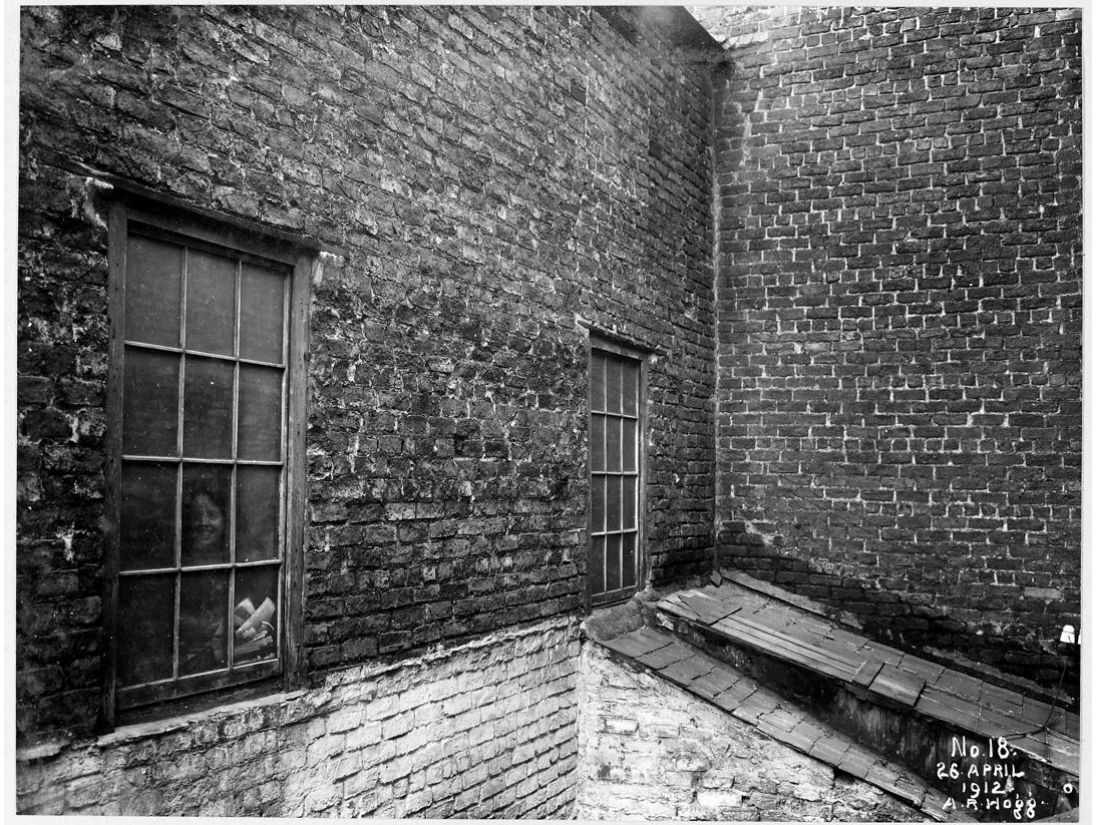
Anderson Row, 1850s

Anderson-row is a narrow, short cul-de-sac, which sends to meet the intruder the miasma of rotten straw, filthy rags, and rubbish of even' description, with which the ground is covered instead of pavement. There are some twelve or fourteen houses — if these dens can be so called — in Anderson-row, and in them dwell about two hundred beggars, thieves, and prostitutes. Often these dens are chokingly full of denizens — often some are empty, because their former inhabitants have migrated to prison. Anderson-row is mainly a nursery for young criminals, and these dozen houses, on an average, supply three-fourths of the contingent to the prisons and re- formatories. Women, trembling with frost and hunger, dirty and half naked, stood in the doorways, or lay on the stones under the houses. I had seen in the mud- hovels of the heath what Ireland had to offer in the shape of want and misery, where human beings and animals pass the night under one straw roof, often on one straw bed. In the dens of Anderson-row, however, in the pestiferous air which crime and unnatural sin breathe, no animal could live. Here a man can only exist in the worst stage of degradation, till his mind grows gloomier and gloomier, like the candle which burns in an atmo- sphere full of choke-damp, timidly and droopingly, out light or warmth, but still burning to the end. The walls of these dens are black, and drip with damp. The windows are stuffed up with rags, and only here and there is a hole left, through which wind and rain enter.



O'Hanlon on Anderson Row

Before passing out of this region, I must direct your eye to the houses lately erected in Anderson's -row , by Mr. John Bain . They constitute one side of a square, and are every way worthy of a passing remark , forming, as they do, a pleasing contrast to so many of the dwellings of the lower classes of mill hands and labourers...These tenements are let in flats - two rooms to each family - and they are so constructed that the inmates in the upper rooms have equal access as those below to the rear of the buildings — a flight of stairs descending from the higher story to the back door. Each house is furnished with due accommodations, and, by a sanitary regulation on the part of the proprietor, no noxious materials are permitted to accumulate. The houses are let as fast as they are built, and, I believe, before they are completed a full proof that the poor know and appreciate the benefits of comfortable and healthy abodes, and are willing to labour hard to avail themselves of such, if they are provided, and placed at all within the reach of their weekly earnings.



Later in the century

- Between 1892 and 1912, the price of food rose 29%.
- During the same time, it was calculated that 59% of an unskilled labourers wage went on food.
- The working classes suffered a major decline in living standards in the last 30 years of the 19th century.



Belfast in 1908

- The life of unskilled labourers and was altogether more precarious A Royal Commission of 1908 laid bare the poor quality of life for the poor of Belfast.
- Much of the housing in the city was built to reasonable standards, but slum conditions such as those around Abbey Street endured.
- The slums were not as extensive as Dublin, but thousands of families lived in cramped, unsanitary dwellings, away from the prosperous streets and squares.



Poverty driving people to crime

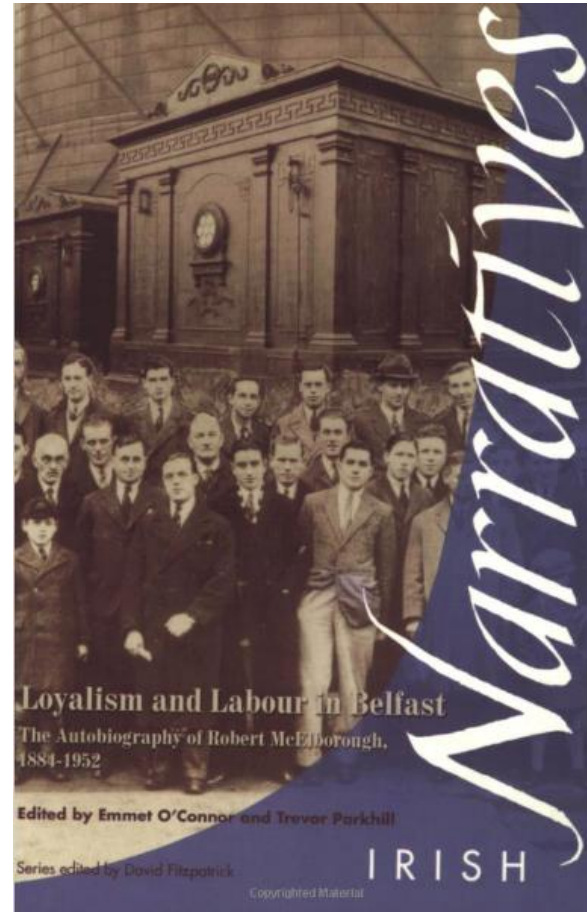
October 1910: Mary Ann Murray was sentenced to six months in jail after she appeared in the dock carrying a tiny baby and charged with the theft of boots belonging to Samuel Small. Evidence of ownership and pawning were given and the accused pleaded guilty stating that poverty and hunger had been the cause of her crime. She had been before the courts over five times previously



One view...

Robert McElborough, writing his memoirs of life in Belfast in the opening years of the twentieth century wrote:

‘My experience of living in rooms with nothing to eat only what friends gave us is engraved on my memory.’



Old clothes' market Belfast, 1899



Men sleeping rough, Springfield Brick works, 1905



State of poverty in Belfast in 1911

- Wages rates for highest skilled workers highest in the UK (the labour aristocracy around 15% of the workers)
- 3,426 inmates in workhouse (0.8% of the population).
- 96% of total population was literate. Variations:
 - West Belfast it was around 95%.
 - For male general and factory labourers the rate was 93%.

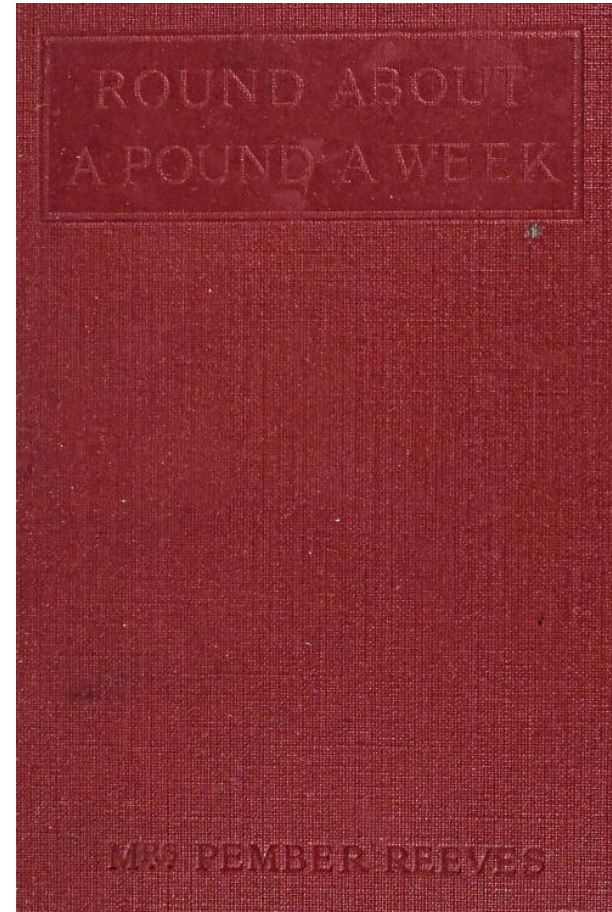


Around a pound a week...

Published in 1913, this landmark sociological study was authored by Maud Pember Reeves, a Fabian Society member.

It examined the lives of working-class families in London, focusing on women managing households on very limited of around 18 to 30 shillings.

People were one pay packet away from the work house...



Managing on around a £ a week

	s.	d.
Rent	8	0
Burial insurance (2d. each child, 3d. wife, 5d. husband; unusually heavy)	1	8
Boot club	1	0
Soap, soda, blue	0	4½
Wood	0	3
Gas	0	8
Coal	1	0
	12	11½

Mr. P., printer's labourer.

Average wage 24s. Allows 20s. to 22s. Six children.

November 23, 1910, allowed 20s. Left for food 7s. 0½d.

Cost for child burial...

	£	s.	d.
Funeral	1	12	0
Death certificate	0	1	3
Gravediggers	0	2	0
Hearse attendants	0	2	0
Woman to lay her out	0	2	0
Insurance agent	0	1	0
Flowers	0	0	6
Black tie for father	0	1	0
	2	1	9

The following is an account kept of the funeral of a child of six months who died of infantile cholera in the deadly month of August, 1911. The parents had insured her for 2d. a week, being unusually careful people. The sum received was £2.

Diet of an average family...

The following is a week's menu taken from Mrs. X., the wife of a carter. His wages vary between 19s. and 23s. 6d., according to hours worked. In a Bank Holiday week they went down to 15s. He usually keeps 1s. a week, and has his dinners at home. There are four children, all under five. The rent is 4s. 6d. for one room. They do not insure, and are slightly in debt. Mrs. X. is a good manager. This menu was taken from a week when Mrs. X. had 22s. 6d. given her by her husband:

Sunday.—Breakfast: One loaf, 1 oz. butter, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. tea, a farthing's-worth of tinned milk, a halfpennyworth of sugar. Kippers extra for Mr. X. Dinner: Hashed beef, batter pudding, greens, and potatoes. Tea: Same as breakfast, but Mr. X. has shrimps instead of kippers.

Monday.—Breakfast: Same as Sunday. Mr. X. has a little cold meat. Dinner: Sunday's dinner cold, with pickles, or warmed up with greens and potatoes. Tea: One loaf, marmalade, and tea. Mr. X. has two eggs.

Tuesday.—Breakfast: One loaf, 1 oz. butter, two pennyworth of cocoa. Bloaters for Mr. X. Dinner: Bread and dripping, with cheese and tomatoes. Tea: One loaf, marmalade, and tea. Fish and fried potatoes for Mr. X.

Wednesday.—Breakfast: One loaf, 1 oz. butter, tea. Corned beef for Mr. X. Dinner: Boiled bacon, beans, and potatoes. Tea: One loaf, 1 oz. butter, and tea. Cold bacon for Mr. X.

Thursday.—Breakfast: One loaf, jam, and tea. Dinner: Mutton chops, greens, and potatoes. Tea: One loaf, 1 oz. butter, and tea.

Friday.—Breakfast: One loaf, 1 oz. butter, and tea. Dinner: Sausages and potatoes. Tea: One loaf, jam, and tea.

Saturday.—Breakfast: One loaf, 1 oz. butter, two pennyworth of cocoa. Dinner: Pudding of "pieces," greens, and potatoes. Tea: One loaf, 1 oz. butter, and tea. Fish and fried potatoes for Mr. X.

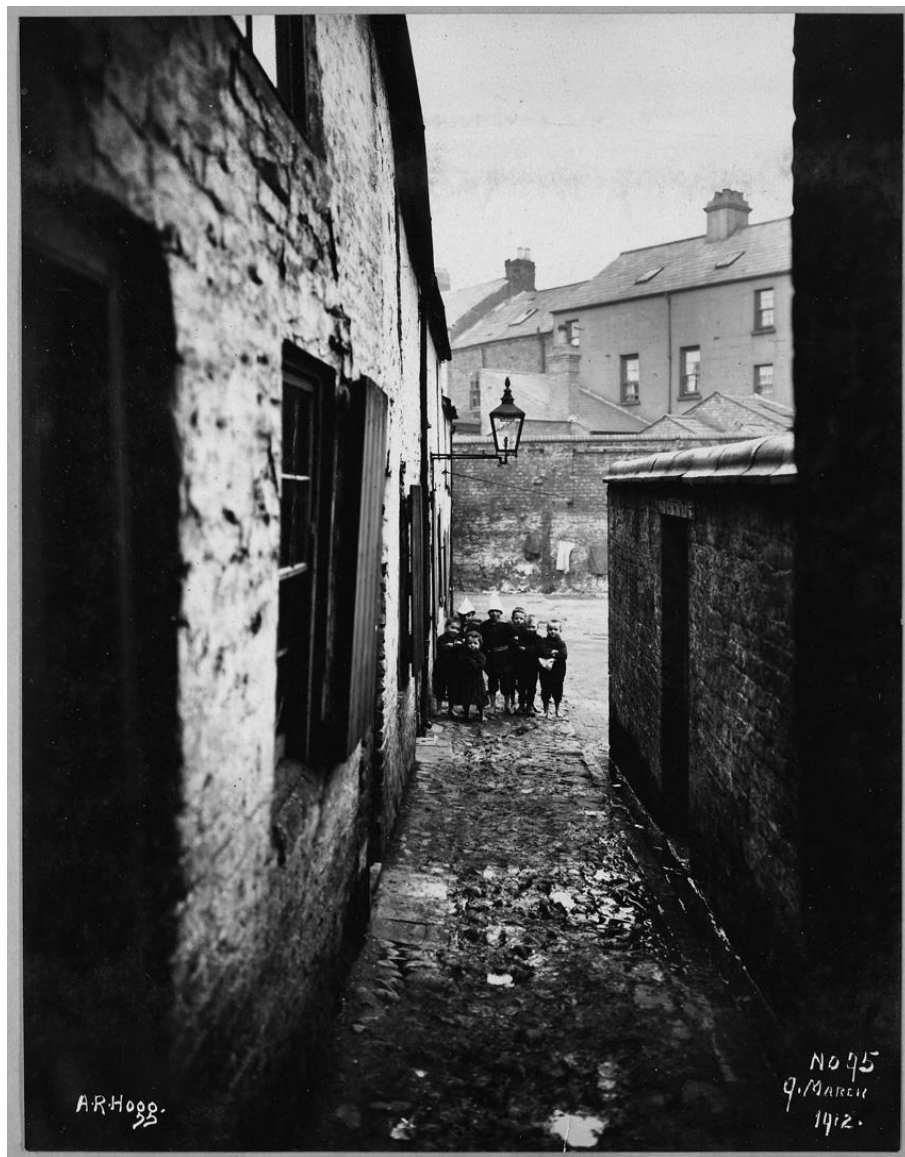
The book found...

- Most working-class families lived on about £1 a week, with no margin for unexpected expenses.
- Women managed household budgets, often going hungry to feed their children.
- Families lived in overcrowded, unsanitary housing, worsening health issues.
- Poor diets led to malnutrition and high child mortality rates.
- Poverty was shown to stem from systemic issues like low wages, not personal failings.
- The book called for reforms, including better housing, living wages, and welfare support.



Hopes Court, Millfield





Barrack Court from Barrack St, 1912



Hemsworth St, area of Warwick St

Poverty in Northern Ireland, 2018

- Poverty in Northern Ireland is slightly lower than in England or Wales, but it is higher than in Scotland.
- Poverty among pensioners has fallen considerably over the last decade. Families with children have seen steady or falling poverty rates, but working-age adults without children are now at higher risk of poverty than ten years ago.
- Northern Ireland has higher worklessness and lower employment than elsewhere, and the proportion of people in poverty in workless households has increased slightly over time, in contrast with the UK as a whole.



By We Care food bank founder
and Community activist
Ray Barron Woolford



Telling the inside story and
exposing the truth behind
Food Bank Growth in the U

JRF contd...

- This suggests that the employment rate continues to be a major factor affecting poverty rates in Northern Ireland, and that raising the employment rate could lead to falls in poverty.
- The gap in educational attainment among richer and poorer children has narrowed slightly but remains very large.
- There are more people with no qualifications and fewer people with higher-level qualifications in Northern Ireland than in the rest of the UK.
- One in ten households in the poorest fifth in Northern Ireland faces problem debt.
- Nearly two-thirds of people in the poorest fifth are not paying into a pension, increasing their risk of future poverty.

Poverty in 2020s Belfast

1. Currently in NI, one in four children and young people live in poverty; this equates to over 100,000 children and young people. ¹
2. The gap between rich and poor is growing and this number is expected to rise to one in three by 2020. ²
3. Proportionally, we have a higher poverty rate than the rest of Ireland or the UK. ³
4. One reason for this is the relationship between poverty and the legacy of the Conflict, which continues to negatively affect many children and young people's lives. ⁴
5. Families who have had a high experience of the conflict are poorer than those with no conflict experience. A fifth of all our children currently live with an adult that has a 'high experience' of the conflict. ⁵



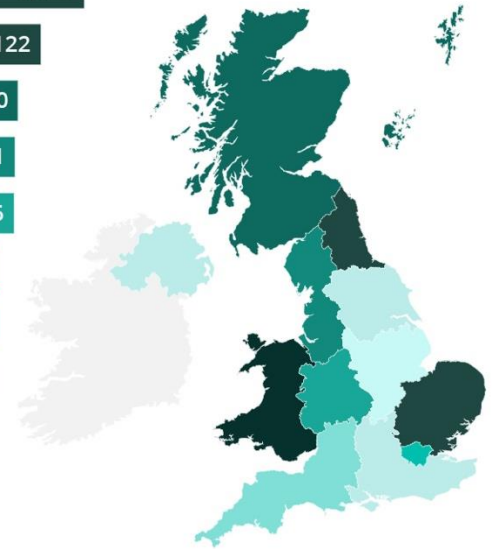
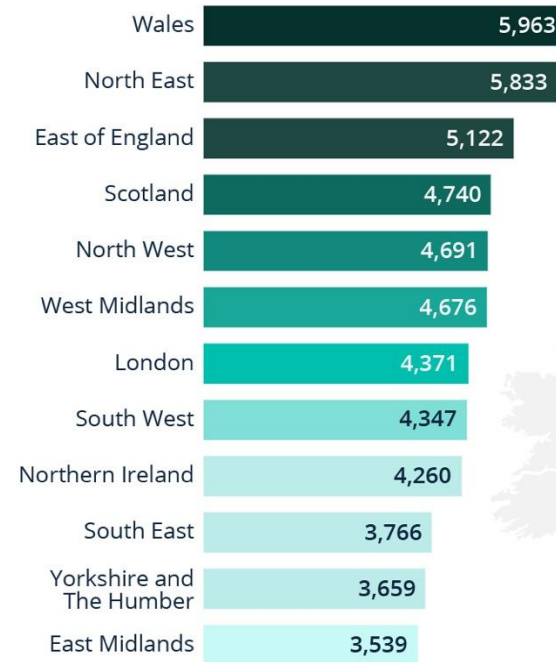
Belfast
City Council

Poverty today continued...

- At every stage of schooling, NI's poorest children and young people are likely to do worse than their better off class mates. [6](#)
- Around 60% of boys and 50% of girls receiving free school meals do not leave school with five good GCSE's compared with 30% and 20% of those not eligible. [7](#)
- The makeup of people who experience poverty has changed over the last few years; there are now more young people living in poverty than there was five years ago. [8](#)
- Employment rates for young people aged 16-24 are 12% lower than in Great Britain, a significant difference and the average weekly wage in NI is lower than it was ten years ago.
- Levels of in work poverty have also increased. 36% of children experiencing severe poverty live in a household where at least one adult works.

Food Bank Dependency in the UK

Number of emergency food parcels given per 100,000 population in 2022/23*



* by Trussell Trust foodbanks
Source: The Trussell Trust



Context: attitudes to poverty and welfare



Victorian attitudes

- During the late 19th century, many believed in the idea of 'laissez-faire', to leave people alone to live their lives.
- Individuals were viewed as solely responsible for their own lives and welfare.
- The government did not accept responsibility for the poverty and hardship that existed among its citizens.



The role of government

- The accepted role of the government was very limited - to maintain law and order and to protect the country from invasion
- Government involvement in social issues was unpopular as it would result in a rise in taxes.
- The poor were seen by the wealthy as an unfortunate but inevitable part of society.



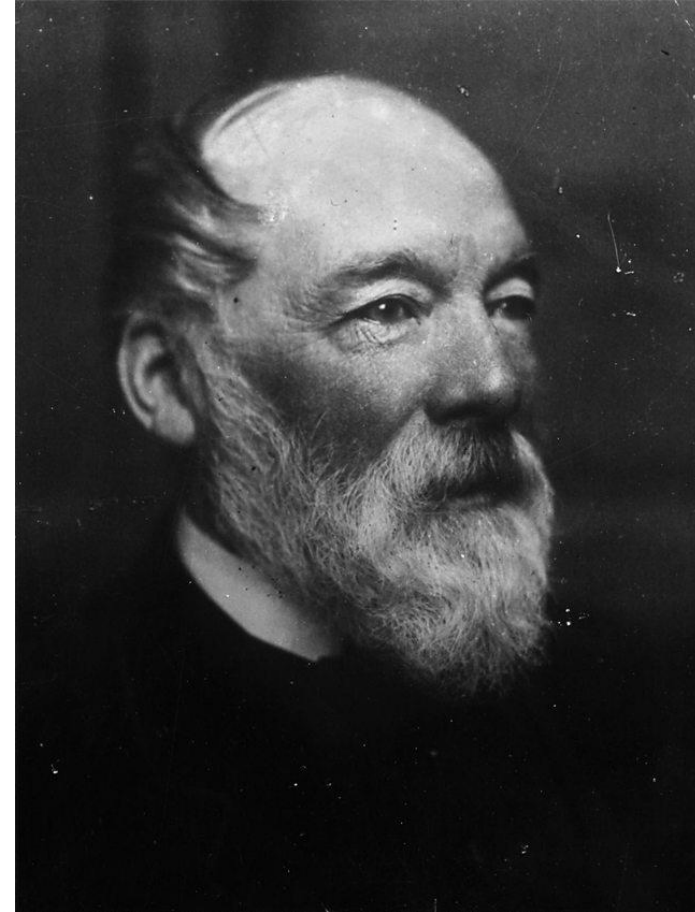
The poor were “made of inferior material...and cannot be improved.”

- This was the view of Norman Pearson.
- Not a unique view. Many took the that poverty was caused by idleness, drunkenness and other such moral weaknesses on the part of the working classes.
- Pearson was born in 1787, he was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge.
- Pearson then took holy orders, and acted as chaplain to the Marquess of Wellesley.
- In 1826 the Church Missionary Society appointed him the first principal of its newly founded missionary college at Islington. In 1839 he was appointed vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Tunbridge Wells, a position which he resigned in 1853.



Self help : Samuel Smiles (below)

- Many thought that 'self-help' (the theory that individuals being responsible for their own social standing and livelihood) should be promoted. This belief was promoted by Samuel Smiles, who published a book called 'Self-Help' in 1859.
- Samuel Smiles (1812-1904) was a Scottish author and government reformer. Although he campaigned on a Chartist platform, he promoted the idea that more progress would come from new attitudes than from new laws.
- His primary work, Self-Help (1859), promoted thrift and claimed that poverty was caused largely by irresponsible habits, while also attacking materialism and laissez-faire government.
- Smiles son William Holmes Smiles, was director of Belfast Ropeworks.



Smiles' views

- The Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 was "one of the most valuable that has been placed on the statute-book in modern times".[\[](#)
- Home Rule: In 1893 he said "This Home Rule Bill is horrid ... I am quite appalled at that wretched hound, miscalled statesman, throwing the country into a state of turmoil. I cannot understand how so many persons in this part of Britain follow that maniac, just like a flock of sheep. He is simply bursting with self-conceit. Alas! Alas for Liberalism!"



Reform of the welfare system

Individuals were expected to get themselves out of poverty through education and hard work.

The 1832 Royal Commission into the operation of the poor laws had said their:

"effect has been to promote bastardy; to make want of chastity on the woman's part the shortest road to obtaining either a husband or a competent maintenance; and to encourage extortion and perjury".



The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act

The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act that followed aimed to put a stop to all that.

Conditions in workhouses were deliberately made as harsh as possible, with inmates put to work breaking stones and fed a diet of gruel, to make the alternative, labouring for starvation wages in factories or fields, seem attractive.



Changing views

- In an 1850 investigation into the life of the poor, Charles Dickens described how the inmates of a Newgate workhouse skulked about like wolves and hyenas pouncing on food as it was served.
- And how a "company of boys" were kept in a "kind of kennel". "Most of them are crippled, in some form or another," said the Wardsman, "and not fit for anything."
- Dickens sparked outrage with his powerful evocations of workhouse life, most famously in the novel *Oliver Twist*.



Dickens' visits to Belfast

- September 1858: Mr. Charles Dickens' visited to Belfast where he visited the Victoria Hall and read excerpts from his "Little Dombey" to his audience.
- March 1867: Mr. Charles Dickens arranged to give one of his readings in Belfast on Wednesday, 20th March 1867.
- January 1869: Charles Dickens read selections from his own works such as the 'Christmas Carol' and the great 'Trial from Pickwick' to a large and attentive crowd gathered in the Ulster Hall



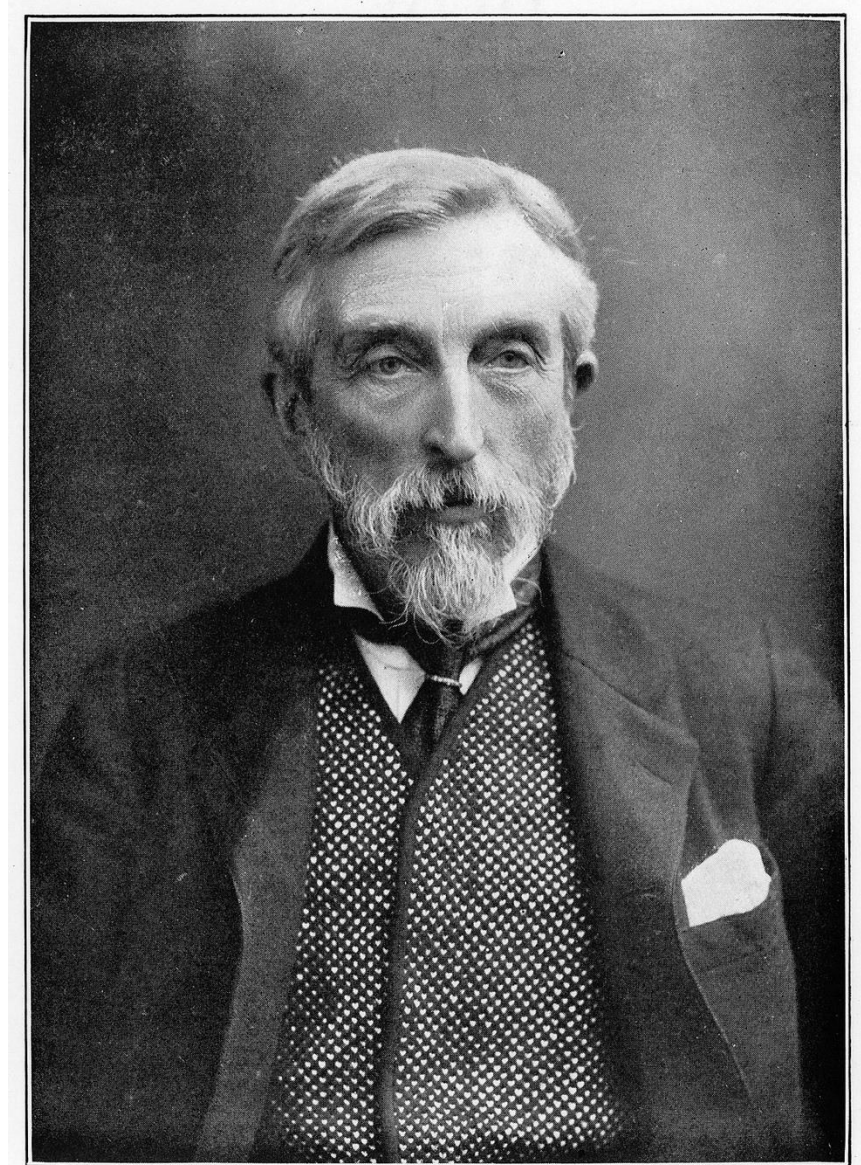
Social surveys

- From the mid 19th century, a number of investigations were carried out by philanthropists and wealthy businessmen, responding to concern that poverty was a national problem.
- Two important figures, Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree, sponsored major investigations into the extent and causes of poverty.



Charles Booth

- Booth (right) conducted research in London, between 1886 and 1903. After interviews with the poor, doctors, teachers and priests, he came to the conclusion that 30% of people in London lived in poverty.
- Booth claimed that people were in poverty if they earned less than 21 shillings per week. He produced a collection of reports entitled 'Life and Labour of the People in London '.
- His findings proved that poverty led to illness and death and that the poor were not to blame for the condition they found themselves in.



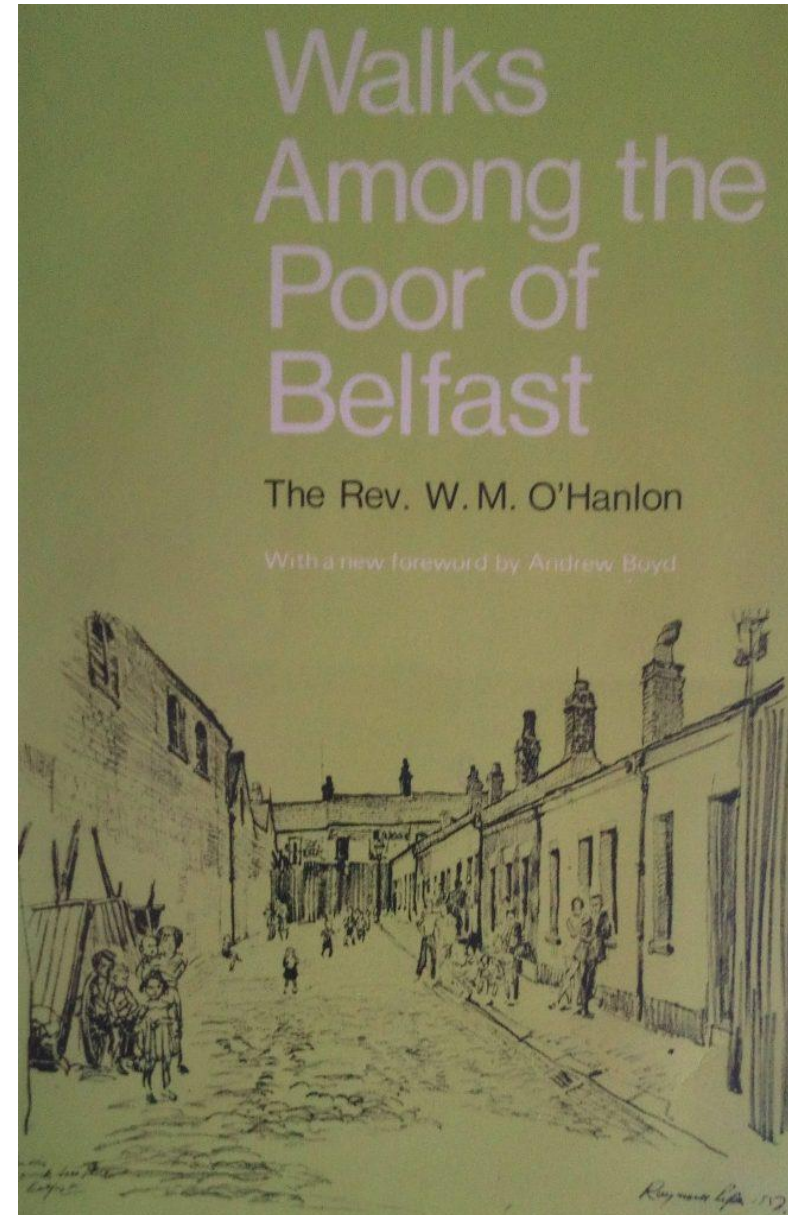
Seebohm Rowntree

- Seebohm Rowntree conducted research in York between 1899-1901. He reached the conclusion that 30% of people in York lived in poverty and that they needed to earn 21s per week to stay out of poverty.
- If they earned less than 21 shillings per week, he said that they were living below the 'poverty line'.
- Rowntree produced a report entitled 'Poverty, A Study of Town Life'. He claimed that people could not help being poor and that large families helped to cause poverty.



William Murphy O'Hanlon

- Published Walks Among the Poor of Belfast as a survey of poverty, living conditions and 'ordinary life' for the poor citizen of the city in BNL.
- Much earlier than Rodenberg and Rowntree
- Made into a book later in the century.



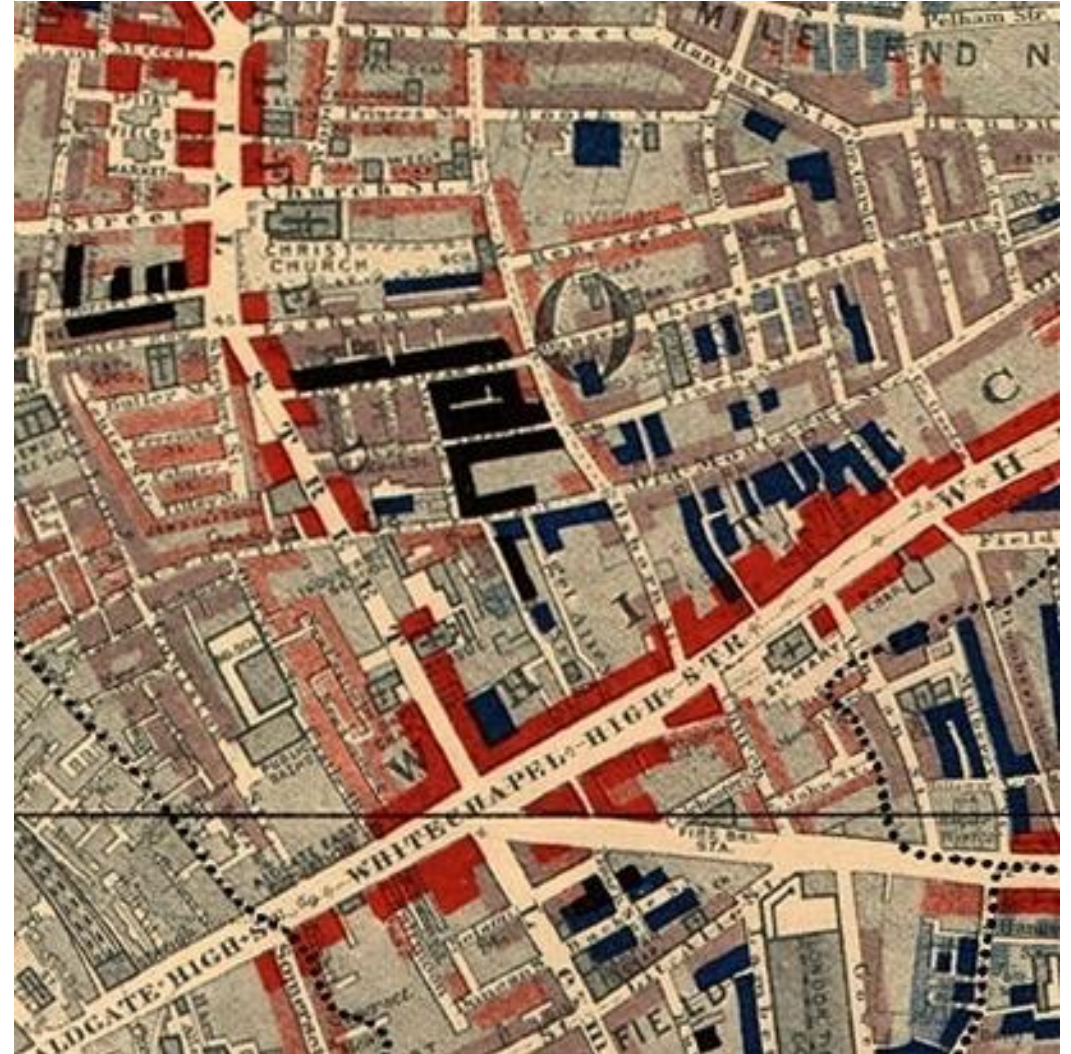
The key messages of the surveys

Booth and Rowntree both identified the main causes of poverty as being illness and unemployment and that up to 30 per cent of the population of cities were living on or below the poverty line.

People could not pull themselves out of poverty by themselves

Age was also a major factor: both the very young and the old were most at risk of poverty

When these social surveys were published, they not only shocked the British public but changed popular opinion on the cause of poverty.



New Liberalism

- A new type of Liberalism had emerged in the late Victorian era.
- It championed the idea that the government should intervene to help the poor. This provided the inspiration for social reform.
- Many politicians, especially in the Liberal Party, abandoned the idea of 'laissez-faire' (e.g. Newcastle programme):
 - they wanted to use governmental power and money to help the poor.
 - they argued that there were circumstances in which it was right for the state to intervene in people's lives.
 - they felt that the social problems the poor faced were out of their control.
- Campbell-Bannerman (an 'Old Liberal') was replaced in 1908, by Herbert Asquith, who was much more supportive of New Liberalism.
- 'New Liberals' such as David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill rose to prominence in Asquith's government.



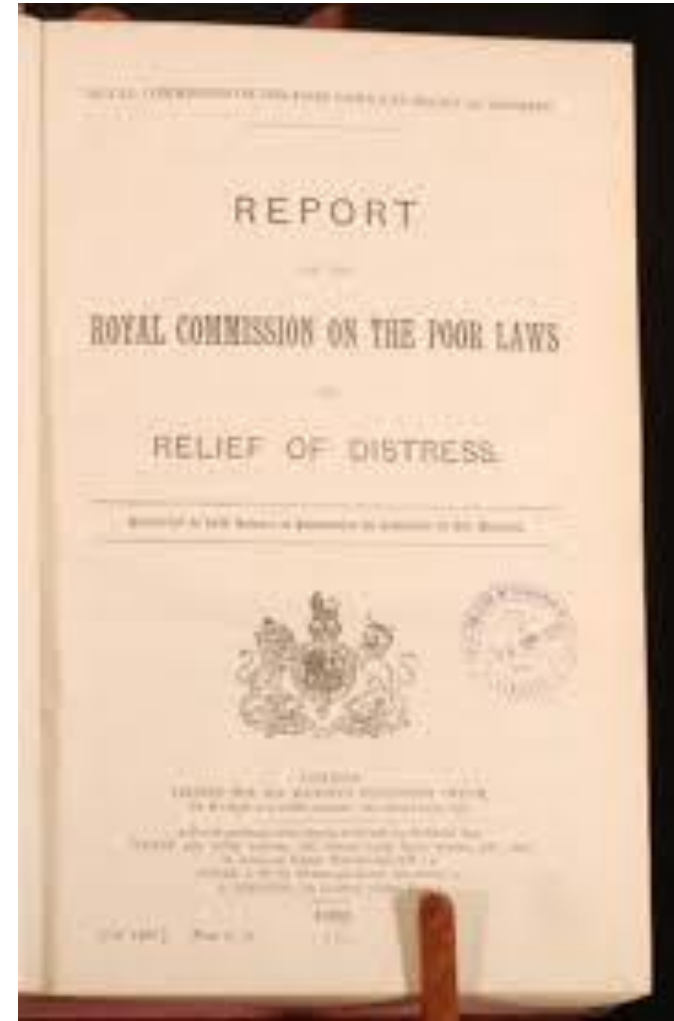
The Boer War (1899-1902)

- The Second Boer War began in 1899 in the south of Africa. It was fought between the two Boer Republics and the British Empire, which held lands in the area. The Second Boer War lasted three years and required a great deal of soldiers.
- However Britain only had a small army. It needed to enlist more recruits and many British men volunteered.
- The British army experienced great difficulty in finding able young men to recruit as soldiers.
- Before men could join the army, they had to pass a medical inspection. As the war progressed the number of men failing army medical inspections was found to be one in three. They were declared unfit for military service and refused entry.
- This led to questions being asked about the physical condition of the working class male. The government would have to do something to ensure basic health levels among the population.



Royal Commission on the Poor Laws (1905–1909)

- Purpose: Investigate the Poor Law system and propose reforms.
- Composition: Included Poor Law Guardians, Charity Organisation Society members, local government board representatives, Charles Booth, and Beatrice Webb.
- Outcome: Two conflicting reports:
 - Majority Report: Supported traditional Poor Laws.
 - Minority Report: Advocated for a modern welfare state.
- Significance: Highlighted contrasting ideologies on poverty relief and state responsibility.



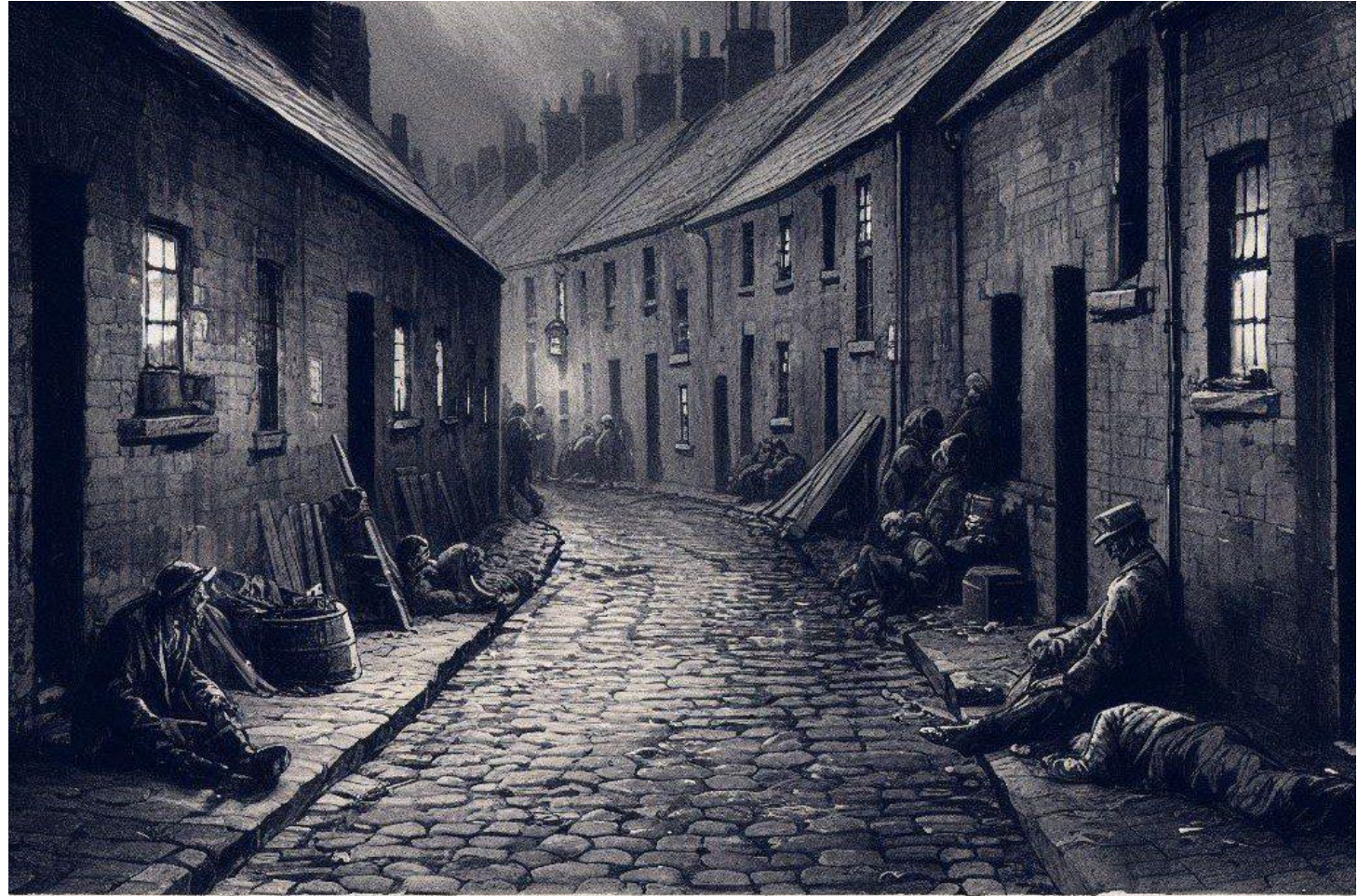
The Majority Report

- Key Proponents: Lord George Hamilton, Helen Bosanquet, Octavia Hill.
- Findings:
 - Poverty rooted in moral failings.
 - Advocated retention of the Poor Law system.
 - Criticised over-reliance on outdoor relief.
- Recommendations:
 - Greater deterrence for the able-bodied poor.
 - Charity-led efforts to reform individuals over state intervention.



The Minority Report

- Key Advocate: Beatrice Webb (with input from Sidney Webb and George Lansbury).
- Philosophy:
 - Poverty as a structural issue requiring collective responsibility.
 - Advocated for a "national minimum of civilised life."
- Recommendations:
 - State-guaranteed welfare: nourishment, training, living wages, healthcare, and support for the disabled/aged.
 - Abolition of the Poor Law system.
- Impact: Inspired future welfare policies, including the Beveridge Plan of 1942.



Key Debates and Divisions

- Majority vs Minority:
 - Majority: Emphasised individual responsibility and feared dependency.
 - Minority: Advocated structural solutions and state-led welfare.
- Common Ground:
 - Agreement that the Poor Law system was inadequate.
 - Desire for standardisation in provision.
- Political Dynamics:
 - Liberal Party ignored both reports due to ideological divisions.



Legacy and Impact

- Legislative Outcomes:
 - Poor Law reforms delayed; workhouses persisted until 1948.
 - Fabian Influence: Minority Report catalysed welfare state discussions.
- Political Shifts:
 - Moved Fabians and the Webbs towards supporting the Labour Party.
- Public Campaign:
 - "The Crusade" mobilised support against the Poor Law.
 - Influenced the creation of the modern welfare state through later policies.



National efficiency

- Fears that Britain was in decline as a world power led to the idea that it had to improve its 'National Efficiency'. This meant taking steps to improve the quality of the workforce:
 - the quality of the workforce needed to be improved
 - a healthy, fit and well-educated workforce was required
 - current levels of ill-health and poor diet weakened workers and lead to high absences
- For Britain to maintain its reputation as the industrial powerhouse of Europe, it had to ensure its working class was fit to work (and fight in any future war).
- The existing policy of laissez- faire did not seem to be working as poverty and ill-health remained widespread.



Concern regarding the security of Britain

- There was growing concern for national security (the safety of Britain).
- Many believed that the British Army was not powerful enough. If there was difficulty recruiting for a small-scale war, then it would be even more difficult to enlist a large number of able soldiers for a large-scale war.
- This meant Britain was at risk of defeat by a strong, industrialised nation with a large army, such as Germany. Germany seemed to be challenging Britain for international supremacy.
- Governmental reports published in 1904 stated that free school meals and medical examinations should be introduced in Britain to help combat the poor physical condition of many British citizens.
- The reports emphasised that diet should be improved and overcrowding reduced, as the worst cases of ill health were found in the industrial cities. Pressure was mounting on the Government to act, to ensure that the safety of the nation was not in jeopardy.





Welfare provision

Solutions to want, idleness and need



How did the Victorians deal with poverty?

- Legal measures
- Emigration
- Indoor relief – the workhouse. The poor were given clothes and food in the workhouse in exchange for several hours of manual labour each day.
- Outdoor relief. Food and money was given to those at home or living rough.
- Charitable giving



Welfare and the law

It was illegal to be:

- a vagrant
- beg
- 'chargeable to the Union'
- 'neglect your family'



Vagrancy (Ireland) Act, 1847, Section 2

Every person who **shall desert or wilfully neglect** to maintain his wife or any child whom he may be liable to maintain, so that such wife or child shall become destitute and be relieved in or out of the workhouse of any union in Ireland, shall on conviction thereof before any justice of the peace be committed to the **common gaol or house of correction, there to be kept to hard labour for any time not exceeding three calendar months.**



Vagrancy (Ireland) Act, 1847, Section 3

Every person **wandering abroad and begging**, or placing himself in any public place, street, highway, court, or passage to beg or gather alms, or causing or procuring or encouraging any child or children so to do, and every person who, having been resident in any union in Ireland, shall go from such union to some other union, or from one electoral or relief district to another electoral or relief district in Ireland, for the purpose of obtaining relief in such last-mentioned union or district, shall on conviction thereof before any justice of the peace, if such justice shall think fit, **be committed to the common gaol or house of correction, there to be kept to hard labour for any time not exceeding one calendar month**



Enforcement of the Vagrancy Act

- April 1849 Thirteen men women and children were charged with vagrancy after they were exported from Glasgow to Belfast as paupers, against their will. All were in an exhausted condition and were sent to the Workhouse.
- August 1880: Robert Boyle was charged with being a vagrant, wandering from union to union for the purpose of receiving relief. He was gaoled for one week.



THE DAY AFTER THE EJECTMENT.

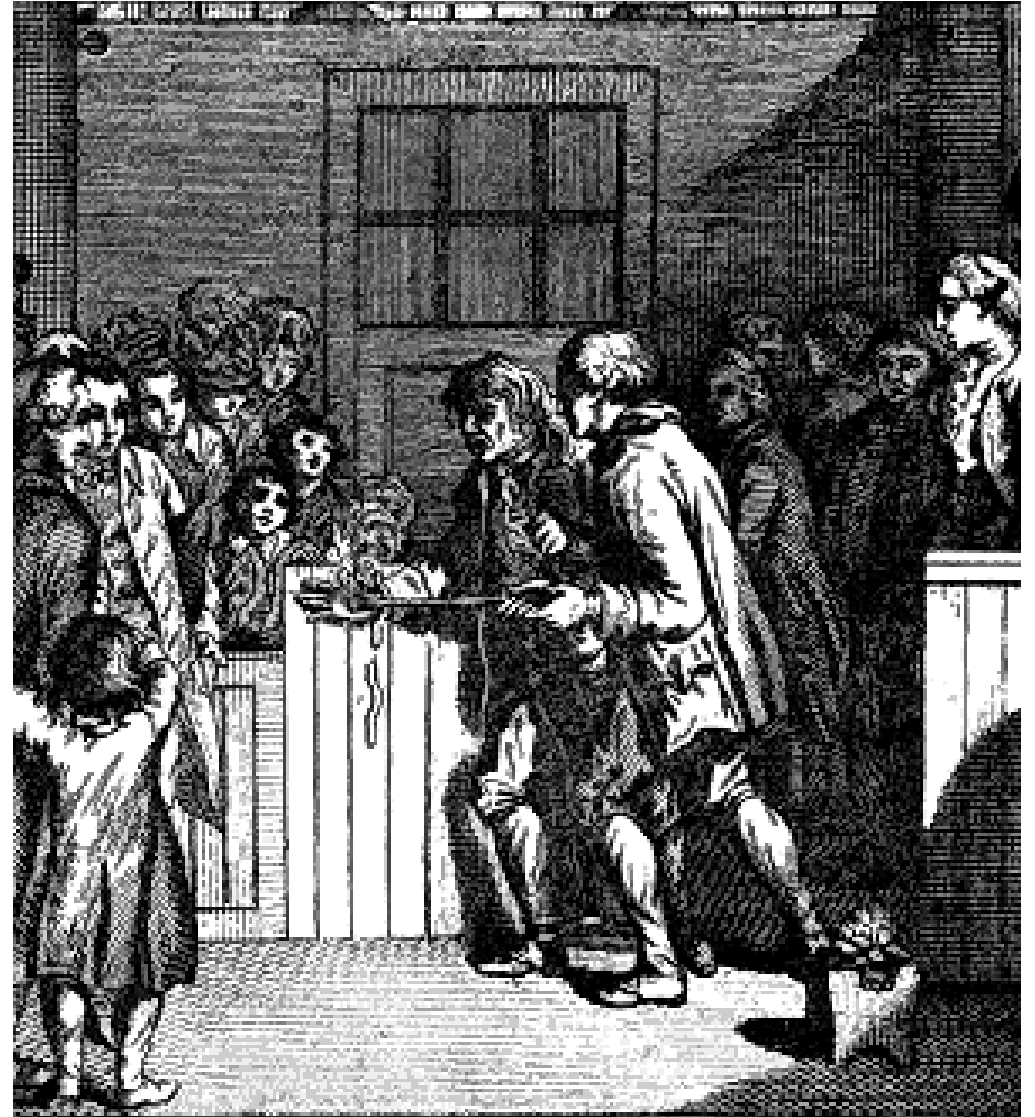
April 1895

Six men named McErlean, Hall, McKinstry, Moore, Stewart and Prussia were charged under the Vagrancy Act with sleeping in Mr. McGladdery's brickyard, Springfield Road. McErlean, Hall and Stewart had been convicted before and were gaoled for one month, the others were dismissed.



Begging

- December 1880: Hugh Donnelly was charged with begging. He had been the pest of Donegall Place for months and was a filthy person. He was gaoled for one month.
- August 1888: James Donaghy was charged with being a rogue and a vagabond and begging on the public streets. Twenty crusts of bread, a quantity of bacon and seven shillings in silver and 14d in coppers was found in his possession. He was gaoled for three months.



September 1892:

Catherine McDonald was charged with begging and exposing her child in Castle Place. She was gaoled for one month. The child was sent to the workhouse.



Being 'Chargeable to the Union'

- This meant leaving your family in destitution so that the Corporation (and rate payers) had to look after your family. The newspapers reported that:
- May 1841: Catherine Gamble was charged with deserting her three children, leaving them chargeable on the Union. She was sent to the Workhouse.
- November 1844: A man named McMullan was prosecuted for deserting his wife, thereby obliging her to seek shelter in the Workhouse. He claimed that her misconduct was the reason for deserting her. He agreed to pay three shillings a week for her support.



December 1856

Charles Hall, a dealer in cattle, has been brought before the courts charged with having deserted and wilfully neglected his wife so as to leave her destitute. He was imprisoned for one month and was told that if after that time he still refused to support his wife, he would be recommitted for three months.



April 1872

Three young men, who were coming in the direction of Belfast along the Ballynafeigh Road, heard a noise at the back of a hedge at Mr. McCausland's field. On looking over the ditch, they observed a newly born child. They saw a female proceeding at a quick pace. When brought back to the child, she admitted leaving it there, as she was going to get some milk for it. The police took the girl, named Lucy Fitzpatrick, who was an inmate of the Workhouse, into custody. She was charged with having deserted her child.



Neglecting one's family

- Language changes from 'being chargable to the union' to neglecting one's family'. The newspapers reported:
- October 1890: Hugh and Sarah McGreavey were charged with having neglected their three children, the eldest of whom had been remanded for having been concealed with intent on the Sand Quay. The children were half clad and had no place of abode, having been evicted from the previous home. Both prisoners were sent to gaol for three months. The children were sent to the workhouse, awaiting admission to an industrial school. Andrew Johnston, a carpenter, of 59 Hornridge Street, Ballymacarret, was summoned in his absence for neglecting his children and family leaving them destitute. There was neither fire, food nor fuel in their house. He drank all his earnings. His wife worked at he Tea Lane Mill and earned 3 shillings and 6d a week. The children were sent to the workhouse and a warrant was issued for his arrest.



‘Neglecting and exposing his child’

September 1892: Robert McMinn was charged with neglecting and exposing his child, aged 14 months, in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering and assaulting his wife by hitting her with a coal shovel and biting her finger so hard that a constable had to lever his mouth open with a poker. He was sentenced to three months in gaol. Jane McIlveen of 42 Fraser Street was charged with illtreating and neglecting a child, Mary Jane Haslett, aged one year and eight months. The child's mother, Florence Haslett, of 53 Loughview Street had left the child in the care of McIlveen, but it had not been adequately fed. The case was dismissed.



Comparison with the UK

June 1912: The Board of Trade noted that Belfast had the lowest pauper rate of any city or district in the UK with a figure of 107 per 10,000 of the population.



Emigration



Voluntary emigration

- August 1869: It was reported that the flow of emigrants to the United States from the North of Ireland continued unabated. A large number of emigrants from the counties of Antrim, Down, Monaghan, Tyrone and Derry took their departure by the Liverpool steamer for America.
- April 1872: A large number of emigrants, for different parts of the United States, left Belfast by the Liverpool steamer



Emigration – many left voluntarily for better lives

EMIGRATION.

TABLE XLI.—EMIGRATION from the County of ANTRIM and City of BELFAST (a) during each year, from the 1st of May, 1851, to the 31st of March, 1911, compiled from the Returns of the REGISTRAR-GENERAL.

Years.	Males.	Females.	Persons.	Years.	Males.	Females.	Persons.	Years.	Males.	Females.	Persons.
1851 (from 1st May) (b)	2,128	1,676	3,804	1871 (from 1st April) (c)	5,014	2,760	7,774	1891 (from 1st April) (c)	905	902	1,807
1852	2,186	2,100	4,286	1872	5,829	2,372	8,201	1892	1,076	823	1,899
1853	2,674	2,642	5,316	1873	5,290	2,125	7,415	1893	980	777	1,757
1854	2,328	2,097	4,425	1874	3,268	2,537	5,805	1894	432	509	941
1855	3,111	3,067	6,178	1875	2,587	2,503	5,090	1895	551	569	1,120
1856	4,317	3,630	7,947	1876	2,902	2,166	5,068	1896	630	556	1,186
1857	5,533	3,981	9,514	1877	2,623	2,165	4,788	1897	493	485	978
1858	5,518	4,239	9,757	1878	2,274	2,001	4,275	1898	416	366	782
1859	9,045	6,330	15,375	1879	3,144	1,649	4,793	1899	908	800	1,708
1860	4,402	4,475	8,877	1880	3,254	2,484	5,738	1900	1,169	1,021	2,190
1861 (to 31st March) (c)	1,015	972	1,987	1881 (to 31st March) (c)	608	486	1,094	1901 (to 31st March) (c)	256	232	488
Total	42,287	35,229	77,516	Total	36,183	23,248	59,431	Total	7,906	7,040	14,946
1861 (from 1st April) (c)	2,999	3,140	6,139	1881 (from 1st April) (c)	2,268	1,811	4,079	1901 (from 1st April) (c)	921	964	1,885
1862	1,898	2,081	3,979	1882	3,562	2,797	6,359	1902	1,393	1,234	2,627
1863	2,210	2,240	4,450	1883	3,666	3,098	6,764	1903	1,757	1,285	3,042
1864	1,505	1,378	2,883	1884	3,169	2,446	5,615	1904	1,623	1,274	2,897
1865	3,552	2,429	5,981	1885	2,162	1,693	3,855	1905	1,681	1,182	2,863
1866	5,363	2,136	7,499	1886	1,988	1,518	3,506	1906	2,346	1,745	4,091
1867	2,585	1,112	3,697	1887	2,703	1,940	4,643	1907	2,823	2,033	4,856
1868	2,636	1,020	3,656	1888	2,621	1,767	4,378	1908	1,695	1,570	3,265
1869	4,197	1,585	5,782	1889	1,647	1,315	2,962	1909	1,835	1,188	3,023
1870	5,861	2,811	8,672	1890	1,457	1,182	2,639	1910	2,212	1,416	3,628
1871 (to 31st March) (c)	1,128	493	1,621	1891 (to 31st March) (c)	231	218	449	1911 (to 31st March) (c)	421	206	627
Total	33,943	20,727	54,670	Total	25,604	19,775	45,379	Total	18,707	14,097	32,804
								General Total	164,720	120,116	284,836

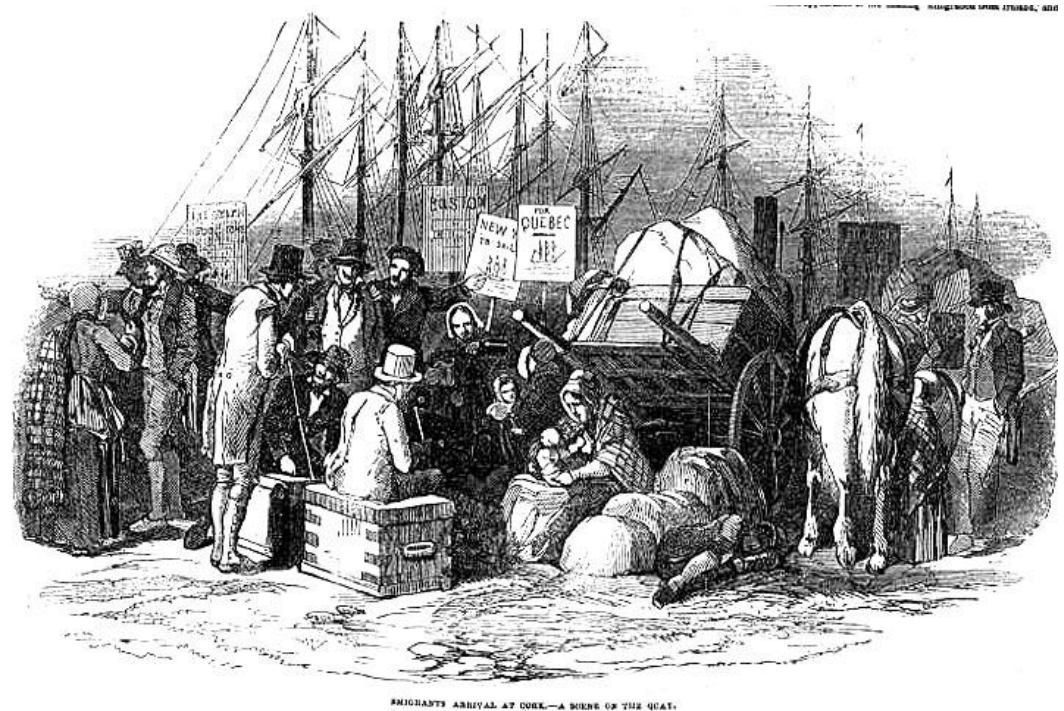
(a) It is not practicable to compile a Return of the Emigration from the City of Belfast.

(b) The enumeration of emigrants from Irish Ports did not commence till the 1st of May, 1851.

(c) The nearest time to the date of the Census for which the Emigration Returns can be made up.

Pressure to send the destitute abroad...

- April 1842: A meeting was held in the Town Hall, Police Buildings, to consider the distressing condition of the Ballymacarrett weavers and to raise funds to enable them to emigrate to the British Colonies in North America.
- July 1842: Letters have been written to this newspaper suggesting that emigration is a means to alleviate the present distress among the handloom weavers of Ballymacarrett. Between fifty and sixty destitute persons marched on the Workhouse and asked for food, reflecting the current distress felt by workers in Belfast.



May 1848

- Twenty-six women, aged between sixteen and twenty, were brought to Belfast from Armagh Union Workhouse en route to Australia. The union is paying £3 to each individual to emigrate. A total of fifty-nine women will sail from Belfast.



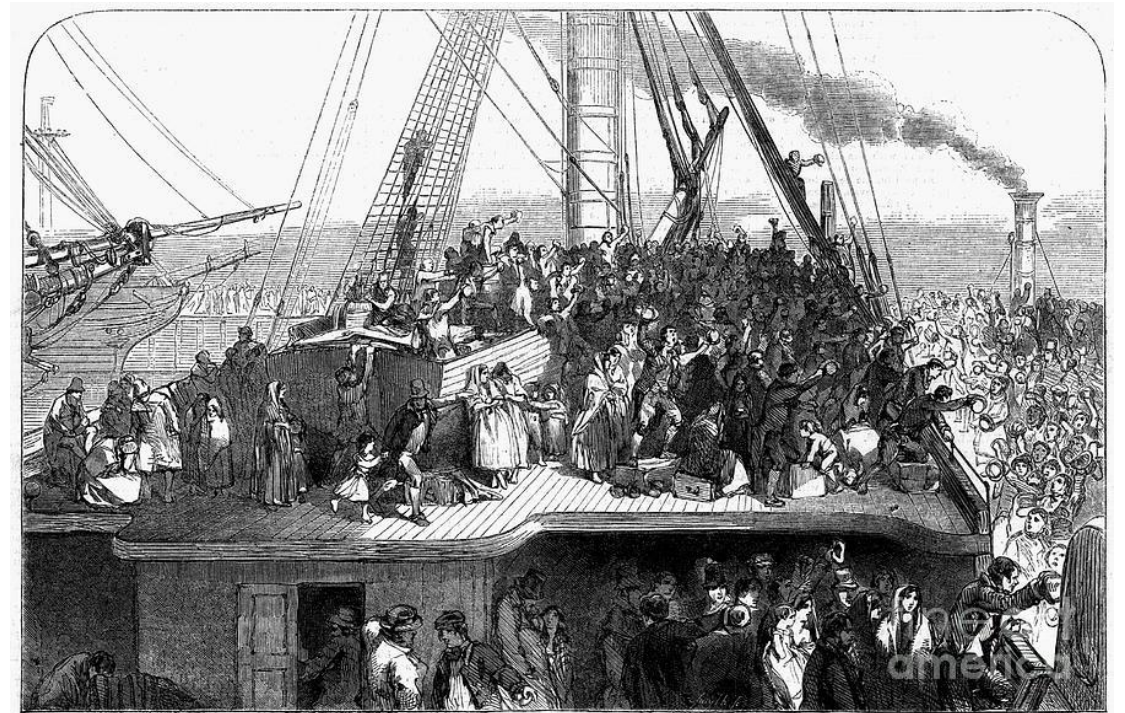


May 1863

Ninety-one people, comprising families who have been rendered destitute in Ballymacarrett and some districts of Belfast as a result of the depression in the weaving trade, sailed.

Compulsory migration

October 1856: A poor woman named Jane Wilson, whose husband had been killed in a coal mine at Kilmarnock, Scotland, made an application to the authorities there to be admitted to the union but was refused relief of any kind, and in consequence was immediately despatched.



Export of paupers to Belfast.

April 1849: Thirteen men women and children were charged with vagrancy after they were exported from Glasgow to Belfast as paupers, against their will. All were in an exhausted condition and were sent to the Workhouse.



November 1857

- The deportation of paupers from Scotland and England to Belfast continues. The past six weeks between **two and three hundred** persons have received temporary relief here at the hands of Captain McBride. One man sent to Belfast had lived in Manchester for the last 25 years.



Indoor Relief



Belfast Charitable Society

- 1752, Belfast Charitable Society founded.
- It aimed to set up 'a poor house and hospital are greatly wanted in Belfast for the support of vast numbers of real objects of charity in this parish, for the employment of idle beggars who crowd to it from all parts of the north'.



Who established it?

- The Belfast Charitable Society was established in 1752 by a group of prominent local merchants and professionals.
- Key figures included Waddell Cunningham, Thomas Gregg, and John Brown, Thomas Bateson, who were influential in Belfast's civic and economic life.



Why establish it?



- **Poverty and Suffering:** The visible hardship of the poor, including widespread begging and homelessness, motivated the society's founders.
- **Public Health Concerns:** Outbreaks of disease in the growing town highlighted the need for an organised approach to care for the sick and destitute.
- **Moral Duty:** The founders were driven by religious and social values that emphasised charity and compassion for the less fortunate.
- **Economic Concerns:** A desire to address the economic drain caused by begging and vagrancy encouraged a structured system of assistance.

Poor House

- Opened in 1774
- Room for 36 inmates and 24 people in the infirmary
- The Poor House included living quarters, an infirmary, a school, and workshops.
- Residents were provided with basic education, moral instruction, and employment opportunities like spinning and weaving.
- Still going today!



Poverty in 1800

- Belfast faced significant hardship in the 1800s due to political unrest and bad harvests
- A snowstorm in April 1799, followed by continuous rain, destroyed crops and caused famine.
- Food scarcity drove prices up, forcing many to migrate to Belfast for survival.



The Establishment of the 'House of Industry'

- The 'House of Industry' was created in 1801 'for the suppression of mendicity and the promotion of industry among the poor'.
- By 1810, it employed 309 spinning wheels and produced 550 hanks of linen weekly.
- It also supported 376 families weekly with food parcels and other essentials.
- The initiative relied entirely on donations from the middle-class business sector.



Employment and Support Measures

- The House offered jobs in spinning, weaving, and knitting, paying workers for their output.
- This system fostered independence and broke the cycle of poverty.
- By 1817, it spent £5,000 on relief for 1,200 families.
- Families also received soup, potatoes, and coal to sustain them during hardships.



Decline and Legacy

- The Belfast Poor Law Union, established in 1839, took over poverty relief.
- By 1843, the House of Industry had closed, marking the end of its operations.
- The initiative demonstrated the value of sustainable solutions like education and employment.
- It laid the foundation for future approaches to social welfare in Belfast.



Indoor relief – Workhouse, 1911

- Th w m

TABLE XII.—Showing the Number of the BLIND, DEAF and DUMB, DUMB not DEAF, IDIOTS, LUNATICS, PAUPERS, the SICK, and PRISONERS in the Counties of the Province of ULSTER, on the Night of the 2nd April, 1911.

Counties, &c.	Popula- tion in 1911.	Blind.		Deaf and Dumb.		Dumb not Deaf.		Idiots.		Lunatics.		Paupers.				The Sick.		Prisoners.	
		From Birth.	Others.	From Birth.	Others.	From Birth.	Others.	In Asy- lums.	Not in Asy- lums.	In Asy- lums.	Not in Asy- lums.	In Work- houses.	On Outdoor Relief.			At their Homes.	In Hospi- tals.	In Prisons.	In Bride- wells and Police Sta- tions.
													At Homes.	Children boarded out.	Children in Certified Schools.				
TOTAL . . .	1,581,090	62	1,256	742	250	203	75	252	1,038	6,018*	647	8,883†	5,676	537	17	4,397	5,533	614	41
ANTRIM COUNTY . . .	193,864	3	158	92	24	26	11	25	126	639*	81	1,160†	1,171	134	.	631	873	.	3
ARMAGH COUNTY . . .	120,291	2	109	58	18	23	3	19	103	549	88	794	421	81	2	380	410	74	2
BELFAST CO. BOROUGH . . .	386,947	23	356	204	121	22	19	40	112	771	68	3,207	875	45	11	674	2,199	445	35
CAVAN COUNTY . . .	91,173	3	70	31	12	10	4	.	63	.	68	455	523	42	.	199	185	.	.
DONEGAL COUNTY . . .	168,537	5	112	107	16	28	12	20	180	719	92	588	367	37	.	589	265	.	.
DOWN COUNTY . . .	204,303	3	146	61	23	25	7	43	128	1,163	40	657	1,104	95	.	519	646	.	1
FERMANAGH COUNTY . . .	61,836	1	47	26	4	20	4	.	59	.	40	272	165	19	.	185	142	.	.
LONDONDERRY COUNTY AND CO. BOROUGH . . .	140,625	6	92	61	13	18	4	38	81	517	60	651	282	31	.	451	311	95	.
MONAGHAN COUNTY . . .	71,455	3	53	43	7	8	7	23	78	900	62	461	187	13	4	273	200	.	.
TYBONE COUNTY . . .	142,665	3	114	59	12	23	4	39	106	820	48	738	551	40	.	481	362	.	.

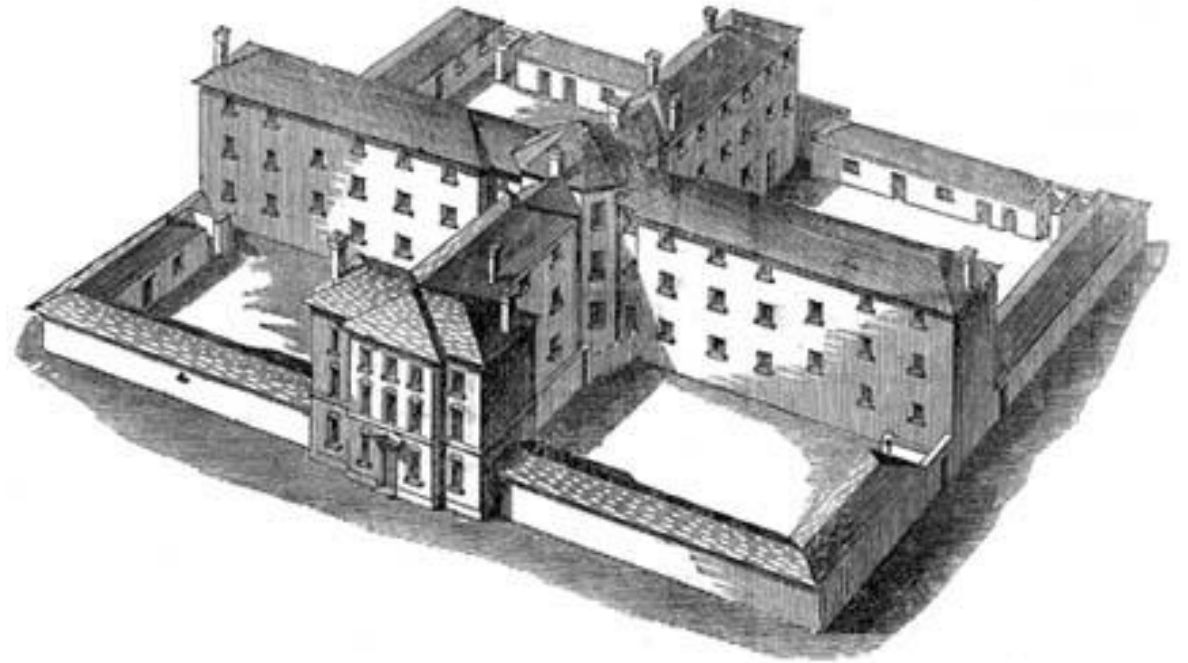
NOTE.—The Ages and Sexes of the Blind, Deaf and Dumb, Dumb not Deaf, Idiots, Lunatics, Paupers, Sick, and Prisoners, included in this Table, will be found in Table XXVIII.

* Including 82 Lunatics in Ballymena Workhouse (see note (d), Table XI.)

† Excluding 82 Lunatics in Ballymena Workhouse (see note (d), Table XI.)

Origins: 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act

- The Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, dubbed the 'new Poor Law', which overhauled the system of providing support to the poor in August 1834. The Act grouped local parishes into Poor Law unions, under 600 locally elected Boards of Guardians.
- Each 'Union' would have a Workhouse that would care for paupers, the insane and children and give medical care to those with no other support.
- It aimed to deter people seeking support by making the conditions worse than earning a living work.



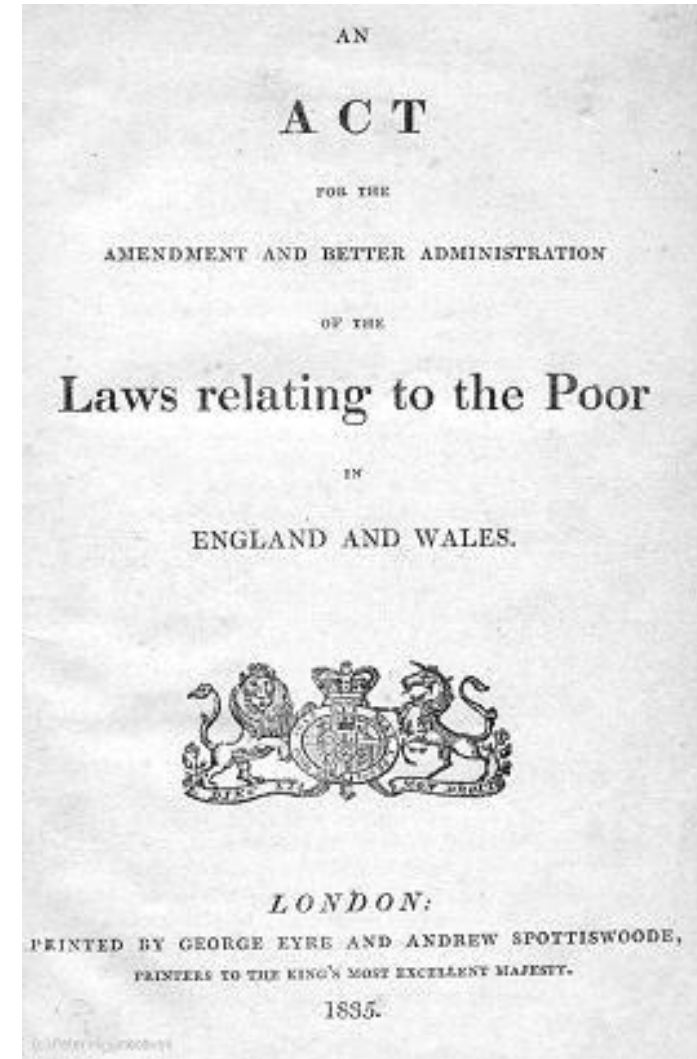
Belfast Poor Law Union

- Formed 1839.
- 12 acres sight purchased for a poor house.
- Opened in 1841 to accommodate 1,000 inmates
- 1848 school erected to educate and accommodate 1,300 boys.
- Workhouse grounds included 15 acres of farm land



The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act

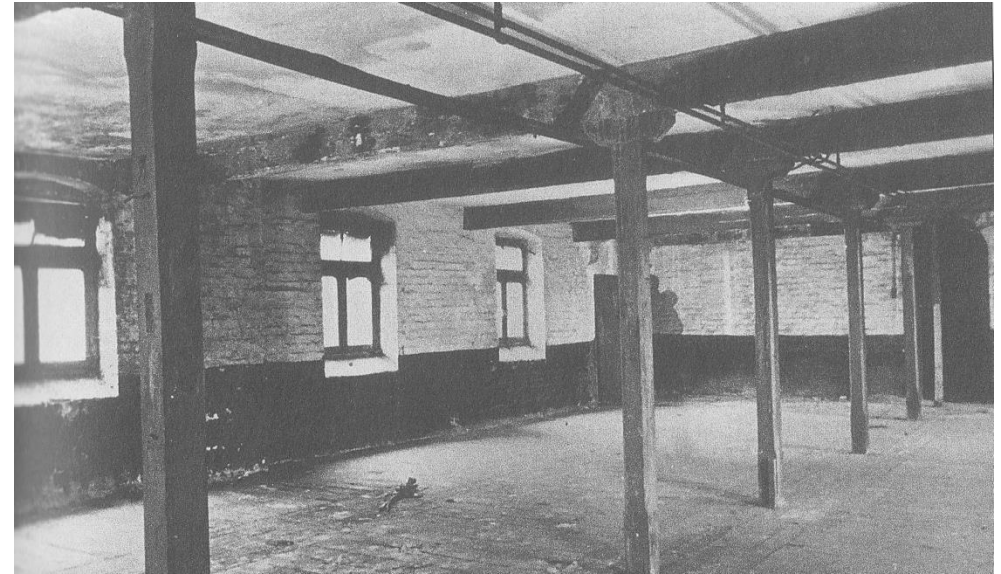
- No poor law in Ireland before 1830s.
- Poor Law Act and Victorian welfare policy aimed to encourage work and discourage idleness.
- A safety net existed but it was to be minimal and encourage individual self reliance and industry.
- Welfare was provided but in exchange for labour.



54 Lisburn Road, Belfast Union Work House, 1840



Original buildings of the work house



Ward in the Work House

Fever hospital of the Workhouse remains



Admissions to the workhouse: children

- February 1862: A male child, about five weeks old, was left in the doorway of Messrs. J. & E. C. Reid, Chichester Street. The child was very scantily dressed and therefore might have perished had its situation not been discovered. It was immediately conveyed as a foundling to the Union Workhouse.
- February 1880: A vulgar looking woman named Mary Hullah appeared in the court for cruelty towards her five year old boy. The court was told that the child had the bridge of his nose broken by a broom, had been flogged almost every day and had been thrown into the fire causing severe burns to his arms and legs. The mother was sent to jail for six months and the child was handed over to the Workhouse authorities.
- February 1885: James Lennon, a little boy, was charged with being destitute and having no means of support, after being found in the street. He was sent to the workhouse while inquiries were made about his family.



Admissions to the workhouse: idiots and insane

- April 1870: An employee of the Ulster railway discovered a man lying across the rails a short distance from the station shortly before the arrival of the express train from Dublin. The man was taken to the Police Office where he claimed to be Benjamin Disraeli. It was soon ascertained that he was George Preston, a shoemaker from London, who had been confined in Bethnal Green Asylum, London, some time before. The magistrates at the Belfast Police Court ordered him to be taken to the Workhouse.

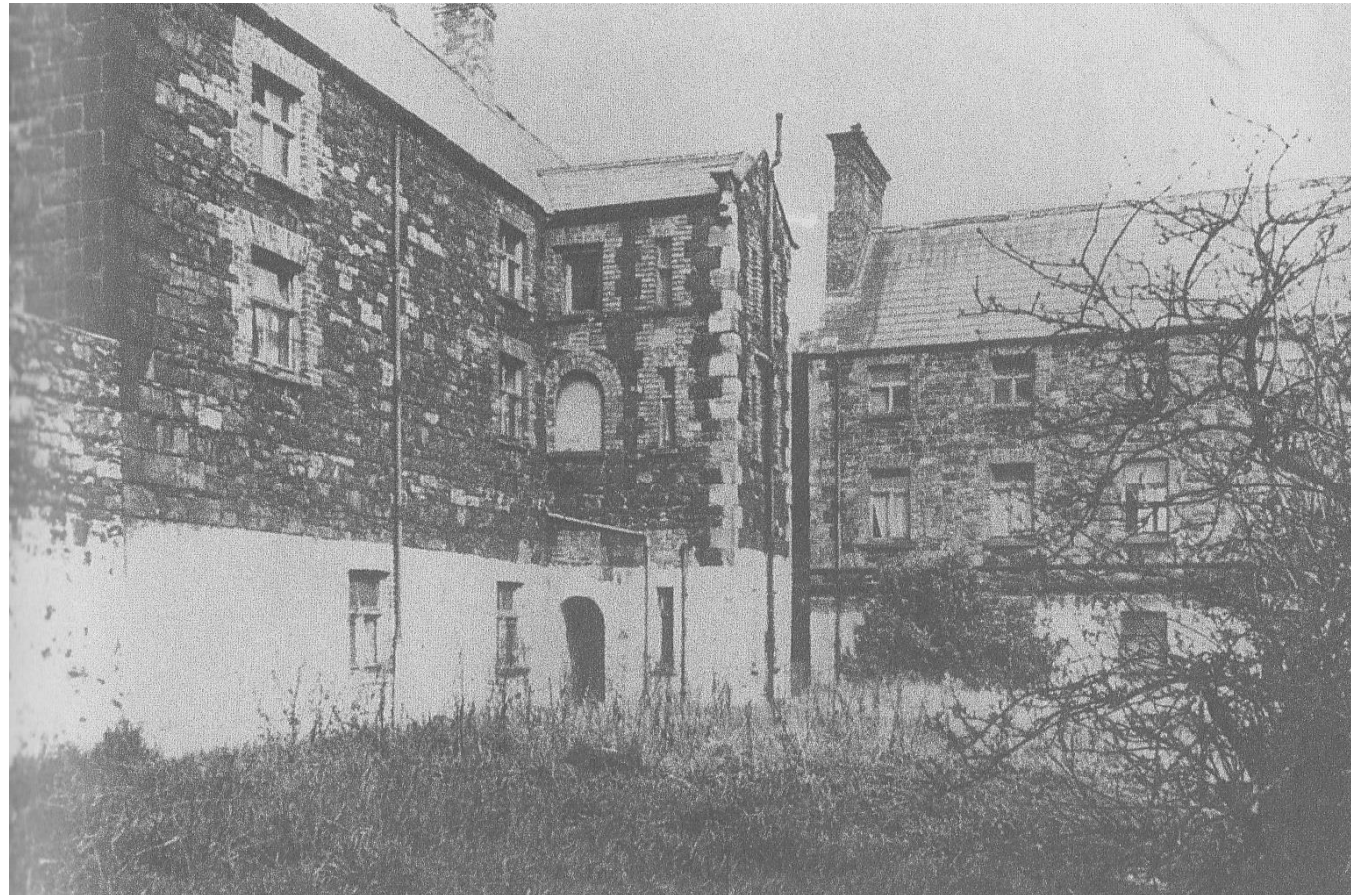


Care for the mentally ill

- September 1882: Eliza Jane Monaghan was charged with assaulting a policeman, and being “a dangerous lunatic”. She was confined to the lunatic ward of the Union Workhouse.
- October 1885: An old woman, named Jane McCartney of Mallon Street was charged with attempting suicide by cutting her throat. She was sent to the insane ward of the Workhouse.
- July 1888: S. McCormick, a labourer, was charged with attempting to commit suicide by hanging and sent to the idiot ward of the Union Workhouse.



Women's yard and 'cripples' wing



Admission register

5	Robinson	Thos	36	62	Robinson	Thos	62	23	Riddell	Thos	64	1608	11	11	11	11
9	Russell	John M	17	76	Riley	Ellen	37	4	Rutledge	George	40	4	12	12	12	12
72	Rea	John S	60	7	Patrick	7	7	6	Riley	Peter	46	34	13	13	13	13
99	Rea	Joseph	62	8	Thos	5 1/2	5 1/2	45	Robinson	Thos	9	4619	14	14	14	14
866	Rooney	Pat	17	2413	Reith	Ellen	30	7	Redpath	Margt	6	4680	15	15	15	15
91	Ralenscroft	Parah	44	4	Elizabeth	12	12	79	Rush	Mary	44	81	16	16	16	16
2	Quinn	8	73	Reilly	Krist	71	71	80	Bernard	9	82	82	17	17	17	17
931	Rooney	Aunnie	25	2559	Rea	Wm	37	1	Edward	6	83	83	18	18	18	18
2	Edward	1 1/2	64	Reilly	John	20	20	2	Mary	4	84	84	19	19	19	19
955	Rogan	Joe	30	74	Reilly	Pat	64	3723	Robinson	Joe	64	85	20	20	20	20
992	Rafferty	Michael	57	90	Reilly	Joe	1	9	Riley	Ellen	37	4403	21	21	21	21
1057	Reilly	Margt	71	1	Reid	Bridget	45	30	Joe	10	4714	4714	22	22	22	22
98	Reilly	Edw	16	8	Robinson	Joseph	31	1	Patrick	7	4726	4726	23	23	23	23
98	Ross	Hannie	19	9	Ada	8	8	2	Thos	5	4775	4775	24	24	24	24
169	Raney	Joe	29	2600	Viola	6	6	93	Rafferty	Martin	62	98	25	25	25	25
90	Thos	6	1	Herald	9	9	9	3843	Robinson	Bridget	27	4817	26	26	26	26
1	Margt	5 1/2	2	Bertie	1	1	1	44	Joe	8	27	27	27	27	27	27
2	Sam	1 1/2	78	Robinson	Joe	13	13	45	Edward	3	28	28	28	28	28	28
3	Joe	1/2	2719	Rafferty	Wm	67	67	88	Ryan	Thos	28	42	29	29	29	29
1170	Roscliff	Maugh	57	27	Rafferty	Julie	26	3933	Richardson	Edw	20	63	30	30	30	30
94	Rooney	Margt	19	48	Ross	John	46	47	Robinson	Agnes	22	98	31	31	31	31
1031	Robinson	John	56	93	Russell	Paul	22	4022	Ritchie	Thos	28	4907	32	32	32	32
1249	Reilly	Peter	46	2805	Richardson	John	65	3	Ritchie	Eliza	55	18	33	33	33	33
1357	Rooney	Mary J	16	19	Ryan	Frank	14	9	Robinson	Bridget	28	4949	34	34	34	34
1370	Robertson	Margt	28	20	Raushin	Parah	53	30	Joe	7	93	93	35	35	35	35
98	Riley	Ellen	45	2916	Reagan	Thos	25	1	Edward	4	95	95	36	36	36	36

Admissions to the workhouse: the impoverished

- February 1870: It was reported in the Belfast newspapers that on average, about a dozen poor people make applications nightly at the police office for shelter, stating that they have been refused lines by the relieving officers to admit them into the workhouse. The constable in charge informed the applicants that 'there was no accommodation in the police office except for prisoners'.



May 1878

Robert Gillespie, George McAllister, George Allsop and Henry McCluskey were found asleep outside the gate to the workhouse by the local police. They were brought up in court charged with being vagrants and not having any visible means of support. In court evidence was heard that the boys had been discharged by the Guardians of the workhouse against their will and after trying unsuccessfully to find work in the country had returned to the town. They were denied admission to the workhouse and had no choice but to lie down outside and sleep. The boys had been taken to the police station where they were fed and the court decided to discharge the prisoners and urged them to apply once more for admission to the workhouse.



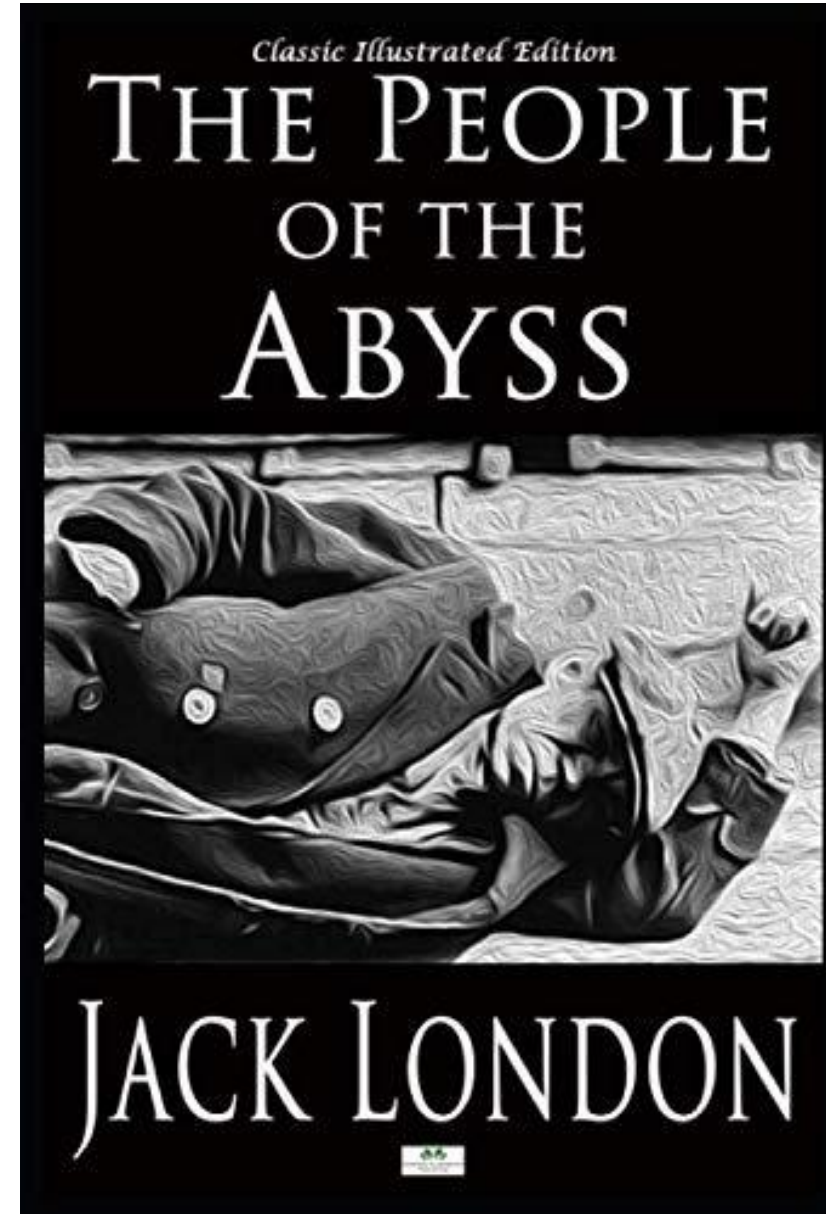
'Casual' admissions

Who Were the Casuals?

- Temporary relief for homeless individuals, seasonal labourers, and vagrants.
- Typically short-term stays (1-2 nights).

Process and Conditions:

- Relief included basic food, a bed, and sometimes medical care.
- Casuals often performed tasks like oakum picking or stone breaking as repayment.
- Conditions were deliberately harsh to deter reliance on the workhouse.



Admissions to the workhouse: as a punishment

- August 1887: Two boys named Samuel Irvine and William Smith were charged with stealing fruit from the garden of Dr. Sinclair, Cliftonville. Irvine was given six stripes of the birch and Smith was sent to the Workhouse for one week.
- September 1891: Alice Corner was charged with being drunk and disorderly and neglecting her child, aged four months. She was discharged on promising to go to the Workhouse.



Capacity in 1847

May 1847: A town meeting was held to discuss the fever in Belfast. The Union Workhouse originally had space to accommodate one hundred and fifty patients but has now space for 500, due to utilising sheds and any other space available. The General Hospital has also reached capacity with 96 fever patients, 72 patients suffering from dysentery and 38 suffering from small pox.



Conditions in the workhouse – the band

Reported in the papers in February 1871: A thirteen-year old boy named Hamill, a cornet player in the workhouse band, absconded along with others. He happened to make his way to the Bandmaster of the Antrim Rifles in the military barrack and persuaded him to allow him play a cornet. The captain, upon hearing him, gave him some money and a kind letter to the master of the Larne workhouse, begging upon that official to deal leniently with the lad, promising that he would represent him favourably to Lord Donegall, as he had expressed a desire to join the Antrim Rifles Band.



Treats for the children

- September 1880: Belfast Union Workhouse held an annual excursion for the children, to Bangor on the steamer Erin.
- April 1882: Three hundred children from the Belfast Workhouse were treated to a visit to the Theatre Royal to see a pantomime
- December 1886: 500 children of the Workhouse were treated to cakes, apples and oranges by Mr. R.G. Dunville to celebrate the New Year.



Mortality

- Reported in February 1864: It was discovered that the number of deaths in the Belfast Workhouse during 1863 amounted to 455 out of an average of inmates of 1,450. Although many poor people went into the workhouse in the last stage of destitution and therefore die there, this still seemed like a large mortality rate.
- However, in September 1891 it was reported that Isabella Rowley died aged 104 in the workhouse.



Death register of the Workhouse

FORM 14. RECORD OF DEATHS.

No. in Register	Date of Death	Cause of Death	Name	Whether Married	Age	Period for which the Death was reported
3872	31 August 1902	Carcinoma of Stomach	James Regan	Male	62	17 May 1902
3821	31	02 X General Debility	James Smith	Female	5	26 Feb 1902
1379	31	02 X Chronic Tuberculosis of Stomach	James O'Connell		16	14 August 1902
1131	31	02 X Chronic Tuberculosis of Stomach	James O'Connell		7	9 August 1902
1677	31	02 X Chronic Tuberculosis of Stomach	James O'Connell	Male	30	21 August 1902
955	31	02 X Chronic Tuberculosis of Stomach	James O'Connell		30	3 August 1902
2098	1 Sept	02 X General Debility	John Russell		38	1 September 1902
4338	1	02 X General Debility	John Russell		76	5 July 1902
3768	1	02 X Cancer of Stomach	James O'Connell	Female	61	18 August 1902
251	2	02 X General Debility	Richard O'Connell		76	22 August 1902
2097	2	02 X Heart Disease	Edward O'Connell	Male	95	1 September 1902
1217	3	02 X Chronic Tuberculosis of Stomach	James O'Connell	Female	74	12 August 1902
968	3	02 X Chronic Tuberculosis of Stomach	James O'Connell		28	4 August 1902
635	4	02 X Chronic Tuberculosis of Stomach	James O'Connell		42	26 July 1902
3069	4	02 X Chronic Tuberculosis of Stomach	James O'Connell	Male	34	31 August 1902
2006	4	02 X Chronic Tuberculosis of Stomach	James O'Connell		60	30 August 1902
2944	5	02 X Typhoid Fever	James O'Connell		30	3 September 1902
918	5	02 X Chronic Tuberculosis of Stomach	James O'Connell		34	2 August 1902
2531	5	02 X Chronic Tuberculosis of Stomach	James O'Connell	Female	22	6 May 1902
2033	6	02 X Heart Disease	James O'Connell		38	30 August 1902
1956	6	02 X Typhoid Fever	James O'Connell		40	28 August 1902
2197	6	02 X Chronic Tuberculosis of Stomach	James O'Connell	Male	64	3 September 1902

Discipline and rules – punishments for absconding

June 1850: A woman named Catherine Tuton was sent to prison for three months for absconding from the Workhouse and leaving her children behind. Two boys named William Dunn and William McMullan were sent to prison for two weeks with hard labour for absconding from the Workhouse.

RULES & ORDERS

TO BE OBSERVED BY
The Poor of the Parish Workhouse of Aylesbury,
IN THE COUNTY OF BUCKS.

I.

That the Master and Mistress live in the House, and see that the following Rules be observed.

II.

Every Person in health shall rise by six o'Clock the summer half year, and by seven the winter half year, and shall be employed in such labour as their respective age and ability will admit, and commence their work by six o'Clock in the Morning, and work till six o'Clock at Night, from Lady-day to Michaelmas; and from seven o'Clock till dark, from Michaelmas to Lady-day, allowing half an hour for breakfast, one hour for dinner, and half an hour for supper; and any one refusing to work, shall for the first offence go without their next meal, and for the second offence be reported to the Overseers, that they may otherwise be punished.

III.

That all the poor in the House go to bed by eight o'Clock the summer half year, and by seven o'Clock the winter half year, and that all candles be put out by that time.

IV.

That the poor shall have their provisions in a clean and wholesome manner, their breakfast by eight, their dinner at twelve, and their supper at six o'Clock; that no waste be made, nor any provisions carried away; and that Grace shall be said before and after dinner, and none may depart until Grace is said; and their dinner three times a week to be hot meat and vegetables properly cooked.

V.

That the House be swept from top to bottom every morning and cleaned all over once a week, or so often as the Master and Mistress think necessary; and the windows be opened daily.

VI.

That none absent themselves from the House without leave, nor stay beyond the time allowed them, on pain of losing their next meal, or of some other punishment; nor may any one be admitted into the House without leave of the Governor.

VII.

Any of the poor guilty of stealing, selling their provisions or clothing, or of drunkenness, swearing, quarrelling, fighting, or in any other way disturbing the peace of the House, or of being in any way saucy or abusive to the Master or Mistress, shall be punished with the utmost severity of the law.

VIII.

That all in the House who are able, and can be spared from the duties thereof, shall attend Church or some other Place of Worship twice every Sunday; and those who refuse or neglect to attend, or do not return as soon as Service is over, shall go without their next meal, or be punished in some other way, as the Overseers shall think proper.

IX.

No person shall be permitted to bring spirituous liquors into the House, or smoke in any part of the premises, except the hall. Those found transgressing, shall lose their next meal, or be otherwise punished.

X.

Workers shall be allowed 2d. in every shilling they earn; Cook 4d. per week; Doctor's Nurse from 1s. Washerwomen half a pint of ale each per day, and tea in the afternoon.

XI.

Any of the poor acting in disobedience of the orders of the Master or Mistress, or in contempt of these Orders, shall be taken before a Magistrate, and punished as the law directs.

XII.

That these Orders be placed in the hall, dinner-room, or in any other place that the Overseers may direct; and that they be read on a Sunday at dinner-time by the Master or Mistress, so that the poor may not plead ignorance of the same.

XIII.

If any of the poor are found defacing or destroying these Rules, they shall be punished by being fed on bread and water only for two days.

JOHN KERSELEY FOWLER,
JASPER JACKSON,
WILLIAM HOMEMAYER,

}

Churchwardens.

ROBERT READ,
JOSEPH SHAW,

}

Overseers.

27th JANUARY, 1831.

(c) www.workhouses.org.uk

February 1880

Three people named Mary Moore, Ann Hughes and John Doherty appeared in the Belfast police Court charged with absconding from the Belfast Workhouse. They were all fined and, in default, sent to prison for six months.



February 1894

Samuel Brown was charged with leaving the workhouse without permission and drunkenness. He was sentenced to one month in gaol.



Punishments for theft, assault and criminal damage

- March 1859: Sarah Hickey, a middle aged woman and pauper in the Belfast Union was charged with stealing a piece of soap from the workhouse. She was found guilty and sentenced to three months in jail.
- August 1862: Mary Anne Savage, a pauper, was sent to jail for two months for having been drunk and insubordinate in the Union Workhouse, and with having assaulted Robert Gray, gate porter, and with having maliciously torn his coat



More punishments

- January 1870: Hugh Brennan, a pauper, was imprisoned for three months for having threatened to burn the workhouse and for using threatening language towards Mr. Watt, the master of the workhouse. When leaving the dock, the prisoner threatened to have Mr. Watt's life when he came out of jail. As a result, his sentence was increased to six months.
- July 1887: Albert Geddis was charged with insubordination at the workhouse and assaulting the ward master by hitting him on the head with a clog. He was sentenced to three months gaol.



Punishments for insubordination

- February 1878: Francis Mallon was sentenced to one month's imprisonment for refusing to comply with the rules of the Workhouse, in that he was required to give three hours notice of leaving the house and had to work for those three hours.
- August 1881: William Townsley was charged with having been insubordinate in the workhouse by refusing to get out of bed. He was gaoled for one month.



December 1893

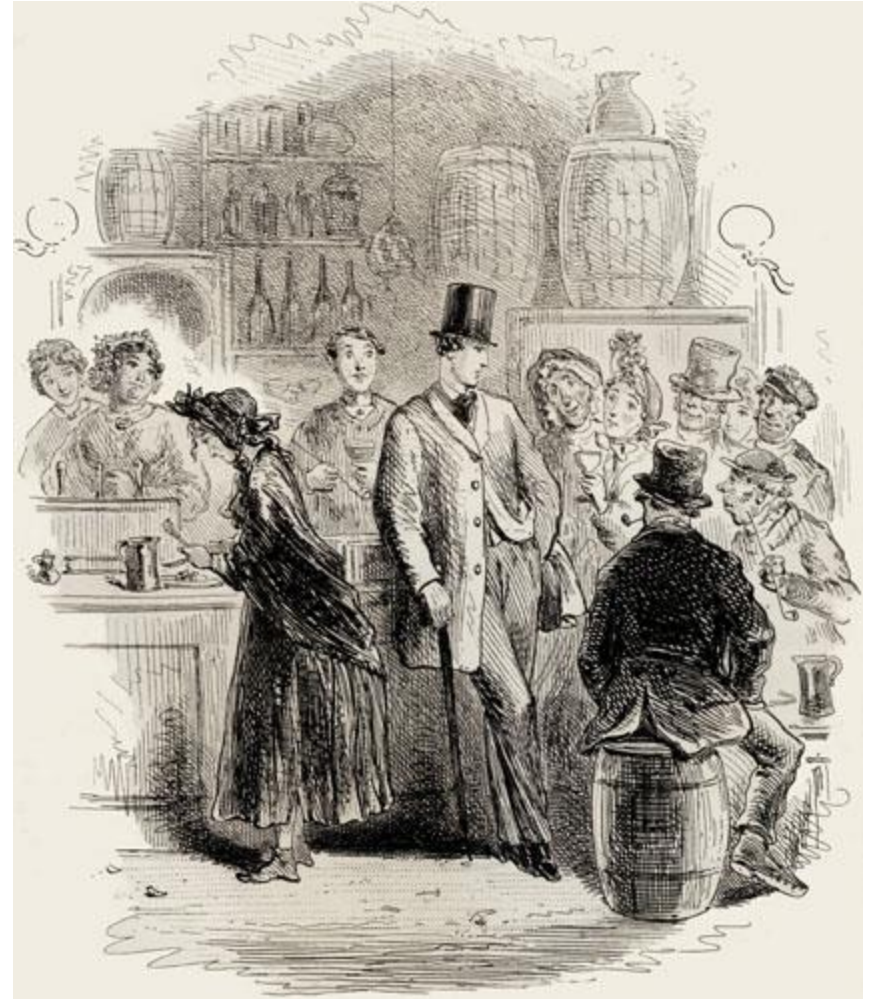
Alexander Johnston was charged with insubordination in the workhouse for throwing his dinner and his boots at the master. As it was his 96th conviction, he was sentenced to three months with hard labour.



"BESSIE'S HUSBAND STEPTED DOTTLY TO THE HALP-DOOR OF THE BAR, AND SPOOD TITTLE."

November 1897

John McAllister was charged with insubordination in Belfast Union Workhouse for absconding. He was found in the Royal Hospital where he was having drink pumped out of his stomach. He was born in the workhouse. He had been found lying drunk in Newtownards Street. He was gaoled for one month.



Challenges – Staffing issues

- March 1842: Ann Connor, the matron of the Workhouse, was charged with assaulting Catherine Evans, the mistress of the Workhouse. She was fined 10 shillings or 14 days in gaol.
- May 1844: Two persons named Loughran and McGuigan, who had recently left the Workhouse, deposed to Mr. Lennon, solicitor, that while they were inmates of the Workhouse, Mr. Stewart, the schoolmaster of the Union (who had unaccountably disappeared) had been murdered by Mr. Todd, Master of the Workhouse, and Mr. Owens. The two men's depositions were dismissed and they were charged with perjury and committed for trial to the next assizes. Mr. Stewart, the schoolmaster at the Workhouse who, it was rumoured, had been murdered, wrote a letter from his new home in Newry to allay all rumours of his demise.



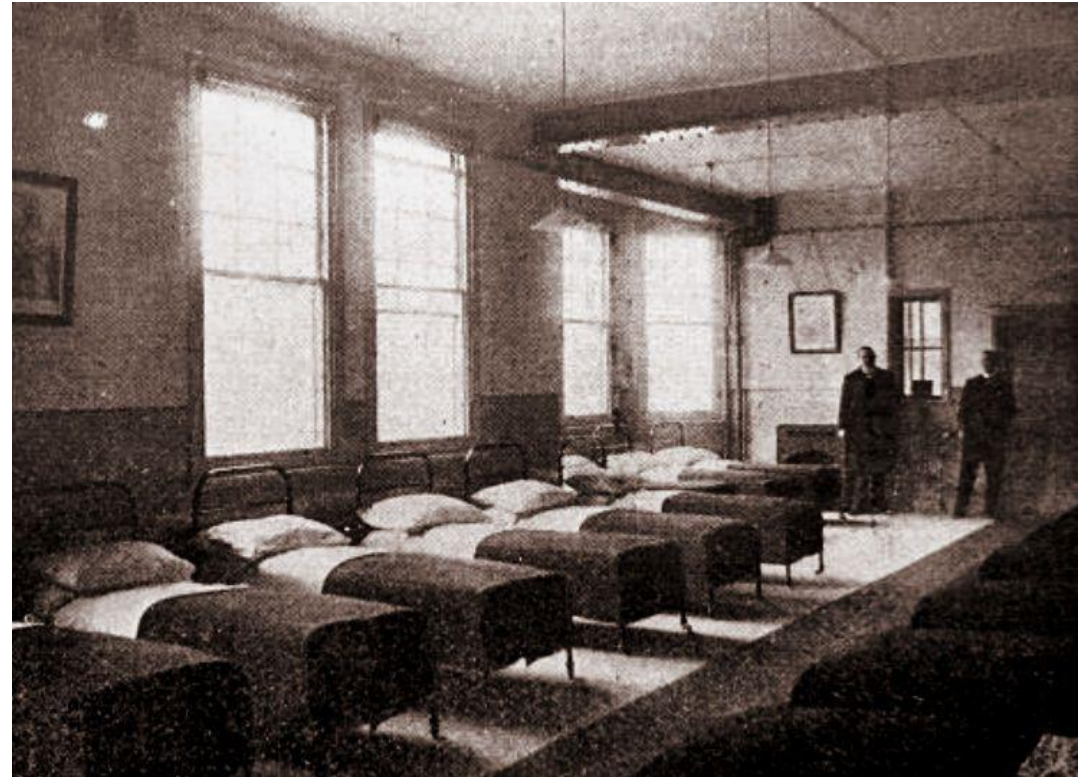
Religious questions

February 1859: A Poor Law inspector has carried out an investigation at the Workhouse into the case of Joseph Black, an inmate of the House. Black, although registered as a Presbyterian, was in the habit of attending the Catholic service. The discovery of this case has led to other similar cases.



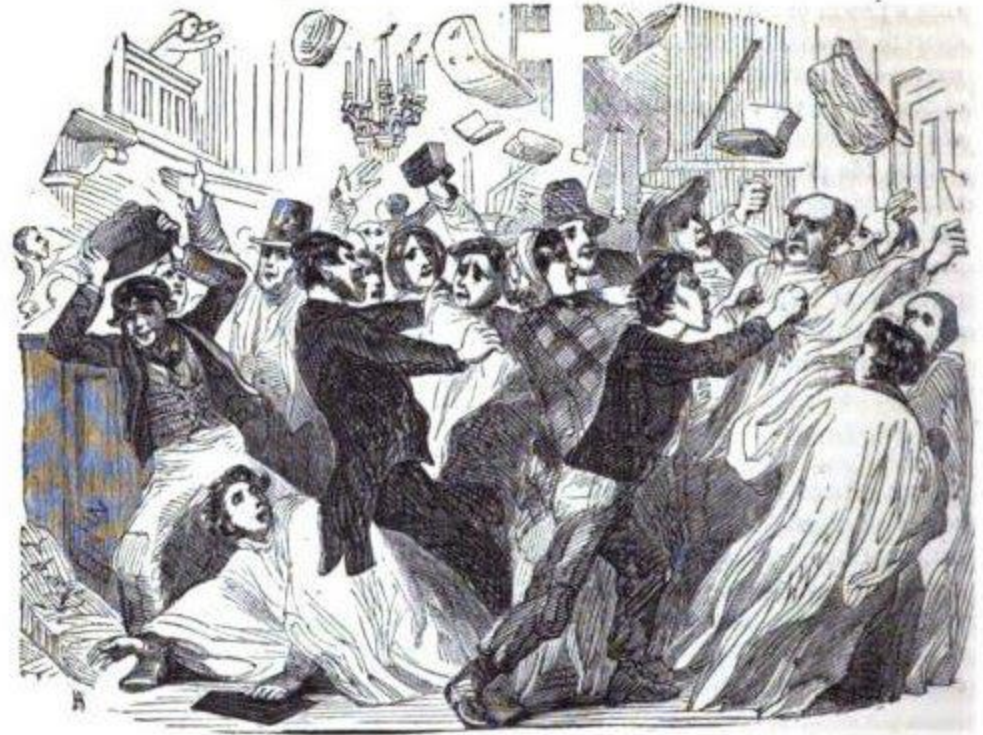
Poor medical support

October 1859: Dr. Knox, Poor Law Inspector, held an investigation in the Registration Office at the Union Workhouse into complaints which had been made regarding the attendance of medical students to midwifery cases instead of the qualified medical officers of the districts and midwives appointed by the commissioners. The inquiry was adjourned so that Dr. Knox could ascertain the number of midwifery cases that had occurred in the district during the previous six months.



Protest and resistance in the workhouse

June 1842: A mutiny took place in the Belfast Workhouse, during which a number of windows were broken. A number of female paupers were arrested and charged with riot.



Rioting in the Workhouse

December 1869: Henry McCrory, Thomas Mansfield, James McKeown, Charles Doran, John Smith and James Reynolds were sent to jail for fourteen days, having been charged with insubordinate conduct at the Union Workhouse.

They had refused to break stones for Martin Smith, agriculturalist, on the grounds that they were Roman Catholics and that the day was a holiday



Outdoor relief



Work for welfare

- July 1837: The annual meeting of the Belfast Institution was held. A meeting was also held by the Belfast Committee for the Relief of the Distressed Poor. At this it was ascertained that upward of £460 had been expended leaving a balance of only £149. Because the sum is inadequate the poor of the town will be left in the extremist destitution.
- September 1842 The supply of work provided for the temporary relief of the distressed weavers of Belfast has been withdrawn, leaving hundreds without an income.
- April 1846: The mayor of Belfast is to convene a public meeting to adopt measures for relief of distress in Ballymacarrett. The Ballast Corporation is to take measures to offer employment to able-bodied men at the New Quay breaking stones.



Soup kitchen

- January 1847: One thousand, two hundred families are in receipt of relief in Belfast. The soup kitchen has dispersed 15,000 quarts of soup and 22 cwt of bread to the needy poor of Belfast.
- February 1847: Belfast Soup Kitchen has distributed 18,595 quarts of soup and 33 cwt of buns to the poor of Belfast. Belfast Ladies Association for the Relief of Irish Distress has donated 20/ to Ballymacarret Relief Fund.
- February 1895: The Belfast Board of Guardians met to discuss the need to grant a special outdoor relief to alleviate the distress among the poor of Belfast.



A black and white aerial photograph of a dense urban landscape, likely from the early 20th century. The image shows a vast expanse of buildings with various rooflines, including several prominent chimneys emitting smoke. The overall atmosphere is hazy, suggesting air pollution or fog. The text "Social activism" is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

Social activism

Social activist causes

- Protecting 'fallen women'
- Combating child neglect and cruelty
- Tackling animal cruelty
- Promoting temperance and sobriety
- Charitable giving



‘Laundering sin’ – helping the ‘fallen’



Laundries in Ireland

- First laundry was the Dublin Magdalen Asylum (sometimes called Magdalen Asylum for Penitent Females) on Lower Leeson Street, Dublin.
- It was a Church of Ireland-run institution and founded in 1765 by Lady Arabella Denny.
- It only accepted Protestant women.
- Unmarried pregnant women had no access to a social welfare system; therefore, many resorted to prostitution or entered laundries.
- These refuges were institutional solutions to social problems



Church of the Good Shepherd

- Located on Ormeau Road was run by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd from 1867 to 1977.
- Church of the Good Shepherd was a religious order that was founded in 1835 by Mary Euphrasia Pelletier in Angers, France.
- While superior at Tours, Sister Mary Euphrasia formed a contemplative nuns group, named the Magdalen Sisters for penitent women who wished to live a cloistered life, but were ineligible to become Sisters of Our Lady of Charity.



Ulster Female Penitentiary and Laundry

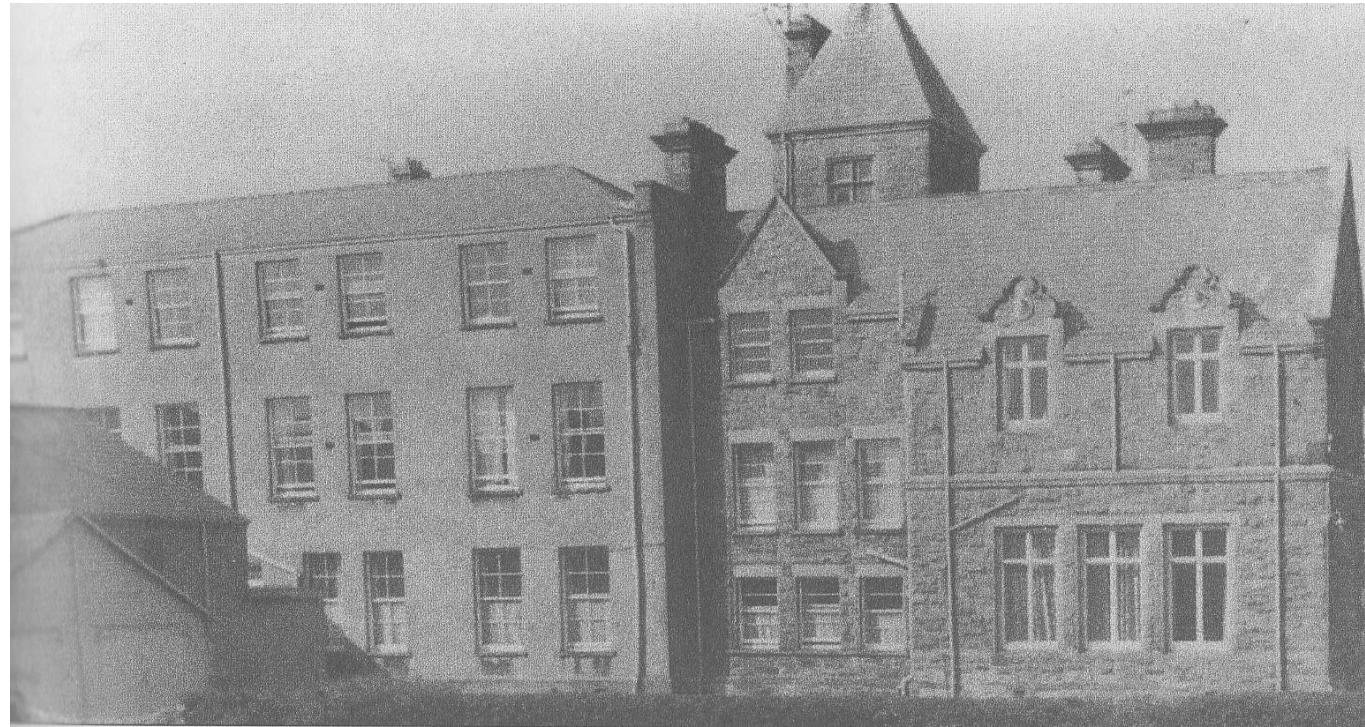
- Founded in 1816.
- It was a mother and baby home in Brunswick Street, Belfast.
- It was greatly expanded and developed when it came under Presbyterian control and Rev. John Edgar and the new home was opened in November 1839; known as the 'Edgar Home'
- 1902 new premises 'providing laundry work for prostitutes in grounds of Whitehall House'. Accommodated 75 inmates.



Interior and exterior of Edgar House



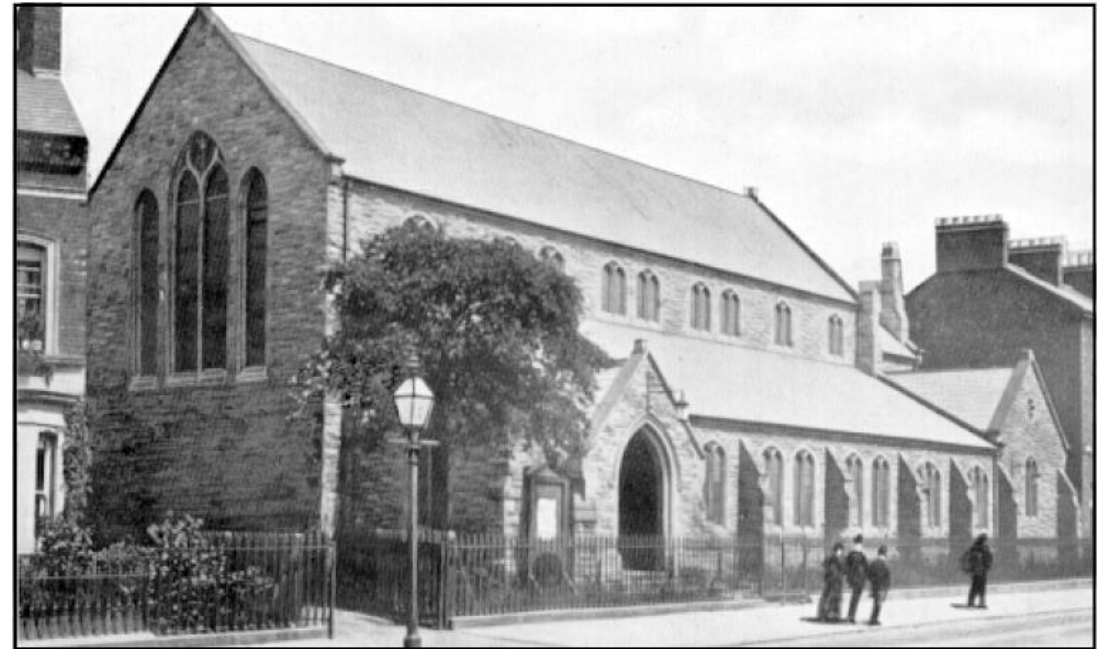
Laundry at Edgar House, Brunswick St, 1901



Exterior view of Edgar House, Brunswick St, 1901

Ulster Magdalene Asylum

- Founded in 1839 at Donegall Pass by the Church of Ireland. It was founded as part of the St. Mary Magdalene Parish, connected to St Mary Magdalene Chapel. It was to provide an asylum for "penitent females".
- Laundry closed in 1916, the institution survived and the home operated until the 1960s.
- The Ulster Magdalene Asylum in Belfast maintained a close relationship with other Protestant evangelical organisations such as the Belfast Midnight Mission (which was a rescue for "unfortunate women and their offspring") as well as the Belfast Female Mission, a School was affiliated to the Asylum run by the Church Education Society; these organisations shared members and trustees.
- The Magdalene Asylum was run by a board of trustees, five clergymen and four lay members of the church.
- It was not until the spring of 1849 that it was opened for the reception of inmates. The premises contained dormitories capable of holding 50 beds and one storey of the building was reserved to create another dormitory if needed.



Ulster Magdalene Asylum, Donegall Pass



NCPCC – combating child neglect and cruelty



Background

- Public concern in Belfast- July 1870: A public meeting of the friends of neglected and homeless children was held in the Victoria Hall to hear an address from the Rev. W.C. Van Mater, of the Howard Mission, New York. The attendance included a large number of young persons, and Mr. Charles Finlay took the chair
- London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children formed in 1884. NSPCC established in 1889. Belfast branch established in 1891. NSPCC given royal charter in 1895.
- Legislative change. Prevention of Cruelty to, and Protection of, Children Act 1889. It was the first Act of Parliament for the prevention of cruelty to children. It enabled the state to intervene, for the first time, in relations between parents and children. Police could arrest anyone found ill-treating a child, and enter a home if a child was thought to be in danger. The act included guidelines on the employment of children and outlawed begging.



NSPCC activities in Belfast

- February 1899: A monthly meeting of Belfast & District branch of NSPCC was held in the society's offices at 3 Clarendon Place, May Street. Four cases of ill treatment, 102 of neglect and starvation, five of abandonment and three of exposure.
- June 1899: The NSPCC held its quarterly meeting in 8 Clarendon Place. 275 cases were heard on Belfast during the preceding quarter.
- June 1910: At the annual meeting of the Belfast branch of the NSPCC it was reported that over 4600 children required the help of the society in the previous year.



NCPCC sponsored prosecutions

- July 1891: Joseph Pierce, a plasterer, was charged by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, with having neglected his six children. The case had to be adjourned as the prisoner attended court under the influence of drink
- January 1893: Daniel Collins was summoned by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children for neglecting his children in a manner which caused them unnecessary suffering. They were found to be dirty and ill-cared for, with one girl suffering from a burned arm after the defendant had thrown her and her mother into the fire while he was drunk. He was sentenced to one month in goal.
- January 1899: Bridget and James McAvoy were charged with the manslaughter of their infant child Agnes. An inquest was held and Dr. McQuitty concluded that she had died from tuberculosis due to neglect. The prisoners had originally been charged with neglect. The home in 38 Laganview Street was filthy and unkempt. On returning to the house to see if improvements had been made, Inspector Gunn of the NSPCC found the child in a dying state. The mother was sentenced to three months and the father to one month.



Other Prosecutions

- August 1891: Adam McCann was charged with cruelty to his children for leaving them in a filthy condition. He was gaoled for three months with hard labour.
- December 1893: Hugh and Rachael Darragh, who had been charged with cruelty to their children, were sentenced. Rachael got one month in gaol and her husband was discharged.
- June 1894: Catherine Bradley was charged with cruelty to a child and being drunk and disorderly. She was found in a state of intoxication, swinging the child around by the leg. She was gaoled for one month with hard labour.
- January 1899: John Dowie, of 44 Riga Street, was charged with cruelty and neglect of his children. He was a violent and drunken man who frequently put his wife and children out of the house. He was gaoled for six months.



USPCA/BSPCA – Tackling animal cruelty



Background

- USPCA is the 2nd oldest animal welfare organisation in the world, having been established in 1836.
- RSPCA founded in 1824.



Activities

- April 1842: The sixth Annual meeting of the Belfast Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was held.
- April 1848: The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals annual meeting was held in Fisherwick Place congregational school room. Among the issues discussed were the problems of cockfighting among the respectable sphere of society.
- February 1849: The Belfast Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has erected a watering trough for draught horses at Queen's Quay
- March 1850: The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals erected a new through for cattle at the Ulster railway. This brings to five the number they have placed throughout the town.



CRUELTY TO ANIMALS.

PUBLIC MEETING.

THE ANNIVERSARY MEETING of the Belfast Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, will be held in the FISHERWICK-PLACE SCHOOL-ROOM, on TUESDAY Evening, the 30th instant, at Half-past SEVEN o'clock.

J. CLARKE, Esq., Mayor of Belfast, has kindly consented to preside.

In addition to the usual business, the Silver Medal, awarded by the Society for the best Essay on the proper treatment of the lower creation, will be conferred at the meeting.

I. STEEN, } Honorary
F. A. CALDER, } Secretaries.

Belfast, April 26, 1844.

(250

Vindicator,
April 1844

USPCA sponsored prosecutions, 1883

- January: A man named Allen, was charged with cruelty to a pony belonging to Samuel McIlhagga. He had cut off the animal's tail, out of spite when McIlhagga had given him notice to leave his employment. He was fined £5 with £4 compensation.
- August: William Hamilton was charged with cruelty to a horse for belabouring it with a heavy ash plant. He was fined 5 shillings plus costs.



HANSOM CAB photographed in London in 1895. (Smithsonian photo.)

Other cases

- December 1883: John Cosby of Glenn's Row was charged with cruelty to geese for carrying four geese by the legs. He was fined one shilling plus costs.
- June 1884: Andrew Magee of the Newtownards Road was charged with cruelty to dogs, when his terrier began to fight with another dog, he carried it off while it still had its teeth in the other dog's throat. He was fined 10 shillings plus costs.



THE BOTTLE.

Temperance



Organisations

1. Barrack Street Temperance Society
2. Belfast Deaf Mute Temperance Society
3. Belfast Roman Catholic Total Abstinence Association
4. Belfast Total Abstinence Society
5. Irish Temperance League
6. Irish Temperance Movement
7. Ladies of Victoria Temperance Society
8. Temperance & Female Society
9. The Friends of the Tee-total Society
10. Women's Temperance Association



Carrick House, Lower Regent St, dry bar, 1902



Activities: Irish Temperance League

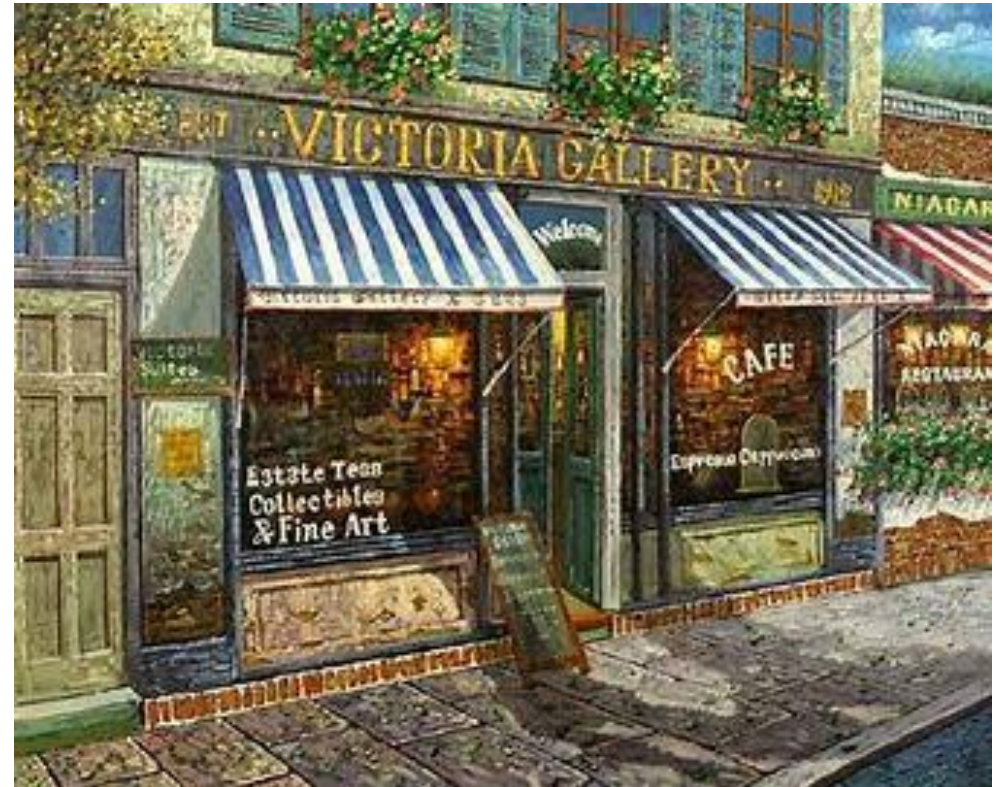
April 1880: A coffee stand at St. Georges' Market, Oxford Street was officially opened by Mr. William Ewart M.P. It is the eighth stand to be erected by the Irish Temperance League.

April 1882: The Band of Hope, under the auspices of the Irish Temperance League will hold a demonstration in the Ulster Hall.



December 1896

The Irish Temperance League opened a new coffee stand at 56 and 58 Falls Road, opposite the Corporation Baths. The walls are adorned with pictures of the Irish apostle of temperance, Father Matthew and a work by George Cruikshank entitled 'The Worship of Bacchus'.



Charitable giving



Charitable response to the famine

Responses to the famine in March 1847:

- A meeting was held in the Town Hall to resolve the establishment of a Day Asylum and school for training the young in useful industrial skills. Belfast Ladies Society for the Relief of Local Distress has donated 90/ to be distributed in food among the inhabitants of several medical districts of Belfast.
- Belfast Chess Club, 30 York Street, has donated £20 to the Belfast Soup Kitchen committee.
- The treasurer of the Belfast Soup Kitchen Committee received £11 1 shilling and 1d from the Total Abstinence Association, collected at the Reverend Nelson's meetinghouse.
- Belfast Relief Fund has acknowledged the receipt of 10/ from the members of the Loyal Donegall Lodge of Odd Fellows.
- An amateur dramatics group will play at the Theatre in aid of the relief of the destitute of Belfast.



YMCA tackling poverty in Belfast

- 1895: 1,000 volunteers and between 6,000 to 10,000 'adherents' (Belfast News-letter, 22.10.1895)
- December 1904:
 - 1,800 'free breakfasts' given out in 1 week in December of that year (Belfast Weekly News, 8.12.1904).
 - In Ballymacarrett, over Xmas, given 15,000 'free breakfasts' (BNL, 3.2.1904)

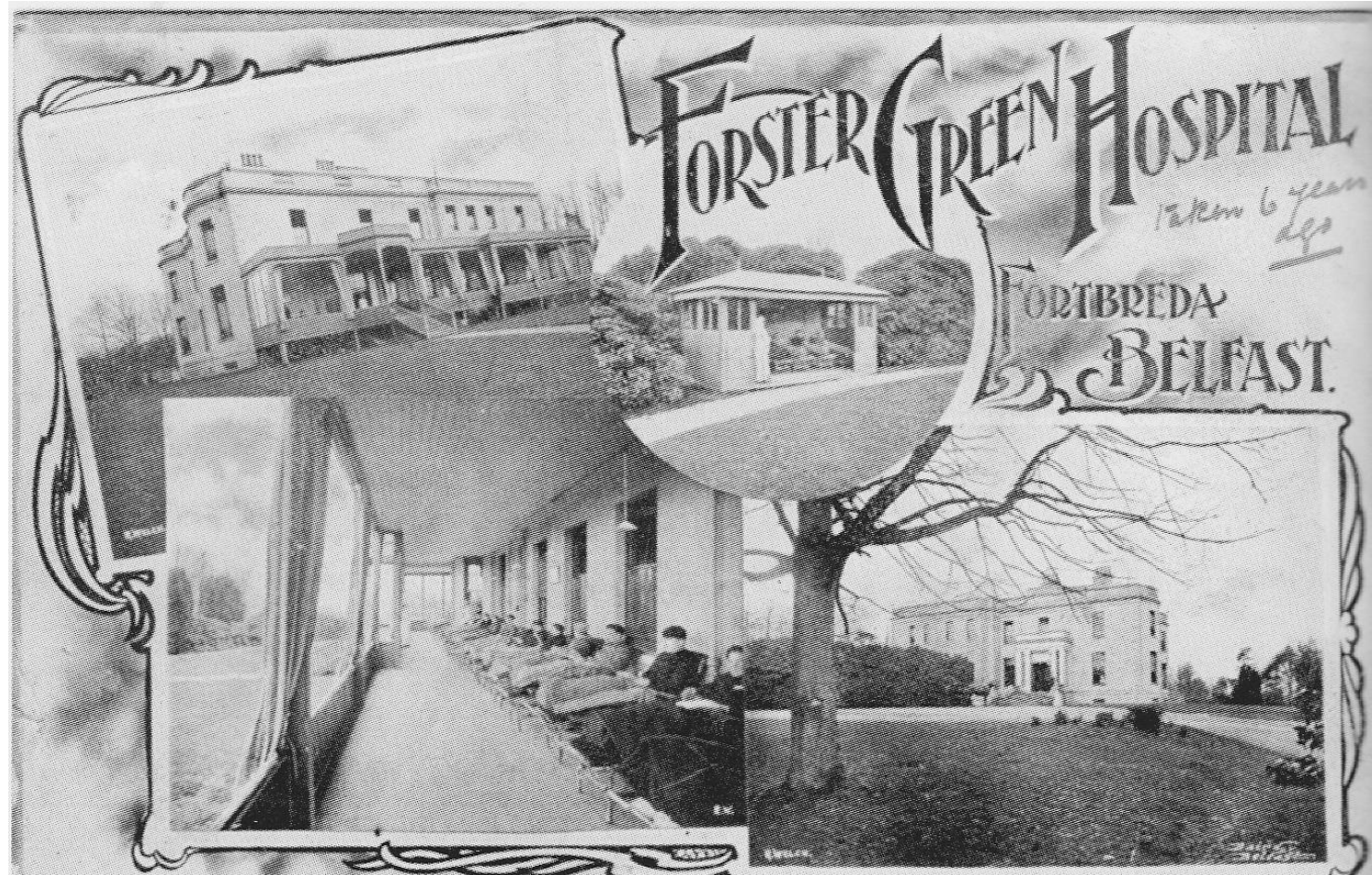


The Benn Hospitals

- Edward Benn helped establish three hospitals.
- August 1899: The Ulster Eye, Ear and Throat hospital held a meeting and agreed to rename the establishment the Benn Ulster Eye Ear and Throat Hospital



Forster Green Hospital



Campbell College

- In 1889 linen baron Henry James Campbell passed away.
- His will left a bequest for the establishment of a hospital or school.
- In 1890 his Trustees purchased the Belmont Road site with instruction to build either.
- Four years later in 1894 Campbell College opened the doors to its first pupils and has been educating boys ever since.



Questions?