

Poor-Law Reform in the Rural South-east; the Impact of the 'Sturges Bourne Acts' during the Agricultural Depression, 1815–1835.¹

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I. The context of the Sturges Bourne initiative

The deteriorating situation of farmworkers during the French wars between 1793 and 1815, notably those in the vast swathes of England's cornlands in the south and the east, is well-known. High food prices enriched farmers, and enabled landlords to inflate rents, but the former minimised wage increases, resulting in many labourers becoming to degrees dependent on allowances in-aid-of wages. Except locally, and very ephemerally, poor-law payments were not calculated on the notorious Speenhamland scales of supposedly 1795 vintage, which sought to guarantee labourers' families subsistence incomes by allowances based on their size and regulated on a weekly basis by volatile food prices.² In many primarily agricultural parishes, farmers collectively set wage levels; as early as 1798 it was emphasised that they refused to pay wages adequate for fathers to maintain more than two pre-working age children, a widely adopted and enduring rude rule of thumb.³ For able-bodied farmworkers with more, domestic economies were preserved – often perilously – through receipt of weekly *static* allowances made for eligible children, together with further periodic help to meet the costs of other essentials – clothing, shoes, fuel and cottage rents. The latter category of benefits – often dubbed 'casual relief' – were extended to a high proportion of other labourers, except young and unmarried men, though some were driven into poorhouses by intensifying shortages in the proletarian housing market. Many observers identified and lambasted a burgeoning dependency culture.⁴

Historians have often repeated these contemporary claims, and some-

times recognised that larger farmers eschewed responsibility to pay a living wage, by transferring the obligation – and the costs – of minimal family incomes to a much broader sector of ratepayers.⁵ While there is some truth in this argument, the real situation was more complicated, exemplified by tenant farmers advancing their own rising poor-rate contributions, in commonly annual negotiations with landlords to restrain them from maximising rentals. And this phenomenon *endured*: in 1833, one well-travelled observer insisted that ‘too many of the farmers keep more in view the reduction of rent than the reduction of the poor rates’.⁶ Similarly, where tithe owners continued to receive it, as across most of the South-east, high poor rates effectively enabled farmers to claw back part of these payments.⁷ Contemporary critics were less concerned with balanced analyses, preferring Malthusian prognostics, as he transmuted his identification of demographic principles into assertions that the poor-law as presently administered, created the escalating poverty problem its Elizabethan architects sought to prevent.⁸

After the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815, both the principal sectors of the economy – agriculture and manufacturing – faced radically changed economic circumstances. If the latter had to adjust to the speedy decline in massive government demand for the artefacts of war, the former confronted the removal of war-induced high farm-product prices, with inflationary being replaced by deflationary pressures. Farmers’ reducing profits undermined payment of rents at war-time levels. Both sectors were afflicted by *the* most devastating and immediate phenomena, namely the unprecedented scale of very speedy demobilisation and the not unrelated baby boom. Demobilisation swamped most labour markets and galvanised depression universally. If the industrial proved severe, its duration was *relatively* short, but in agriculture – however uneven in its local manifestations⁹ – was felt universally, as it intensified and endured, reaching what proved an early nadir in 1821–2. If there was some disparate recovery in the mid-1820s, depression returned and deepened during the last three years of the decade.¹⁰ The anticipated return of ‘peace and plenty’, went unrealised, and was graphically revealed by national burgeoning poor-rate expenditure between 1816 and 1820, and intensifying rural poverty – especially in the cornlands – was also reflected regionally by sustained high relief costs, despite annual fluctuations, throughout the 1820s and beyond.

For cornland communities from 1815, the wartime problems caused by the conjunction of high food prices and low labouring wages changed. Subsistence costs fell sharply. Wages decreased further, the corollary of surplus labour, and for most poor-law authorities the latter phenomenon proved *intractable*. Faced with returning servicemen, a proportion with

new families, to their places of settlement, parochial authorities resorted to the removal of many wartime migrants without settlements in their host villages, in a desperate attempt to preserve available employment and housing for those with legal entitlements to relief. This sparked conflict over notoriously litigious settlement criteria, but if the numbers of appeals shattered all records, few – especially populous parishes – secured any marked reduction in labour supplies; for every family successfully removed out, others were sent in.¹¹ Although some parishes acted to keep endangered small farmers in business,¹² a proportion normally preserved their economic equilibrium through labouring for more substantial neighbours; inadequate supplemental work forced them to seek poor relief with some bankrupts ending up as parish roadworkers.¹³

Under- and unemployment among farmworkers, now joined lowered wages. The situation was aggravated by increased resort to threshing machines especially by large farmers which at once enabled them to reduce winter season labour for traditional thrashing, and respond speedily to rises in corn prices; neither benefit was enjoyed by smaller farmers.¹⁴ But these developments dictated even greater resort to allowances in-aid, and casual benefits, notably respecting housing accommodation, which came under such pressure that cottages commanding an annual 30/- before the war, were commonly sub-divided thereby generating yearly incomes of between £5 and £10.¹⁵ Former soldiers – especially those recruited ‘young before their habits of labour were formed’ – constituted the ‘greatest evil’, namely ‘returned . . . very little inclined to labour’, and dubbed ‘the military poor’.¹⁶ Parish vestries experimented with various expedients to absorb surplus labour, including the Roundsmen system offering the unemployed with wage subsidies to farmers; among the permutations was a quota system, stipulating that farmers employ a number of men – and often boys and youths too – governed by their rentals, poor-ratings, or acreages, demarcating between arable, pastoral and (important in parts of the South-east) hop gardens.¹⁷ Make-work schemes directly organised by parochial authorities included greater attention to highways, often in conjunction with the extraction of materials from rented quarries, and some parishes took over vacant farms, of which an increasing number became available.¹⁸ Many rural vestries quickly became convinced that all make-work schemes effectively filtered local workforces, through both farmers’ selections of the better labourers for steady employment, and self-identification by their unenthusiastic neighbours seeking less demanding taskmasters in the form of parish officials. Farmers also traditionally responded to labour surpluses with a preference for family men and thereby discriminated against unmarried men and youths. Significant numbers ended up with

publicly-organised work, 'almost useless employment' according to one of William Sturges Bourne's informants in 1819; 'the bulk . . . are young able bodied single men' who 'only pretend' to work, developed 'habits of sloth, & sullen discontent', which he anticipated would endure and

render the youth of the present day, a body of deteriorated workless labourers & miserable discontented paupers. They never will recover from the evil habits & dispositions they are now acquiring.¹⁹

The famous road-maker, John MacAdam, was one of the few able to exploit this situation. From 1819 he contracted with numerous turnpike trusts anxious to exploit countryside labour surpluses, which peaked during the winters, to cheaply mend and improve their thoroughfares. He secured labour worth three times what he paid to parish officers anxious to claw back some of their relief costs – impossible with village highway work – and he insisted that day-to-day labour was supervised under their agencies.²⁰

II. Parliamentary Select Committees and the Passage of the Acts, 1815–9

All these initiatives contributed to increased expenditure. Estate owners conceding rent reductions to compensate for rising poor rates, soon feared that the latter were 'eating' their rent-rolls, ostensibly confirming Malthusian prognostics. Once cornland disturbances commenced principally with the East Anglian riots in 1816, parliamentarians – notably the numerous converts to utilitarianism among MPs – initially became more concerned with poor-law matters than the broader combination of factors responsible for the depression. Early anticipations of official intervention, included one press report in November 1815 surmising that the 'abuses and profligacy practised' by local administrations would result in government taking 'management of the poor into their own hands'.²¹ Liverpool's Cabinet of course had no such intent, and though post-war problems had refuelled public debate – one specialist dubbed these years as witnessing the 'the climax of abolitionism' – it was 1817 before select committees in both houses investigated. The Commons committee produced the more radical report, influenced by Sturges Bourne, and published in the same year. It criticised the current litigious furore over settlements, advised fundamental changes to that law, and castigated the huge increase in claimant numbers thereby 'perpetually encouraging and increasing the . . . misery' the law 'meant to alleviate', not least by 'unnaturally' stimulating the birth rate. Workhouses were places 'of idleness and vice' and had lost their historic capacity to deter,

as claimants 'now rather court to come in'; moreover, they revealed 'no . . . gratitude' and perceived relief as a right, among the reasons for the system's 'highly prejudicial' impact on 'the moral habits . . . of a great body of the people', which was blamed – be it shamefully simplistically – on magistrates' endorsement of allowances in-aid.²²

Ironically in view of the committee's indictment of the justices, its remedy lay in restoring the allegedly traditional upper-class hegemony over vestries, from their current supposed usurpation by lesser ratepayers, whose populist generosity towards claimants underpinned present maladministration. Hence proposals for a plural voting system based on ratepayers' property values to elect select vestries to constitute small parochial executives, dominated by the affluent, enjoined to reduce claimant numbers, discriminating between the deserving and undeserving, in which salaried assistant overseers should be appointed to rigorously investigate every applicant, and advise the remodelled administration accordingly. Elite bodies would restore the deterrent features of workhouses, through strict supervisory regimes, which it claimed, would also overcome parental objections to the relief of large families in the long established – but disliked – form of taking one or more children into the workhouse. Here they would now receive a Christian education and work experience; compulsory powers to restrict relief to large families to this mode were recommended.²³

The Lords' report, delayed until 1818, reviewed poor-law trajectory, including recent practices, among them allowances in-aid, and effectively comprised a conservative defence, with a principal emphasis on the very great dangers attendant on radical reform.²⁴ The very different thrusts of the two reports, constituted an ideologically-driven clash between utilitarian enthusiasts ascendant in the Commons, and peers more sensitive to the poor-laws' important contribution to social control and helping to neutralise revolutionary portents during the war, though they did not put it quite like that, with the very recent insurrectionary events in the Midlands rekindling fears.²⁵

The first of what became known as the Sturges-Bourne Acts passed in 1818, stipulated plural voting with one to six votes based on parishioners' ratings between under £50 and £150 cast in orthodox general vestries. Ratepayers in arrears or refusing to pay were disfranchised, and a revealing number of criminal clauses respecting parish officers' apparently common device of not producing, defacing or destroying documentation, were added. It omitted to prescribe how this 'complicated system of voting could be used in a large and perhaps disorderly meeting', but an amending statute a year later principally permitting proxy voting

and extending it to non-residents, created bureaucratic problems for the populous parishes it primarily addressed.²⁶

The second main statute, the 1819 Select Vestries Act was – in contrast to its predecessor – permissive, though the option was closed to administrations under Local or Gilbert Acts. The latter had been quite widely implemented in parts of the South-east. Although wide-ranging, the 1819 statute represented only a partial victory for the Commons committee; adoption depended on general vestries voting under the 1818 Act, whereupon parish executives of between five and twenty ‘substantial householders’ were annually ‘nominated or elected’ in the same forum, with resort to elections only in the event of contests. Their names were to be registered by one magistrate. The Act failed to stipulate any *ex officio* members, though it implied such status for incumbents; chairmen were to be elected at every meeting at which the clergyman was absent. Curates, if rated, were automatically members. *Ex-officio* status was also implied for annually nominated overseers and churchwardens, as only one of these officers was permitted in the quorum, fixed at three. The Act permitted the appointment of salaried assistant overseers though the decision remained with the general vestry. These functionaries were to minutely investigate relief claimants’ precise circumstances to enable select vestrymen to discriminate against ‘the idle, extravagant or profligate poor’. As assistants were responsible for considerable monies – especially where their duties included rate collection, the ‘chief trouble’ of traditional overseers²⁷ – sureties were required; Petty Sessions were to confirm appointments. Existing appellant procedures were modified against select vestry rulings; rather than the customary single justice, two were required, and they were to minute their reasons when upholding appeals. Other powers bestowed on select vestries included those to enlarge or erect workhouses, to rent or purchase up to twenty acres of land to be worked by the unemployed, though ceilings on loans to exercise these options were stipulated. The liable persons clauses of the Elizabethan Act whereby close relatives of claimants could be forced by the magistracy to support them, recently restricted by the King’s Bench, were restated to unambiguously make grandparents, parents, and children responsible for each other as circumstances warranted. The practice of relief by way of loans was reinforced. But the Lords rejected the clause empowering relief to large families to be restricted to taking children into workhouses, thereby ensuring the survival of regular allowances in-aid. Select vestries were also to report formally twice a year to general vestries, which retained the right to nominate parish officers annually, including waywardens. Finally, select vestries’ powers were

restricted to poor-law administration; nuisances, police – and quite critically – highway maintenance, remained general vestry prerogatives.²⁸

The Bill's passage evoked a mixture of sensible and ludicrous comment from supporters. If the former was exemplified by Sturges Bourne's critique of current resort to removal orders exposing all the contradictory 'intricacies . . . involved . . . in settlements', the latter was revealed by his claim that incarcerating children in workhouses and thereby separating families did not constitute 'overstraining humanity', because the affluent sent their offspring to boarding schools and on grand tours. Even the Lords failed to reject the clause empowering select vestries to opt to rate the owners rather than the tenants of cottages,²⁹ *without* removing parish officers' powers to seize the tenant's possessions in the event of non-payment, which they were supposed to recoup by deducting the value from future rents. Although Sturges Bourne was an estate owner and familiar with rural administrations,³⁰ his asserted aim to 'reduce the powers of the masses', ironically derived from his experiences of the vestry responsible for populous St George, Hanover Square; his implied extension of the repetitive boisterous activities of smaller ratepayers here to rural parishes has been rightly described by Professor Eastwood as 'pure fantasy'.³¹ However, there was some justification for the view that small farmers and non-farming ratepayers, commonly in arrears, blocked employment schemes promoted by greater farmers.³² Ironically, historians have detected a marked eighteenth-century growth in the emergence of stable, parochial oligarchies, of richer inhabitants as opposed to the elite, as most squires and parsons eschewed regular attendance. The 'Heads of the Parish' – a common description – at West Farleigh numbered five, only one of whom was minuted as 'esquire', and two colleagues were the 'Millers Ewell'. But – as a glance at Sussex shopkeeper Turner's diary while he was overseer reveals – the restricted number of the East Hoathly attendees included men who were often drunk, perennially argumentative, commonly cussed, and invariably foul-mouthed. No wonder one incumbent confirmed that

If two or three vociferous members in a Vestry hang together, business is soon left to their management, by others absenting themselves.³³

Contemporary opinions on the Sturges Bourne Acts varied. *The Times* denounced the 1818 Act as unconstitutional and against divine law. Radicals, Cobbett among them, automatically attacked plural voting and soon came to lambaste assistant overseers as visible enforcers of inhumane regimes. Conversely, others believed that if compulsory, the 1819 statute would have dissolved the impetus for radical reform eventuating in the notorious Poor Law Amendment Act.³⁴ One specialist historian,

Dr Boyer is incomprehensibly ignorant of Sturges Bourne, revealed by the comment that post-war parliamentary committees 'made no attempt to . . . reform the Poor Law'. The adoption of Sturges Bourne has not been systematically studied, merely commented upon, sometimes inaccurately typified by Professor Cowherd's claim that they 'transferred the authority of levying the poor rates to wealthy individuals'.³⁵ Rates remained levied by general vestries and audited by magistrates.³⁶ Professor Mandler correctly points out that the 1820s witnessed 'a rash of local experiments in Poor Law reform',³⁷ but one very recent expert, Dr Steven King, contrasts northern and western, with eastern and especially southern Old Poor Law administrations, to conclude that the former exhibited a perennial 'stinginess' with an 'obstructive attitude towards claimants', which 'drummed into generations of poor and potentially poor people that there was no such thing as a right to relief'. Conversely, their relatively 'generous' southern counterparts created a 'dependency culture'.³⁸ However, although King is aware of the 1819 Act,³⁹ he eschews consideration of the reasons for its widespread adoption by his supposedly pro-dependency-culture southern ratepayers; nor does he reflect on the Act's possible broader regional influence through that traditional manner of administrations cherry-picking statutes to suit their local purposes,⁴⁰ without formal adoption of permissive statutes.⁴¹

The adoption, implementation and regular administration of the 1819 Act, coincided with an intensifying very public debate during the 1820s. Nobody could have equalled Malthus's contribution; he published new editions of the *Essay* in 1817 and 1826, and a *Summary View of the Principle of Population* in 1830. Two other major contributors, the Revd. Becher, and C. D. Brereton promoted opposing opinions over work-houses; Brereton was hostile, while Becher wanted a radically revamped system underpinned by the test for the able-bodied; significantly they united over the abolition of allowances in-aid. This debate was politicised through recurrent petitioning of parliament by notably farmers, with the Commons' responses germinating an interaction with select committees appointed to collect information on poor rate levels and practices over the country. Between 1821 and 1826, committees reported annually on poor-rate returns, and masses of statistics were accompanied by extracts from local officials' commentary. Further committees concerned with first, general principles, and secondly recommendations for specific reforms, including statutory amendments.⁴² The most important after those of 1817-8, were committees on labourers' wages of 1824 and its 1828 successor which focused on the relief of the able-bodied. The former restricted itself to recommending reformatory principles, including that parish-employed labourers should be paid less

than those working for farmers. It coincided with the apparent lifting of the depression and complacently concluded that 'agricultural distress' had 'now happily disappeared'.⁴³ Once that manifestly proved a false dawn, the 1828 committee took a much tougher line, including the illegalisation of allowances in-aid.⁴⁴ Further committees addressed relevant topics, among them friendly societies, emigration and crime.

Regional experiences with poor-law administration dovetailed with parliamentary debates and reports, provoking commentary by journalists and arguments between newspaper correspondents. One exemplar in the Lewes press in 1818 claimed that in vestry consultations 'a few of the leading ones who carry all the sway . . . have it determined to suit their own interests, and . . . what was intended for the good of the poor is perverted to the aggrandisement of the rich', a complaint reiterated in 1826 by a utilitarian lambasting allowances in-aid, who added post-1815 innovations, including the Roundsmen scheme. A subsequent contributor identified a perennial struggle between claimants and select vestrymen, with the former 'exclaim[ing] against starvation', while the latter's officials 'in their turn fly to the Bench' where decisions were 'generally to the great dissatisfaction of both sides'. Further allegations that direct payment of the 'wages of [privately-hired] labour from . . . the poor rates' being sanctioned by the magistracy evoked a denial from the East Sussex Quarter Sessions chairman, who conceded that as 'the value of labour was under great depression, and the supply . . . exceeded demand', the law directed that those with income unequal to support their dependants, had to be assisted.⁴⁵

Sturges Bourne certainly empowered the installation of utilitarian administrations prepared to select from its optional provisions; they might reject direct employment in favour of workhouse accommodation adequate to implementing the test. But technically, general vestries could torpedo policies agreed by their select counterparts; if the latter resorted to the test, the former could instruct the waywardens to employ those threatened with incarceration on the roads, funded from the highway rate. The present article aims partly through case studies to evaluate the character of these administrations, principally using the archival contents of former parish chests, which enables circumvention of what Professors Hobsbawm and Rudé once dubbed the 'obscurity of village annals'.⁴⁶ Indeed, these sources are often embarrassingly rich, and provide vivid insights into the realities of parochial politics in a seriously problem-riven era. To what extent did Sturges Bourne facilitate utilitarian experimentation; were they obstructed by the generality of rate-payers, or were they to degrees overwhelmed by the enduring features of the agricultural depression? And, given the claims of magisterial ineptit-

ude expressed in post-1815 parliamentary debates, and subsequently coloured the 1834 Poor Law Report, how did South-eastern Petty Sessional Benches police select-vestry administrations in the 1820s, which terminated in the Captain Swing implosion of 1830 and subsequently strong attribution by old poor-law critics to maladministration? Ironically, the standard authorities on Swing, while recognising widespread attempts in the twenties to reduce poor-law expenditure, and reiterating the denunciation of assistant overseers in their source material, make no mention of either their or select vestries' roles, and are silent on the relevant Acts.⁴⁷

III. Select vestries at Ticehurst and Westbourne

Any systematic study of Sturges-Bourne administrations is bedevilled by documentary deficiencies; partial exceptions include Ticehurst and Westbourne. The 1819 Act stipulated that select vestries convened at least fortnightly and maintained minute books; adoptees should have kept separate minutes for general and select vestries, and this record ought to permit the recreation of relationships between the two, including key elements, among them the identities of select vestrymen themselves, and those parishioners active in general vestries. Statutory ambiguity over the status of churchwardens and overseers, might explain why in the two administrations both categories of officers were among those nominated, though not routinely. However, if we ignore the issue of documentary survival, it is clear that the bureaucratic principles enshrined in the Act were rarely fully implemented, despite increasing resort to salaried parish clerks, a feature not exclusive to adoptees.⁴⁸ Extant select vestry minutes commonly record decisions on individual claims, but the records of select and general vestry meetings are often juxtaposed within the same volume;⁴⁹ even where rigid demarcation between them was observed, general vestry minutes are clearly incomplete,⁵⁰ thereby compromising recreation of their inter-action. Problems also derive from the manner in which attendance at both forums was minuted.⁵¹ Petty Sessions minutes' survival is erratic, for select vestrymen nominations were sometimes recorded there rather than by single justices,⁵² and those for jurisdictions embracing our villages are not extant; however, the identities of select vestrymen are comprehensively listed in the parochial records.⁵³

Finally, there is no comprehensive source of adoptees, despite regular parochial poor-law returns to parliament in the 1820s, requests for which were regularly accompanied by encouragement to adopt the Act and appoint assistant overseers. Local documentation reveals adoption by

way of what proved experimentation with the Act's provisions, without any record of why parishes subsequently abandoned them, while some vestries cherry-picked clauses from the statutes in customary style. Only 21 of the 160 or so South-eastern parishes making returns to the 1832–4 Royal Commission claimed select vestry status, and the fact that only two more – Chilham and Pulborough – acknowledged having adopted and later abandoned the Act, may reflect respondents' anxieties over such admittance, or – given the high turnover of farmers – a simple ignorance of their predecessors' actions.⁵⁴ However, as barely a tenth of parishes in England and Wales answered the Commissioners' questionnaires, and inadequately by many that complied, the scale of South-eastern adoption is obscured.

Ticehurst and Westbourne,⁵⁵ were among the earliest adoptees in 1819 and they both survived until 1835 when rendered redundant by New Poor Law implementation. In 1821 both had substantial populations, respectively 1966 and 1852, and extensive acreages, 8,265 and 4,503, with overwhelmingly agrarian economies. Land-ownership was more diverse in Ticehurst,⁵⁶ though both had several relatively substantial farmers, and a greater number of modest and smaller farms, including some owner-occupiers in all categories. Despite the diversity, in George Courthope, Ticehurst had an unambiguous resident squire; he and his eldest son were active. The Way family owned some land at Westbourne, and the avowson, but played little direct part in village affairs, though at times exercised influence through the Rector; of greater importance were William Parry Wallis, who chaired most select vestry meetings throughout the 1820s, and his colleague, General Sir John Oldfield between 1819 and 1825.⁵⁷ Neither owned much land, though Wallis was a modest farmer of manorial acres and enjoyed rights of common.⁵⁸ Ticehurst was an archetypal High Wealden parish, heavily wooded, with contracting arable land, surrounded by similarly-placed villages. Westbourne lay on the coastal plain with richer and therefore even in the depression more profitable land. Its proximity to less-densely populated downland embracing parishes, including Funtingdon, and over the Hampshire border, Warblington, and 'close' coastal West Thornley, meant that these places normally drew upon workers domiciled in Westbourne.⁵⁹ Ticehurst was very differently placed; adjacent parishes did not draw on its pool of labourers, and if some found work outside, the effect was cancelled by workers commuting in the opposite direction. This was one cause why of the two, Ticehurst had the greater poverty problem. Its scale, and the sheer geographical size of the parish dictated the annual appointment of four, rather than the customary two overseers.

If these studies focus on the years 1819 to 1830, some analytical features derive from these administrations' duration, notably select vestry personnel, and their relationships with general vestrymen. The numbers of select vestrymen elected from year-to-year to constitute the Ticehurst and Westbourne authorities varied between fifteen and twenty at the former, and from twelve and nineteen at the latter, but the chronology of these variations reveals no identifiable trends. There was no reduction in the numbers of willing nominees, though this should not obscure the fact that regular attendees declined significantly in both administrations. At Ticehurst, the original plan to create rotas of six men for serving for two-month periods collapsed within eighteen months,⁶⁰ and attendance on occasion slumped to threaten the minimalist quorum, namely three.

Totals of 79 and 51 men respectively served on the Ticehurst and Westbourne select vestries between 1819–20 and 1834–5,⁶¹ representing a disparity partly deriving from the greater volatility of middling farming tenants at Ticehurst.⁶² However, when we examine long-serving members of ten or more years during the fifteen, a stable core of eight emerges in both. Of the Westbourne core, the detailed results of two elections under the 1818 Act reveals that three had the largest number of votes, six,⁶³ while three more were entitled to between three and five votes.⁶⁴ Parallel evidence is unavailable for Ticehurst; rate assessments show that only one came into the lowest bracket – under £50. If we except the elder Courthope, and the Revd. Wetherell, assessed respectively at £175 and £213, the others lie between £94 and £170, indicating men of substantial economic status.⁶⁵

Of those in office for three years or less, there were thirteen at Westbourne and forty at Ticehurst; if the latter figure is analysed, thirteen served for three years, of whom twelve sat either in consecutive years or with only one year's absence in between. Most of these characters were modest farmers, clear evidence of their instability rather than the impact of abrasive parochial politics.⁶⁶ We know relatively little about the latter in either location, though the implications deriving from the constituency of general vestries, notably the annual nomination meetings, and at Westbourne those who assembled to listen and possibly debate the select vestry's formal reports, are significant.⁶⁷ In both villages, nomination meetings appear to have been dominated by outgoing and aspirant select vestrymen, who were commonly one and the same by dint of seeking re-nomination. Indeed, the latter term together with aspirant status, are misnomers; nomination meetings were usually poorly attended, with at most four or five ordinary ratepayers, usually from the middling strata.⁶⁸ Moreover, the numbers of select vestrymen seeking re-nomination *attending* these meetings, declined. There

is no evidence of votes being cast, and with one exception, technically at least one and usually more candidates, had there been such, could have been accommodated. The identities of nominees were known beforehand. Details of votes on other topics cast in Westbourne general vestries, reveal a genuine interloper could have been voted down by the select vestrymen present. Select vestrymen increasingly formally reported to a minority of themselves in the appropriate Westbourne general vestries. Important issues which were decided at general vestries, among them appointing assistant overseers, certainly did attract some mere ratepayers in both communities, but select vestrymen usually dominated numerically, and – on the not invariably valid assumption that select vestrymen would have voted the same way – if it came to a vote, they would win. Even at Ticehurst, where there were more highly contentious issues, especially in the early years, the simple device of either Courthope or their close ally, the Rector chairing a general vestry often neutralised opposition.

Personalities were relevant. At Westbourne, the Act's stipulation that in the absence of the incumbent the chair be elected, resulted in Wallis chairing every meeting he attended before 1830; an assiduous parochial politician, he turned up at most general vestry meetings, and almost invariably chaired them, including the nomination meetings, at which he was a nominee; he continued to seek nomination even after he became a long-serving churchwarden. Perhaps the fact that he had but one vote under the 1818 Act dictated this neo-democratic profile. If so, the same cannot be said of his Ticehurst counterpart. Benjamin Buss was the beneficiary of the tradition whereby the incumbent chose one churchwarden, and Buss served throughout the period. He was entitled to five votes, sufficiently wealthy to be called a 'gentleman' and contributed to the 1820 voluntary subscription to cover the costs of a new gallery in the church, pragmatically organised to circumvent the increasingly contentious church rate.⁶⁹ Buss too sought nomination, perhaps as a device to emblematised his independence. However, Rector Wetherell, also sought nomination for every year he served (1820–35), though perhaps this confident profile also reflected the fact that under an unusual long-standing convention, the rectorial tithe was not assessed to the poor rate, elsewhere an increasingly bitter topic between clergymen and their parishioners.⁷⁰ On the other hand, Wallis's and Buss's actions could be the simple product of the lack of statutory clarity. A few in both communities also sought nomination during their years as overseer.⁷¹ Although it is unclear how many ratepayers attended either vestry prior to the Act's adoption, the implications from Ticehurst's earlier minutes is that few did. For example, signatories at parish officer nomination

vestries between 1769 and 1805, averaged thirteen, and the maximum totalled twenty (in 1772), including illiterates entering their marks.⁷² A Rolvenden (Kent) witness typically stated, that ordinary vestry meetings dealing 'with matters of course' were 'very thinly attended, unless some material question arises'.⁷³ Another irony with Sturges Bourne, derives from the fact that adoption saw select vestries exceed the size of usual attendance in ordinary vestries, but the emergence of cores of select vestrymen reflect reinforced oligarchy.

IV. Ticehurst's administration 1819-30

On its October 1819 foundation, the Ticehurst select vestry under the chairmanship of one or other Courthope – nominated members – reviewed inherited relief policies from a precursor since 1816, namely a general vestry sub-committee which pronounced on individual claims.⁷⁴ Flour allowances for labouring and some other fathers of large families, had become entrenched as had the payment of part or all of many farm-workers' cottage rents.⁷⁵ No quota system enjoining farmers to employ numbers fixed on their rental or equivalents was operational; establishing one, constituted a reason for adopting Sturges-Bourne. However, parish employment in woodlands hired from absentee-landlord Fuller, had been introduced in the previous spring, and one of the new authority's first acts was to hire a farm.⁷⁶ Workhouse regulation was tightened by new rules issued by the select vestry. Some present adult able-bodied recipients of outdoor relief were ordered in, as were a few of the children of continuing recipients.⁷⁷ Early notice forewarned beneficiaries of rent payments and their landlords that they would cease from next Ladyday, as Ticehurst was an archetypal parish for cottage building by speculative 'Carpenters and Masons'.⁷⁸

Once spring arrived in 1820, and with it increased agrarian activity, fewer members attended regularly.⁷⁹ Presumably tenants and their landlords faced with the termination of rent payments voiced opposition; the issue was deferred until the new select vestry was nominated in August.⁸⁰ Cereal harvesting and hop-picking prevented more than routine decisions until the early autumn, when it turned attention to the employment problem, including hiring non-settled labourers, and decreed that five named employers – three of them absent colleagues – be 'spoke' to accordingly.⁸¹ At a general vestry on 25 October the issue of employment quotas was inconclusively raised, together with the inadequacy of work available on the parish farm and wood to absorb the unemployed. Whatever the outcome, the select vestry, with both Courthopes in attendance, pressed ahead by reviving house rents, and

raising the question of an assistant overseer, pragmatically referring both to another general vestry scheduled for 5 December.⁸² That convened; the minutes recorded an adjournment to the 15th owing to a 'Short Attendance'. Short or not, also on the agenda were the contents of the annual poor-law return to parliament: the meeting added a tough rider; Ticehurst had more than 800 paupers, with 'frequently 30 to 50 Famileys out of employ', owing to the depression. Farmers were 'incapable of paying for that Labour, and many of them [are] not able to pay the Poor Rate and other Taxes', sentiments hostile to any quota system, laced with anger over government indifference to the intensifying severity of agrarian problems.⁸³

The adjourned general vestry was attended by eleven, all bar one select vestrymen, including the chair, the Revd. Wetherell. No decision on house rents was minuted, but the decision to go ahead with the assistant overseership was, with the post being advertised.⁸⁴ A poorly-documented row developed after a general vestry on 18 February – comprised twelve select vestrymen – appointed James Shoosmith, a parishioner (a common feature⁸⁵) on an annual £40 salary, but requiring the enormous surety of £1000. Although this sum was halved, Shoosmith did not take the job, while the delay coincided with the imminent expiry of the present workhouse governor's yearly contract. On 10 May the general vestry agreed to combine the post of governor and assistant overseer on a salary of £55, representing an overall saving of £17 per annum, and another common expedient.⁸⁶ On the 23rd, a general vestry comprised fifteen men, ten of whom were serving on the select vestry, and two former members, appointed William Barron and his wife, currently in charge of a Rochester poorhouse.⁸⁷ He was to reside in and manage Ticehurst workhouse, and soon persuaded his new employers to extend the accommodation, and erect enclosing walls in the interests of security. The fact that it took three poorly-documented general vestries before select vestrymen steered through acceptance of the costs speaks for itself.⁸⁸ Barron was to present fortnightly accounts to the select vestry, enforce bastardy payments, visit non-resident relief recipients to ensure that their circumstances had not improved, and attend every Petty Sessions meeting. He was to collect the rates on a quarterly basis, but 'on no account' to commence collection of a new rate before the fruits of its predecessor were in parochial coffers.⁸⁹ Barron compiled comprehensive lists of relief recipients, their employers, the ages of their children, 'and he will be expected to make himself acquainted with their [claimants'] Character Disposition Employment and Earnings'. None of these duties was easy, and the latter two particularly onerous.⁹⁰

Ultimately, the latter reflected determination to introduce a quota

system to govern employment, which remained problematic, though it had not prevented a preliminary enquiry by a select vestry sub-committee into individual farmers' rents and employment levels, which additionally revealed that some non-settled labourers remained in work. The latter issue was taken to a general vestry by outgoing select vestrymen, together with the still unresolved question of house rents on 16 March 1821. Despite the fact that that assembly again ostensibly comprised exclusively serving select vestrymen, nothing was minuted over the latter issue, though all farmers still employing non-settled workmen were formally 'requested . . . to discharge them' at Ladyday, more-or-less immediately.⁹¹ After the new select vestry's nomination, with all but two of the fifteen former members reinstalled with four newcomers, it brought up the hoary problem of a property revaluation in the interests of 'equalising the Poor Rates', unambiguously a matter of intense concern for every ratepayer. Increasing disparities between farmers' precise circumstances, caused by unequal shrinkages in cereal cultivation, with uneven growth in pastoral and hop acreages, aggravated by rent reductions for some tenants, and further complications deriving from owner-occupiers' position, constituted legitimate reasons behind this initiative.⁹² However, re-valuations were often manipulated to benefit larger and middling farmers and disadvantaged their smaller brethren, modest dual-occupationists, retailers and master craftsmen.⁹³ When it was discussed on 27 April by a general vestry, revealingly attended by several mere ratepayers, it was approved by a solid majority, though one select vestryman was among the opponents. After a subsequent general vestry discussion a month later, the select vestry appointed a re-rating sub-committee, but the initiative was abandoned during the summer, as further falls in produce prices served only to enflame this contentious issue, and heat the parochial political climate.⁹⁴

A revaluation might have ostensibly provided a more equitable basis for a quota system, without which all employing farmers had every economic incentive to cut, if not terminate their regular workforces, a fact reflected in a rapidly swelling pool of 'surplus' hands as farmers reduced their wheat acreages. The quota issue was discussed at no less than three general vestries in November 1821, after the first adjourned owing to a 'very small attendance', though each of these assemblies were dominated by select vestrymen. The third resolved that 'Ticket[s] for every 15£ Rent [or equivalent for owner-occupiers] be put into a Bag and Drawn for by the Labourers Weekly'. Thus a farmer with a £60 rental, employing two men, would have to find work for two more, who were changed weekly, as the 'surplus' men drew their tickets on Saturdays, identifying their employer for the following week. 'Ticket Men' were

paid a daily seven pence, or 3/6 weekly; only married recipients received cash supplements, 1/6 for a childless couple, two shillings for the first and 1/6 for the second child, with those with three or more children retaining their existing flour doles. In a desperate attempt to ensure industrial discipline, ticketed labourers who did not satisfy their employers were excluded, and put to work on the parish farm and woodland; the luckless assistant overseer was ordered to

Look into the Publick Houses every Saturday Evening and Sunday Morning and make his report [to the select vestry] of what Paupers he may find there Tipling and at any other part of the week if thought necessary.⁹⁵

The impact of the quota decision was dramatically revealed. Ticket scheme accounts reveal that the 199 labourers at the first ticket draw swelled to 363 on the second, as farmers jettisoned their higher-paid regulars. A significant number refused to employ designated ticketmen, either because they objected to specified individuals, or did not require full entitlements, and no doubt these reasons often dovetailed. Those who did take the largest number – though not necessarily their full complement – were the larger employers, who constituted the elite, including most serving select vestrymen. The numbers sent to work on parish land soon comprised ‘worthless characters’, beyond the managerial capacity of the ‘foreman’, who was soon sacked – by the select vestry – for unspecified ‘misconduct’. That body also decreed at its first subsequent scheduled meeting, that bachelors were to receive a shilling subsidy, a clear sign that despite the somewhat redoubtable Barron’s pub-policing, public order was collapsing – as it was over the region at the juncture – with this extra cash aimed to appease those principally responsible.⁹⁶

On 23 December, select vestrymen restated the 16 November policy to ratepayers assembled in general vestry, adding that employers were prohibited from privately swapping allocated ticketmen. Those refusing to take their full allocation were excluded. Complaints that the quota criteria as formulated did not accommodate employed youths aged fourteen to eighteen, nor – a matter of great importance for especially smaller farmers – adult sons labouring on family land. Select vestrymen present in their customary majority promised to address these issues on the morrow, significantly attended by the elder Courthope – though only his son had been nominated this year.⁹⁷ In the interim, a general vestry was asked through its chairman, select vestryman Oyler, to identify suitable candidates for appointment by the select vestry as paid beadles, in anticipation of continued disorder. The general vestry recon-

vened on the 10 January 1822 to hear the revised quota scheme. However, they were told only that a relaunch required an up-to-date account of farmers' residual regular workforces, in which those under eighteen were also to be included; Barron, his authority bolstered by the presence of the appropriate overseer for each district, was to compile this information. On 17 January, all six parish officers attended a general vestry of unknown size to announce that all farmers' sons aged fourteen to eighteen and 'constantly employed on the land' were to count as one quota man, as were every two other employed lads and youths aged between twelve and eighteen. The quota of a man per £15 rental was retained, with farmers observing their quotas entitled to one ticketmen per man employed, drawn from the unemployed pool as before, but now paid *entirely* by the parish.⁹⁸

This blatant attempt by the greater employers to exploit the surplus – now at the somewhat reduced total of around two hundred – provoked a storm of protest, and an intrusive lobby of the next select vestry on 24 January. Its customary listing of members present was one victim of the excitement, only the chairman signing the minutes which revealingly state that '26 Inhabitants present at this Meeting', a term usually denoting ordinary ratepayers present at general vestries. It agreed an untidy compromise. The pool of ticketmen was restricted to 35, with those outside receiving 'blank certificates', rather than ones designating an employer; such men must 'procure work in the best method they can', which as they numbered 170 represented a significant reversal for select vestrymen. With this compromise apparently adequate to mollifying the mass attendance, the select vestry proceeded to fix beadle-designates' wages at between seven shillings and 9/6 according to family size, and stipulate that on Saturday pay-nights, two attended the workhouse where payments and flour-doles were made, while their colleagues were 'to parade the Village' itself.⁹⁹

The revamped quota scheme worked over the winter and into the spring; indeed, it was renewed, be it for a fortnight in June 1822, though confined to farmers employing one regular man to £12-10-0 rental, and they had to literally bid proposed wages against each other for available men, an arrangement less favourable to larger farmers. The select vestry engendered competition for parish flour supplies between the two principal millers, neither of whom served on that body which under the Act would have prevented them seeking parochial contracts, forcing one to follow the other's offer to supply at a halfpence a gallon under 'the regular Retail Price of the Parish'; butcher Standen was also pushed into reducing meat prices for workhouse supplies, which smacks of a retaliatory thrust against these tradesmen, who had been almost certainly pre-

sent among the protesters.¹⁰⁰ Unspecified trouble at the 1822 select vestry nomination meeting necessitated a repeat, though in the event that body's membership was unchanged. Courthope was asked to try to negotiate a reduction in Fuller's rent for the woodland, and on his refusal, the tenancy was abandoned, along with the parish farm, according to Courthope owing to the insoluble problems with those who ended up working on it.¹⁰¹ Their subsequent employment was embraced by a revival of the amended quota system in the autumn, with bidding constituting the principal change. It was preceded by a decision, taken by a general vestry chaired by the younger Courthope, and in the context of further declines in wheat prices, that farmers could pay their rates in wheat which would be ground on the parish's account and used for flour doles. Once cereal prices began to rise before the end of the year, the advantages of this arrangement declined, and the general vestry accepted favourable contracts with both and probably chastened millers.¹⁰² By this date, reservations over even the amended quota system were manifest; 'auctioning' was 'attended with fraud', and much later Courthope confirmed that 'some farmers from various motives' – on which he did not enlarge – 'will join with their men in deceiving the [select] vestry as to their labourers receipts or earnings': it was abandoned once demand for labour rose in the spring of 1823.¹⁰³

In October 1824, in a development inspired by Courthope's 'determination that such [surplus] men shd. never be employed in private labor of the farmer', the select vestry appointed a sub-committee of five men, chaired by the Rector, to review employment policies for the winter season; buoyed by the continued improvement in farmers' fortunes, they concluded that the reduced surplus pool could be absorbed by increased expenditure on highway maintenance coupled with modest improvements. Once bolstered by a parish quarry, these 'public works' sufficed to deal with the unemployed through successive winters including that of 1829–30, a process started by the select vestry's regular liaison with the three waywardens, each responsible for one of the three districts into which the parish was divided, and cemented by Barron's duties being extended with his appointment as assistant highway surveyor. By the mid-1820s, winter-time surpluses had shrunk to around a dozen, with but a residual three or four remaining out of work from the spring, and the select vestry was convinced that its discriminatory regime had disciplined the workforce; their assistant overseer's 'vigilance' had 'Check[ed] gross fraud and imposition', while the 'Really necessitous' received 'full Relief'. The latter included fathers with large numbers of children under working age, but weekly assistance was cut once allowances in flour became payable only for the fourth and further children, measures which

had produced 'a very Material Reduction in the Poor Rate' as early as Easter 1824. Further reductions derived from forcing the millers to supply flour at a penny the gallon under the Lewes market price. One year later, and with some semblance of returned agrarian equilibrium dovetailing with further poor-law cost reductions, the select vestry triumphantly 'Congratulating the Generall Vestry on the present state of the Parish', confident 'that more extensive and more lasting benefits' would derive from the preservation of 'the same good management and the same system of Oeconomy'. In that spirit, and at that juncture, the select vestry finally implemented its long-established desire to terminate cottage rent payments, though it cautiously did not extend it to stopping those made for non-residents, and risk provoking a flood of returnees. On 1 August 1825, a reputedly 'full' general vestry presented Barron with 'a very handsome silver tankard' and a eulogy on his 'unwearied exertion and judicious conduct'; this celebration was reported in the county press, together with vestrymen's satisfaction that not only were poor-rates locked into a downward spiral, but the parish 'Paupers' had been 'rendered more independent and comfortable', while 'none that are capable of labour are kept idle'. But if paupers were still paupers, publicity to further victims of economising was eschewed at this junketing. A number of smaller farmers were prosecuted for rate arrears in the 1820s, among them William Hyland; he suffered the indignity of having some of his household possessions auctioned at the Bell Inn.¹⁰⁴ The select vestry also enforced the liable persons clauses of the statute, and although the – certainly small – total is unknown, one was the elderly 'yeoman', Thomas Kemp senior, rated at under twenty pounds. Ordered to pay a weekly three shillings for two grandsons and a grand-daughter, on default the justices imposed the set penalty of a pound a month, and issued a distress warrant with suspended implementation for a mere four days.¹⁰⁵

The select vestry subsequently launched a vigorous campaign against 'burthensome' bastardy levels; all illegitimate children currently supported from the rates, went to the workhouse, as did pregnant spinsters on application for aid, for 'at least' twelve months after the birth, with their 'Hair turned back and attired in a Linsey Wolsey Gown', "to take their Pride down". Barron was charged with securing and enforcing affiliation orders. Unmarried mothers who conceived again were hauled before the Bench. Ticehurst's initiative reflected widespread parallel parochial campaigns in the region, and proved of restricted consequence. No less than 75 illegitimate children were born between 1827 and 1832, and only £57 of expenditure totalling £137 – exclusive of 'considerable expense for law, [and]travelling' by Barron – was recouped. The local

Bench, according to Courthope, who served on it, 'seldom punished' those mothers brought before it, 'as there is very little chance of her not returning from gaol worse than she entered'; moreover, he was unconvinced that stigmatised dress or cropped heads either worked or was legally enforceable, though the latter opinion reflected the *cause célèbre* outcome of a Sussex Assize case in 1830.¹⁰⁶

Roadwork and quarrying, transferred costs from the poor to the highway rate, reflected in its rise to the enormous figure of 5/5 in the pound, the year a general vestry demanded payment from all assessed, however marginally. It coincided with a wave of begging by parents and their children, with repetition being visited with the termination of allowances, and in the case of parish employees, their dismissal. This penal response against begging echoes the disciplinary impact celebrated so publicly in 1826, and illustrates Professor Cowherd's view that select vestries resembled 'a society for the suppression of vice'. Unfortunately, extant parochial records imply that disciplinary penalties were separately documented; only one covering a few months in 1821-2 survives. It reveals cases of withdrawn outdoor relief to force insubordinate recipients into the workhouse, and one man 'kept 2 Days in the Pound House [used as a lock-up] on Bread & Water only'. Some recipients of assistance with rents, were forced to repay them weekly through deductions from regular relief. Permanent claimants were pressurised into sending their children to school, with absenteeism – through seizure of irregular opportunities for work – being visited with reduced allowances on specific select vestry orders. The sole workhouse governor's book records absconding adults and children, and some penalties for these and other miscreants, including prison sentences summarily imposed by justice Courthope. Use of the pound-house signifies publicly-inflicted penalties, though not to the degree elsewhere, exemplified by the 'large grindstone' located 'in front of the poor-house' at Ringmer, 'as an instrument for punishment' for parish-employed labourers after dismissal for 'Insolence, neglect of Work, or Misconduct'.¹⁰⁷

Farmers' problems returned with the wet 1828 harvest and its even wetter 1829 successor, reflected in a gradual increase in defaulting poor-ratepayers, which precipitated a crisis between February and June 1830; a general vestry on 18 February failed to set a poor rate, and passed the issue to the select vestry's deliberations on the 25th. On 1 March, Courthope chaired another general assembly, which fixed the rate at 4/6 in the pound, only to provoke a partial strike by ratepayers. Nearly four months later, a badly-attended general vestry discussed the 'difficulty' deriving from 'enforcing . . . the payment of unpaid Rates', but was able only to order Barron to liaise with Courthope and the Rector,

'as to the best means of extricating the Vestry' from its predicament – namely impending insolvency – whereupon select vestry meetings remained inquorate for the three months. Meanwhile, a further general vestry, again chaired by the squire, minuted nothing about the uncollected rates on its agenda, only a decision to borrow £50 to initiate an emigration scheme. Although select vestry attendance had on occasion fallen off dramatically to the point of inquoracy – notably in 1826 – and probably attributable to complacency,¹⁰⁸ the crisis over the summer and early autumn 1830, suggests more than absenteeism owing to difficult harvesting and hopping during the third consecutive wet season; only one member materialised on 9 and 23 August and 7 September, though eight convened on 18th. Inquoracy then returned with nobody materialising on 4 October and but two on 1 November, just as the Swing mobilisations commenced in Sussex with that on 30 October in nearby Battle.¹⁰⁹

V. The Westbourne administration 1819–30

Westbourne's poverty problem was less severe than Ticehurst's. In the first years of Westbourne's select vestry additional work derived from the substantial enclosure of Hambrook Common, which extended into Westbourne from both Funtingdon and Chidham, and the new administration inherited a parish farm. Some employees were repeatedly insubordinate, and if this gave the select vestry an opportunity for early flexing of its disciplinary intent, members were quickly convinced that labourers preferred working there to ordinary farms. Once repeated wage cuts failed to reduce the numbers 'who may wish to throw themselves on the Parish', the tenancy was abandoned, despite additional unemployment problems caused in 1821–2 by 'adjoining Parishes' previously 'employing Laborers indiscriminately have from necessity employed those of their own Parish'. Nevertheless, some claimants were specifically instructed to seek work outside Westbourne, while others were informed that 'as there is plenty of Work in the Funtingdon now' that 'Parish Roads and Lands are enclosing', they must apply. After 1822 such instructions ceased, and the unemployed were mostly absorbed on the highways, with select vestrymen increasingly directing the surveyors, for example in 1827, stipulating that they 'employ the Paupers that cannot get Work' at the low and deterrent rate of a daily eight- or ninepence 'so that the few Shillings' earned, 'shall be expended' exclusively on necessities, with allowances in-aid for family men. This sufficed, except during adverse winter-time weather, when masters laid off most regular workers for the duration of continued rain, severe frost and snow.

A common feature in West and parts of East Sussex, it was discouraged with degrees of success at Ticehurst, where workers could be put to work on hand threshing in the barn,¹¹⁰ an option of restricted relevance at Westbourne where the larger farmers used threshing machines. At such times, the latter's authority resorted to 'indispensably necessary' doles in cash and flour.¹¹¹

Formal reports from Westbourne select vestry repeatedly extolled the virtues of the Act, notably facilitating discriminatory relief practices, together with concern over intruders gaining what they dubbed 'surrupicious Settlements'; members were vexed by the 'large number of Tenements' erected on the coast for fishermen 'without the Success of getting a Livelihood by Fishing', and recurrently asked for intelligence identifying incomers. Select vestrymen regularly emphasised food-price movements in explanation of falling or rising expenditure, stressing the 'obvious' impact on the rates 'when the Markets for the first Necessities are greatly advancing', and ascribed the impossibility of sustained rate reductions to their 'Agricultural Locality, where the Population increases without a proportionate ratio of resources'. Rising county rates, at Westbourne in common with most places, paid from the poor rate, also received some emphasis.¹¹²

The Westbourne regime's documentation permits a critical evaluation of its early claims that discriminatory relief was 'economical' with a disciplinary impact through improving the 'morals' of the labouring class, claims which were implicitly compromised by arguments advanced in the mid-1820s that 'constant vigilance' required the services of an assistant overseer.¹¹³ Minutes of many successful claims record 'industrious' beneficiaries. Despite repeated references to the parish's 'Rule for many Years', namely 'allowance weekly under the head of Flour Money' for men with large families, this 'Custom' was not sacrosanct;¹¹⁴ the select vestry occasionally withdrew it from large families with insubordinate heads, and ordered one or more children into the poor-house, riposting to protesters that such constituted 'a relief'.¹¹⁵ *De facto* tests were imposed on others, among them the wife and family of a soldier posted overseas, and a smaller farmer – with a £28 rental – supplicating support for his wife and five children.¹¹⁶ Wives were prohibited from personal appearances before the select vestry, except during their husbands' illnesses, and from 1824 that required certification from the parish surgeon, though representations could be made by 'such others whom it may concern', including employers.¹¹⁷ Applicants who prevaricated in front of select vestrymen over precise circumstances, could expect claims to be summarily rejected, including a labourer refusing to divulge the nature of his wife's incapacity, and a widow with children

to support who would not enlarge on her 'profits in business'.¹¹⁸ Some of those ordered to seek work on the enclosure resisted, and if no doubt labourers' hostile ideological predilections were a factor,¹¹⁹ such employ often involved lengthy daily journeys, advanced euphemistically by one who refused to cross the parish boundary. But protesters were simply told that objections disqualified their claim.¹²⁰ Others answering back, including those who announced their intention to appeal to Petty Sessions, received equally short shrift, though on occasions when the executive calculated that they would fail to call such claimants' bluff, an overseer was instructed to attend court to present the authority's case. But this was a necessary precaution.¹²¹

Westbourne's select vestry's own record suggests considerable pragmatism, and on a few occasions even generosity and leniency. The latter category includes the five shillings awarded to a woman, prevented from gleaning through nursing her sick mother, and – be it on one occasion – on a claimant refusing to detail his income, instructing the overseer 'to endeavour to learn it from his Employers'.¹²² Charles Ford's first claim resulted in five of his seven children being taken into the workhouse; a fortnight later father removed them 'in a most unbecoming manner', and although vestrymen ruled that his relief was 'discontinued', within two months the five were to 'eat their victuals at the poor house'.¹²³ At times, the overseers appear to have exercised powers to relieve in emergencies liberally, and on other occasions were specifically authorised to use their 'discretion & judgement', for example in identifying which families received free bushels of potatoes.¹²⁴ Pragmatic policy decisions include the granting of applications from non-residents in some numbers, notably Westbourne folk laid-off from Portsmouth Dockyard in the early 1820s, and again during what select vestrymen grandiloquently dubbed the 1826 'grand depression of Mercantile and other pursuits'.¹²⁵ If the authority periodically 'lamented' the resistance, notably of 'young Men and others . . . who have health and strength', to migrate in significant numbers after employment,¹²⁶ it funded work-seeking travel, among them men going to Surrey brick-making locations and craftsmen seeking building work in Brighton and London,¹²⁷ although sometimes such aid was loaned.¹²⁸ A number of tradesmen were principally lent money, among them shoemaker Ford to purchase leather,¹²⁹ while some aspirant petty entrepreneurs received the where-withal to commence – or perhaps restart – businesses, including Charles Ford's receipt of £2 to 'buy a horse which will enable him to get a living'.¹³⁰ In spite of disquiet over fishing, some eligible fishermen were assisted, exemplified by loans for expensive specialist footwear, and non-repayable costs of replacement sails.¹³¹ And vestrymen were also sensit-

ive when cobbler Turner balked at labouring for the parish, and decided that he should mend poorhouse inmates' shoes, be it at the stingy weekly rate of seven shillings.¹³²

Despite periodic select vestry reference to the Act's perceived 'intent' to enjoin deferential behaviour and its provisions enabling transgressors to be 'treated according[ly]',¹³³ some of the more awkward claimant characters were tolerated at least to degrees. Charles Moore's application for additional flour was rejected on the grounds 'that his five Children are young & not considered expensive' to maintain, and on a subsequent request for shoes being turned down, he 'threatened to leave his Work'; that response was simply minuted, but once Moore abandoned his family, the wife received a ten shilling loan, though an overseer was to seek an attachment of earnings order in the event of non-repayment. Moore returned, but when he subsequently went to Portsea having refused to work on the enclosure, he was again warned against leaving his family unprovided, and on learning of a summons, evaded a court appearance by the simple expedient of returning before the next sitting. That was acquiesced in, and he is later found in receipt of assistance.¹³⁴ Another perennial claimant, George Hurlock Crockford, born in 1804, appeared before the select vestry on at least 43 times between 1821 and May 1830, usually owing to unemployment; indeed, he was the 'only young man out of Work, & not will[ing] to seek for any' in February 1825. Despite this record, and serving two short prison sentences for assaults on the police, he repeatedly received casual payments in cash, more to seek work in Brighton, and on several occasions rushes, or the money to buy them, to mend chairs, in the interest of 'promoting . . . [his] industry'. On two occasions, select vestrymen present offered employment; he refused one. A September 1823 appearance resulted in pressure, whereupon he 'promised to be industrious in future', a promise repeatedly broken, with no apparent effect until in the later 1820s relief applications were rejected, but only as a punishment for being spotted drinking, and for again declining specific offers of work. He was nevertheless given further casual payments, and another opportunity to recommence chair-mending.¹³⁵ John Freeland, in the mid-1820s lost his Brighton job, and eventually returned; he too left his family in 1826, but reappeared after a month and 'having asked forgiveness and promised never to behave so' again, was given unemployment pay on six further occasions.¹³⁶

Both Westbourne's general and select vestries experienced frustration in poorly attended generals called to decide major issues, including meeting the costs incurred in a failed court action in 1820 over 'encroachments' associated with the enclosure from the poor rate, and

difficulties over rating this land once privatised. The former cost almost £300, about twelve per cent of the entire poor rate for 1820-1, and the proposal was put to the vote. This revealed a division, with three substantial property owners – two of them serving select vestrymen – voting against half payment of the total from that year's rate, with the remainder in the following year, presumably in recognition of its illegality. The remaining participants, representing the entire one to six spectrum of voting entitlement, voted for. When the Bench refused to pass the accounts, the proposal to reimburse the outgoing overseers by a specific seven-penny in the pound rate was not put to a further vote, a decision which their worships “were not pleased to allow”, but did.¹³⁷ The rating of the former Hambrook Common lands was addressed by a general vestry comprising seven select vestrymen, who minuted their irritation that ‘a great Number of Proprietors & Occupiers have not attended’, and went on to recommend that in ‘the present scarce times’, the expensive but neutral services of ‘an experienced Surveyor’ should not be engaged. However, the parish officers were instructed to call on the absentees to solicit their opinions; three months later, another general vestry – its attendance unrecorded – diplomatically resolved that the newly-enclosed lands should not be rated more highly than already-rated comparable land. A five-man committee, comprised three select vestrymen, the father of a fourth, and one other – almost certainly a former commoner now with a freehold interest – should undertake the valuation. This exercise proved – be it protractedly – unacceptable to the affected parties, many of whom were domiciled in Funtingdon and Chidham. Eventually, a resolution, agreed in a general vestry of fourteen, eleven of whom were select vestrymen, stipulated a professional surveyor after all, for whom Westbourne paid.¹³⁸

The only other issue known to have involved a vote, was not the principle to appoint an assistant overseer – illegally decided by the select vestry – but which of the four candidates to choose in 1825. Twenty-six electors put 57 votes behind the overwhelming victor, with two dissidents with six votes between them supporting another; the remaining two candidates received none. Although not all serving select vestrymen participated in either election, and the first was held at 10a.m. on a Friday, these psephological details reveal that if they all voted in unison they would have commanded an absolute majority in 1820, but not in 1825, which brought out a significantly large number of those entitled to a single vote. The implication remains that in a hypothetical confrontation between a united select vestry, and the other ratepayers, select vestrymen could not be assured of winning.¹³⁹ It is not surprising that the select vestry, at least on other occasions than the Hambrook

rating issue, sought wider consultations than proved possible through the constitutional medium of general vestries. When the former recommended the surrender of the parish-farm lease in 1822, publicly owing to its 'inconvenient situation', rather than admitting the counter-productive difficulties experienced in running it, members again ordered their parish officers to seek 'the consent of the Proprietors as is *usual in such Cases*'.¹⁴⁰ Again, in 1825, when exhausted funds determined the Westbourne Friendly Benefit Society to call in £40 of a £400 loan made to the parish, a general vestry of ten – eight of whom were select men – agreed to 'communicate the Proposition made to the several large Renters & others for their Advice & information', though this procedure was probably not repeated in 1826 on the Society's demand for a further repayment of £50.¹⁴¹

Conversely, select vestrymen were not beyond nepotism as revealed by their appointment – be it through a considerable majority in a general meeting – of their non-nominated churchwarden colleague, Charles Louch, to the vacant assistant overseership also in 1826.¹⁴² The same dominance of general vestries was used in 1829 when the outstanding loan of £300, half the original sum borrowed from a John Scardevill in the 1770s to provide a poorhouse, fell due for repayment. Although the trajectory of this five per cent mortgage is obscure, the fact that the remaining £300 was now owed to the long-serving select vestry chairman, Wallis, and his equally long-standing colleague, larger farmer James Whitley, possibly reveals how existing parish debts were taken over by a incoming members of a changing local elite.¹⁴³

Although the select vestry steadfastly published its formal reports on the church door, their content became increasingly anodyne in the late 1820s, and in 1830 they resorted to merely mentioning the rate ordered, the amount collected and arrears. The latter remained serious throughout the decade, falling to under ten per cent only during the brief recovery of farmers' fortunes between 1824 and 1826, despite the fact that the select vestry exercised its right under the Act to rate the owners, rather than the occupiers of plebeian houses; however, in aggregate this source of revenue was essentially marginal in villages however hard it might hit individual cottage proprietors.¹⁴⁴ Recurrent resort to threats of legal action against defaulters, usually followed by at least a token number of court cases,¹⁴⁵ suggest that in the cases of most defaulters, using the ultimate mechanism to enforce payment was unproductive, and possibly economically counter-productive if deployment against smaller farmers and tradesmen forced them out of business.¹⁴⁶ Although this argument was not advanced formally, the topic was repeatedly mentioned in apologetic riders over continued non-payment despite

'repeated urgent Solicitations', and the accounts prove the regular waiving of arrears. In the later 1820s, the select vestry emphasised the even greater need to respond to the 'almost innumerable solicitations' from claimants, and on occasion that saw authorised resort to commencing collection of a new rate before its predecessor was even substantially completed.¹⁴⁷ A disproportionate amount of what was collected derived from the larger farmers, a feature reflected in the pattern of arrears which were usually more substantial at Michaelmas before farmers had sold much of their newly-harvested produce. In the late 1820s rate demands resumed their upward course, and arrears began to achieve alarming levels. Twenty per cent of the aggregate demand for £2,509 in 1828-9 was unpaid, and only a minor improvement was registered in the following year.¹⁴⁸

This appears to have precipitated a crisis of confidence in the select vestry, and certainly saw its first documented defeat once a solid phalanx of ratepayers applied pressure for the adoption of that customarily-perceived expenditure reducer, a farmed workhouse, with the contractor paid a weekly *per capita* sum for inmates' maintenance, but profiting from their work in rude manufacturing.¹⁴⁹ First raised at a general vestry in April 1828, it received short shrift from the majority comprising select vestrymen, who proceeded without much sense of timing – under the new Rector's chairmanship – to agree to a church rate to fund repairs. Workhouse farming went on the formal general vestry agenda at the end of the 1828-9 'parish year', at 'the request of a great number of the Farmers and others', who by that time had a candidate, though the issue was ignored in the select vestry's formal report to that meeting with its emphasis on that body having 'economised to the utmost'. As the candidate, James Champion hailed from nearby Emsworth, he may in fact have proposed himself and lobbied accordingly. In addition to the usual terms respecting maintenance costs (3/2 per head), educational provision for children – who were to receive a daily two hours lessons in reading, with nothing entered about writing – Champion was also to 'provide Implements of Labour and all the [necessary] machinery'. He was specifically prevented from hiring inmates to work for individual parishioners, a customary practice, which invariably benefited larger farmers,¹⁵⁰ and against this stipulation in the parish copy is emphasis in the form of a pencilled finger-posting sign. Although the supervisory committee created included all select vestrymen – revealingly 'considered as not acting in their individual, but their public capacity' – along with serving parish officers and the curate, there seems to be little doubt that this initiative was more or less imposed on them, despite what appears an attempt to create a block vote; recourse to a vote was unmen-

tioned, and given what is recorded about popular support for the measure, resistance by select vestrymen would have failed.¹⁵¹ This episode looks as if it represented ratepayers' dissatisfaction with the administration, and the select vestry's survival possibly turned on accepting a populist route to reducing costs, while the ruling against the workhouse farmer's permitting inmates to work for parochial employers suggests that Westbourne select vestrymen had, as larger employers, exploited their position be it to a lesser degree than their Ticehurst counterparts.

VI. The Role of the Magistracy

Whatever the incisiveness of assistant overseer's minute enquiries and however discriminatory the decisions by their masters on select vestries, the appellant system ensured that JPs' attitudes were the ultimate factor in securing Sturges Bourne's objectives. Given the extraordinary increase in magistrates' business after 1815, notably over poor-law but also in criminal matters as crime rates soared, far less 'justicing' took place in magistrates' kitchens in customary style, and there are indications that rural justices' growing sense of personal insecurity was an additional cause.¹⁵² Although some local and minor matters were no doubt still so resolved as encountered at Ticehurst, Petty Sessions became the key forum, as the 1819 Act required two magistrates to hear appeals against select vestry decisions. Administrative conveniences dictated that 'vestry business' dovetailed with Petty Sessions, reflected in Staplehurst select vestry's 1821 decision to convene 'Monthly . . . every Tuesday . . . before the Sitting at Cranbrook'.¹⁵³ Complaints against magisterial exercise of their powers over appeals continued in the 1820s, with specific claims that the Bench undermined select vestry applications of discriminatory relief; the 1834 Poor Law Report notoriously reiterated orthodox utilitarian critique of the JPs, and asserted that the single justice's residual powers to order emergency relief, effectively torpedoed the effectiveness of the 1819 Act. In the light of the forthcoming discussion, that claim exemplifies Chadwickian perversion of the evidence at its more extreme.¹⁵⁴

Battle Petty Sessions covered a core of 24 parishes with a combined population of 22,424 in 1821, rising slightly to 23,110 by the succeeding census.¹⁵⁵ Of these, half ignored the 1832-4 enquiry; of the respondents, five, Sedlescombe, Battle, Bexhill, Mountfield and Salehurst claimed to have a functioning select vestry, though all had an assistant overseer except Herstmonceux. It is unlikely that many of the other twelve in this epicentre of smuggling, though greatly pauperised jurisdiction, eschewed at least experimentation with assistants. This Bench was aware

of contemporary debates, and however legally sound their expenditure on poor-law pamphlets, they nevertheless paid 'ab[ou]t. 4s' for 'Mr Brereton's Pamphlet on the Poor Law System' in 1825, and 7/6 in 1828 for three copies of the Revd. Becher's more influential *The Anti-pauper System*.¹⁵⁶ As assistant overseers' appointments had to be confirmed by, and adoption of Sturges Bourne registered by the Bench, with individual justices responsible for annually recording select vestry personnel, collectively their worships must have had a firm grip on the precise status of village administrations and their parish officers. Despite this, the court made no distinction between adoptees and non-select vestry parishes, and was unconcerned whether overseers were salaried or annually nominated, so long as they came equipped with full details of appellants.¹⁵⁷ The Bench effectively imposed Sturges Bourne rules on all component parishes, while insisting on some basic conditions primarily aimed at expediting burgeoning business. The Bench disapproved of officials attempting to short-circuit procedures by arbitrarily 'directing' claimants 'to apply' to the court to discourage applications, and objected to vestries' refusals to relieve 'until ordered so to do' by the Petty Sessions, even with particularly awkward individuals.¹⁵⁸ Appellants had to give their 'Overseer . . . Notice of coming', and in the event of 'No Notice' the court refused to adjudicate. When officials attended, but appellants failed to materialise, a formal 'Memorandum' naming the absentees was ominously minuted. In officials' absence magistrates issued an order for a 'Month unless the Overseer in the meantime shew good cause to the contrary'.¹⁵⁹

Battle Sessions publicised a number of policy decisions. Among the early exemplars was the November 1821 categoric and what proved ruthless adoption of the Sturges Bourne provisions for liable relatives, initially for Northiam, but with the clear intent of broader application:

In future Orders to be made on Parents & Grandfathers to maintain there Children & Grand Children *wholly as long as they have any Property*. (My emphasis)

In May 1822 their clerk was ordered to write to all

Victuallers that if Paupers who are notoriously chargeable to Parishes are found tipping in any of the Houses, steps will be taken to have the Recognizances of such Innkeeper estreated and his License will not be renewed.

There was not an iota of ambiguity here. In the following year the Bench strengthened its stance by ordering populous Battle to supply 'Lists of

Paupers printed to be given to the Publicans', and extended this practice – of urban origins – to all divisional parishes in 1825.¹⁶⁰

The Bench recorded parish officers' statements of appellants' incomes, including the contributions of wives and children, especially harvest earnings, and allowances received, and sought confirmation from claimants in court. Parkhurst of Westfield earned 12/- weekly, received weekly supplements for rent and fuel respectively of two and one shillings, and 'an Occasional Allowance' of 2/-. With his 'Boy', Thomas Deprose of Ninfield earned 15/- weekly for a family with five children, but the vestry refused any allowances. Earnings across time also entered equations. Speers from Sedlescombe, appearing on 13 August 1822, had 'earned 12s weekly till Whitsuntide and since has had Work in Harvest'. Bricklayer Harmer of Ashburnham, in court in January 1826, 'had earned 19s a Week all Summer & probably £1-10s a Week – now earns 10s a Week'. Higher seasonal earnings affected the appeal of a Ewhurst 'Timber Hewer', and in another from Sedlescombe, overseer 'Smith proved that' the appellant 'had earned 65£ in the last Year'. Of these, only Pankhurst, with a wife and seven children was awarded any extra allowance – a weekly shilling. In Deprose's case the overseer conceded that the man had a 'good Character', though his appeal was as unsuccessful as those receiving damning references. Under interrogation, Mrs Briant of Brede, appealing for an increase to the three shilling supplement to husband James's weekly 10/6 labouring wage, admitted that he brought home 15/6 'when he is breaking Horses'. Not surprisingly, some appellants 'refused to answer the Magistrates questions', in William Scoatland's typical case the key total of his family's hop-picking earnings. Any obduracy guaranteed failure. Protests from rejected appellants were not tolerated; on Samuel Shadwell's, 'very impertinent' response – 'I find that there is no Justice done here' – he was ordered to 'find Sureties for good Behaviour' and clapped in jail on refusal.¹⁶¹

A very high proportion of appeals were rejected. During two consecutive meetings in November 1821, only four of the 39 appellants from sixteen parishes, were upheld. In 1825 all seven appellants from Peasmarsh returned empty-handed. The Bench was not required to record details of rejected appeals, though they sometimes entered the details and added 'no good Cause of Complaint', revealing their worships' satisfaction that Joseph Crouch of Ninfield could support his wife and three children on nine shillings a week, and that the daily two shillings 'full Wages' received for roadwork by married but childless Thomas Skinner, recently compulsorily moved to Beckley with his wife, was adequate.¹⁶² The Bench generally supported parochial decisions made – at least in part – on moral grounds. Smugglers and illegal purveyors of liquor could

expect their poor-relief claims to be rejected by vestries, whatever the degree of hypocrisy of some who took those decisions. Hannah Ford, whose husband was in custody awaiting trial for smuggling, 'Keeps a Gin & Beer Shop', and the Bench typically concurred with the vestry's condition of assistance, namely the closure of her illicit establishment, while Thomas Noakes of Brede – another illegal retailer who also went 'out as a Batsman' on smuggling runs – was likewise told that relief would depend on terminating both activities. Others from this category who tried to bamboozle the court over relief, were jailed.¹⁶³ Mere tipplers' appeals could expect little magisterial sympathies either, as repeated cases of relief withheld, or withdrawn, for claimants seen drunk or imbibing indicated.¹⁶⁴ Intrusions into more personal matters included withholding William Catt's assistance until he 'lived together' with his wife, and John Ovenden's parish work was withdrawn for 'having parted with his wife and lives with another woman'.¹⁶⁵ The Bench also upheld a decision not to pay allowances respecting the two children James Stansden's 'wife had before their Marriage', though whether he was the father went un-minuted.¹⁶⁶

The perceived misapplication of benefits, other than expenditure on liquor, and commonly visited by withdrawal or suspension, were also confirmed by the Bench, among them recipients who refused to part with their dogs, so current in the 1820s as warrant identification of an old poor-law policy, though it had antecedents going back until at least the 1790s.¹⁶⁷ More serious abusers of aid included John Dengate of Northiam; 'playing at Cards' in different hostelries was risky, but when he staked 'a new pair of shoes', just supplied by the parish, he was convicted as a rogue and vagabond and imprisoned with hard labour for three months.¹⁶⁸ Appeals against workhouse incarceration were rejected in many cases, among them some wives of prisoners, more for women dressing 'beyond a Pauper's station', and the withdrawal of certain widows' outdoor relief on their refusal to go in. Nor were children exempt, among them a widow's child on leaving parish-arranged live-in service. Parishes wishing to relieve large families by taking one or more children into their workhouses, were also supported by the Bench.¹⁶⁹ So too were vestry rulings over parish housing, including insisting that rent was paid from hop-picking wages, and an ultimatum to pay £3 a year rent for a parish house on pain of eviction. Eviction orders were repeatedly issued.¹⁷⁰ By the 1820s, there was, of course nothing new in claimants' angry and insulting responses – except perhaps their numbers – to vestries and their officials' rejections of their demands, or withdrawals or reductions of existing relief; rejected appeals are frequently minuted, 'impudent to the Parish Officers', including assistant overseers, the usual

medium through which select vestry decisions were announced to individuals.¹⁷¹ According to their clerk, Battle justices' primary concern 'was not to starve . . . [appellants'] children'; one of the magistrates said they sought to prevent 'suffering'. But as the chairman of the county Bench admitted, in appeals by family men

we say to the overseers, "Do something to keep him from starving, but no more; make him work as hard for that as if he was earning good wages."¹⁷²

The Battle Bench almost invariably rejected appeals against vestry invocations of the liable persons clauses, and enforced its decision that those with property must support themselves, even if this meant its sale, including the houses they were living in. John Ranson of Crowhurst, earning a weekly 9/- on which to support a wife and two children, was informed that 'His Father has property & must provide a House', and as the mother of John Parsons, with a family of four children on a weekly twelve shillings at Westfield, 'Has a Share of certain Property of which . . . [she] enjoys the Income', his appeal for allowances in-aid was turned down. When James Ransome, married without children at Northiam, appealed - 'Out of work . . . No Money' - the Bench recorded, 'His Father is a Carrier to & from London with 3 Horses. No Order'. Permutations included Henry Freeland whose relief would be loaned as he 'has expectation of Property' by inheritance at Sedlescombe, and in Thomas Coleman's case the Bench confirmed that 'His House in Battle to be sold & then entitled to Relief'. The fathers of transportees were also forced to support their grandchildren and daughters. Few from these two categories of appeals were upheld; one exception, David Dann Snr. persuaded their worships that he had 'not sufficien[t] Property . . . having 9 other Children to support' to assist his eldest son. There can be little doubt that those adversely affected by such decisions, who were certainly at some social remove from the generality of claimants by dint of their means, harboured serious grudges against their authors, which included the magistracy in appeal cases.¹⁷³

The court ruled in appeals by workers directed by parish officers to labour for specified private employers, and those employed directly by vestries. When dealing with Lusted of Battle, who misrepresented the reason for his appeal, farmer 'Lansdell proved that he had offered more work at 15s a Week & if he chose to work over Hours 17/6 . . . which he refused', and unsurprisingly 'no order' was minuted again, as it was in cases of appellants 'proved' to have 'neglected his work'.¹⁷⁴ However, their worships sympathised with men found private work by officials, only to be shamelessly exploited by employers, among them three Battle

men labouring for farmer Quaife 'who would allow but 5d a Rod for grubbing Heath' – 'not half enough' – and the parish was ordered to arrange alternative work.¹⁷⁵ Although the Bench sustained decisions against those who performed inadequately in direct parish employ, the justices were clearly unhappy over the tendency to reduce single men's wages to below subsistence levels, as in the case of those at Northiam paid a weekly 1/6 and the costs of a gallon loaf; they were to have 'at least 5s . . . to include' accommodation costs, though an 1826 attempt to impose this throughout the jurisdiction failed.¹⁷⁶ Other labourers successfully complained over derisory piece-rates for quarrying, while the parish officers were ordered to find work for appellants *simply* on unemployment grounds.¹⁷⁷ Given the notoriety increasingly accruing to the practice of parish roadworkers made to drag carts, perhaps it is not surprising that the Bench was also wary when dealing, be it apparently but once, with contrived hard work, taking no action over Sam Brook, who refused make the stipulated number of daily trips with his wheelbarrow, and was then caught taking 'Beach from the Road to cheat'.¹⁷⁸ However, the justices declined to intervene when unemployed tradesmen were put to work on parish roads and farms, including journeyman blacksmith Cuthbert 'stone breaking' at Salehurst, and wheelwright Reed, who wanted a subsidy to fund tramping for work in customary artisan style, but was put to 'grubbing' in Battle woods. Once again, a sector of village communities, traditionally unused to supplicating parish officers found themselves aggrieved at judicial rulings.¹⁷⁹

No doubt, some compromises were made behind the scenes between appellants and parish officers, and at Battle complaints formally brought by officials against claimants were resolved in open court. One overseer 'forgave' an errant parish worker on his 'promising to behave better in future'; a road-working father and son, 'discharged' for 'disorder . . . and interrupting Persons passing', were reinstated after solemnly promising the Bench to desist from abuse, though their victimisation for engaging in slanging matches speaks for itself.¹⁸⁰ The court also formally referred appellants' cases back to the vestries in anticipation that minor adjustments and compromises might be made.¹⁸¹ David Hall, working away from his Iden home and charged with the criminal offence of deserting his family, was prevailed upon to send five of his weekly nine shillings to his wife, and that was the end of the matter.¹⁸² But little of this was remotely generous, even if their worships revealed the odd pragmatic touch. The exaction of a promise from officials to find Thomas Kite 'some Place of Shelter' when he was 'living in a Tent' with his wife and three children, says more about the vestry than the Bench.¹⁸³ In the case of Sophia Winchester, the mother of two bastards, the Bench also made

a 'recommendation', namely 'that the Woman has what is absolutely necessary & to provide her Work', usually 'spinning & knitting' for house-bound single mothers and wives with husbands in prison.¹⁸⁴ The order that Spencer Gutsell's wife be given a pair of sheets for childbirth, was issued with a rider that Westfield officials 'see that the Paupers do not suffer'. Likewise, in a Sedlescombe case, minuted as a Malthusian classic – 'married at 15 without any Provision' – officials were nevertheless 'ordered to take Care that the Man does not starve' either. With claimants periodically 'exclaiming against starvation', the Bench was concerned that discrimination combined with parochial parsimony might produce scandals, for which justices might be held ultimately responsible.¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, select vestry confidence in their decisions is exuded on occasion in their minutes, exemplified by Winchelsea's; on James Hoads' 'repeated' refusals to get the parish doctor's confirmation of illness, of which 'the Vestry have no Evidence', relief was refused. Hoads successfully appealed to the Bench in the assistant overseer's absence, for when he produced the order before vestrymen, they ruled that as Hoads

still refuses the attendance of the Parish Surgeon, and . . . the Magistrates have given the order without the necessary means of knowing the merits of the case, the Vestry feel themselves compelled to instruct the Overseers to refuse paying the Order.

The mere threat to take two brothers, relieved by taking some of their children into the workhouse, to the Bench for not contributing to towards their keep as additionally stipulated, had the desired effect.¹⁸⁶

Petty Sessional proceedings bear little resemblance to Chadwickian images of a complacent magistracy undermining discriminatory and indeed penal parochial administrations, though claimants from non-Sturges Bourne parishes may have sought out individual justices with local reputations for liberality;¹⁸⁷ instead, magistrates in their Petty Sessions were accused of treating appellants' 'complaints with indifference, frequently with hautiness and severe reproof, coldly admonishing them to make greater exertions to get work in their own parish'. It requires little imagination to picture the interrogatory proceedings behind the Battle minute in the case of John Dine, who repeatedly 'positively swore that he had not £5 in the World except his househ[ol]d furniture'. At this period Petty Sessional rulings in poor-law cases largely went unreported by the press. Such occasional publicity as accrued usually involved judicial intervention against particularly savage treatment, represented by the elderly man with a blind wife whose allowances were

halved prior to review after hop-picking, with obvious implications; the chairman of Farnham Sessions was adamant that

“At his time of life he ought to be put out to grass; old man (turning to the veteran) you have arrived when we must take care of you. It really . . . seems *shocking* . . . to force a man on parish work at 80”.¹⁸⁸

At the regional level there were relatively few press reflections of utilitarian critiques of the magistrates’ supposed liberality in the post-war years before 1830. Justice Goring’s attempts, through the Steyning Bench, to force Broadwater select vestry to pay more than ‘starvation wages’ to workers on a parish sand excavation scheme, provoked a successful appeal in 1819. The Duke of Richmond, announcing the decision from the chair of West Sussex Quarter Sessions, rebuked Goring for profligacy, the ramifications of which constituted a fundamental fiscal threat to the survival of the landed interest. Goring, who had recently celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his elevation to the Bench, resigned. Indeed, the East Sussex Quarter Sessions came out publicly against the ‘illegal’ practice of partially paying farmworkers’ wages from the poor rate, which the justices tried ‘to prohibit and restrain’ through their Petty Sessions, among them East Grinstead, which also condemned allowances for cottage rents as equally illegal.¹⁸⁹

In the early thirties, there was a marked disparity between the handful of South-eastern magistrates’, and substantial number of parish officers’ responses to the rural queries on the issue of the appellant system. Most of the former, whatever their precise choice of language, perceived themselves holding the balance between sometimes fraudulent and aggressive claimants, and combative cost-conscious parish officers capable in the Revd. Onslow’s words, of ‘grinding . . . the Poor to powder’, a point endorsed by one assistant overseer for ‘some Parishes’.¹⁹⁰ Justice Streatfield believed that his colleagues currently exercised their powers with ‘more discretion and caution than formerly’. Indeed, an Oxted parish officer conceded that the magistrates ultimately relieved vestries from ‘the onus of the refusal’ to meet ‘exorbitant demands’. Only one, R W Blencowe, who served in East Sussex and West Kent, argued that judicial intervention did ‘More mischief than good’.¹⁹¹ A considerable number of parish officers desired an end to their policing by magistrates, while others – among them assistant overseer Abel of Brede – wanted them limited, in his case, the right to substitute cash equivalents for relief ordered in kind.¹⁹² The Farnham type of case, led certain commentators to argue, with limited justification, that adjudication in appeals against select – and unreformed – vestry decisions, satisfied neither appellants nor vestrymen, with each side ‘finally compromising

their several differences in a mutual complaint against the . . . injustice of the worshipful decision'. Squire Courthope measured emphasis, that the fact that the Hurst Green Sessions he regularly chaired rarely upheld appeals, was compensated by behind the scenes magisterial advice to vestries to reconsider some cases – 'generally done by private intimation' – by which 'means' he argued, 'the Magistrates & Vestries have drawn well together', was doubtlessly soundly-based.¹⁹³

South-eastern evidence strongly suggests that a majority of active justices supported the central tenets of Sturges Bourne, and sought only to curb abusive use of it with regard to individuals, through Petty Sessional formal and informal mechanisms; countering self-interested manipulations by dominant majorities on select vestries, was more likely when magistrates acted in their squirearchial capacity, like Courthope. The rulings of Petty, and on occasion Quarter Sessional Benches, thus encouraged the discriminatory and indeed penal activities of 1819 adoptees, and self-confident oligarchies elsewhere who implemented the spirit of the 1819 Act without formal recourse to it. Orthodox vestries proved vulnerable to domination by cost-conscious, theoretically-driven and aggressive enthusiasts, spectacularly exemplified by the utilitarian solicitor Robert Weale at Midhurst. Among the reasons for dramatic falls in expenditure under his directorate, was to put artisans seeking aid over their slack winter period to roadwork, with their parish earnings adjusted to ensure that their annual incomes were levelled to that of farmworkers 'or any other Pauper', a further example of the humbling of skilled men by personifiers of Sturges Bourne's spirit.¹⁹⁴ It will be recalled that Gilbert's Act of 1782, was widely adopted in West Sussex, Surrey and East Kent. Two West Sussex Gilbert Union parishes, Funtingdon and Tillington, informed the Poor Law Commissioners in the early 1830s that they had implemented the 1819 Act, though without mentioning the fact that it expressly forbade adoption by Gilbert administrations. At Tillington, in the Easebourne Union, on application the unemployed were mainly absorbed on the roads and in a quarry, but such work was denied to those refusing farmwork at low wages, with the result that some able-bodied men were sent to the workhouse, in flagrant breach of the Act's stipulation that parish Guardians found work for the unemployed, and where necessary paid allowances in-aid-of wages. Supplicants for casual and other relief were ordered to bring documentation authenticating their need from their employer. Relief was cut for drunkenness, including imbibing wives, and also impertinent retorts to assembled select vestrymen; all these features were replicated at Easebourne, and Trotton in the same Union, though there is no evidence of the 1819 Act's formal adoption here.¹⁹⁵ Nor was Tillington peculiar.

Petworth, a single parish Gilbert adoptee, eschewed a child allowance scale in favour of collective vigorous vetting in vestry of each applicant; whenever interrogators believed that a 'man can get along without' aid, his application was rejected, except those of 'very good conduct' who might get a token part of the relief sought, but no claimant could 'count' on success.¹⁹⁶ In these places, vestrymen – and their overseers confined to rate-collection by the 1782 Act – had partially usurped the role of the Guardians,¹⁹⁷ and was dramatically symbolised by the widespread employment of assistant overseers by a larger number of Gilbert parishes.¹⁹⁸

In the 1820s, the mirroring of select vestries' profiles by Gilbert parishes, symbolised the fact that enforcing the spirit became much broader than adoption of Sturges Bourne, and if the greatest expression of intent was found in engagements of assistant overseers, another is revealed in imitative conduct by their traditional annually-rotating counterparts. At Thurnham, overseer and farmer Stoke approached the paper mill-owning employer of Mrs Hewitt, the sole source of the family's income, to learn what it amounted to, and promptly cut their out-relief. Stoke's 'impertinence' was small beer compared to his ruthless counterpart, Becher at Ash; during the 1829–30 winter he forced unemployed shepherd Fordred, domiciled at Margate with five children, but settled at Ash, to *walk* the round trip of twenty-six miles to 'Ash every day (except Sunday) for 1s 6d', instead of weekly to collect 7/6, let alone arrange for non-resident relief through the usual channels. Not surprisingly, Becher was responsible for 'similar unfeeling conduct towards' other claimants.¹⁹⁹

VII. Conclusions

Poor-law administration was thrown into enduringly sharp focus by the prolonged agricultural depression, and – after an ephemeral retreat – its re-intensification in the later twenties. Although there were other regionally relevant grievances, including tithes and post-war state fiscal policies to finance the bloated national debt, notably malt taxes and the excise on hops, local taxes and above all the poor rate, had a universal significance, because it impacted on virtually every adult, either as claimants or – of fundamental importance – as ratepayers. Together the Sturges Bourne Acts made a profound impression on the South-eastern countryside. The significance of the introduction of plural voting designed to reduce the political power of numerous small ratepayers in favour of their grander neighbours, under that of 1818, was reflected in the numbers of printed extracts pasted inside vestry minute books, cle-

arly for instant reference in the event of disputes.²⁰⁰ The 1819 statute was of restricted consequence for thinly populated parishes, at the most extreme exemplified by downland Old Shoreham, farmed by three men, only one of whom was resident, and the sole candidate for overseer, with the result that he served in perpetuity.²⁰¹ And, even this Act reflected tradition in that it legitimised practices already adopted, especially salaried overseers, but also vestry executive sub-committees, Ticehurst being among the examples (from 1814).²⁰² Nevertheless, formal adoption was widespread; if initiatives derived from dominant landowners, they were not confined to the resident variant represented by Courthope, but absentees, among them the Earl of Chichester at Heltingly. Some incumbents also took the lead, notably the Revd. Kirby at Mayfield, who assiduously chaired the select vestry for a decade. However, the revolution in parochial psephology enabled adoption by villages without either category of landowner, with examples including Brede, Burwash and Westbourne.²⁰³ But the overall impact was enhanced, immeasurably, through the adoption of the spirit, whether semi-legitimated by customary cherry-picking of legislation as in the case of assistant overseers, or simple imitation of discriminatory regimes, underpinned by ideological expositions by pamphleteers, parliamentarians and parsons.

Magistrates contributed importantly to the dissemination of Sturges Bourne's spirit, most spectacularly in the response of the Duke of Richmond to justice Goring's supposed blindness to ratepayers' interests in favour of claimants'; lesser expressions include the campaign against public subsidies to individuals' housing rents by East Grinstead Petty Sessions.²⁰⁴ Magistrates appear to have retained their traditional indifference to what comprised minor infractions of poor-law statutes, revealed by their acceptance – be it grudgingly – of Westbourne's illegal rate levied to pay enclosure litigation costs, and apparent acquiescence in Gilbert parishes' fractures of both the 1782 and 1819 statutes. Westbourne and Ticehurst select vestries effectively directed their waywardens' highways policy, and if this could be dismissed as an inevitable reflection that customarily parish officers were drawn from the same more affluent sector of village populations, which was further exemplified by the close correlation we have found between nominated select vestrymen and general vestry activists in both places, the resident justice must have appreciated that the salaried extension of the latter's assistant overseer's role to roadwork administration contravened the 1819 Act. In this climate, semi-corrupt practices flourished at the parochial level too. At Burwash, on farmer and butcher John Vigor's 1823 nomination to the select vestry, one son was shortly appointed assistant overseer;

thereafter, another son secured the workhouse meat contract, one of a number of countryside cases indicative that this form of manipulation was not, as sometimes claimed by historians, restricted to urban communities.²⁰⁵ At Hartfield, the multi-occupationist William Kenward expanded his businesses while assistant overseer, and the capital for his addition of retail grocery to his other concerns derived from parish funds – and borrowed money at that. This aggressive and abusive character was possibly also motivated by the kudos likely to come from reducing the rates, but his idea of deterrence extended to using his journeymen blacksmiths to physically eject claimants from his premises. Among other exploiters of part-time assistantships was John Trouton, who ensured his sons were preferred for seasonal work before claimants at Otford.²⁰⁶

Assistant overseers, in the front line whether full or part-time, provoked massive resentment; they ‘felt no sympathy for’ claimants’ ‘condition’, were ‘callous to the ties of nature’, and ‘paid with so much the greater cheerfulness as he makes fewer calls on the purses of his employers’ by ‘browbeating the Applicants for relief’.²⁰⁷ Many of their employers were no better, exemplified by Salehurst vestrymen perennially ‘insolent to their inferiors. They never call a man Tom Dick etc but you d[amne]d rascal etc, at every word’. When Thomas Furminger requested hog corn – a routine form of aid in many places – assistant overseer Abel minuted Brede select vestry’s decision thus:

This vestry agrees to take the Hog to the Poor House and Fat him and make a good Hog of him and when killed he Furminger is to have half the said Hog. . . . Refused by the Applicant

unsurprisingly, as he would have lost heavily by accepting.²⁰⁸ Hearing poor-law cases at Petty Sessions, said one justice, ‘particularly to the unemploy’d Labourers during the winter . . . is the most Irksome duty’, and Assize judges were soon urging county magistracies to act demonstrably to counter current beliefs among the poor that their distresses were unattended to.²⁰⁹

There can be no doubt that the rural poor bore the brunt of the discriminatory and punitive spirit of Sturges Bourne. But they were not alone. Resort to the liable persons stipulations comprised one route for the imposition of penalties on lesser entrepreneurs and modest property owners. Countryside journeymen craftsmen were faced with the likes of Richard Weale of Midhurst, who was merely an extreme representative of administrators who reduced them to the humiliations of road-working, along-side some of their failed masters and handfuls of bankrupted small-farmers. Some were imprisoned for debt. One Surrey

farmer, tottering on the brink of bankruptcy and eviction, emphasised that his last low-yielding crop was '[in]adequate to the amount of our tythes and poor rates by more than £30', and he went on to stress that his 'only consolation . . . is that we have not brought it upon our selves either by extravagance or neglect': and he concluded, 'were I continue in this miserable country full of pride poverty and deceit "a dungeon or a workhouse bounds my prospects"'.²¹⁰ If even temporary downward social mobility compromised its victims' social standing, the permanent variant was literally devastating, not least because it jeopardised children's futures. All smaller ratepayers, whether in the service sector or family farmers, together with the owners of more substantial non-farming rural businesses, were commonly forced to subsidise the production costs of larger farmers. Despite the latter's apparent exploitative, manipulative opportunism under plural voting regulations, which required a normally unachievable degree of solidarity among smaller ratepayers to defeat,²¹¹ the historian must remember that a significant proportion of grander farmers had over-extended themselves with capital borrowed in wartime; some abandoned farming and took what they could salvage, while a significant proportion were ruined. For many who carried on, it seemed that survival dictated resort to every expedient, amongst which minimising poor-law expenditure and with it their rate contributions proved the most promising option; it was, after all, in their own hands. Social conflict in the countryside in the 1820s was multifarious. Some polarisation developed on class lines, labour versus capital, but more revealed deepening fissures within the hierarchical structure of agrarian capitalism, extending to the biggest landowners – under pressure to reduce rents and waive arrears.

William Cobbett, as revealed by his journalism in the *Political Register*, and his lecture tour in West Kent and East Sussex in mid-October 1830, acknowledged the depression's universal impact. If he notoriously revealed no sympathy for substantial rentiers, and the more exploitative big farmers, his speeches embraced the range of countryside grievances, from farmers' difficulties, to the problems engulfing labourers' families, low wages, unstable employment, poor-law dependency, and sheer despondency over their seemingly chronic nature. Cobbett lambasted select vestries and their assistant overseers, with their inhuman treatment of claimants – among them the practice of people hauling carts – issues previously rehearsed in the *Register*. At Battle he referred to the Ticehurst grandfather, forced by the select vestry and justices to support his grandchildren, who met this charge only through the sale of the two cottages, the rents for which constituted his entire income.²¹²

Cobbett's timing reflected not just his political agenda, but the fact

that 1830 witnessed the third successive seriously defective harvest, immeasurably deepening the returning depression, and subsequent to agriculturalists' utter despair so superbly evinced by Kentish farmer Andrus's diary entry for 11 January 1830:

the corn marketts are as bad as can be the average prices of corn are as follows, Wheat 56s per Qr Barley 29s Beans 26s Oats 21s. If this is not enough to brake farmers I do not know what is, according to the present rents, taxes and poor rates – it is impossible it can last for ever, the evil day must come and will not be long first, God knows what the consequence will be, I fear it will be dreadfull.²¹³

Select vestries which had presided over significant rate reductions in mid-decade, were increasingly thrown on the defensive, though the relative rarity of extant formal reports to general vestrymen, probably obscures the typicality of the pessimism encountered at Westbourne. As early as 1827, the East Grinstead select vestry's printed report was apologetic, admitting expenditure at just over £5,000, with defaulting ratepayers owing a tenth of that sum.²¹⁴ As we have seen at both Ticehurst and Westbourne, some select vestries were in manifest crises from the spring of 1830. A proportion of adoptive parishes terminated their select vestries, perhaps most symbolically at Mayfield, where the persistent Revd. Kirby had been joined by the utilitarian pamphleteer and youthful local squire William Day (who became an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner in the 1830s).²¹⁵ Mayfield's neighbouring counterpart at Salehurst, like Ticehurst, faced a ratepayers' strike. There is considerable evidence that many parochial administrations were in crisis, *before* the 1830 harvest, whereupon confidence in others collapsed before the South-east was engulfed by Swing.²¹⁶ The ideological premises underpinning the spirit of Sturges Bourne, and its rosy remedial potential, proved utterly inadequate to combating an apparently renewed crisis in agrarian capitalism itself. Indeed the poor-law, warped by the spirit of utilitarianism, revealed itself as a major contributory cause, as Swing exposed the contours of Andrus's 'dreadfull . . . consequences'.

Handbills published by radical printers circulating during Swing argued against protesters seeking additional poor relief and expose themselves 'to . . . abuse by that Assistant Overseer'.²¹⁷ Perhaps ironically, the first documented attack on an assistant overseer (Thomas Abel) occurred at Brede, which hosted a nucleus of radicals, some of whom were very likely to have travelled the six miles to attend Cobbett's lecture at Battle twenty days previously.²¹⁸ Although these men's identities are not known, the farmworkers' leadership included Tom Noakes, the labouring proprietor of an illegal gin shop,²¹⁹ who had just had an appeal

against a rejected relief application dismissed, and three other prominent labourers had recently recorded altercations with the select vestry. After several meetings at Noakes' establishment, they agreed to expel Abel, as part of a protest also aimed at increased wages *and* allowances in-aid. After his expulsion – in the cart used to collect beach – he went fourteen miles further to contact justice Courthope at Ticehurst.²²⁰ Brede triggered what his worship almost immediately described as a 'contagion' against Abel's counterparts. The Battle assistant pre-emptively resigned, and as moves to mobilise crowds in villages throughout Wealden East Sussex commenced between 6 and 9 November, several equally pre-emptively fled, with Barron of Ticehurst seeking a sanctuary thirty miles away at Rochester, where previously employed. Others were not so lucky, as at Salehurst where the postholder was hunted down and beaten, though elsewhere whatever the determination of the villagers, expulsions were good-humoured with invocation of traditional skim-mingtons.²²¹ At Mayfield, the assistant – among those who decamped – was allowed back for five days to settle his accounts with the vestry, before leaving permanently; Abel was formally fired.²²² Subsequently, expulsions were reported from more distant locations, including Hampshire, while another was forestalled at Henfield by the telling compromise that the assistant's responsibility for handing over the money to claimants was to cease – no doubt one theatre for his 'bullyragg[ing] over the poor'. At Wrotham, the intrepid assistant armed himself with pistols, but did not try to use them when carted out somewhat later on 24 November.²²³ But the option of expulsion was not viable where assistant overseers were not 'strangers' but established residents. If the property-less incumbent at Chiddingfold – also a gamekeeper – was merely pelted with turves by a crowd, which, in his estimation, 'behaved in a middling manner', at Hartfield, the unpleasant Kenward's stacks were fired, a fate shared by some of the more ruthless traditional overseers, among them Stokes of Bearsted, and Becher of Ash.²²⁴

Perhaps surprisingly in the light of the usage of workhouse accommodation to discipline individuals and in places whole categories of claimants, notably younger single men, and the fact that very few appeals against incarceration were upheld,²²⁵ few South-eastern workhouses were attacked by Swing crowds. At Margate, fears that their's would be attacked by 'bad characters' and smugglers – presumably one and the same – did not materialise once protected by coastguards, and a similar force defended Lancing workhouse from a crowd whose reasons for wanting it 'immediately demolished' went unrecorded.²²⁶ Four of the five Sussex workhouses listed in Hobsbawm and Rude's tables, were targeted because their assistant overseers doubled as the governor, and the

crowd's rage was at the former's office, not the institution. However, similar juxtapositions do not account for the attacks by one crowd on two Gilbert Union workhouses in Hampshire, at Selborne and Headley, six miles apart, after securing farmers' agreements for wage increases conditional on protesters negotiating tithe reductions with several clergymen. In both places, a recently widowed former publican and presently carpenter, Robert Holdaway, with five children under eleven, led the attacks, smashing up the first, and systematically demolishing the second, a direct response to anger over the policy of enforced residency for some offspring from large claimant families, and the possible source of fears for the security of other Gilbert establishments, particularly Petworth and Easebourne.²²⁷ The crowd drawn from several parishes assembled on Ringmer Green, demolished the notorious grindstone near the poor-house, though permission was conceded by Lord Gage, after he intervened to prevent the intended expulsion of the assistant overseer.²²⁸

There is less evidence of poor-law concerns among East Kent and West Sussex machine-breakers; in their eyes, farmers' offences hinged on the use of labour-saving technology: "we are out of employ – we have no Work – Break the machines – we will have Bread – we will not Starve", shouted the crowd at Westbourne. Carl Griffin has recently stressed that hand-threshing was relatively lucrative – compared to casual labouring in winter-time – and in this context, restoring that source of income by eliminating machinery, assumed a popular priority. Moreover, such direct action was supported – including participation – by a wider cross-section of countryside communities, including tradesmen in the service industries, shopkeepers, publicans and smaller farmers.²²⁹ Some West Sussex farmers were additionally denigrated, among them Stephen Farnell of Bosham for employing labourers with settlements elsewhere; and he 'never attended the Vestries' to represent the cases of employees when applying, a practice encouraged at nearby Westbourne.²³⁰

However, if we should be careful when assessing the importance of the role of experiences under the poor-law as a cause of Swing, the issues of relief were inextricably juxtaposed with virtually every other grievance. Occasionally, as at Newick, negotiators specifically sought to demarcate between customarily interlinked issues of wages and regular poor-law allowances and their 'pernicious effect', but decoupling proved difficult, if not impossible.²³¹ Where wage increases appear to have been the sole issue, the unstated assumption was that relief entitlements for men with larger families would continue to be paid.²³² Hence observers' use of 'strike' to describe local Swing events,²³³ and in some localities – notably in Rye and adjacent villages – journeymen in various trades also

struck.²³⁴ Elsewhere, exemplified by Etchingham, wages, employment quotas and upwardly-amended allowances in-aid were the outcome of labourer-farmer negotiations.²³⁵ At Ticehurst, after Barron's dramatic flight, negotiations ended with wage increases, and child allowances were extended to the third.²³⁶ Indeed, a paper – used extensively by crowds in negotiations at adjoining Ticehurst, Mayfield and Burwash – stipulating wages (with lower rates for single men), employment for all children over twelve, arranged by local authority where necessary, reduced cottage rents, *and* increased child allowances, also expressly stated that they were required so that 'all may live by there Labour'.²³⁷ The fact that the latter objective necessitated greater public assistance for family men might be marshalled in support of a southern dependency culture; it also reflects poor-law administrators' relentless determination throughout the previous decade and a half to promote discipline, reverse dependency *and* reduce expenditure, policy components embodying the spirit of Sturges Bourne often irrespectively of formal adoption. Although Westbourne select vestry was soundly defeated on one occasion, while Ticehurst's retreated several times, the 1818–9 Acts rendered opposition more difficult at the parochial level, as revealed in the case studies. As one Hampshire magistrate incisively opined over that spirit, Swing proved categorically that 'our economy and Retrenchment has operate[d] too much on our social defences'.²³⁸

Notes

1. In this study the rural South-east comprises Sussex, and non-metropolitan Kent and Surrey. However, some evidence from neighbouring counties is also used
2. R. Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England, 1793–1801* (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 3, 6, 219, and esp. 290–7, 299–301. Cf. D. Eastwood, *Governing Rural England. Traditions and Transformation in Local Government 1780–1840* (Oxford, 1994), p. 114, and *idem.*, *Government and the Community in the English Provinces, 1700–1870* (1997), pp. 130–1.
3. Anon., *The Connexion between Industry and Property . . . addressed to the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor* (Exeter, 1798), no pagination, copy in H[ampshire] C[ounty] R[ecord] O[ffice], Baring Mss. 92M95/F2/14/1. *Political Register*, 22 December 1821. B[ritish] P[arliamentary] P[apers], [House of] Commons, select committee 'Report on Poor Rate Returns', (1825), vol. 6, p. 49, evidence of Revd. Power, Selscombe, Sussex. BPP, Commons, select committee 'Report on the Poor Laws relating to the Employment of Relief of able-bodied Persons from the Poor Rate', (1828), vol. IV, p. 30, evidence of N Driver, Ferneux Pelham, Hertfordshire.
4. Wells, *op.cit.*, esp. pp. 299–301, 332–3.

5. G. R. Boyer, *An Economic History of the English Poor Law, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), esp. chs. 3-5.
6. For discussions of the more complicated nature of the old poor-law issue, see R. Wells, 'Migration, the law, and parochial policy in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Southern England', *Southern History*, 15 (1993), pp. 86-139. R. Wells, 'Social protest, class, conflict and consciousness in the English countryside, 1700-1880', in M. Reed and Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880* (1990), esp. pp. 138-47. See also *Political Register*, 20 December 1828.
7. *Ibid.*, 21 December 1821. Pamphleteer T. E. Lee to Chancellor of the Exchequer Althorp, 24 November 1830, B[ritish] L[ibrary], Althorp deposit, H5.
8. J. R. Poynter, *Society ad Pauperism; English Ideas on Poor Relief 1795-1834* (1969), esp. chs. 3-4.
9. A. R. Wilks, 'Adjustments to arable farming after the Napoleonic wars', *Agricultural History Review*, 28 (1980).
10. Although some parishes registered very little population growth between 1821 and 1831, almost certainly owing to out-migration, overall population grew substantially, exemplified by the Kent figure of 12.5% after those parts at the start of the process of being embraced by the metropolis are excluded. A. Armstrong, 'Population, 1831-1914', in *idem.* (ed.), *The Economy of Kent 1640-1914* (Kent County Council, 1995), pp. 30-1. P. Brandon and B. Short, *The South East from AD 1000* (1990), pp. 268-71. There was nothing exceptional in the Romney Marsh parish of Brookland's demographic breakdown in 1821; of its 487 inhabitants, 164 were aged under ten. Vestry minute book, census notations, C[entre for] K[ent] S[tudies], P.49/8/3.
11. Wells, 'Migration, the law . . .', pp. 114-5.
12. At Heathfield, William Goble was installed on a small parish farm rent free, on condition that he received no further poor relief; he was also excused from rate payments, an arrangement which lasted from 1820 to 1831. P. Lucas, *Heathfield Memorials* (1910), pp. 137, 149.
13. B. Reay, *The Last Rising of the Agricultural Labourers* (Oxford, 1990), p. 78. W. Reeves, Maidstone, to the P[oor] L[aw] C[ommission], 7 November 1842, explaining that his brother had been evicted from a small farm in 1830; sent to work on the roads, the disgrace was said to have killed him, PRO. M[inistry of] H[ealth], 12/4913.
14. Many observers made this connection. For a classic statement by justice Wildman of Chilham in answer to rural query 53, see BPP. 'Report from the House of Commons Select Committee Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws', (1834) vols XXX-XXXIV, Appendix B1, 'Answers to Rural Queries', hence 'Poor Law Report', and question number.
15. BPP. Commons, select committee report, 'Labourers' Wages', (1824), vol. VI, pp. 56, 66, evidence Henry Drummond, JP for Surrey and Hampshire.
16. BPP. Commons, select committee report, 'Poor Laws', (1817), vol. VI, Q's. 106, and 127, evidence of farmers Rankin, and Viazey, Bocking, and Halsted, Essex.

17. For a short discussion with examples from the Midlands, see W. E. Tate, *The Parish Chest* (Cambridge, 1960 revised edition), pp. 231–3.
18. R. Wells, 'Social protest, class . . .', pp. 141–5. To give but one illustration, having put a farm tenancy at a reduced rent, the agent responsible informed his employer that he could 'get no Biding as people are very shy of Business at this precarious time': G. King, near Dorking, to the Trustees of the Perrin Estate, 5 October 1816, D[erbyshire] CRO, Fitzherbert papers, D239M/E12710.
19. BPP. Commons, select committee 'Report on Poor Rate Returns', (1825), vol. 6, p. 49, evidence of Revd. Power, Selscombe, Sussex. Letters to Sturges Bourne, from John Harwood, near Overton, 25 February 1819, and owner-occupying farmer Simons, near Winchester, 4 December 1830, HCRO. Baring Mss. 92M95/F2/14/4; 19/153.
20. However, Downland parishes, where poverty was rarely intense, were able to make money by the unemployed picking flint from fields, for sale to turnpike trusts. MacAdam's activities extended from Hampshire, Sussex, Surrey, (but not Kent) to the rural South Midlands and as far north as Lincolnshire. BPP. Commons, 'Labourer's Wages', (1824), pp. 11–5: [House of] Lords, select committee report, 'To Consider the Poor Laws', (1831), vol. VIII, p. 386, evidence of T. Partington JP, Offham.
21. *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 18 November 1815.
22. Poynter, *op.cit.*, ch. 6, esp. pp. 245–8, and pp. 277–8. BPP. Commons, 'Poor Laws', (1817), pp. 3–5.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 1–27, 203. This relief mode was often directed at the offspring of 'very profligate parents'.
24. BPP. Lords, select committee report, 'Poor Laws', (1818), vol. V, pp. 1–9.
25. For the debate see esp. I. R. Christie, 'Conservatism and stability in British society', and R. Wells, 'English society and revolutionary politics in the 1790s: the case for insurrection', in M. Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 169–87, 188–226. For Pentrich, E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1968 edition), pp. 428–9, 538–9, 723–34. For a recent short overview, J. E. Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest in England 1780–1840* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 89–93.
26. 58 Geo.III, c. 69, amended by 59 Geo.III, c. 85. B. Keith-Lucas, *The English Local Government Franchise: a Short History* (Oxford, 1952), pp. 23–7. Cf. D. Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian Britain* (1979 edition), pp. 26–8, 33, 38–40, and J. Vernon, *Politics and the People: a Study in English Political Culture c. 1815–1867* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 18–9, 155.
27. BPP. Commons, 'Poor Laws', (1817) p. 117, parish officer Tillyer, Harmondsworth, Middlesex.
28. 59 Geo.III, c. 12.
29. A power so much needed, that obtaining it was the chief reason for some expensive Local Acts, among them Gravesend's, BPP. Lords, 'Poor Laws' (1818), p. 129, evidence of Robert Crunden of Gravesend.
30. The suggestion that 'large landowners' had but 'limited knowledge of poor-law administration at the parish level' is as peculiar, as the notion that

- 'labour-hiring farmers were not well represented in Parliament' is bizarre. Boyer, *op.cit.*, p. 195.
31. Eastwood, *Governing Rural England* . . . , p. 139.
 32. BPP. Lords, 'Poor Laws', (1831) p. 419, evidence of estate-steward Cameron, Midhurst.
 33. D. Vaizey (ed), *The Diary of Thomas Turner, 1754-1765* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 35, 143, 145, 147-8, 173, 181, 204, 267-72, 291-2, 308. T. Jones, agent, West Farleigh, to absentee landowner Perrin, 31 December 1800, DCRO, Fitzherbert papers, D239M/ E12054. 'Poor Law Report', reply, Q.44, Revd. Bliss, Funtington.
 34. *The Times*, 13 April and 7 May 1818, cited Keith-Lucas, *Parish Affairs: the Government of Kent under George III* (Kent County Council, 1986), p. 126. *Political Register*, 23 October 1830; cf. *The Gorgon*, 6 June 1818. Assistant Poor Law Commissioners' report on Local Acts, BPP. 'Ninth annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners', (1843), vol. XXI, appendix 2.
 35. Boyer, *op.cit.*, p. 60. R. G. Cowherd, *Political Economists and the English Poor Laws* (Ohio, 1977), p. 97.
 36. Salehurst select vestry minutes, 24 October 1830 and 2 January 1831, stipulating the date for the general vestry to make a poor rate, ESCRO. Par.477/12/1. At Faversham the general vestry had 'the discretion . . . whether it [the next rate] shall be 1s or 2s' in the pound, while at Goudhurst, the annual overseers on the select vestry's behalf 'produce an estimate of the probable expenditure for the next three or four months . . . and the [general] Vestry grant a Rate accordingly'. After 1818 disputes were resolved by a vote under the Act of that year, which is why although all ratepayers were entitled to attend, 'especially those who pay the most, make it their business (it being greatly in their interest) so to do', according to justice Brown, 'Poor Law Report', replies, Q.'s. 32-5, Chalk, Faversham and Goudhurst.
 37. P. Mandler, 'The making of the new poor law redivivus', *Past and Present*, 117 (1987), pp. 85, 90-3, 95-7.
 38. S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850, a Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000), chs. 6 and 7, esp. p. 221.
 39. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 26-7, 100, 274, for cites from the archives of northern adoptees.
 40. One very revealing and semi-formalised exemplar of this feature was revealed by farmer Donkin, of Bocking, Essex; once its woollen manufacturing industry had been eradicated by northern competition, this large parish's economy depended principally on agriculture, though it also had a large service sector, which could not absorb the labour supply, notably after the return of demobilised servicemen. The principal inhabitants created a committee to administer the poor-law, one of a number of localised antecedents of executives created before the 1819 Act, (for which see below) in order to ensure that landowners and their tenants retained control, 'because if the distribution [payments from] . . . the poor rates were to rest in the tradesmen of the town, there would be different [a clash of] interests'. When this arrangement caused friction, Donkin was among a group who approached an un-named (and probably elderly) magistrate for advice, who 'told us we might take

advantage of the Act for incorporating hundreds, and do it by acting as guardians of the poor', and it was 'adopted'. In fact there was no Act for incorporating hundreds; proposals to seek one applicable only to Norfolk, were dropped in 1772. But a number of East Anglian Hundreds had obtained specific local Acts during the 1760s and 1770s enabling unions of parishes, and it was this legislation to which the justice was in fact referring. When questioned as to whether Bocking was incorporated with any other parish, Donkin replied, 'No but we understand we are allowed to take advantage of the Act, and by that means it [Bocking] is managed now by guardians'. BPP. Commons, 'Poor Laws', (1817), p. 108. G. W. Oxley, *Poor Relief in England and Wales 1601-1834* (1974), pp. 85-6. A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (1978), pp. 33-6.

41. Central to King's agenda is to escape from what he describes as the domination of 'welfare historiography ... by the agricultural labourers of the south'. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
42. The best discussion is still offered by Poynter, *op.cit.*, ch. VIII, 'Reform by [parliamentary] Committee'.
43. BPP. Commons, 'Labourers' Wages', (1824), pp. 7-8.
44. BPP. Commons, select committee report, 'Relating to the Employment or Relief of able-bodied Persons from the Poor Rate', (1828), vol. IV, p. 11.
45. *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 20 April 1818. *Sussex Advertiser*, 17 April and 8 May 1826, and 21 January 1828.
46. E. J. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, *Captain Swing* (1973 edition), p. 144.
47. *Ibid.*, esp. pp. 53-4, 77-8. Archer, *op.cit.*, p. 18, but cf. p. 22.
48. There seems to have been a long established tradition to appoint worthy village folk, whose fortunes had declined - among them craftsmen, petty entrepreneurs, and mostly smaller farmers - to salaried parochial posts. On Winchelsea's adoption the new assistant overseer was also to be clerk, but clerkships commonly went to deserving literate parishioners in difficulties; at Iden for example, the clerk John Winsor, prevented from 'any arduous work' by 'bodily infirmity', but not from fathering eight children by the age of 33, was also made workhouse governor in 1828 to enable him to support them. Conversely, at West Itchenor, 'The Clark is a sober Man & being an Object of Charity another officiates for him'. Winchelsea select vestry minutes, 12 April 1820, 21 August 1823 and 2 November 1827, ESCRO. Par.511/12/1, 2: Winsor to the PLC, April 1837, PRO. MH.12/13076: Churchwarden's presentment, West Itchenor, 1828, visitation returns, WSCRO. Ep.1/22/1/1828. Cf. S. B. Black, *Local Government, Law and Order in a Pre-reform English Parish 1790-1834* (Lampeter, 1992), pp. 227-9.
49. Burwash typically invested in a large new bound record book on adoption of the 1819 Act, and dutifully recorded attendance and the member elected to chair the select vestry, but this volume was also used to record general vestries. ESCRO. Par. 284/12/1.
50. Exemplified by select vestry minutes which refer to scheduled general vestries which were not minuted; on occasions, minuting clerks failed to distinguish between the two bodies, including Ticehurst minutes, 8 June 1824 and 21 March 1825, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/5. Nor is the fact that some

- minute books record both categories of vestry, recognised in archival listings.
51. Parish clerks commonly recorded members as they arrived, though not necessarily latecomers. Conversely, ratepayers in attendance often signed, but perhaps not by those leaving early. Both procedures account for disparities.
 52. For example, the six justices attending Uckfield Petty Sessions, signed Framfield vestry minute book on 1 February 1825 to 'approve of the nomination' of the named select vestrymen. ESCRO. Par. 343/12/1.
 53. Ticehurst nomination papers are also available; ESCRO. Par. 492/13/3-12.
 54. Unless noted, adoptees before 1830. There are none for Surrey; in Kent, Bexley, Edenbridge, Farmingham (1831), Faversham, Goudhurst, Hawkhurst, Horsmonden, Northfleet, St Margaret (Rochester), and Tenterden; in Sussex, Ardingly, Bexhill, Burwash, Eastbourne, Framfield, Funtington, Mountfield, Salehurst, Sedlescombe, Ticehurst, and Tillington. 'Poor Law Report', answers to Q.32.
 55. In Westbourne's case the regional historian can draw on the work of local counterparts. P. Ellacott, *The Poor of the Parish and the Work of the Westbourne Select Vestries 1819-1835*, Bygone Westbourne, 3 (Westbourne Local History Group, 1986); D. Hogg, *Westbourne Worthies*, *ibid*, 8 (1996); P. Ellacott, *The Bastards of Westbourne; a Study of Illegitimacy between 1720 and 1840*, *ibid*, 9 (1996).
 56. The best contemporary description of Ticehurst, including its economy, are the many pages penned in November 1832 by squire Courthope in response to the Poor Law Commission's questionnaire; mss copy, ESCRO. SAS Co/C/230.
 57. Hogg, *op.cit.*, pp. 10, 19.
 58. WSCRO, index of persons.
 59. Westbourne select vestry report to general vestry, 22 March 1822, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4. Cf. Assistant Poor Law Commissioner Pilkington's report on labour-market conditions in parishes scheduled for inclusion in proposed Westbourne Poor Law Union, 14 February 1835, PRO. MH.12/13176.
 60. Ticehurst select vestry minutes, 29 November 1819, 21 January, 20 March, 15 May and 7 August 1820, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/4.
 61. Ticehurst select vestry was nominated as usual in the spring of 1835, whereas Westbourne's was not, reflecting the latter's incorporation in the new Poor Law Union centred on the parish. The Ticehurst Union did not commence operations until the following autumn.
 62. An impressionistic picture derived from Westbourne and Ticehurst land tax and poor-law rating records; neither category constitute an infallible guide to the scale of individuals' business interests, as farmers especially rented (or owned) land in more than one parish, not invariably adjacent ones. For example, H. H. Haviland, one of the largest owner-occupier's in neighbouring Burwash, was also assessed to the Ticehurst poor-rate at £34-10-0. Ticehurst overseers' rate book, 1807-41, ESCRO. Par. 492/30/4.
 63. James Bowmen, John Cousens and George Hipkin had six. All three served on the select vestry for all or most years between 1819 and 1835,

- usually after nomination, but on occasion as parish officers. Ellacott, *Westbourne Select Vestries* . . ., appendices 1 and 2.
64. Namely, William Turner with five, William Ayling with four and James Whiteley with three; James Sylvester, another farmer with five votes served for nine years (three of them as overseer), with intermissions, between 1823 and 1835.
 65. Using rents, or rent equivalents (contemporary surrogates for rate assessments), produces anomalies. For example, the junior Courthope was not rated in his own right. Gideon Jarvis, who served for sixteen years, was originally assessed at £170, but from the mid-1820s, son Thomas – who served with intermissions for nine years – took over an increasing proportion of his father's lands, and by 1833 the elder man's assessment had dropped to £16-10-0. Benjamin Buss, another select vestrymen who served throughout the administration's life-time, extended his property holding; his 1822 assessment of £115 had increased to £148 by 1828. For ten non-consecutive years, son Thomas served too, though he was not personally rated. It should be noted that property values were not revised over this period, reflected by unchanged assessments for other select vestrymen, exemplified by the £112 rating on George Oyler throughout the sixteen years he served. Ticehurst overseers' rate book, 1807-41, ESCRO. Par. 492/30/4.
 66. *Ibid.*
 67. However, as copies of the select vestries' six-monthly reports under the Act had to be fixed in time-immemorial fashion to the church door, greater interest may have been displayed than suggested by attendance details at general vestries. No reports survive from Ticehurst.
 68. There is possibly a problem with attendance records for general vestries. Although the 1819 Act stipulated that select vestry attendance must be recorded, parish clerks were under no statutory obligation to extend it to general vestries. Clerks may have been predisposed to note the names of only the more affluent and/or influential members of the community present, rather than all. Some clerks were no doubt lazy, and often otherwise occupied as meetings convened, and there are examples of recording only parish officers present at general vestries. However, as historians are agreed on the general and growing eighteenth-century tendency towards the oligarchic characteristics of vestries, there remains a chance that the attendance of ordinary and lesser ratepayers was not rigorously recorded. See also note 211 below.
 69. Ticehurst general vestry minute, 26 August 1820, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/2.
 70. Since 1730. Tithe agreements, 1739 and 1757, ESCRO. Par. 492/6/3/1.
 71. One of the Westbourne exemplars was recognised as a mistake, William Ayling's name being entered by the parish clerk and then erased from the nomination list by the magistrates in 1827; ironically, when as overseer he was again nominated in 1831, the error – if it was – went uncorrected. WSCRO. Par. 206/13/2.
 72. Calculated from vestry minutes 1740-1805, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/1/1.
 73. 'Poor Law report', reply, Q.33, Rolvenden.

74. Ticehurst vestry minutes, 1814-9; at this time, further parishes adopted the same expedient in response to escalating numbers of claimants, with such committees presumably comprised more affluent men with time to spare; for example, Hailsham, vestry minutes, 3 January 1814, and 13 April 1818; Biddenden, vestry minute, 13 November 1817; ESCRO. Par. 353/12/1/10, 14; 492/12/2/2: CKS. P.26/8/1.
75. Evidence derived from (erroneously listed) select vestry minutes 1809-14, 1814-20; these are in fact monthly lists of claimants to Ticehurst general vestry, and from 1816 to its executive sub-committee. ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/1, 2.
76. General vestry minute, 19 February 1819, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/1/2. Courthope, 1832 return, *loc.cit.*
77. Select vestry minutes, 1 and 13 February 1820; 'Ticehurst Book A', a volume summarily listing the decisions of the select vestry on individuals' claims, for the information of the four overseers between 1819 and 1823, a practice abandoned shortly after the assistant overseer was appointed; entries 11 October and 15 November 1819, 26 December 1820, 29 October and 10 December 1821, and 27 May 1822, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/3, 6.
78. According to Courthope, such parishioners were 'inclined to speculate in building cottages whenever they can procure small strips of land for this purpose', 1832 return, *loc.cit.* Select vestry minute, 8 October 1819, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/4.
79. Select vestry minutes, 20 March and 15 May 1820, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/3.
80. Select vestry minute, 24 July; general vestry minute, 2 August 1820, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/3, 4.
81. Select vestry minutes, 2 and 11 October 1820, *ibid.*
82. Select vestry minute, 11 October 1820, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/3.
83. Select vestry minute, 17 November; general vestry minutes, 5 and 15 December 1820; undated hand-written copy of rider, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/3; 492/37/90.
84. The advert emphasised that the post was 'permanent', that 'ample security' was required, and that the authority was a select vestry. General vestry minute, 15 December 1820, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/4. *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 22 January 1821.
85. The depression ensured numerous candidacies, with even some impoverished larger farmers seeking to stay financially afloat with public jobs paying weekly usually between ten shillings and around a pound. See also note 48 above.
86. General vestry minute, 18 February, 28 March and 10 May 1821, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/3, 4.
87. Barron's undated testimonial was signed by the mayor, parish officers and some seventeen other Rochester worthies, who claimed that he had managed their establishment 'with great credit' while maintaining an 'irreproachable' character; select vestry minute, 13 March 1820; general vestry minutes, 10 and 23 May 1821, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/1/2; 492/12/2/3,4; 492/37/44.

88. The sole extant workhouse admission-discharge book, June 1821 to December 1822, and clearly one of a series, as it records the inmates during Barron's first eighteen months of office, and the deaths of those who died therein over a longer period; general vestry minutes, 7 June and 13 July; Joseph Child, tender for workhouse extension, 14 June 1821. ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/4; 492/37/39, 47-50.
89. Sundridge vestry typically rejected overseers' requests to commence collecting a new before completing the old rate, and 'desired them to wait another week, or more, and collect it up closer'; 'Poor Law Report', return, Q.33, Rector D'Oyley.
90. Subsequent select vestry minutes reveal Barron's assiduous attendance, though with archetypal meanness the general vestry made his appointment conditional on the couple remaining childless at the mere thought of parochial provisions being misappropriated. The contract is minuted by the general vestry, 23 May 1821, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/3.
91. Select vestry minute, 5 March; general vestry minute, 16 March 1821, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/4.
92. To give one of the most blatant examples, in order to attract new tenants when demand was in free fall, landlords offered farms – commonly after declining investment by previous tenants – at greatly reduced rentals in the first couple of years to compensate. Incomer Gardiner got his farm at Hartfield at a 'Pepper Corn Rate' in the first, and for £35 in the second year. The old rent, £64-15-0, here as elsewhere, was used to assess the poor rate, and in Gardiner's case, a vestry of five summoned a 'Meeting of the Inhabitants on this express' issue, which unsurprisingly ruled that 'no Redress [rate fixed on the actual rent] can be given'. The demarcation between an oligarchic vestry and a 'meeting', in this non-Sturges Bourne parish, is also instructive, as to their capacity to mobilise ratepayers when it suited their purposes. Vestry minutes, 7 and 21 May 1828, ESCRO. Par. 360/10/1/1.
93. Not least because valuers were often livestock dealers and other agrarian commercialists whose qualifications derived from their familiarity with property values across the region, and of course non-residency in the parish to be valued. They commonly also had valuable business with the larger farmers. BPP. 'Labourers' Wages', (1824), pp. 55-66, evidence of Henry Drummond. For a discussion of surveyors, see J. A. Chartres, 'Country trades, crafts and professions', and H. Porter, 'The development of rural society', in G. E. Mingay (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. 6, 1750-1850, (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 451-4, and 845.
94. General vestry minutes, 27 April and 1 June; select vestry minute, 3 August 1821, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/4.
95. The fact that Barron's instructions from select vestrymen were issued at what was technically a general vestry, speaks for itself. General vestry minutes, 6, 12 and esp. 16 November 1821, *ibid.*
96. R. Wells, 'Social conflict and protest in the English countryside in the early nineteenth century: a rejoinder', in Reed and Wells, *op.cit.*, p. 68. Wells, 'Tolpuddle in the context of English agrarian labour history, 1780-1850', in J. Rule (ed.), *British Trade Unionism 1750-1850; the Formative*

- Years (1988), pp. 116–7, and note 97. Ticehurst select vestry minutes, 26 November and 24 December; general vestry minute, c.23 December 1821; volume identifying 36 employers, and four lists – three of them undated – naming ticket men. ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/4; 492/31/1/13. Courthope, 1832 return, *loc.cit.*
97. General vestry minute, c.23 December; select vestry minute, 24 December 1821, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/4.
98. Select vestry minutes, 7 and 10 January; general vestry minutes, 17 January and 6 June; ticketmen list of 204 names, 26 January 1822, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/4; 492/31/1/13.
99. Select vestry minute, 24 January 1822; the revised quota system was publicised by hand written copies, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/4; 492/13/1.
100. Tenders, millers Newington, and Huntley, 20 and 26 February, and Standen, 26 February 1822, ESCRO. Par. 492/37/53–4, and unfoliated.
101. Courthope, 1832 return, *loc.cit.* General vestry minutes, 16 May and 6 June 1822, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/4.
102. General vestry minutes, 12 September and 26 December 1822, *ibid.*
103. Copy in select vestry minute book of parliamentary questionnaire, and Ticehurst's return, n.d. [c. March 1824], *ibid.* Courthope, 1832 return, *loc.cit.*
104. Namely, a 'Round Deal & Oak Tables Yew Tree Armchair a Hearth Fire Grate, square looking Glass, 2 Iron bound Casks, 5 pair of Mens & Womens shoes'. Handwritten auction notice, 2 April 1824, ESCRO. Par. 492/31/67.
105. The elderly Kemp was probably the Ticehurst grandfather later publicised by Cobbett once he was eventually forced to sell his two cottages in order to meet these costs. General vestry minutes, 8 June 1824, 28 and 31 March, and 4 April 1825, and 23 March 1826; select vestry minutes, 27 October 1823, 21 March and 28 April 1825; select vestry sub-committee minute, 27 October 1823; copy of 1824 parliamentary return: rate summonses, 1821–4; magistrates payment order, 20 July, forfeit and seizure orders, 21 September 1824, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/1/2, 4; 31/129–133, 136–9; 37/156. *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 8 August 1825. Courthope, 1832 return, *loc.cit.*
106. Although parallel campaigns against illegitimacy were widely adopted regionally in the mid-1820s, it might be surmised that fuller employment also generated spare workhouse capacity, which accounts for the timing. General vestry minutes, 23 March 1826, 25 February 1828, and 29 November 1829; select vestry minutes, 2 February, 26 March, 9 April and 22 September 1827, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/4, 5. *Sussex Advertiser*, 29 March 1830. BPP. Lords, select committee report, 'The Several Cases Alluded to the Certain Papers respecting the Operation of the Poor Law Amendment Act', (1837–8), vol. 19, pp. 235–6, evidence of Revd. G. S. Bull. Courthope, 1832 return, *loc.cit.*
107. Select vestry minutes, 15 and 29 November 1819, 7 and 26 December 1820, 7 February, 16 April, 20 August and 10 December 1821, 4 July 1821, and 29 June 1829; workhouse governor's book, June and 8 October 1821, 7 September 1825, 4 September 1829 and 28 June 1830, ESCRO. Par.

- 492/12/2/ 3, 4, 5, 6; 492/37/39. *Brighton Herald*, 20 November 1830. BPP. Lords, 'Poor Laws', (1831), p. 386, evidence T. Partington, chairman East Sussex Quarter Sessions. Cowherd, *op.cit.* pp. 76-7.
108. Select vestry minutes, 16 January, 19 and 28 March, 10 April and 9 October 1826, 28 June, 12 and 26 July, 9 and 23 August 1830, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/4, 5.
109. Select vestry minutes, 9 and 23 August, 18 September, 7 and 18 October, and 1 November 1830, ESCRO. Par. 492/12/2/5. *Sussex Advertiser*, 6 November 1830.
110. Although Courthope acknowledged that 'it is too much to expect that all farmers will abstain from this method of relieving themselves at the expence of others', it became 'much less practiced' at Ticehurst once the quota system was abolished, not least because continuing with lay-offs would 'not lead to procuring Labourers at reduced prices from the rate'; Courthope, 1832 return, *loc.cit.*
111. Westbourne select vestry minutes, 12 and 26 November, and 24 December 1819, 7 January, 28 April and 8 December 1820, 27 March, 27 April and 11 May 1821, 7 and 21 June, and 8 November 1822, 17 and 31 January 1823, 17 October and 29 December 1826, 12 and 23 January, and 5 October 1827; select vestry reports to general vestry, March 1822 and March 1823, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4, 5.
112. Select vestry reports to general vestries, esp. October 1819, March and October 1820, October 1821, October 1824, March and October 1828, *ibid.*
113. Select vestry reports to general vestries, October 1819 and March 1820; select vestry minute, 11 February 1825, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4, 5.
114. Select vestry minute, 9 May 1823, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4.
115. Select vestry minute, 26 June 1829; cf. 2 December 1825 and 15 May 1829, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/5.
116. Select vestry minutes, 13 April 1821 and 20 April 1827, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4, 5.
117. Select vestry minute, 3 December 1824, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/5.
118. Select vestry minutes, 21 January 1820 and 2 August 1822; cf. 16 July 1824, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4, 5.
119. Under Westbourne, Warblington and Chithurst's 1818 enclosure Act, 774 acres (of which about a third comprised the common) were in the process of implementation. In 1814, 520 acres of common and waste in Warblington had been enclosed under an Act of 1810. J. Chapman, 'The parliamentary enclosures of West Sussex', *Southern History*, 2 (1980), p. 74 and appendix. J. Chapman and S. Seeliger, *A Guide to Enclosure in Hampshire 1700-1900*, Hampshire Record Series, vol. XV (Winchester, 1997), p. 130.
120. Select vestry minutes, 11 May 1821, 7 and 21 June, 27 September and 6 December 1822, and 14 February 1823, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4.
121. Select vestry minutes, 23 June and 6 August 1819, 7 and 28 January, and 14 September 1821, 30 August 1822 and 26 June 1829, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4, 5.
122. Select vestry minutes, 14 September 1821 and 19 September 1828, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4, 5.

123. Ellacott, *op.cit.*, p. 18.
124. Select vestry minutes, 19 January 1821 and 14 April 1828, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4, 5.
125. Select vestry minute, 10 March 1824; select vestry reports to general vestries, March 1823 and October 1826, *ibid.*
126. Select vestry report to general vestry, March 1825, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/5.
127. There are implications that select vestrymen felt defensive over such assistance, for example when responding positively to painter Lonyers' request that his two children be sent to his new London home; members stressed that they were impressed by his 'very proper Letter' and had ensured 'as frugal a Carriage to London for them as possible': select vestry minutes, 23 November 1821 and 11 March 1825; cf. 9 March 1827, 14 November 1828 and 9 March 1829. In fact, assisting tradesmen of all hues in various ways, including financing migration after work, was normal under the Old Poor Law, though utilitarians would have argued that such higher earners ought to have met all their expenses. Wells, 'Social protest, class . . .', pp. 143-4.
128. Including that to the lame labourer D M Mills, who secured a sub-contract from road-builder McAdams, and received a £28 loan to execute it. Select vestry minute, 22 August 1828, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/5.
129. Select vestry minute, 17 December 1824; cf. 21 September 1827, *ibid.*
130. Select vestry minute, 3 March 1820; cf. 5 November 1824, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4, 5.
131. Select vestry minutes, 1 September 1820 and 27 September 1822; cf. 26 May 1822, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4.
132. *Ibid.*, 1 February 1822.
133. Select vestry minutes, 7 and 21 January 1820, *ibid.*
134. Select vestry minutes, 17 March, 9 June and 7 July 1820, 7 and 21 June, 5 July and 30 August 1820; cf. 14 September 1820 and 27 September 1822, *ibid.*
135. Another young claimant, Thomas Reed, had a parallel history. Wells, 'Social protest, class . . .', p. 165 and note 126. Select vestry minutes, 11 May and 7 December 1821, 10 May and 25 October 1822, 12 and 27 March, 11 April, 4 and 18 July, 1 August and 26 September 1823, 16 January 16 July 1824, 25 February 1825, 10 February, 20 October and 17 November 1826, 23 January, 23 February, 9 and 23 March, 15 May, 1 June and 5 October 1827, 22 February and 14 November 1828, 3 April and 10 July 1829, and 28 May 1830, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4, 5, 6.
136. Select vestry minutes, 16 January and 3 December 1824, 8 September, 6 and 20 October 1826, 26 January, 9 March, 20 April, 7 September, 5 October and 2 November 1827, *ibid.*
137. General vestry minutes, 1, 6 and 13 April 1821, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/1.
138. General vestry minutes, 12 October 1821, 11 January and 6 September 1822, *ibid.*
139. Ellacott, *Westbourne Select Vestries . . .*, appendix 2 gives the votes cast, but not their distribution, which is recorded in general vestry minutes, 1 December 1820 and 4 March 1825; there is a rough copy of entitlements

- to votes on the reverse of a preserved church door notice (24 November) of the 1820 election in the parish archive. The select vestry minute, 11 February 1825, directs the calling of a general vestry, which was to agree the salary and settle the question of whether the assistant overseer should also manage the workhouse. WSCRO. Par. 206/12/1, 5; 206/13/3.
140. My emphasis; select vestry report to the general vestry, March 1822, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4.
 141. General vestry minutes, 25 November 1825 and 24 November 1826, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/1.
 142. General vestry minute, 7 April 1826, *ibid.*
 143. General vestry minutes, 16 March and 8 December 1829: statement of monies expended on purchase of premises and their conversion, 1773–4, and £600 mortgage to Scardevill, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/1: 206/35/3.
 144. General vestry minute, 6 April 1821, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/1.
 145. Select vestry minutes, 28 October 1819, 11 May and 3 August 1821, 15 March and 30 August 1822, and 6 April 1827; select vestry reports to general vestries, March 1820 and March 1825, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4, 5.
 146. A select vestry report, specifically on defaulters, ordered by that body on 1 February 1822, is unfortunately not extant. WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4.
 147. Select vestry minutes, 12 November 1819 and 13 February 1824; and report to general vestry, October 1827, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4, 5.
 148. The annual rate arrears provided by Ellacott, *op.cit.*, appendix 3, are based on contemporary March aggregations; these disguise the seasonal element revealed by the October calculations, comprised in the select vestry's reports of that month to the general vestries. WSCRO. Par. 206/12/4, 5, 6.
 149. Oxley, *op.cit.*, pp. 98–101. King, *op.cit.*, p. 38.
 150. Lurgashall's revenue from 'Sums raised by the Labour of the Poor kept in the house & sent to work for the Farmers', raised almost £53 in 1790–1; audit of parish poor law expenditures for those joining the Easebourne Gilbert Union, 1 November 1792, WSCRO. WG.1/3.
 151. General vestry minutes, 6 April 1828, 16 March and 8 December 1829; public notice of general vestry meeting, 7 March 1829; undated [1829] printed copy of workhouse farmer's contract, clearly for circulation in the parish, WSCRO. Par. 206/12/1; 206/35/6.
 152. BPP. Commons, select committee report, 'The Sale of Beer', (1833), vol. XV, p. 350, evidence justice Disney, a Petty Sessional chairman, of Ingatestone, Essex.
 153. Ironically, with a not untypical cavalier attitude to the Act's stipulated fortnightly meetings for select vestries. Black, *op.cit.* p. 273. Cf. S. G. and E. O. A. Checkland (eds.), *The Poor Law Report of 1834* (1974), p. 199.
 154. BPP. Commons, 'Poor Rate Returns', (1824), Appendix F1, from Cuddesdon (Oxon) and Holcombe, Somerset: cf. BPP. Commons, 'Labourers' Wages', (1824), pp. 40, 53, evidence from Bedford and Woburn of enhanced magisterial rigour. Checklands, *op.cit.*, pp. 193–241, esp. 198–203, 220–1.
 155. Battle Bench's long-serving clerk (T. C. Bellingham) spoke of a jurisdiction embracing forty parishes, with an aggregate population of 35625 in 1833; this is not sustained by the court's minutes, and indeed returns pre-

- sented by Bellingham to a Commons committee derive from but 21 parishes. At this period Petty Sessional jurisdictions were somewhat flexible; Battle's sometimes heard cases from Burwash, though another court often convened in that village, before permanently adopting Hurst Green from the mid-1820s. Battle's volumes of minutes overlap chronologically, resulting from separate minuting of the issue of warrants, summonses, removal orders and game convictions. Internal evidence indicates that the seven extant volumes, from 1789-1832, with gaps and overlaps, comprise survivors from a larger total; those for 1821 to 1832 possibly comprise a complete record of poor-law appeals, but not civil administration registrations. ESCRO. PS/BA, 1-7. BPP. Commons, 'Beer', Q.1428, Bellingham's evidence. Cf. Wells, 'Migration, the law ...', pp. 125-7, for a discussion of Petty Sessional archives.
156. Battle Petty Sessions minutes, 9 August 1825 and 12 August 1828, ESCRO. PS/BA/4, 5. Subsequent references give only the date, not the volume. Poynter, *op.cit.*, pp. 311-4 and note 36. My earlier brief analysis underrated the significance of the Sturges Bourne Acts. Wells, 'Social protest, class ...', pp. 145-6.
 157. One example suffices; when Moses Grandier of Herstmonceux appealed against his allowance in-aid, the clerk recorded, 'Overseer states that the man' - in weekly receipt of 12/- wages and 4/- supplement - 'is one of very bad Character'. The Bench made 'no Order'. Minutes, 22 May 1827; cf. 14 August, 9 October and 13 November 1821, 12 March 1822, and 10 May 1831.
 158. In the case of a man refusing the offer of outdoor relief on condition that he left Brede workhouse, compliance was enforced by his ejection by the police. Brede vestry minutes, 25 February and 26 October 1823, ESCRO. Par. 253/12/3. Cf. Petty Sessions minute, 12 December 1831.
 159. Minutes, 9 April 1822, 8 November 1825, 22 May and 11 December 1827.
 160. Minutes, 11 November 1821, 25 June and 12 November 1822, 23 September 1823 and 13 September 1825.
 161. Minutes, 13 November 1821, 12 February, 9 July and 13 August 1822, 25 February 1823, 24 January, 24 October and 14 November 1826, 22 May and 11 December 1827, and 14 October 1828.
 162. Minutes, 24 July, 13 and 27 November 1821, 13 December 1825, 24 January and 14 March 1826.
 163. Minutes, 12 March 1822, 11 March 1823, 26 February 1828 and 26 October 1830.
 164. Minutes, 14 August 1821, 13 July 1824 and 13 November 1827.
 165. Such cases also had financial implications for vestries. Minutes, 13 June and 10 October 1826, and 8 January 1828.
 166. Minutes, 10 October 1826.
 167. Minutes, 8 March 1825. Wells, *Wretched Faces ...*, p. 305. Cf. select vestry minutes, Battle, 23 February 1823 (excluding rat-catchers), ESCRO. Par. 236/12/2/2.
 168. Minutes, 14 January 1823.
 169. Minutes, 8 March, 26 April, 9 August and 8 November 1825. 'Poor Law Report', reply, Q.39, justice Davenport, Salehurst.

170. Minutes, 14 February, 9 May and 24 October 1826.
171. Minutes, 25 February 1823. A Norfolk justice spoke of a 'vociferous . . . man came to battle with the overseers for . . . relief', conduct 'the magistrates . . . pretty well know, to indicate a sturdy pauper'. BPP. Commons, 'Beer', Q.978, Weyland's evidence.
172. *Ibid.*, Q's.1469-73, Bellingham's evidence. 'Poor Law Report', *loc.cit.* BPP. Lords, 'Poor Laws', (1831), p. 390, Partington's evidence.
173. Minutes, 8 April and 11 November 1823, 13 July 1824, 23 May 1826, 14 August and 11 December 1827, 10 March 1829 and 14 June 1831.
174. Minutes, 14 May and 22 October 1822.
175. Minutes, 25 April 1826.
176. Minutes, 24 July 1821 and 13 June 1826.
177. Minutes, 13 November 1822, 24 January and 14 February 1826.
178. Minutes, 9 May 1826.
179. Minutes, 12 December 1826 and 10 June 1828.
180. Minutes, 22 October 1822 and 29 November 1825.
181. William Burt, earning eight shillings weekly, married with two children, appealed for *de facto* child allowances, but when the overseers explained that the couple illegally 'sells . . . Beer', the issue was 'referred to the Vestry'. Thomas Crisford, whose 'Wife supports herself a nursing', had suspiciously 'sold his Effects for £19'; Crisford 'must account to the Overseers', and if appropriate return for review. Minutes, 29 November 1825 and 8 May 1827.
182. Minutes, 24 November 1825.
183. And cf. the appeal of Samuel Fairhall, who with his wife and three children, were 'obliged to be at a public House at an expense of 5s a Week', absorbed from his nine shillings from 'constant' work and three-shilling allowance; the Bench 'recommended' they be found cheaper 'quarters'. Minutes, 25 July 1825 and 20 June 1831.
184. Minutes, 14 December 1824 and 27 October 1829.
185. Minutes, 13 December 1825 and 10 March 1829. *Sussex Advertiser*, 8 May 1826.
186. Winchelsea select vestry minutes, 16 and 30 September; cf. 8 April and 10 June 1825, and 1 June 1827, ESCRO. Par. 511/12/2.
187. Exemplified by justice Lodwick of Rochford Hall in Essex; this may explain occasional complaints that appellants sought out such worthies, though post-1815 period Petty Sessional jurisdictions were becoming more stable, which reduced the juridical freedoms of such justices. Lodwick to Sutton parish officers, 27 and 29 December 1829, cited by M Holland, 'A Crime to be Poor: a Study of the Connection between Poverty and Rural Protest Crime in the Barstable and Rochford Hundreds of South-east Essex', (unpublished MA dissertation, University of Brighton, 1992), p. 38.
188. Minutes, 29 November 1825. *Kent Herald*, 25 November 1830. *Surrey Herald*, 4 September 1827.
189. *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 18 and 25 January, and 8 February 1819. Broadwater parish committee, printed handbills, 16 December 1817 and 23 March 1818; A Member of the Committee, *A Friendly Hint to the Poor of . . . Broadwater* (Worthing, 1818): C. Goring, *An Address to the Inhabitants*

- of *Bramber Rape and a Reply* (Worthing, 1819), copies in PRO. MH.12/12905.
190. The experience of Swing probably confirmed majority judicial conviction in this role.
191. 'Poor Law Report', answers to Q's. 43-5, from esp. Chalk, Chiddington, Chilham, Hartling, Tonbridge, Westerham, Westwell, Kent; Albury, Newdigate, Send, Surrey; Fletching, Sussex.
192. *Ibid.*, esp. from Barham, Edenbridge, Kent; Brede, Sussex.
193. *Sussex Advertiser*, 8 May 1826. Courthope 1832 return, *loc.cit.*
194. Weale to the Duke of Richmond, with enclosed printed extracts from parish accounts, 10 April 1834, WSCRO. Goodwood Mss. 669.
195. 'Poor Law Report', replies, Q's. 32-4, Funtingdon and Tillington. Tillington select vestry minutes, 1 and 28 June, and 28 September 1820, 28 June 1821: relief application book, 2 and 30 December 1819, 4 February, 2 March, 3 April and 30 November 1820, 4 and 23 April 1821, 3 January, 7 and 31 October 1822, and 27 February 1829; Easebourne, relief application book, 18 February, 5 August, 2 September and 28 October 1822, and 10 June 1823; vestry minutes, 28 October 1822 and 5 June 1826; Trotton vestry minutes, 25 November 1820, 17 February and 29 September 1821, and 21 February 1824; WSCRO. Par. 75/12/2; 75/13/1: Par. 197/12/2; 197/37/1.
196. BPP. Commons, select committee report, 'Poor Law Amendment Act', (1837-8), vol. XVII, Q. 39, Revd. Sockett's evidence.
197. At Easebourne, the customary vestry nomination of a member, Robert Shotter, was described 'to serve the office of Guardian to the Poor House', implying that Shotter's role was confined to contributing to collective management of the Union workhouse; vestry minute, 3 March 1829: cf. Trotton vestry minute, 13 July 1822; WSCRO. Par. 75/12/2; Par. 200/12/1. Thakeham's Guardian Botting noted that money collected by the overseers, was 'expended' by him 'partly on applications made by Paupers, and partly by the guidance of other Ratepayers who may happen to attend the Vestry'; cf. the reply of Farnham Guardian (1817-31), where vestries to address relief applications attracted the 'larger Meetings'; 'Poor Law Report', replies to Q's. 32-5, from Farnham, and Thakeham. For details on some Hampshire Gilbert Unions, see assistant commissioner A'Court to commissioner Lefevre, 1 and 3 February 1835, PRO. MH.32/2.
198. Preston-next-Faversham, Kent; Farnham, Surrey; Arundel, Tillington, Sussex; others ignored this question, though Thakeham and Wiston both stated their Gilbert status, non-appointment of assistant overseers, and active Guardians; replies, Q's. 32-5, 'Poor Law Report'. West Dean vestry minutes and overseers account book, expenditure categories table for 1830-1; WSCRO. Par. 65/12/1.
199. Prosecution brief against arsonist Dyke, Kent Winter Assize, 1830; East Kent Clerk of the Peace, John Boys, to Home Secretary Peel, 17 October 1830, PRO. T[reasury] S[olicitor], 11/943/3412; HO.52/8, ff. 209-10.
200. At Brede it is glued into assistant overseer Abel's account book (1829-31), ESCRO. Par. 253/30/6.
201. 'Poor Law Report', reply, Q's. 32-5, Old Shoreham; cf. Bapchild, Kent;

- Addington and Buckland, Surrey; Alciston, Berwick, Glynde, Poling and Withyham, Sussex.
202. Vestry minutes, Hailsham, esp. 3 January 1814, 13 April 1818 and 12 April 1827; Biddenden, 29 April 1813, 13 November 1817, 6 and 17 April, and 23, 16 and 23 October 1823: ESCRO. Par. 353/12/1, vols. 10, 15 and 23: CKS P.26/8/1.
 203. Mayfield, select vestry minutes, 25 March 1820 to 25 March 1829: general vestry minutes, Burwash, 10 May 1819, Hellingly, 23 March 1823, Brede, 5 March 1826, ESCRO. Par. 253/12/3; 284/12/1; 375/12/4; 422/12/2.
 204. *Sussex Advertiser*, 20 March 1826 and 21 January 1828.
 205. Burwash general vestry minutes, 26 March 1823, 23 March 1824, 18 March 1825; select vestry minutes, 6 December 1823, 7 January, 19 March, 21 May, 18 June, 1 October and 24 December 1825, ESCRO. Par. 284/12/1. Keith-Lucas, *English Local Government* . . . , pp. 29–33.
 206. Hartfield general vestry minutes, 5 and 11 April 1827, 28 March 1828, 28 March 1829 and 25 March 1830; rate book, 1822 and 1826, ESCRO. Par. 360/10/1/1; 360/10/2/4; 360/12/1/7. Prosecutor's brief against George Buckland for arson, Kent Winter Assize, 1830, PRO. TS.11/1007/4051. *The Times*, 17 December 1830.
 207. Collingwood, from Battle, to the Home Office, n.d. (c. 16 November 1830), PRO. HO.52/10, ff. 448–52. *The Times*, 25 November and 6 December 1830.
 208. Abel's account book, 11 September 1830, *loc.cit.*
 209. T. Goodlake, Wantage, Berkshire, to Peel, 18 January 1830, PRO. HO.52/6, ff. 2–3. *The Times*, 5 January 1831.
 210. T. Stayner, Parkhurst, to Sir H. Fitzherbert, 3 March 1822, DCRO. D239M/E12860.
 211. One select vestry nomination meeting at Burwash was forced to adjourn owing to the 'turbulent and improper conduct of . . . the lower Class of Tax payers (urged forward by . . . ill judging Shopkeepers and small Tradesmen) many of whom . . . have not a legal right to be present'. When the fifteen 'orderly and principal Inhabitants' reconvened some hours later, 'the disorderly persons having dispersed', they disparagingly minuted that two persistent men also present, in aggregate rated at £57-16-0 – 'neither of whom had paid up their Rates' – maintained their opposition against the others, together rated at £1248-7-0.; this revealing display of parochial psephological realities speaks for itself, even if these interventions delayed the nomination for a fortnight. General vestry minutes, 25 March and 8 April 1824, ESCRO. Par. 284/12/1.
 212. *The Times*, 17 November 1830, citing *Essex Mercury*. R. Wells, 'Mr William Cobbett, Captain Swing and King George IV', *Agricultural History Review*, 45 (1997), esp. pp. 35–7. *Idem.*, 'Crime and protest in a country parish; Burwash, 1790–1850', in J. Rule and R. Wells (eds.), *Crime, Protest and Popular Politics in Southern England, 1740–1850* (1997), esp. pp. 183–4, 197–200. *Brighton Gazette*, and *Political Register*, 21 and 23 October 1830. Depositions of members of Cobbett's Battle audience, 'Master Shoemaker' Wren, and labourer Sinden, both of Battle, taken 10 January 1831, PRO. HO.17/50, pt.i.

213. F. S. Andrus, 'Extracts from the miscellany and farm account of Francis Andrus of Scadbury in the parish of Southfleet', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, C (1984), p. 396.
214. Signed by the vicar, five parish officers and twelve vestrymen, 25 March 1827, who 'flatter ourselves, [that] their Fellow Parishioners will feel satisfied with their Exertions during the Year: as it has been one of great difficulty, an increase in the Rates has arisen from several causes, want of Work, Sickness, increase of Paupers, Labour on the Roads, and Money to be advanced in Measuring of the Parish [for re-valuation purposes]; the unemployed poor at one period of the Winter amounted to more than 100 . . .; the allowance granted in Sickness (particularly out of the Parish [and relieved through non-resident relief]), forms a large amount of Casual Relief, and the Sum expended for Labour . . . amounts to a large Sum . . .'. Copy among Hartfield parish papers, ESCRO. Par. 360/14/11.
215. Mayfield general vestry minutes reveals nominations each year from 1820 to 1829; for Day's period of dominance, see select vestry minutes, 29 March, 1, 4, 8, 15 and 26 April, 8 May and 5 June; general vestry minutes, 25 March, 19 and 24 April 1826. R. A. Lewis, 'William Day and the Poor Law Commissioners', *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, 9 (1963-4), pp. 163-96.
216. Only three members attended Burwash select vestries at four consecutive meetings in September and October, and although they were technically quorate, each was adjourned without any decisions; five convened at the next, but only to decide upon how the parish was to repay its spiralling debt, and agreed to recommend the sale of all parish property except the workhouse at a general vestry; select vestry minutes, 4 and 18 September, 2, 16 and 30 October; general vestry minutes, 2 November. Simultaneously, Salehurst select vestry's attempts to call general vestries was met with indifference; select vestry minutes, 30 September and 16 October; general vestry minutes, 7, 10 and 24 October 1830, ESCRO. Par. 284/12/1: 477/12/1.
217. Bill, 'Conversation between Two Labourers', printed by Levi Cohen at Brighton, December 1830, PRO. HO.52/10, f. 284.
218. Brede was reputedly one of ten parishes in the district where the 'labourers . . . formed . . . Association[s], to promote local and general Reform', according to a Rye correspondent, *Kent Herald*, 18 November 1830; cf. *Hastings . . . Iris*, 14 May 1831.
219. Such establishments, often run by 'old smugglers' were commonly tolerated, unless proprietors (or their close relatives) became poor-relief claimants, as revealed by some Battle cases; evidence of J. Parrot MP and JP, South Devon, and Brede return to Battle Petty Sessions re beer shop enquiry, BPP. Commons, 'Beer', Q's. 839, 1425, Bellingham's evidence. Battle Petty Sessions minutes, 26 October 1830, ESCRO. PSBA/5. Statement, made before justice Webster at Battle, by Brede labourers' leader Joseph Bryant, 19 November 1830, PRO. HO.52/10, ff. 422-3.
220. *Ibid.* *Hastings . . . Iris*, and *Kent Herald*, 13 and 18 November 1830. Courthope to Phillipps, 5 and 6 [enclosing Abel's deposition of same date] November, PRO. HO.52/10, ff. 369-70, 373-4. Battle Petty Sessions

- minutes, 21 February 1828 and 26 October 1830: Brede vestry minutes, 27 July 1829 and 21 November 1830: Justice Stileman's diary, c.1 June 1826, ESCRO. PSBA.5: Par. 253/12/3: Add.Mss.4917.
221. Courthope to Lord Lieutenant Egremont, 6 November; T. L. Hodges, Benenden, and Blunt, to Peel, both 11 November 1830: indictments, Sussex winter Assizes, 1830, PRO. HO.52/8. ff. 171-2; 52/10, ff. 526-7, 617: Assi. 35/270/5. Recognizances to keep the peace, and some sureties, 9 November 1830, Quarter Sessions roll, Epiphany 1831: R. Davenport, Robertsbridge, to H. B. Curteis MP, and E. J. to H. B. Curteis, 8, and 10 November 1830, ESCRO. QR/E806: AMS. 5995/3/10, 13. *Rochester Gazette*, 16 November 1830. *The Times*, 24 December 1830. *Kent Herald*, 30 December 1830.
 222. *Maidstone Gazette*, 16 November 1830. Brede select vestry minute, 21 November 1830, ESCRO. Par. 253/12/3.
 223. A. M. Colson, 'The Revolt of the Hampshire Agricultural Labourers and its Causes 1812-1831', (Unpublished MA thesis, University of London, 1937), pp. 97-8. J. Chambers, *Hampshire Machine Breakers*, (Clifton, Bedfordshire, 1990), pp. 69-71, 115-7. *Brighton Herald*, and *Kent Herald*, 27 November, and 2 December 1830.
 224. Prosecutor's briefs against Buckwell, and Dyke, for arson, Sussex, and Kent Winter Assizes, 1830: Petty Sessions clerk Boys to Peel, 17 October 1830, PRO. TS, 11/943/3412; 11/1007/4051: HO.52/8, ff. 209-10. *The Times*, 11 December 1830.
 225. On Battle Petty Sessional evidence.
 226. Clerk, Margate Bench to Phillipps, 26 November, PRO. HO.52/8, ff. 77-8. *Sussex Advertiser*, 29 November 1830.
 227. The situation was further complicated because the Revd. Cobbold had engineered the termination of Holdaway's liquor license. Letters to J. Bonham Carter, H. Budd nd. [23], J. Hegenio, and W. Mitchell, 24 and 25 November; Bonham Carter to his wife, nd. c.25 November 1830, volume of selected correspondence re. Swing, Bonham Carter dep., Hants.CRO, 94.M72/15/8. W. Cowburn to Wellington, 1 January 1831, Southampton University Library, Wellington papers, 4/1/3/4/4. Chambers, *op.cit.*, pp. 41-3, 52-4, 100-1, 111-2, 235-6, 239-40, 245-7, 255-6, 280-1, 325-6. Petition of George Ten, for prosecution witness reward, PRO. TS. 5/18, pp. 325-7. BPP. Commons, 'Beer', Q's. 166-7, evidence of Revd. Wright, Itchen-Abbas. *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 3 January 1831. *Hastings . . . Iris*, 13 November 1830.
 228. *Brighton Herald*, 20 November 1830.
 229. Justice Leake to Peel, 21 November 1830, PRO. HO.52/7, ff. 101-2. Griffin, *op.cit.*, esp. pp. 136-7.
 230. Edward Chapman rebuked Hollingbourne select vestryman Horton, ' "I had a bad leg and wanted allowance and nothing was granted and you were there"'. Farndell's deposition, 18 November: Westbourne select vestry minute, 3 December 1824, WSCRO. Good. Mss.1477a: Par. 206/12/6. Prosecutor's brief against Chapman and two others for riot, Kent Winter Assize, 1830, PRO. TS.11/943/3413.
 231. *Sussex Advertiser*, 29 November 1830.

232. And, on occasion made explicit, as at Laughton, when the vestry minuting adult able-bodied farmworkers' wages increased to a daily two shillings, added that those with more than two children would 'receive the usual relief', 27 November 1830, ESCRO. Par. 409/12/2.
233. Farmer Stapley of South Bersted recalled that his labouring parishioners were the first to 'strike' on the coastal plain, and attributed local employers' capitulation to the absence of machine-breaking occurring in neighbouring villages, especially Bosham. BPP. Commons, 'Poor Law Amendment Act', Q's 16921-43, Stapley's evidence.
234. *Hastings . . . Iris*, 13 November 1830.
235. Etchingham agreement, 11 November 1830, forwarded to H. B. Curteis, ESCRO. AMS.5995/3/14.
236. In Benenden, and other West Kent locations, crowds accepted them from the fourth. Courthope's 1832 reply, *loc.cit.* T. Monger, Tunbridge Wells, to Camden, and fourteen magistrates, at Battle, to Peel, 10 and 12 November: prosecutor's brief against five Benenden men, Kent winter Assize 1830, PRO. HO.52/8, ff. 235-6; 52/10, ff. 394-5; TS.11/943/3414.
237. Sir G. Webster, and Blunt, to Peel, 12 and 15 November 1830, PRO. HO.52/10, ff. 397-8, 528-9.
238. Justice Lockhart, November 1830, cited R. Foster, *The Politics of County Power: Wellington and the Hampshire Gentlemen 1820-52* (1990), p. 72.