DID EDUCATION PROMOTE SOCIAL MOBILITY WITHIN THE WORKING CLASS IN BIRMINGHAM?

A CASE STUDY OF BLUE COAT CHARITY SCHOOL 1780 – 1850

by

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ABSTRACT

Using a unique data set which linked material from a multitude of sources, this research determined whether an association existed between education and subsequent achievement, in the Blue Coat Charity School in Birmingham between 1780 and 1850.

The research followed the life course of pupils at the school from the time they were admitted to the time they left and then throughout their working lives to measure the extent of intragenerational and intergenerational social mobility. Subsequently, the mobility was then correlated to the extent of their educational achievements to determine whether their education enabled them to acquire a higher status role or move into a higher social class.

The study found that the school provided quality education in comparison to other schools in the locality, and evidence suggests that overall those boys who excelled academically were more likely to obtain a beneficial apprenticeship. However they did not necessarily need academic skills to succeed and secure a degree of social mobility as the social capital they also acquired within the school was found to be as beneficial – if not more so – than their educational achievements. For the girls there was little sign that their education enhanced their status.

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ABBREVIATIONS

B.C.S Application Register	The Library of Birmingham. Records of the Blue Coat Charity School: Application Register, MS 1622/2/7
B.C.S. Apprenticeship Indentures	The Library of Birmingham. Records of the Blue Coat Charity School: Apprenticeship Indentures, MS 1622/2/6
B.C.S Examination Records	The Library of Birmingham. Records of the Blue Coat Charity School: Examination Certificate Counterfoil Volumes, MS 1622/2/5
B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book	The Library of Birmingham. Records of the Blue Coat Charity School: General Meeting Minutes Books, MS 1622/1/1/4-10, pp. 1781–1856
B.C.S. Parents' Resignations	The Library of Birmingham. Records of the Blue Coat Charity School: Parents' Resignations, MS1622/3/5/1
B.C.S. Nomination Papers	The Library of Birmingham. Records of the Blue Coat Charity School: Nomination Papers, MS1622/3/3
Census, 1841	England and Wales Census, 1841. Birmingham - Warwickshire'
Census, 1851	England and Wales Census, 1851. Birmingham - Warwickshire'
Census, 1861	England and Wales Census, 1861. Birmingham - Warwickshire'
Census, 1871	England and Wales Census, 1871. Birmingham - Warwickshire'
Census, 1881	England and Wales Census, 1881. Birmingham - Warwickshire'

INTRODUCTION

'Social mobility is about breaking the link between an individual's parental background and their opportunities to reach their full potential in terms of income and occupation.'[1]

In an open society, although inequalities might exist, individuals or groups may through ability or attainment or determination move up (or down) a hierarchical social ladder. In contrast, in a closed society, individuals or groups are born into a specific group based on their parents' status or class and it is very difficult to move into another group. As such, social mobility is a measurement of success and equality of opportunities within society.

No standard exists by which we can define successful mobility; as such any upwards movement along the hierarchy may be considered a successful outcome. However, a distinction may be made between moderate upwards mobility and significant upwards mobility.

Mobility may be measured in different ways. Economists use monetary measures such as wages and poverty rates to measure income inequality whilst sociologists use occupational data to measure socioeconomic status. However, whilst the sociological approach dates back to the 1950s, the alternative approach used by

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[1] Boston Consultancy Group, *The State of Social Mobility in the UK*, (Sutton Trust, 2017), p.
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economists only dates back to the 1990s. Hence, the majority of studies have used occupational data to measure socioeconomic status.

In the UK, a number of indicators are currently used to determine whether mobility may be regarded as successful. The government uses 16 indicators such as low birth weight, free school meals, families who own their own home.[2] Other countries and organisations use more or fewer indicators. Studies which focus on historical mobility generally only use a few indicators on account of the limited and often incomplete, source material. Consequently, occupation is generally used as the main indicator.

Mobility is generally, although not always, characterised as *intergenerational* (changes which take place between one or more generations in a family) or *intragenerational* (changes which take place within the lifetime of one individual). Mobility may also be *Absolute* which takes into account changes within the occupational structure (for example if the proportion of professional occupations were to increase, then there would be more opportunities for upwards mobility from the lower classes) or *Relative* which is the difference between the class origin and class endpoint.

Whilst there is abundant research on contemporary social mobility, few studies have focused on nineteenth century social mobility and findings have been diverse. Sociologist Mike Savage and Social Historian Andrew Miles for instance, suggest that class boundaries were more fluid in the nineteenth century and women from the

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[2] See www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-index-2017-data

working class were more likely to be upwardly mobile than men, although their timeframe extends beyond the nineteenth century from 1839 right up to 1914.[3] Sociologists Cristóbal Montt and Ineke Maas suggest that as men became more successful in their career, determined by the father's occupational status and son's education, Britain became a more open society,[4] whilst sociologists Paul Lambert, Kenneth Prandy and Wendy Bottero found evidence of a modest linear trend toward increasing mobility over an extensive period of time from 1800-2004.[5] On the other hand, social historian Richard Price believes that barriers became more rigid in the latter part of the nineteenth century as occupations became further professionalised and hence were only open to those from the top layers of the stratification system.[6] With a lack of detailed data sets due to the scarcity of historical evidence, one might anticipate differing interpretations but as is the case with contemporary mobility research, such apparent discrepancies may also be the result of differing methodologies. Prandy and Bottero for instance, use social positioning to analyse mobility whereas Miles uses movement between defined social classes.[7] Although in Britain in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, it was commonly believed that you were born into a particular 'station in life' and not

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[3] M. Savage and A. Miles, *Remaking of the British Working Class, 1840-1940* (Routledge, 1994), p.40.

[4] See C. Montt and I. Maas, 'The Openness of Britain during Industrialisation. Determinants of Career Success of British Men Born between 1780 and 1880', *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 42 (2015), pp.123–35.

[5] See P. Lambert, K. Prandy and W. Bottero, 'By Slow Degrees: Two Centuries of Social Reproduction and Mobility in Britain', *Sociological Research Online*, 12.1 (2007), pp.1-26.

[6] R. Price, 'Society, Status and Jingoism: The Social Roots of Lower Middle Class Patriotism, 1870-1900', in *The Lower Middle Class in Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), p.105.

[7] See for instance K. Prandy and W. Bottero, 'Social Reproduction and Mobility in Britain and Ireland in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *Sociology*, 34.2 (2000), pp.265–81 and Savage and Miles. *Remaking of the British Working Class.*

expected to rise above it,[8] opportunities for mobility did arise and as such Britain may be classed as an open society. What is debatable is whether the Industrial Revolution led to *increased opportunities* for mobility. Economists Gregory Clark and Neil Cummins suggest there were stable or declining mobility rates in England from 1700 to 1870[9], whereas another economist Jason Long believes that social mobility in England and Wales increased during the second half of the nineteenth century.[10] However, as noted by the historian Pat Hudson in *Regions and Industries*, there were fundamental differences in terms of economic and social change between the different regions within the UK during the Industrial Revolution.[11] Those living within rural districts or in towns which were dominated by a single industry may have experienced differing rates of mobility in contrast to a town such as Birmingham, which was known for its large number of small workshops which, it was said, encouraged mobility.[12]

It is now widely accepted that education is one of the most important drivers of economic growth, occupational attainment and social mobility in contemporary society. A substantial amount of research exists to support this association between the educational experience and social mobility over the life course which is frequently

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[8] See for example this citation from a contemporary periodical '...those who are destined for a civil career, or born to such a station in life as is likely to lead them into that career' H. Taylor, 'The Statesman', *The London and Westminster Review*, April 1837.p.10.

[9] See G. Clark and N. Cummins, 'Inequality and Social Mobility in the Era of the Industrial Revolution', in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain. Vol 1.*, ed. by Roderick Floud, Jane Humphries, and Paul Johnson (Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 211–36.

[10] See J. Long, 'The Surprising Social Mobility of Victorian Britain', *European Review of Economic History*, 17 (2013), pp.1–23.

[11] P. Hudson, 'The Regional Perspective', in *Regions and Industries: A Perspective on the Industrial Revolution in Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 5–38.

[12] T. Buchner, 'Organizing Labour Markets: The British Experience', in *The History of Labour Intermediation: Institutions and Finding Employment in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, ed. by S. Wadauer, T. Buchner, and A. Mejstrik (Berghahn Books, 2015), p.83.

endorsed in politics, the media and policy reports. For instance, in his pioneering

work *Social Mobility in Britain*, sociologist David Glass predicted an increase in social

mobility with the expansion of educational opportunities following the 1944 Education

Act.[13] More recently, educationalists Professor Becky Francis and Dr Billy Wong, in

their 2013 report *What is preventing social mobility? A review of the evidence* cited

education as a key issue as it prepares young people with 'the knowledge and skills

they need to secure successful futures'.[14] However, whilst education is seen as a key

driver, it is recognised that there are other factors which impact on life chances. The

2017 report *Closing Gaps Early: The Role of Early Years Policy in Promoting Social*

Mobility in Britain highlights the importance of the early years in preparing children for

success in school and later life.[15] For instance, providing quality child care provision

for working parents to ensure a child gets the best start in life. Another factor which

may impact on life chances is the degree of social capital as discussed by sociologist

John Goldthorpe. He claims that families use cultural, economic and social

connections in addition to key educational resources to ensure their children are

socially mobile. As such, those from advantaged backgrounds may still be socially

mobile even if their educational attainments are low as they draw on additional

resources and personal attributes.[16]

Operating alongside those factors which drive social mobility, is the issue of

stratification and how easy it is to move between the boundaries with higher levels of

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[13] D.V. Glass and J.R. Hall, 'Social Mobility in Britain: A Study of Inter-Generation Changes in Status', in *Social Mobility in Britain*, ed. by D.V Glass (London: Redwood Press Limited, 1954), p.21.
[14] B. Francis and B. Wong, *What Is Preventing Social Mobility? A Review of the Evidence* (King's College London, 2013), p.3.
[15] K. Stewart and J. Waldfogel, *Closing Gaps Early: The Role of Early Years Policy in Promoting Social Mobility in Britain*, (The Sutton Trust, 2017).
[16] J. Goldthorpe, *Understanding – and Misunderstanding – Social Mobility in Britain: The Entry of the Economists, the Confusion of Politicians and the Limits of Educational Policy*, Barnett Papers in Social Research, 2, 2012. p.446

mobility reflecting a more open society. Economists Jo Blanden and Paul Gregg explored family income inequality and its impact on children's educational outcomes in the late twentieth century. They surmised that children were 'less likely to break free of their background than in the past'.[17] The Social Mobility Commission, in their annual *State of the Nation* report in 2016 also found it was becoming increasingly difficult to move between the boundaries and that the rungs on 'the social mobility ladder are growing further apart'.[18]

Of those studies which have endeavoured to analyse the extent of social mobility in the nineteenth century, few have managed to demonstrate an association between life outcomes and key indicators, in particular educational attainment. Clark and Cummins used rare surnames and probates to construct a database to portray wealth inheritance. They found that wealth mobility and educational mobility were comparable but inevitability this data excludes the majority of those from working class.[19] Economist Jane Humphries used autobiographies to determine whether there was a correlation between increased schooling and occupational attainment and found evidence that each year of schooling increased adult status attainment by around 4 percent.[20] The majority of studies use evidence of the ability to sign the marriage register to demonstrate the ability to read and write.[21] However many

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[17] J. Blanden, P. Gregg and S. Machin, 'Social Mobility in Britain: Low and Falling', *CentrePiece*, Spring, 2005.

[18] *State of the Nation 2016: Social Mobility in Great Britain*, (Social Mobility Commission 2016), p.iv.

[19] G. Clark and N. Cummins, 'Intergenerational Wealth Mobility in England, 1858–2012: Surnames and Social Mobility', *The Economic Journal*, 125.582 (2014), pp.61–85.

[20] J. Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.336.

[21] See for example: D. Mitch, 'How Did Illiterates Fare as Literacy Became Almost Universal? Evidence from Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Liverpool', *Interchange*, 34 (2003), pp.313–35; C.F Kaestle, 'The History of Literacy and the History of Readers', in *Perspectives on Literacy*, ed. by

children were first taught to read before progressing onto writing, which was seen as

a separate skill. Therefore it is likely that some individuals may have been omitted

from the data set if they did not complete their education and were unable to sign

their name. Conversely, it is debatable whether such a data set would provide

evidence of true literacy skills because even when they did learn to write some adults

could barely scrawl their names. Economist Roger Schofield for instance, found that

more people could sign than could actually write when he reviewed the evidence for

literacy skills for the period 1750-1850.[22] Historian W.B. Stephens believes that

analysis of marriage (or other) signatures may be useful in comparative

measurements (i.e comparing one region to another) but such data does not reveal

the degree of educational attainment and any deductions based on this evidence

must be to some extent crude and limited.[23]

For those who did obtain some degree of literacy, evidence suggests that such an

achievement did not provide any advantage in the nineteenth century. Economist

Michael Sanderson for example, believes that during the industrial revolution many

occupations could be performed by individuals who were sub-literate.[24]

Educationalists Stephen and Jacqueline Nicholas found evidence of deskilling during

the early nineteenth century.[25] However, economist David Mitch found that although

many occupations during this period did not require literacy skills, educational

E. Kintgen, B. Kroll, and M. Rose (SIU Press, 1988), p.103; R. Houston, 'The Literacy Myth? : Illiteracy in Scotland 1630-1760', *Past & Present*, 96 (1982), p.82.

[22] R.S. Schofield, 'Dimensions of Illiteracy, 1750-1850', *Explorations in Economic History*, 10.4 (1973), p.441

[23] W.B Stephens, *Education, Literacy, and Society, 1830-70: The Geography of Diversity in Provincial England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p.269.

[24] M. Sanderson, 'Literacy and Social Mobility in the Industrial Revolution in England', *Past & Present*, 56 (1972), p.102.

[25] S. Nicholas and J. Nicholas, 'Male Literacy, "Deskilling," and the Industrial Revolution', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 23.1 (1992), p.17.

attainment did impact on economic growth albeit at professional level.[26] In his analysis of primary schooling in the nineteenth century Long concluded that although education did not significantly impact on social mobility, the gains did outweigh the cost of the schooling.[27]

Much of the research into historical social mobility has been on a macro scale, for example across regions in England or England and Wales. Such research does not take into account the local variations noted earlier. Miles for example, used a sample of marriage registers taken from across ten registration districts within England and found that the trend was for greater fluidity between the classes in the nineteenth century.[28] Long also examined records from across England and found evidence of increased mobility across and within generations post mid nineteenth century.[29] On the other hand, economists Nina Boberg-Fazlic and Paul Sharp used data which compared and contrasted the North and South of England and found that mobility was greater in the North than the South[30] and Stephens compared several regions across England in his book *Education, Literacy and Society 1830-70* and found considerable variation in educational provision and attainment across the country.[31] At micro level, Mitch used data from Birmingham and Norfolk to compare mobility within urban and rural areas and found that although overall there was a similar rate

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[26] D. Mitch, 'Education and the Skill of the British Labour Force', in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain*, ed. by Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.354.

[27] J. Long, 'The Socioeconomic Return to Primary Schooling in Victorian England', *Journal of Economic History*, 64.4 (2006), p.17.

[28] See A. Miles, *Social Mobility in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England* (Basingstoke: Macmillian, 1999).

[29] See Long, 'The Socioeconomic Return to Primary Schooling in Victorian England'.

[30] N. Boberg-Fazlic and P. Sharp, *North and South: Social Mobility and Welfare Spending in Preindustrial England*, EHES Working Paper 37, 2013.

[31] See Stephens. Education, Literacy and Society.

of mobility in both these areas, there was greater potential for the unskilled in Birmingham to rise to a skilled status. [32] Historians Margaret and Dennis Warwick found that there was little intergenerational mobility and not much intragenerational mobility in their study of a village in Yorkshire in the nineteenth century. [33] These micro studies ably show us how important it is not to assume 'one size fits all' in terms of mobility across different regions in the country.

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[32] D. Mitch, 'Literacy and Occupational Mobility in Rural versus Urban Victorian England: Evidence from the Linked Marriage Register and Census Records for Birmingham and Norfolk, 1851 and 1881', *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, 38.1 (2005), pp.26–38.
[33] M. Warwick and D. Warwick, 'Burley-in-Wharfedale in the Nineteenth Century: A Study of Social Stratification and Social Mobility', *Local Population Studies*, 54 (1995).

Blue Coat Charity School

This research will use qualitative and quantitative techniques to analyse data from the Blue Coat Charity School in Birmingham at the end of the eighteenth century through to the middle of the nineteenth century. As such it is a micro-study which investigates mobility for one specific town and school during a significant period in Britain, when not only was industry and urban society transformed as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution but formal education became available to even the poorest in society.

Blue Coat Charity School (sometimes called Birmingham Blue Coat School in contemporary literature and herein after to be referred to as the *Blue Coat School*) was founded in 1722 by the Rev. William Higgs, Rector of St Philip's Church. It was called a 'Blue Coat' School as the children wore blue uniforms which was the colour associated with charity in the sixteenth century (see Fig 1. below). However, there were a number of pupils in the Blue Coat School in Birmingham who wore green uniforms as they were funded by a bequest left by George Fentham in 1690 for the teaching of poor children. Additionally, a number of pupils were funded by the St. David's Society set up in 1824 to assist children of Welsh patronage. Irrespective of the source of funding, admission to the school was limited to those children who had been baptised in either St Martin's or St Philip's Church. The school appears to have been a popular institution as it was enlarged in the late eighteenth century and again in the early nineteenth century.

Figure 1: Statues of the Blue Coat School children 1770

 Source: The Blue Coat School, Birmingham (Credit: Julie Foster)

The eighteenth century was an era known for its philanthropic activity. Indeed,

historian Mary Jones called it as 'the age of benevolence'.[34] Philanthropists had

become increasingly concerned by the growing numbers of destitute children,

particularly in urban areas. Through poor relief, destitute families could receive some

assistance towards food, clothing, rent and even employment but it was thought that

the provision of poor relief led to idleness amongst the poor. Riots, protests and

growing social issues encouraged the public to engage in charitable concerns to

stem a perceived growth in immorality and debauchery. Of the numerous societies

and organisations which were set up by the philanthropists many targeted self-

improvement, particularly education. Education was seen as a means of enabling

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[34] M.G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action.* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1938), p.3.

the poor to 'improve' their lives to become 'useful' members of society,[35] although there is some evidence that education was also seen as a means of providing social control.[36] However, this assertion is open to debate.[37]

At least 60 Blue Coat Schools were set up in the British Isles between the mid sixteenth and late eighteenth century[38] and the objectives of such schools were inevitably the same; to instil obedience, discipline and good behaviour in the pupils through moral and religious education. As such, the indenture for the Blue Coat School which cites 'several inhabitants of the town' who believed that 'profaneness and debauchery are greatly owing to a gross ignorance of the Christian religion, especially amongst the poorer sort',[39] was merely following a standardised format. There was nothing particularly exceptional about its primary motives as comparable objectives may be found in many narratives during that period. In Bicester a Blue Coat School was established in 1721 on the pretext that 'profaneness and debauchery are greatly owing to a gross ignorance of the Christian religion, and for want of an early and pious education of youth, especially among the poorer sort'.[40] In

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[35] This was not a new concept as Thomas Firmin proposed sending destitute children to working schools to discourage idleness as early as 1678 (T. Firmin, 'Some Proposals for the Imployment of the Poor, and for the Prevention of Idleness and the Consequence Thereof, Begging a Practice so Dishonourable to the Nation, and to the Christian Religion : In a Letter to a Friend' (London, 1678)).

[36] See for instance B. Rosen, 'Education and Social Control of the Lower Classes in England in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century', *Paedagogica Historica*, 14.1 (1974), pp.92–105; J. Rule, *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England 1750-1850* (Longman, London and New York, 1986), pp.244-247.

[37] This point will not be discussed in this thesis but see for instance, M. Thompson, 'Social Control in Modern Britain', *ReFresh (Autumn)*, 5 (1987); B. Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: Society, State and Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800-1945* (Macmillan International Higher Education, 2004), p.4.

[38] 'Records of Christ's Hospital and Bluecoat Schools: Information Leaflet Number 29' (London Metropolitan Archives, 2013).

[39] G. Griffith, *History of the Free-Schools, Colleges, Hospitals and Asylums of Birmingham and Their Fulfilment* (London, 1861), p.60.

[40] J. Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Bicester, a Market Town in Oxfordshire* (London: Richard and Arthur Taylor, 1816), p.111.

1714, the trustees of the Blue Coat School in Darlington set up a subscription 'on the consideration that profaneness and debauchery are greatly owing to a gross ignorance of the Christian religion'.[41]

The Admission process

Admission to the Blue Coat School was through a nomination process. Anyone who donated at least ten pounds to the school was allowed to nominate one child to be entered into the ballot. Additionally those who paid an annual subscription of one guinea to the school were also allowed to nominate one child. A payment of two guineas entitled an individual to two chances at the ballot although only one child per subscriber could be admitted.[42] In 1843, the nomination system was overhauled and the children were chosen by the school committee. This was to encourage the committee, (who were elected from those who paid the subscription) to take more interest in the Blue Coat School charity as they were now obliged to become engaged in the election process of all the children and not just the child they had nominated.[43]

Entry requirements

For those children who were selected for admission to the school, entry was not guaranteed as they first had to satisfy the entry requirements. The children were to

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[41] W. Longstaffe, *The History and Antiquity of the Parish of Darlington in the Bishoprick* (London: Darlington and Stockton Times, 1854), p.265.
[42] The Library of Birmingham. Records of the Blue Coat Charity School: General Meeting Minutes Books, MS 1622/1/1/4-10', 1781–1856. March 1816.
[43] ' B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book. May 1843.

be members of the established church and the parents were expected to be parishioners of Birmingham and provide certification of their marriage. A surgeon also had to certify the children were free of disease.[44] It was also essential that any child who was admitted was seen as being a 'proper object of charity'.[45] As this term was never fully defined judgements were subjective but usually included orphans, children of widows and large families as long as the parents were seen as being poor but 'industrious'.

Blue Coat School was a boarding school and as such the children were provided with food and clothing as well as education. It cost £16 9s 5d to maintain each child in the school each year as recorded in the general minutes in 1838 although tuition fees would have been included in this cost.[46] This approximates to 6s 4d a week. As such, the school provided an opportunity for those children whose parents were of limited financial means to be clothed, fed and educated.

Opportunities for social mobility

The sermon preached in the Blue Coat School on the day that it opened on 9th August 1724, warned of the 'wicked fathers neglecting the education of their children, being willing they should be even such as themselves; whereby the children of course growing vicious, ignorant and so contemptible, it comes to pass, that the

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44 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. March 1816, May 1843.
45 A. Tomkins, *The Experience of Urban Poverty, 1723-1782: Parish, Charity and Credit* (Manchester University Press, 2006), p.165.
46 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. August 1838.

name of the family is in the next generation clean put out'.[47] Whilst this sermon was clearly focussing on the moral benefits of education, it is also feasible that such schools did also offer genuine opportunities for poor children to receive an education which enhanced their economic or social status. The preacher at the Blue Coat School may have derided the 'wicked fathers', but he also emphasised the value of education as a leveller, as he believed that it was 'education, not extraction that creates the differences and degrees among men'.[48] Whether the Blue Coat School deliberately encouraged social advancement is debatable. Certainly, many in this period believed that charity school children should not be encouraged to rise above their station but this was not always the case. The theologian Dr Isaac Watts for instance, published a pamphlet in 1728 in which he stated that charity school children, after they had completed their education, should be placed in 'country labours; domestic services; in some inferior post in a shop, or in mechanic trades' but he then goes on to add 'there may be here and there a fine and sparkling genius born in cottages...and why should not such sprightly children (if I may so express it) have their chance to rise in the world?'[49] Remarks such as this suggest that it was possible to succeed if you were from the working class and had skill and talent rather than achieve mobility through making use of the privileges associated with wealth and class.

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[47] T. Bisse, '*Publick Education, Particularly in the Charity Schools: A Sermon Preach'd at St Philip's Church in Birmingham*, August 9, 1724.' (London, 1725), p.8.

[48] Bisse. *Publick Education, Particularly in the Charity Schools* p.7

[49] I. Watts*, 'An Essay towards the Encouragement of Charity Schools, Particularly Those Which Are Supported by Protestant Dissenters, for Teaching the Children to Read and Work*.' (London, 1728), p.9 and p.17.

A unique dataset has been constructed for this research in order to examine the life-course of a number of children who entered the Blue Coat School and passed through its educational system. The dataset has been constructed by combining material from a multitude of documents from the Blue Coat School archive and further supplemented with a wide range of material from other sources such as the census returns, trade directories, parliamentary reports, newspapers and contemporary literature. A laborious process of meticulously linking the extracted material has made it possible to follow the experiences of the Blue Coat School alumni and in doing so, to shed light on the relationship between education and social mobility in the transition to modern society.

Few historical studies examine change within the lifetime of an individual due to the problem of obtaining sufficient data. Indeed, 1780 was chosen as the date for commencement of this research in order to assure that some of the individuals who entered the Blue Coat School during the late eighteenth century would be recorded in the early census records, although the majority of linked records are by necessity from the early to mid nineteenth century. The selection of 1850 as the final date for entry into the Blue Coat School with ensures that the data set encompasses the growth of popular education and subsequent government intervention during a period of social and economic change.

The source material and creation of the dataset

This section will explain how the dataset has been constructed for the purpose of analysing the collection of material associated with the Blue Coat School. It will also provide a brief overview of the source material and the issues which arise when it is used for historical research although additional references to specific source material may also be found in the following chapters.

The Blue Coat School dataset

For the purpose of this research, an extensive dataset was created using Microsoft Access which incorporated material from the Blue Coat School archives along with material from other sources such as the census returns. Each record within the dataset corresponds to an individual boy or girl within the Blue Coat School although few of the records contain material from all the transcribed sources.

The Blue Coat School source material

Source material lies at the heart of historical research and as such, will directly influence any findings. However any historical study on social mobility faces the challenge of constructing a dataset of sufficient length, quality and reliability to support empirical research.

The Birmingham Blue Coat School collection is held by the Library of Birmingham. The records date back to the early eighteenth century and include a variety of administrative and policy documentation ranging from financial records, estate papers, minute books, visitation books, apprenticeship indentures as well as more unusual documentation such as charity sermons and dietary requirements of the children which together provide rich socioeconomic information on the parents and their children.

Where extensive source material exists as is the case with the Blue Coat School records, it is sometimes necessary to be selective in the choice of materials and limit the extent of the analysis. Whilst there is always the danger that some important material may get missed by being selective, a preliminary examination ensured that the most appropriate material from 1780 to 1856 was extracted for the purpose of constructing a dataset of the children who received education at the school and who subsequently obtained employment once they had left the school.

The overall dataset contains 1,974 records of individual pupils but only a relatively small portion of the total number of records could be used for each analysis. Details of the primary source material used to create the main dataset are outlined in Table 1 below. As the original source material was not standardised, the information contained within each record varies. For instance, some of the nomination records include details of the reason the child was nominated together with marriage and baptism certificates whereas others just consist of the date of nomination and the name of the parents. As well as the overall dataset used for the majority of the

analysis, there were two subsets. The first one consists of records of those parents who originated outside of Birmingham (N=100) and the second consists of the number of destitute and non destitute children 1805-1845 (N=478).

Table 1: Overview of material extracted from the Blue Coat School archives.

Nomination Papers (MS1622/3/3) 1819-1850 1,966 records	The nomination papers are documents which had to be submitted in order for a child to be admitted to the school. Each bundle of papers contained one or more of the following items: name of parents, baptism certificate, parent's marriage certificate, a letter of recommendation and a medical certificate.
Apprenticeship Indentures (MS1622/2/6) 1780-1825 386 records	The apprenticeship contract between an apprentice and the master, known as the indenture, provides details of the master, the length of the apprenticeship, conditions of the apprenticeship and type of occupation. Sometimes a transfer form is included in the paperwork which includes details of the transfer of the apprenticeship to a new master.
Examination Records (MS1622/2/5) 1843-1856	From the 1840s onwards the children were examined when they left the school. The examination covered reading, writing, and

	arithmetic as well as general conduct. The examination records in the archives are the counterfoils associated with the certificates the children received following their examination. As well as providing examination results the records sometimes include the start date and name of their future employer.
229 records	
Resignation Records (MS1622/3/5) 1818-1824	This book details the contracts between the parents/guardian and the school. The parents/guardian had to agree to 'resign' their child into the care of the school. It provides an alternative source of admission data.
914 records	
Service Register (MS16/2/1/2) 1805-1844	This is a register of children who were nominated for admittance to the school, and it includes details of their age, their baptism, the date they left the school and details of their employer. It covers the period 1805-1819. From 1819-1844 the register contains signatures of the parents 'resigning' their child into the care of the school together with their address and occupation.
823 records	
Feltham's Trust Register (MS1622/2/1/3) 1834-1850	This book records provides details of the children who were funded by the Feltham's Trust. It includes the date they were admitted,

196 records	their date of birth, who nominated them for admittance, the date they left the school and their employer.
General Minute Meeting Book (MS1622/1/1) 1781-1850 (1796-1801missing)	These were the Meeting Books of the General Committee of the subscribers. They contain information on the day to day running of the school.
Annual reports of Blue Coat School. (MS 1622/1/5) 1818-1850 (15 years missing throughout the period)	These reports include information on the numbers of pupils admitted, the names of those who had done well and any notable occurrence over the year.

As can be seen from the sources listed above, excluding the General Minutes which only refer to individuals in passing, no single source exists which covers the full extent of the timeframe in question. As such, each record in the database contains data from multiple sources from the Blue Coat School archives. For instance, the apprenticeship indentures date from the 1780s, whilst the service register does not commence until 1805.

Other material which was used for the analysis but not incorporated within the school database includes newspaper and magazine articles, parliamentary reports, trade directories, statistical reports, autobiographies and nineteenth century contemporary books.

Issues of interpretation

The construction of the dataset which facilitated this study does not solve all evidential or interpretative issues. This section identifies some of those issues and potential consequences for this study.

Accuracy

Although some inaccuracies may be a consequence of human error others arise through deliberate distortion of the truth. Some documentation was so full of errors that even contemporary observers questioned its validity. For example, Thomas Attwood provided evidence to petitions submitted to the Orders of the Council in 1812, regarding prohibition of trade to countries under France and her allies which he claimed affected 50,000 men in Birmingham. Such a claim was later found to be spurious or exaggerated.[50]

The statistical movement in the 1830s and 1840s led to the formation of statistical societies in many towns such as Bristol, Manchester and the Birmingham all of whom criticised Lord Kerry's 1835 report on the State of Education in England and Wales. Birmingham Statistical Society believed that the data in the report 'was vague and imperfect',[51] although in turn surgeon Richard Grainger disputed the accuracy of

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[50] "Economic and Social History: Industry and Trade, 1500-1880," in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7, the City of Birmingham*, ed. W B Stephens (London: Victoria County History, 1964), 81-139. *British History Online*, [accessed 28 March, 2018,] http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol7/pp81-139.

[51] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, III.1 (1840), p.26.

some of the data provided by Birmingham Statistical Society for the Children's Employment Commission in 1843. Nonetheless, he did admit that on the whole he believed that the Birmingham data presented a 'tolerably accurate view of the state of education in this town'[52] since Wood, who published the Birmingham statistical reports during the 1830s, was known to be very thorough.

Inconsistent recording and standardisation

Standardisation needs to take place in order to ensure consistency across the data for the purpose of categorising it in some manner, even though any act of standardisation could potentially result in loss of information. Standardisation in fact, did take place in the nineteenth century. The census returns for instance were subject to standardisation through the use of summary books which were issued to the enumerators.

Inconsistent recording is a particular problem with historical documentation as spelling was not standardised. For example, there are three different spellings for Joseph Brealey, pupil in the Blue Coat School. *Brealey* on his baptism certificate, *Brierley* on his medical certificate as recorded by the surgeon (whilst at the same time, his father signed his name as John *Brealey*) and *Breley* in the 1851 census. Not only were there variations in the way a name was written but names were often abbreviated or familiar names used in place of formal names. For instance, in the 1841 Census, Elizabeth Drew from the Blue Coat School was referred to as Betsy

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[52] *Children's Employment Commission. Second Report of the Commissioners. Trades and Manufactures.*, Command Papers ; Reports of Commisioners, 1843. p.f185 (No.503).

Drew.[53] These issues can make it difficult to link up the different records and increase the likelihood of errors.

The language which was used in historical documentation needs to be standardised because as is the case in contemporary society, there was considerable regional variation. Abbreviations may be found which could result in the wrong denotation being assigned to them. For example, 'Ag Lab' instead of agricultural labourer is a common one, but also 'm,' for maker (as in bread maker, shoe maker) but 'M.' for manufacturer. Some occupational terms were also often interchangeable, for example publican, inn-keeper, victualler or scribe, scrivener, writer and the coder may incorrectly interpret the descriptive. Some occupational terms are also now obsolete such as 'accomptant' which refers to an accountant. William Price, for example was apprenticed out to a 'writing master and accomptant' in 1794.[54] In the Blue Coat School dataset, standardisation has been used to enable analyse to take place. For instance, the term 'cordwainer' is interchangeable with the term 'shoemaker' so where an occupation refers to a cordwainer it has been recorded as shoe maker.

Such recording issues would have been compounded if the person in question was illiterate. They would not have been aware of any spelling variations nor any liberties the original recorder may have used when writing down details. The respondents in the census returns were said to have often described their occupation in an

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[53] 'Census Returns of England and Wales, 1841. Birmingham - Warwickshire'. HO107, Piece 1143, Folio 26, p. 11.
[54] 'The Library of Birmingham. Records of the Blue Coat Charity School: Apprenticeship Indentures, MS 1622/2/6'. 13 May 1794.

'extremely inaccurate and inadequate manner'.[55] Social Historian Kevin Schürer and Data Scientists Tatiana Penkova and Yanshan Shi for instance, found 41 variations for the term 'watchmaker'.[56] Similarly, the incumbents and clerks who completed the entries in the parish registers often determined what occupation should be entered onto the marriage or baptism certificate. Wrigley found evidence that the occupational descriptive changed when the clerk or incumbent changed.[57] The danger with such inconsistent recording is that any change in recorded occupation could be seen as evidence of occupational mobility.

Descriptive materials may also be found in governmental reports, which contain responses to specific questions addressed to witnesses. Sometimes these individuals were from the working class and as such are invaluable for providing an insight into the lives of the ordinary people. However, whilst the reports do contain solid facts they were also 'produced with an eye to the reading habits and other cultural sensibilities of the potential recipient'.[58] When reading such reports, it is necessary to be aware of any bias or particular slant. In some cases, it may be necessary to disregard some potentially useful documentation. For instance Henry Althan, a school inspector, was an advocate of public education and very dismissive of private education to the extent that he believed that young children could only be

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[55] W A Armstrong and R S Schofield, 'The Use of Information About Occupation', in *Nineteenth Century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for the Study of Social Data*, ed. by E.A. Wrigley (Cambridge University Press, 1972), p194.
[56] K. Schürer, T. Penkova and Y. Shi, 'Standardising and Coding Birthplace Strings and Occupational Titles in the British Censuses of 1851 to 1911', *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, 48.4 (2015), p.196.
[57] E. A. Wrigley, *The PST System of Classifying Occupations,* p.6.
[58] Frankel, Oz. *States of Inquiry: Social Investigations and Print Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the United States.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), p.173.

taught to read if they had attended a public infant school.[59] While his view has been noted, his bias has also been recorded (See Chapter 3).

Secondary sources which act as primary sources

In some cases, it is not possible to view the original primary source, as it has been lost or destroyed. The census is a good example as most of the original schedules were destroyed and we have to assume that the data within the Census Enumerator's Books (CEBs) is a fairly accurate representation of the schedules.[60] Furthermore, many census returns have since been transcribed in order for them to be accessed digitally and this may have led to further errors materialising.

Many other documentary sources are in fact, copies of the original and hence open to copying errors as well as reinterpretation. For example, the early Parliamentary debates were not written down and the initial printed Hansard debates comprised of a collection of notes taken from various sources. Even many of the early guide books which are used as primary source material in fact contain secondary source material. For instance, in historian William Hutton's *History of Birmingham* which has long been a primary source of information for historians, the author quotes John Leland[61] and George Yates in 1830 quotes both Leland and Hutton.[62] In such cases, the background of the author may provide some indication as to the value of the source.

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[59] P. Gardner, *The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England: The People's Education* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p.171.
[60] P.M. Tillott, 'Sources of Inaccuracy in the 1851 and 1861 Censuses', in *Nineteenth-Century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for the Study of Social Data*, ed. by E.A. Wrigley (Cambridge University Press, 1972), p.84.
[61] W. Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*, 3rd Edn (Thomas Pearson, 1795), p.18.
[62] G. Yates, *An Historical and Descriptive Sketch of Birmingham : With Some Account of Its Environs, and Forty-Four View of the Principal Public Buildings, &c* (Birmingham, 1830), p.8.

Hutton himself believed that an historian had to have 'assiduity in collecting materials' and being able to select 'them with judgment'.[63]

Target audience

When viewing a diary, letter, newspaper or other document, the target audience of the material needs to be taken into account as this may explain deliberate or otherwise omissions or distortions in the data. For instance, individuals may have withheld information from taxation lists in order to evade taxes or distorted information in trade directories in order to inflate their status. When social historian Robert Morris made a comparison of linked individuals from Leeds taken from a poll book and a trade directory in the early 1830s, he found that there was evidence of status increase in a large number of cases.[64]

All documents are shaped by their cultural and political background. Parliamentary documents may reflect specific political views and reports used to justify ambitions. Sir John Pakington, who instigated the Royal Commission which was set up to inquire into the state of education in England, recognised the need for public support to achieve his aims. He admitted that his purpose for setting up the commission was to ensure that the report they produced would not only 'arm the government with the authority of facts' but also gain 'the support of public opinion'.[65]

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[63] W.A. Hutton, '*The History of Derby*' 2nd Edn (London, 1817), pp. v-vi.
[64] R. J. Morris, 'Occupational Coding: Principles and Examples', *Historical Social Research*, 15.1 (1990), p.7.
[65] R. Aldrich, 'Sir John Pakington and the Newcastle Commission', in *Lessons from History of Education: The Selected Works of Richard Aldrich* (Routledge, 2006), p.54.

Newspaper articles, even those which were quite localised, were fashioned by their audience and articles were manipulated in accordance to the interest of advertisers or in order to sell their stories. Quite often, newspaper articles would focus just on one side of the story and not provide an alternative viewpoint. In the Birmingham *Aris Gazette*, the Blue Coat School was inevitably portrayed as an 'excellent', 'meritorious', 'highly useful charity' in commentary perhaps to enlist support from readers of the newspaper.

Data taken from popular culture such as guidebooks, works of art and novels may provide an alternative view to counter any official documentation as they would have been written for a different audience although these sources will have their own drawbacks. Guidebooks for example, may portray the same locality in a favourable or unfavourable light. Birmingham printer James Drake, in his book the *Picture of Birmingham* which was written for residents and visitors described town improvements which he said 'will do much to uphold our claims to the title of residents in a handsome town'.[66] In contrast, author Samuel Sidney in his book *Rides on Railways* which was written for travellers who were passing through the town on their way to Wales, the Lake District or Scotland, believed that there were "few towns more uninviting than Birmingham'.[67]

Working class autobiographies, diaries, poetry, memoirs and letters often contribute a wealth of useful information. Nevertheless, whilst they do provide a uniquely personal insight into life within the working class, the authors may have had a

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[66] J. Drake, *The Picture of Birmingham: Being a Concise but Comprehensive Account of That Place Intended for the Information Both of Residents and Visitors* (Birmingham, 1825), p.31.
[67] S. Sidney, *Rides on Railways* (W.S. Orr & Company, 1851), p.77.

particular audience in mind which then directs the narrative. Some autobiographies were written as a record, perhaps to hand down through the family and the author may have wished to have his life presented in a favourable light. Other autobiographies were used to promote personal religious or political beliefs, with the intention to convert or reform. The *Autobiography of John Brown the Cordwainer* published in 1867 not only included his 'sayings and doings in town and country' but also included 'what part he took in the spread of church principles among the working class'.[68]

Those who published autobiographies may have encouraged the author to present the content in a particular way in order to encourage sales. Additionally, the authors would sometimes rearrange events or embellish them in order to make their narrative more interesting. As literacy historian William Christmas is keen to point out 'many labouring poets saw their writing as means to social advancement, and many used their access to print culture to better themselves economically and socially.'[69] It is debatable on the other hand as to whether Job Nott was anticipating any social advancement. In his book *The life and adventures of Job Nott*, the author described himself as a buckle maker from Birmingham.[70] However, in reality he was a merchant from Harborne who was listed amongst the nobility, gentry and gentry, in Pigot's

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[68] *The Autobiography of John Brown the Cordwainer, Ed. by a Clerical Friend [G. Huntington]*, ed. by G. Huntington and J. Brown (Oxford: A.R. Mowbray, 1867).

[69] W. Christmas, '*The Lab'ring Muses: Work, Writing, and the Social Order in English Plebeian Poetry, 1730-1830*' (University of Delaware Press, 2001). Cited in Aruna Krishnamurthy, *The Working-Class Intellectual in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Routledge, 2009), p.5.

[70] T. Price, *The Life and Adventures of Job Nott, Buckle Maker, of Birmingham; as Written by Himself*, (Birmingham, 1793).

1828 commercial dictionary.[71] As such, this highlights another potential problem –

that of literary forgery. William Dodd who was born in the Lake District in 1804, wrote

his autobiography to highlight his experience as a child worker in a textile factory. His

publication *Narrative of the Experiences and Sufferings of William Dodd, A Factory*

Cripple (1841) was sent to Lord Shaftesbury to be used in testimonials in support of

factory legislation for children. However, the Radical John Bright, son of a cotton mill

owner, believed that Dodd falsified details in his autobiography. As such, there was

disagreement as to whether the facts presented in the autobiography could be

treated as reliable evidence.[72]

Recall issues

In an era when many could not read or write, many individuals would have been at

the mercy of their memories and it would have been easy for facts to become

distorted or forgotten. As late as 1891, it was said that 'a very large proportion of

persons, not improbably the indeed the greater number of adults, do not know their

precise age, and can only state it approximately. Such persons, as was shown in the

last Census report, have a tendency to return their age as some exact multiple of

10'.[73]

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[71] *Pigot and Co.'s National Commercial Directory for 1828-9; Comprising... Cheshire, Cumberland, Derbyshire, Durham, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northumberland, Nottinghamshire, Rutlandshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Westmorelan* (J. Pigot & Co. 1828).

[72] J. Carlisle, 'Introduction', in *Factory Lives: Four Nineteenth-Century Working-Class Autobiograhies.*, ed. by James R. Jnr Simmons (Broadview Press, 2007), pp.10-11.

[73] *Census of England and Wales. 1891. Volume IV. General Report, with Summary Tables and Appendices.*, Comand Papers, 1893, CVI. p.27.

Autobiographies in particular may suffer from recall issues with liberties taken intentionally or unintentionally with the facts, presenting a distorted view of the past. This was particularly the case if the author was writing about his or her childhood. Contemporary research suggests that many older people recall more positive than negative events from their childhood when they reminisce[74] but writing with the benefit of hindsight later in life, they may transform their recollections. For example, although Grace Foakes born in 1901 recalled her father as being a stern man, she did acknowledge that with hindsight he was probably extremely tired from work most of the time.[75]

Selection bias

Data collection as an established process was still in its infancy during the nineteenth century and many of the early reports suffer from the 'defects of pioneers'.[76]

The inaccuracy of some of the returns led to selection bias in both official and unofficial reports. For example, the Brougham Commission which was set up to investigate the activities of the charitable trusts in England and Wales (particularly those concerned with the education of the poor) published 32 reports between 1818 and 1837. Its inquiries (excluding London) were carried out by two travelling commissioners together with a clerk and they initially consulted an earlier charity

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[74] Laura Ros and José Miguel Latorre, 'Gender and Age Differences in the Recall of Affective Autobiographical Memories Using the Autobiographical Memory Test', *Personality and Individual Differences*, 49.8 (2010), p.950.

[75] J.M. Strange, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class, 1865–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 2015). p.103.

[76] R. Johnson, *The Blue Books and Education 1816-1896 : The Critical Reading of Official Sources.* (University of Birmingham, 1974), p.3.

census report produced in 1786 and reprinted in 1816. A letter to the local clergy flowed, asking for a list of charities within the parish and meetings set up to interrogate witnesses as to the validity of the charity. In practice, there were rarely sufficient witnesses present at the meetings to enable the board to investigate every charity and of those who did attend the majority of witnesses were churchwardens, curates and overseers of the poor who were often responsible for compiling the lists in the first place as the clergy would delegate the work. Many of the common day and dissenting schools were missed and even the Select Committee admitted that their reports were not very reliable except in reference to endowed schools.[77]

Selection bias may also occur when using working class autobiographies arise as a consequence of the unique nature of the material. Such personal documentation offers only the one viewpoint and the fact that these authors were capable of writing an autobiography in the first place makes them a self-selecting group. As such their experience may not be representative of the general population. For instance, both Samuel Coleridge and Charles Lamb (poets and authors) attended Christ's Hospital charity school in London but neither, it could be argued, were typical alumni.

Some sectors of the population were frequently excluded from documentation and consequently this could introduce a degree of selection bias. For example, the Trade Directories often excluded many (but not all) of the manual labouring population. In other instances, those who did not have steady employment and who frequently changed their abode may become 'invisible'. Missing information is a particularly

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[77] B.I Coleman, "The Incidence of Education in Mid-Century," in *Nineteenth-Century Society: essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data*, ed. by E.A. Wrigley (Cambridge University Press, 1972), p.398.

problem in the case of women and children. The occupation of women was rarely

recorded in parish records or in census reports. The 1841 census enumerators for

instance, were instructed not to record their women and children who worked at

home as 'the profession of wives, or of sons or daughters living with their husbands

or parents, or assisting them, but not apprenticed or receiving wages, need not be

set down'.[78] As a result, in the census returns women and children would have been

recorded as not working. For example, Charlotte Booth was a widow in 1841 with

four children to feed but the census did not record her as having any occupation.

When her son was admitted to the Blue Coat School in 1845 she was said to be

working as a warehouse woman.[79]

Time specific data and interval bias

Historians Diedericks and Tjalsma consider occupations as being 'time and place

bound'.[80] By this they mean that occupations can change over time or even disappear

altogether, so when occupational data is used the time period and location must be

taken into account. However such an assertion may be applied to many historical

references as the data extracted from the documentation inadvertently corresponds

to a particular a time period or even specific day. The census for example, is but a

snapshot taken on one particular day every ten years as are the parish records which

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[78] E. Higgs, 'Women, Occupations and Work in the Nineteenth Century Censuses', *History Workshop Journal*, 23.Spring (1987), p.63.

[79] 'The Library of Birmingham. Records of the Blue Coat Charity School: Nomination Papers, MS1622/3/3'. 23 January 1845 and 'Census,1841.' HO107, Piece 1143, Folio 12 . Also view F. Terry-Chandler, 'Introduction to Birmingham Women's History', in *Birmingham: Bibliography of a City*, ed. by C. Chinn (The University of Birmingham Press, 2003), pp. 126–45 for an explanation of some of the difficulties researching women's history in Birmingham.

[80] H.A. Diedericks and H.D. Tjalsma, 'The Classification and Coding of Occupations of the Past: Some Expeiences and Thought.', in *The Use of Occupations in Historical Analysis*, ed. by Kevin Schürer and Herman Diederiks (Max Planck Institute for History, Göttingen 1993), p.30.

record information on occupation and abode for one particular day of one particular year. The Blue Coat School nomination records occasionally reference the reason for the nomination and circumstances could and did change. For example, in 1827 it was said that the family of Edward Walton were 'through unforeseen misfortunes (are) reduced in circumstances'.[81]

Language is also time specific as the language used in the sources may not have the same meaning as it has now. For instance, a cake merchant was not a confectioner but somebody who dealt in cattle food; a 'banker', was once a person who dug ditches for drainage, and created banks out of the surplus earth and a bar keeper was the toll keeper for the toll roads. In other instances, the definition has remained basically the same but the nature of the work has changed, for example an engineer was originally somebody who designed roads, bridges or machinery.

In some cases, the meaning has been lost. This is particularly the case when you consider administration records, which are written with the assumption that the reader will understand the context. For example, in January 1844 the children in the Blue Coat School were examined and their marks were written down in the General Minutes as seen in Table 2.

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[81] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 1827.

Table 2: Examples of examination grades from the Blue Coat School, 1844

Henry Harcourt	105	1
Samuel Bolton	104	2
Thomas Simpson	104	2
Thomas Seeley	93	3
George Walker	93	3
Joseph Luckett	80	4
William Jones	78	4

Source: The Library of Birmingham. Records of the Blue Coat Charity School: Examination Certificate Counterfoil Volumes, MS 1622/2/5

Although we could perhaps deduce what these marks might mean, we would not be able to verify our conclusion.

Using primary source material presents many challenges but by carefully checking multiple sources it is possible to obtain a degree of accuracy. Sometimes, a source provides its own validation. For instance, the *Morning Chronicle,* which was a London newspaper, published a number of surveys across the country between the years 1849-1851 under the heading 'Labour and the Poor'. Although the primary motive was to capitalise on interest in social issues to increase circulation and hence the reports could suffer from bias issues, contemporary readers did verify or modify the evidence which had been collected by the reporters.[82] In other cases, alternative forms of evidence offer validation. For instance, archaeology can verify documentary

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[82] M Vicinus, 'Reviewed Work: The Victorian Working Class: Selections from Letters to the Morning Chronicle by P. E. Razzell, R. W. Wainwright', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 8.4 (1975), p.138.

evidence. The Bullring excavations of 1997 to 2001 revealed social downgrading of two of the areas under excavation during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries consistent with local surveys.[83] The excavations suggest that these areas were associated with 'high living' during the mid-eighteenth century but this was followed by demolition deposits and extensive rebuilding. At the same time, Hutton speaks of extensive building taking place during this period from 1741 to 1781 when 'Birmingham seems to have acquired the amazing augmentation of seventy-one streets, 4,172 houses and 25,032 inhabitants'.[84]

In the end, whilst primary sources must be treated with a degree of caution, they do provide a window into the past which allows us to interpret the evidence and arrive at our own conclusions to aid in our understanding of societies in the past. As historians Sangha and Willis remark 'our sources help to keep us rooted in a past reality, however tenuous, fleeting and subjective that connection might be'.[85]

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[83] S. Buteux, *Beneath the Bull Ring: The Archaeology of Life and Death in Early Birmingham* (Brewin Books, 2003), p.95.
[84] Hutton. *A History of Birmingham*, 3rd Edn p.59.
[85] L. Sangha and J. Willis, 'Introduction', in *Understanding Early Modern Primary Sources*, ed. by L. Sangha and J. Willis (Routledge, 2016), p7.

Outline of the study

The following chapters will provide a narrative of events as we follow the children through their life-course. First we will examine the family background of the Blue Coat School children before exploring their educational experience whilst in the school. We will then review the occupational training they received on completion of their education before evaluating the extent of any mobility between or within the social strata during their adult working life.

Chapter 1 will consider the physical, economic and population growth of Birmingham. It will locate the school within the social and economic context of eighteenth century Birmingham and the wider region. It will examine parental characteristics such as place of origin and social background to determine if there were any distinguishing features which characterised those children who were admitted to the school. Physical and economic features of Birmingham in a wider context will then be explored and this will include any characteristics which may have impacted on the ability of an individual to become socially mobile. Specific features of the local population such as class will also be considered.

As we saw earlier in the chapter, the Blue Coat School entry requirements stipulated that a child had to be seen as being a 'proper object of charity' before they were admitted into the school. As such, Chapter 2 will explore the family background of those children who were nominated for entry into the school. This chapter will also provide an overview of the working class family in Birmingham and this will include an

assessment of the level of income and quality of life as well as the impact on finances which arose as a consequence of marriage and subsequent children.

Chapter 3 will explore the quality and extent of education which was available to pupils within the Blue Coat School. It will include aspects of the learning experience, including the quality and duration of the education and also provide an overview of the teachers who taught in the school. The following section will then summarise the educational opportunities open to working class children in Birmingham. It will review the growth of formal education which includes the development of the teaching profession.

Chapters 4 and 5 will follow the children once they left the Blue Coat School, to determine whether the education they received in the Blue Coat School had any significant impact on their life. Chapter 4 will review the extent and type of occupational training the children would have received once they had left the school in relation to the different sectors in the economy. This chapter will unpick the nature of apprenticeship in a novel way by comparing the role of the apprentice to that of the master in order to determine whether they were receiving training appropriate to the trade or profession. Furthermore, their qualifications will be assessed to see if their attainments within the Blue Coat School enabled them to obtain a superior apprenticeship.

Chapter 5 will first introduce us to the classification systems used to code the indicators which are used to analyse the extent of social mobility. Following on from

this first section, the chapter will then assess the extent of intragenerational mobility through an examination of the children's career trajectory on leaving school. Whilst previous studies have focussed on mobility between generations, few have investigated change within the life time of an individual. This chapter will also examine the extent of intergenerational mobility between generations. In contrast to the majority of studies which use marriage records and hence compare the fathers who are near the end of their working life with sons or daughters who are near the beginning of the working life, the data set will enable a comparison to be made at the same point in the lives of both generations. Finally, the relationship between those who were seen as 'high achievers' and their academic achievements will be examined to establish whether the education they received at the Blue Coat School may be seen as beneficial to them in the long term. The final section will review the differing sectors within Birmingham in order to determine which were more likely to provide opportunities for social mobility within the working class.

Whilst each chapter will incorporate data from both the males and females who attended the Blue Coat School, as discussed earlier, it is notoriously difficult extracting sufficient information to follow up the life course trajectory of females. Therefore, of necessity, much of the analysis will focus solely on the males. However, the research will incorporate some new material on females which will add to our current knowledge of working class women in Birmingham.

Through focusing on the individuals who attended the Blue Coat School in Birmingham, it has been possible to evaluate the effect of specific issues which may

have impacted on the ability of an individual to become socially mobile, such as the loss of parents whilst young and the lack of a suitable apprenticeship on leaving school. It is apparent however, that many of the children were able to mitigate the severity of any adverse loss through making use of a support network who were either kin or individuals associated with the school. Whilst the education the children received at the Blue Coat School does not appear to have enabled them to become upwardly mobile in the majority of cases, there is evidence that the school enabled them to access opportunities which may not have been ordinarily open to them.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO BIRMINGHAM: ITS PHYSICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

The ability to be socially mobile is to some extent reliant on the characteristics of an area, namely its demographics and economy. A report published by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission in 2016, which identified the most and least socially mobile areas of the country, mapped the '*geography of disadvantage'.* The report highlighted features such as good transport links which aided upwards social mobility and changes in the economy which led to downwards mobility.[1]

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, mobility also varied across the country in accordance with the diverse nature of the land and its people. This incorporates the occupational structure and class structure. For instance, Mitch found that it was much easier for an unskilled individual to rise to a skilled position in urban Birmingham due to its occupational structure than it was in rural Norfolk during the nineteenth century.[2] In Manchester, where there was a large manufacturing sector, there was said to be a much greater division of classes than in Birmingham which hindered social mobility.[3]

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[1] See *The Social Mobility Index*, 2016 (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission 2016).
[2] Mitch, '*Literacy and Occupational Mobility in Rural versus Urban Victorian England*, p.26.
[3] R Dennis, 'Sources of Diversity Among Victorian Cities', in *English Industrial Cities of the Nineteenth Century:A Social Geography* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.17.

This first chapter will examine the institution of the Blue Coat School. It will locate the school and its pupils within the context of the region. As such, it will analyse the extent of parental migration for those associated with the Blue Coat School. The section will then explore the personal qualities regarded as essential for admission to the school. The distinguishing background features which characterised those children who were admitted to the Blue Coat School will also be considered, including the religious preferences of the parents and their social background.

The chapter will also provide an outline some of the major physical, social and economic changes which took place in Birmingham during a period termed the 'first industrial revolution'. The dates for this revolution are not precise, but cover the period from around 1760 to 1840. Following a review of the physical and economic growth of the town, political and social aspects will be explored.

The Blue Coat School institution

Blue Coat School was built in the newly created parish of St Philip's which was in the centre of Birmingham. The parish, which included a church and parsonage house as well as the Blue Coat School was built on land ceded by the rector of the church for a yearly rent of 10 shillings.[4] Fig. 2 shows the extent of both the parish of St Martin's and St Philip's in Birmingham overlaid onto a contemporary twenty-first century map.

Figure 2: The Parishes of St Martin's and St. Philip's in Birmingham in 1708 (overlaid onto a 21st century map)
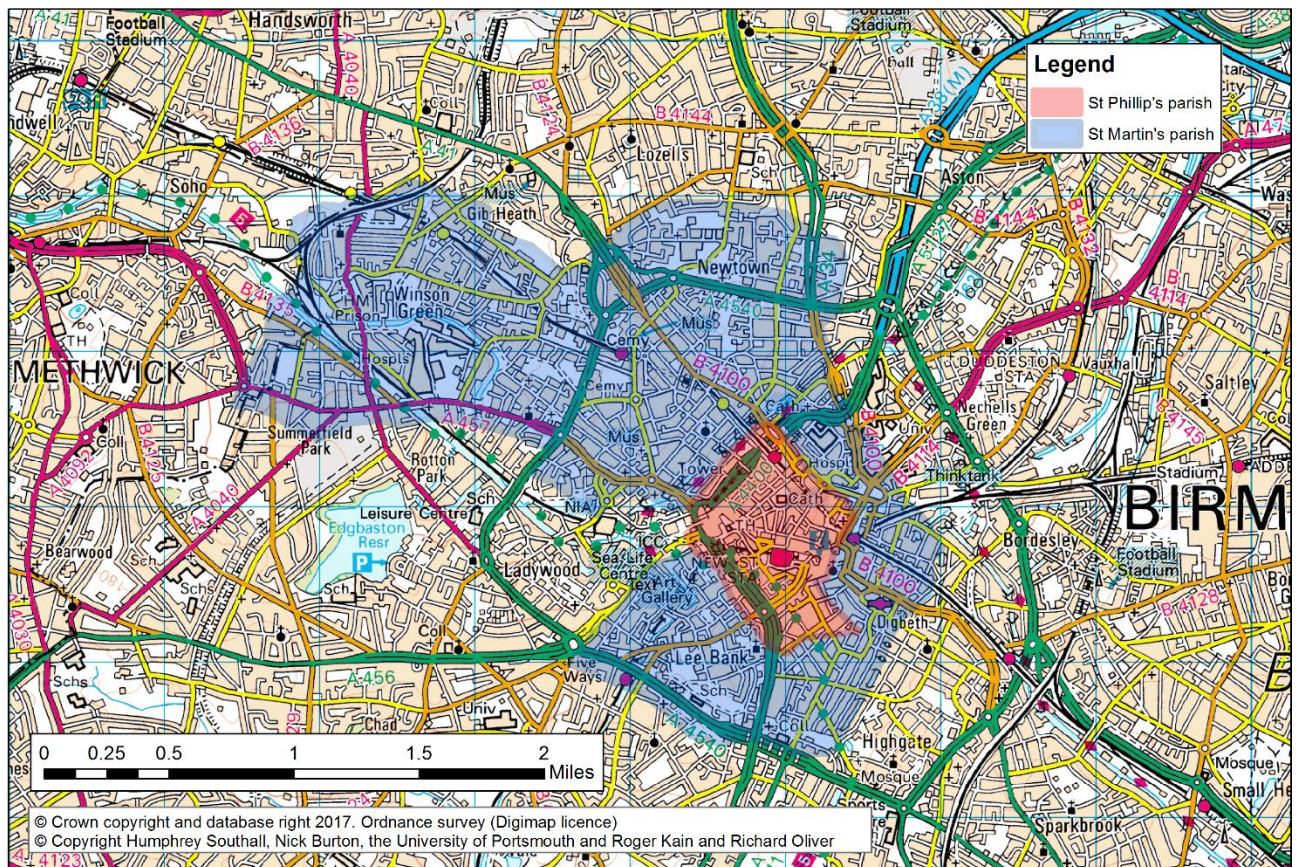
Source: R. J. P. Kain and R. R. Oliver, Historic parishes of England and Wales: an electronic map of boundaries before 1850 with a gazetteer and metadata, Agricultural History Review, 50.2 (2002), pp.134-5.

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[4] *A Short Account of the Blue Coat Charity School, in St. Philip's Church Yard, Birmingham, from It's Institution in 1724 to 1830* (Birmingham: Printed for H.C. Langbridge, 1832), p.6.

Blue Coat School was governed through a board of eleven appointed trustees who were 'empowered to make rules, orders and directions for the management of the said school'.[5] When the number of trustees was reduced to four, the surviving trustees appointed seven more. There was also a committee, which consisted of twenty-five subscribers who were elected annually and this committee always included the Rectors of St. Martin's and St. Philip's. The committee was responsible for overseeing the management of the school and they met every Monday. There were also a number of sub-committees who looked after the food supply, clothing, education, estate matters and other concerns. [6]

The school was financed through endowments, contributions at charity sermons and a charity box which was attached to the school. Whilst income from the charity box only came to £1 in 1831, collections at the churches and chapels brought in £243. Income from rents from its estates raised £1,222 and dividends contributed another £158. Income from the subscribers came to £925.[7]

Although it appears the school was financially sustainable, it suffered intermittently through lack of patronage. For instance, in 1831 the committee noted a decrease in the amount collected on behalf of the Blue Coat School within the churches and chapels following the annual sermon and there are similar entries scattered throughout the minutes.[8] In March 1835 the school suffered a setback when Thomas Paine, a Trustee and a member of the Committee kept £1,544 he had accrued

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[5] *A Short Account of the Blue Coat Charity School.* p.10.
[6] 'ibid'*.* pp.26-28.
[7] 'ibid'. p.54.
[8]' ibid'.

through donations for the support of institution. By November, he had paid back £265 but by December he was said to be insolvent.[9]

Parental background

As stated earlier, one of the main requirements for children who wished to enter the Blue Coat School was that the parents were to be parishioners of Birmingham and their children baptised in the established church. Out of 1,243 children who were nominated for admittance to the Blue Coat School between 1780 and 1850, the majority (eight-eight percent) were from either the parish of St Martin's or St Philip's but the remaining twelve percent were from parishes outside the area.[10] However, even though the majority of children were born in Birmingham, their parents may have been born elsewhere.

Out of a sample of 304 parents of the children from the Blue Coat School where origin of birth has been confirmed using baptism and census records, just over half (53.6 percent) were not born in Birmingham. This figure may be much higher as some parents may not have declared their origin of birth in the records.

Whilst we do not have a migration date for those families who relocated to Birmingham, we do know when the children were born in Birmingham and can use their date of birth to determine an approximate timeframe for the migration. As such

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[9] ' The Library of Birmingham. Records of the Blue Coat Charity School: General Meeting Minutes Books, MS 1622/1/1/4-10, pp. 1781–1856. March to December 1835.
[10] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'.

we can see that the families moved to Birmingham during the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. Fig. 3 displays the extent of Blue Coat School migration, although it excludes two individuals from Scotland, two from Ireland and two where the precise location has not been identified.

Figure 3: Origin of migrant families in the Blue Coat School (N=100) for children born 1802 to 1837
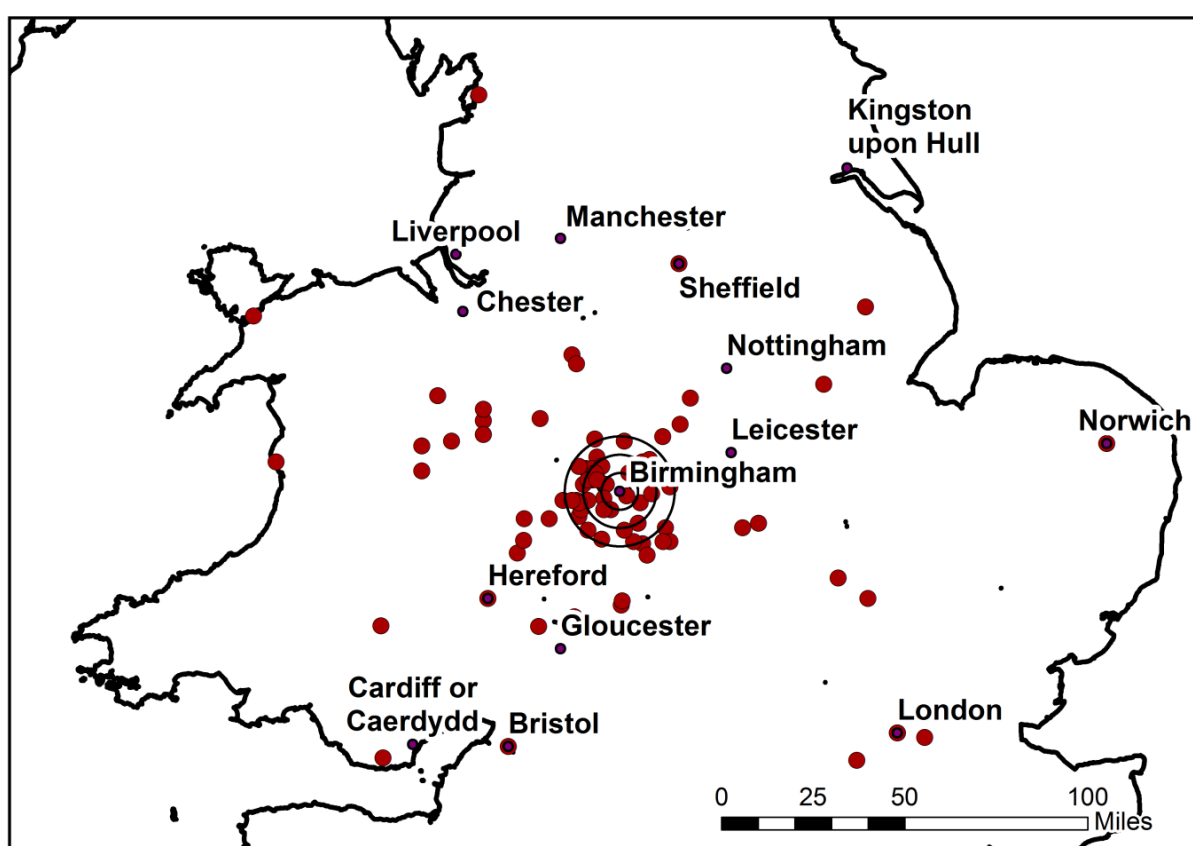
Source: B.C.S Nomination and census records

Just under half (n=46) of the families in the Blue Coat School who migrated to Birmingham came from within a 15 miles radius of Birmingham whilst the rest came from further afield. There is some evidence from Parton and Court that over time

Birmingham began to entice migrants to move from a more extensive area[11] and this evidence may support their findings but with such a small data set this inference must remain inconclusive. We can also see in Fig. 4 that there was a north-west bias for the migration. Possibly this was a consequence of the improvements which took place in the transportation system which may have led to an enhanced networking along these routes.

Figure 4: Families from the Blue Coat School where migration was within 15 miles of the centre of Birmingham (n=46) 1802 to 1837
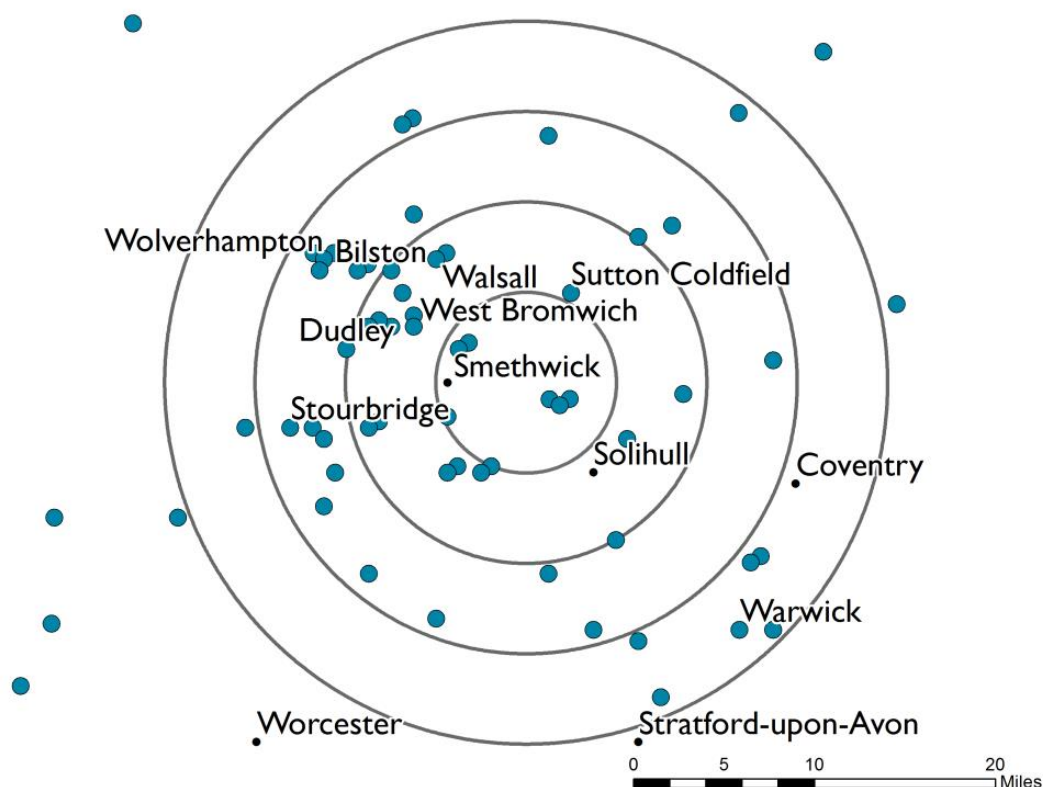
Source: Baptism and census records

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[11] C. Chinn, 'The People of Birmingham', in *Birmingham: The Workshop of the World* (Liverpool Unversity Press, 2016), p.14.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to make an accurate assessment of those who migrated to Birmingham as they may have moved to the town when they were a child or took advantage of new employment opportunities and changed their occupation following relocation. Consequently, the occupation of the Blue Coat School migrants cannot be examined. However, we can ascertain some distinguishing features of the parents who wished to send their child to the Blue Coat School.

The school generally only accepted children from parents who were deemed to be 'industrious' and 'honest' and this excluded those who were on poor relief and in the workhouse. Hence, the father of George Smith in 1826 was described as a 'poor but honest industrious man' as were the parents of Charles Avery in 1827 who were 'honest and industrious people'.[12] If the parents had fallen on hard times there was a need for the school to see evidence that they had tried to support their family and were not merely idle and work-shy. There were some doubts over the character of the parents of James Wheeler who was admitted to the school in 1844 but the school believed that his parents had been reformed particularly as the father was trying to support his own parents through labour.[13]

Sobriety was another characteristics associated with the industrious poor and with working-class respectability. A large portion of an article on the 'Industrious Poor' in *Chambers's Edinburgh journal* in 1836[14] was devoted to the perils of drinking. In the Blue Coat School, only 2.3 percent of the parents (n=6) worked within the drinks

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[12] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 1826, 1827.
[13] 'ibid'. 1844.
[14] '*The Industrious Poor'*. Chambers Edinburgh Journal, April 2, 1836; No. 218 British Periodicals Vol 5-6, p. 77.

industry out of a sample of 254 from 1811 to 1845[15] and this seems to reflect the ideology of the school.

Finally, as might be expected in an institution which promoted the moral activities of a religious establishment, there was a requirement that the parents were married. As such, a marriage certificate had to be presented before their child was accepted for nomination. The inclusion of a baptism certificate was also a requirement to prove that the child was of the established church and to provide evidence of their age.[16] As records show us that a small but significant number of the children were baptised immediately prior to entry into the school, this suggests that many parents were not religiously inclined. Out of a sample of 997 children, 13.5 percent (n=149) were baptised the same year they entered the school. If you extend this sample to include children who were baptised within two years of entering the school, the figure rises to 17.6 percent which suggests an element of advanced planning by the parent(s) or the nominators.[17] It is not possible to say categorically that the children in the sample had never been baptised or had been baptised elsewhere but re-baptised in St Martin's or St Philip's in order to gain entry to the school. However, there are elusive examples within the records of secondary baptisms. James Moreton Chapman was born and baptised in Tasmania 1832 but he was also baptised in St Philip's in 1840 and he entered the school the same year. Thomas Cherrington was baptised in St Matthew's in Bethnal Green, London in 1821 and was also baptised in St Philip's in 1827 before entering the school the same year.[18]

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[15] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'.
[16] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. March 1816.
[17] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'.
[18] 'ibid'.

Summary

This first section explored the foundation of the Blue Coat School. It examined its financial attributes and governance structures and we found that the school was reliant on its patronage to the extent that it intermittingly suffered from lack of support.

Parental background was also examined and we found that many of the parents had migrated to Birmingham at some point during their life course. They were deemed to be 'industrious and honest' individuals, living in Birmingham and of the established church. However, evidence suggests that some of them were not religiously inclined as their children were baptised prior to nomination to assure they were eligible for entry into the Blue Coat School.

The following section will outline some of the major physical and economic changes which took place in Birmingham during this period, including the population explosion which was driven by economic growth. The social characteristics which defined the people of Birmingham will also be explored.

The physical and economic growth of Birmingham

This section will outline some of the major physical and economic changes which took place in Birmingham during a period termed the 'first industrial revolution' which would have impacted on the ability of an individual to become socially mobile. The dates for this revolution are not precise, but cover the period from around 1760 to 1840. Such changes led to a rapid increase in population as people moved into the area in search of new opportunities. As such, this section will also examine migratory patterns and the social characteristics which defined the people of Birmingham. This will include discussion around class and attributes such as 'respectability' which featured so strongly in the Blue Coat School recruitment.

Physical growth

In the eleventh century, Birmingham was a small, fairly insignificant, hamlet. The Domesday Book of 1086 described it as a village which had 9 tenants and 'was and is worth 20s'. In comparison, the nearby village of Northfield had 33 tenants and 'was worth 8ls now 100s'. Yet, by 1783, Birmingham had grown to such an extent that Hutton was able to describe the town as 'large and full of inhabitants, and those inhabitants full of industry.'[19]

There is little surviving evidence of Birmingham prior to the twelfth century when Peter de Birmingham purchased a charter in 1166 which enabled him to hold a

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[19] Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*, 3rd Edn. p.91.

weekly market. Although it did not have many viable resources of its own, it was sited next to several other settlements such as Tipton and Wednesbury which had iron and coal fields which enabled it to become a centre for iron working. Furthermore, several long distance drover routes passed through the town which also created a regional market based around cattle and associated products such as hide, bone and horn.

At the time of the Restoration, there were only three streets in the town of Birmingham, according to an anonymous author in 1743 (although Hutton thought it was more likely that there were fifteen streets[20]) and St Martin's was the only parish. Aston in this period was not part of Birmingham; it was a separate parish which was physically larger than Birmingham. However part of the parish was incorporated into the new municipal borough of Birmingham in 1838, along with the townships of Duddeston, Nechells, Deritend and Bordersley.

By 1801 according to the census, there were 12,044 inhabited houses within the boundary of St Martin's and St Philip's and little space for new developments. However it has been suggested that the town of Birmingham was already suffering from congestion by the late seventeenth century as expansion was restricted by the availability of building land.[21] Certainly, by the early eighteenth century the increase in population was such that the wealthy inhabitants of the town were prepared to finance the building of a new church to accommodate all the parishioners. The Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry obtained an Act of Parliament in March 1708 to

[20] Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*, 3rd Edn p.68.
[21] M. Reid, 'The Urban Landscape', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, ed. by Peter Clark (Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.297.

create the new parish of St Philip's, as it was said that the current 'market town of

great trade and commerce is becoming very populous'.[22]

Economic growth

Although it is probable a market was already in existence by the time Birmingham

received its charter in 1166, its new status granted it certain privileges such as the

collection of tolls which enabled it to expand. The prominent industries at this stage

were the cloth trades and tanneries, but already in this early period there was

considerable growth in metal working. By 1540 John Leland was able to write 'there

be many smithes in the town that use to make knives and all manner of cutting tools,

and many lorimers that make bittes, and a great many naylers. So that a great part of

the town is maintained by smithes'.[23] Such was the reputation of Birmingham, that in

1719, the iron manufacturers, cutlers, smith and artificers petitioned Parliament as

they were concerned that the Russians were paying large sums of money to obtain

apprenticeships in the iron trades. The iron masters feared that their trade secrets

would be exported and their trade undermined.[24] By the time the Blue Coat School

was built in 1722 the town of Birmingham was said to be 'very large and noted for

curious manufactures in steel'.[25]

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[22] *A Bill for Building a Parish Church and Parsonage-House, and Making a New Church-Yard and a New Parish in Birmingham, in the County of Warwick*, HC. Bills and Acts. 8 March 1708.
[23] J. Leland, *The Itinerary of John Leland in or About the Years 1535-1543. Parts IV and V*, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith (London: George Bell and Sons, 1908), p.97.
[24] 'The Historical Register' (London, 1719), p.74.
[25] J. Chamberlayne, *Magnae Britaniae Notitia Or the Present State of Great Britain* (London, 1726), p.19.

Towns which lacked incorporated status were able to prosper through freedom from

any guild restrictions which restricted economic activity (Birmingham was not

incorporated until 1838). However, other factors also played a part. For instance, by

the mid eighteenth century the economic sector was also being driven indirectly by

technological changes taking place within its industries, despite the town not being

situated near to any raw materials nor any water sources suitable for driving

machinery. As the town was in a central location between the markets in the south

and the resources in the northwest, it was able to take advantage of its situation.[26]

In Aiken's map of Staffordshire from 1795 in Fig. 5 below, we can see how

Birmingham was able to connect to towns such as Wolverhampton, Dudley and

Wednesbury via roads and canals as well as further afield to towns such as

Bridgenorth and Shrewsbury which led into Wales.

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[26] Hudson, *The Regional Perspective*, p.122.

Figure 5: Birmingham in relation to the north-west region of the West Midlands, 1795
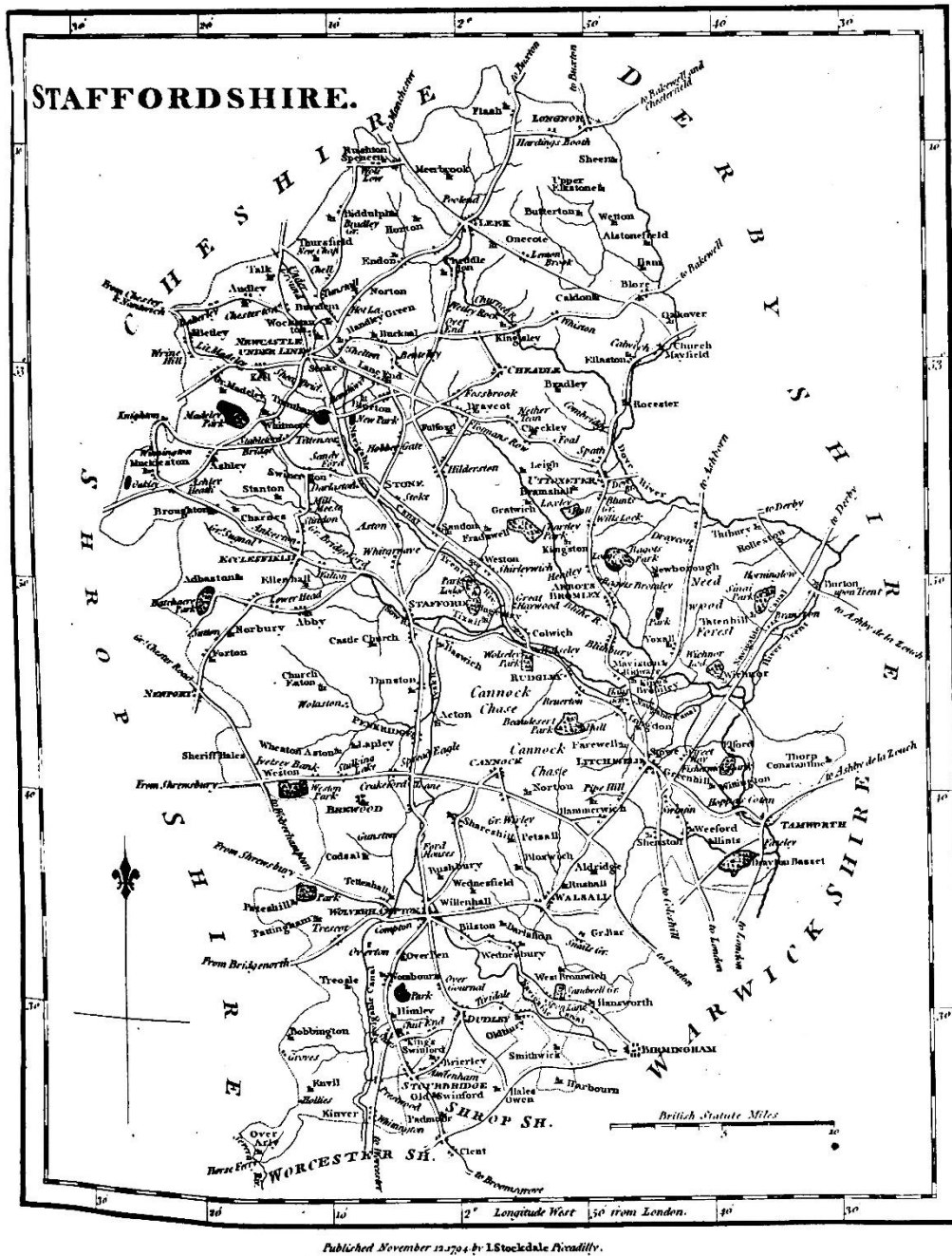
Source: A Description of the Country From Thirty to Forty Miles Around Manchester. Aiken, 1795. p.99.

Initially production focussed on the assembly and finishing processes, due to the cost of transporting raw materials but by concentrating on small 'toy' goods such as tubes, glass ware, jewellery, buttons, pins and especially hardware such as brass fittings,

which were light in weight and small in size for transport along poor quality roads,

manufacturers were able to maximise their profits. The introduction of turnpike roads

in Britain was said to be of particular benefit to those travelling around Birmingham

as merchants were able to transport heavier and larger raw materials. The

Birmingham author Charles Pye, writing in 1818, described the roads as being 'within

living memory, from the rains, constant wear, and no repair, worn into such

Holloways, that in some instances, particularly in Bordesley, a wagon, loaded with

hay, the top of it was not so high as the foot path on the side' but then goes on to add

that the toll roads in Birmingham 'now surpass most of them throughout the

kingdom'.[27] However, it was the advent of the canal system which truly revolutionised

transport and local businessmen were keen to support its development. When the

first canal was opened from Wednesbury to Birmingham in 1769, it was able to

deliver raw materials straight to Birmingham from the coalfield which halved the price

of coal.

Developments were also taking place in the financial sector. Prior to a national

banking system, smaller manufacturers relied on 'factors' to sell their goods. The

factor, later called commercial traveller or travelling salesman (hereafter referred to

as 'factor'), travelled the countryside collecting orders and raising capital in return for

commission. In a town such as Birmingham where there was a high proportion of

small workshops, the factor played an essential role in the local economy. The

importance of this role can be seen in the increase in the number of factors during a

period fuelled by industrial growth. In 1777 there were 85 factors and this had risen to

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[27] C. Pye, *A Description of Modern Birmingham*, (Birmingham 1818), p.67.

175 by 1815.[28] The larger manufacturers, relied not only on friends and merchant guarantors in England and on the continent to sell their products, but also sold directly to customers by setting up branches in the capital and other places. The manufacturer and businessman Matthew Boulton relied on his partner Fothergill, to find suitable markets to sell his goods.[29] Although Hutton remarked that 'about every tenth trader was a banker, or, a retailer of cash',[30] there was still a need for more fixed and working capital, which led to the growth of country banks based outside London. Taylor & Lloyd, the first bank in Birmingham, opened in 1765 and this was followed by many more. By 1800, the West Midlands had more country banks per population than any other region in the country.[31]

Other institutions were also created by the leading manufacturers which were instrumental in serving the needs of industry. For instance, the Assay Office was set up in 1773 (after Boulton vigorously petitioned Parliament). Birmingham Commercial Committee, which was established in 1783 in order to bring together the manufacturers and merchants,[32] eventually became the Birmingham Chamber of Manufactures and Commerce in 1813 with the banker, Richard Spooner as Chairman. In 1855 it transformed itself into the Chamber of Commerce which is still in existence today.

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[28] 'Economic and Social History: Industry and Trade, 1500-1880', [Accessed: 25 November 2014].'
[29] S. Chapman, 'British Marketing Enterprise: The Changing Roles of Merchants, Manufacturers, and Financiers, 1700-1860', *Business History Review*, LIII.2 (1979), 206–34. p.210.
[30] Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*, 3rd Edn. p.129.
[31] Marie B Rowlands, 'Continuity and Change in an Industrialising Society: The Case of the West Midlands Industries', in *Regions and Industries*, ed. by Pat Hudson, (Cambridge University Press 1989), p.127.
[32] Nigel Stirk, 'Manufacturing Reputations in Late Eighteenth-Century Birmingham', *Historical Research*, 73.181 (2000), p.146.

Such developments in the transport and financial services made it easier for manufacturers to facilitate economic growth, whilst at the same time, growth in the middle and lower income groups coupled with a widening range of cheaper consumer goods led to an increase in domestic consumption. This in turn led to an expansion of the service and consumer goods industries and a corresponding increase in the number of tailors, bakers and shoemakers and other service occupations. In addition to this domestic growth, during the second half of the eighteenth century, there was increased demand in Europe for items of high fashion such as candlesticks, buckles and gilt buttons. Hutton in fact, attributed the growth of the economy in Birmingham to overseas trade, stating 'to this modern conduct of Birmingham in sending her sons to the foreign market, I ascribe the chief cause of her rapid increase'.[33] The books of button makers 'Boulton and Fothergill' show that from 1757 to 1765 they traded widely in Europe in places such as Germany, Italy, France, Holland, Turkey, Austria and Turkey,[34] whilst at the same time, trade was taking place further afield in the 'frontier' economies such as America and the West Indies, as cheap guns and goods were being purchasing for the slave market. With little competition from overseas markets, annual profits for many manufacturers in all areas were in excess of £2,000.[35]

Steam power was only slowly incorporated into industry. By 1815, there were 15 steam engines in Birmingham, but even though there were 240 by 1838[36] the town

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[33] Hutton. *A History of Birmingham*, 3rd Edn p.99.
[34] Eric Hopkins, 'The Trading and Service Sectors of the Birmingham Economy 1750-1800', *Business History*, 28.3 (1986), p.87.
[35] D.P. White, 'The Birmingham Button Industry', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, 2 (1977), p.68.
[36] Clive Behagg, 'Custom, Class and Change: The Trade Societies of Birmingham', *Social History*, 4.3 (1979), p.464.

still relied mainly on man power. In the pearl button industry, union members were fined £5 if they used steam, as steam power was not seen to increase productivity.[37] New industries arose such as bedstead making, electroplating and tubing, glass and chocolate manufacturing whilst old trades were also overhauled particularly the brass and copper industries. Letter box plates and letter scales for the post were two items now manufactured in Birmingham following the introduction of the 'Penny Post'; an idea first proposed by a Birmingham man, Rowland Hill.[38]

As it evident, by the end of the eighteenth century Birmingham had grown significantly both physically and economically. The changes it had instigated in transport, finance and other areas had enabled it to become an outward looking town which was influential at a national and international level.

The next section will review the characteristics of the type of people who inhabited such a town and those migrants who might be enticed to leave a community which was perhaps economically stagnant to a new life in what would be seen as a thriving metropolis.

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[37] R. Samuel, 'Workshop of the World: Steam Power and Hand Technology in Mid-Victorian Birmingham', *History Workshop Journal*, 3.1 (1977), p.52.
[38] See *The Resources, Products and Industrial History of Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District: A Series of Reports, Collected by the Local Industries Committee of the British Association at Birmingham, in 1865*, ed. by Samuel Timmins (London: Hardwicks, 1866), pp, 127, 282, 488.

Migration

Birmingham was seen as a wealthy town by its contemporaries. In 1777 it was said to be 'rich and populous' whilst in 1793 it was described as a 'great and opulent town'.[39] The journalist and author John Bunce, described Birmingham at the end of the eighteenth century as being a 'natural centre of attraction to people who desired to better their condition'.[40] No doubt its wealth was the primary factor which led to the very high levels of immigration, especially from surrounding areas. Between 1731 and 1778, the population of Birmingham increased from around 23,000 to over 42,000.[41] Hutton believed that half of the inhabitants above the age of ten were not from Birmingham and that the town 'draws her annual supply of hands and is constantly fed by the towns that surround her, where her trades are not practiced'.[42] Historian Marie Rowlands believes that those who were upwardly mobile, moved to Birmingham from the surrounding areas to take advantage of the central facilities for credit and exchange.[43] Research by historian Alan Parton who examined poor law settlement certificates from 1726 to 1757 using poor law settlement certificates, building on earlier work by Pelham, found that few migrants travelled more than 60 miles as seen in Fig. 6.

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[39] 'The Speeches of John Wilkes' Vol 1 (London, 1777), p.97. and W. Belsham, 'Memoirs of the Reign of George III to the Session of Parliament Ending A.D. 1793' Vol 1 3rd Edn (London, 1796), p.485.
[40] J. T. Bunce, *Josiah Mason, a Biography*, (1882), p.10.
[41] Chinn, *Birmingham*, p.14.
[42] Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*, 3rd Edn. p.54.
[43] Rowlands. *Continuity and Change* p.120.

Figure 6: Poor-law migrants to Birmingham 1727 to 1757 (taken from Parton)
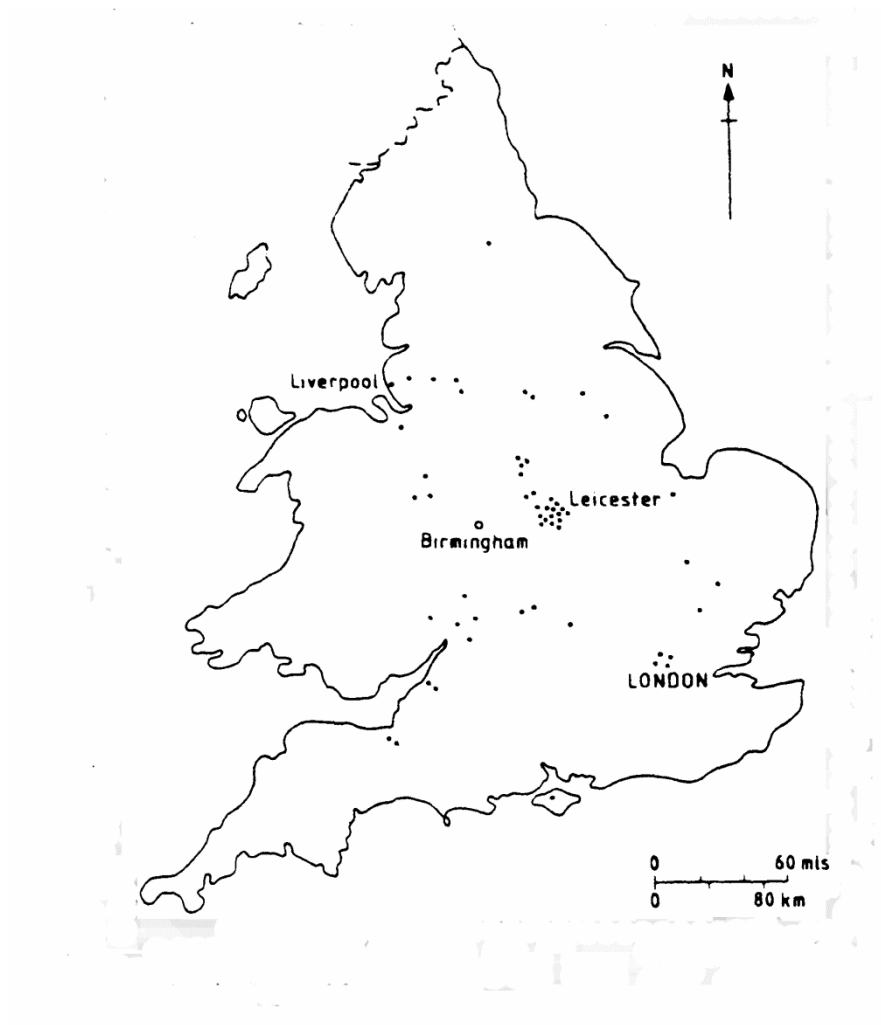
Source: A. Parton, 'Poor-Law Settlement Certificates and Migration to and from Birmingham 1726-57', *Local Population Studies*, 38.Spring (1987), Fig 3, p.28.

Whilst the migrant families in the Blue Coat School may not have held poor law settlement certificates, the majority would not have been seen as affluent and therefore a comparison may be made between the migration in the Blue Coat School and Birmingham. Although Parton used data from the early eighteenth century we find a similar pattern of migration.

In Parton's research there was an influx of migrants from Leicestershire but there is no evidence of such a pattern of migration in the sample from the Blue Coat School. Parton does not provide an explanation for this concentration of migrants but evidence suggests income for framework workers started to decline from around 1756/57.[44]

The majority (60 percent) of migrants in Parton's research came from his 'middle zone' category as seen in Fig. 7 below. This included Worcestershire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire but excluded the town of Birmingham as defined by the city boundary in 1937. They originated at a distance of up to 15 miles from Birmingham and there was a distinct north-west bias. He suggests this could relate to trade and commercial connections with the 'Black Country' region which includes towns such as Walsall, Wolverhampton, Bilston and Dudley.[45]

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[44] '"The City of Leicester: Social and Administrative History, 1660-1835", in A History of the County of Leicester.', ed. by R. A. McKinley (London, 1958), 153–200.
[45] A. Parton, 'Poor-Law Settlement Certificates and Migration to and from Birmingham 1726-57', *Local Population Studies*, 38.Spring (1987), p.25.

Figure 7: Poor-law migrants from the 'Middle Zone', 1727 to 1757 (from Parton)
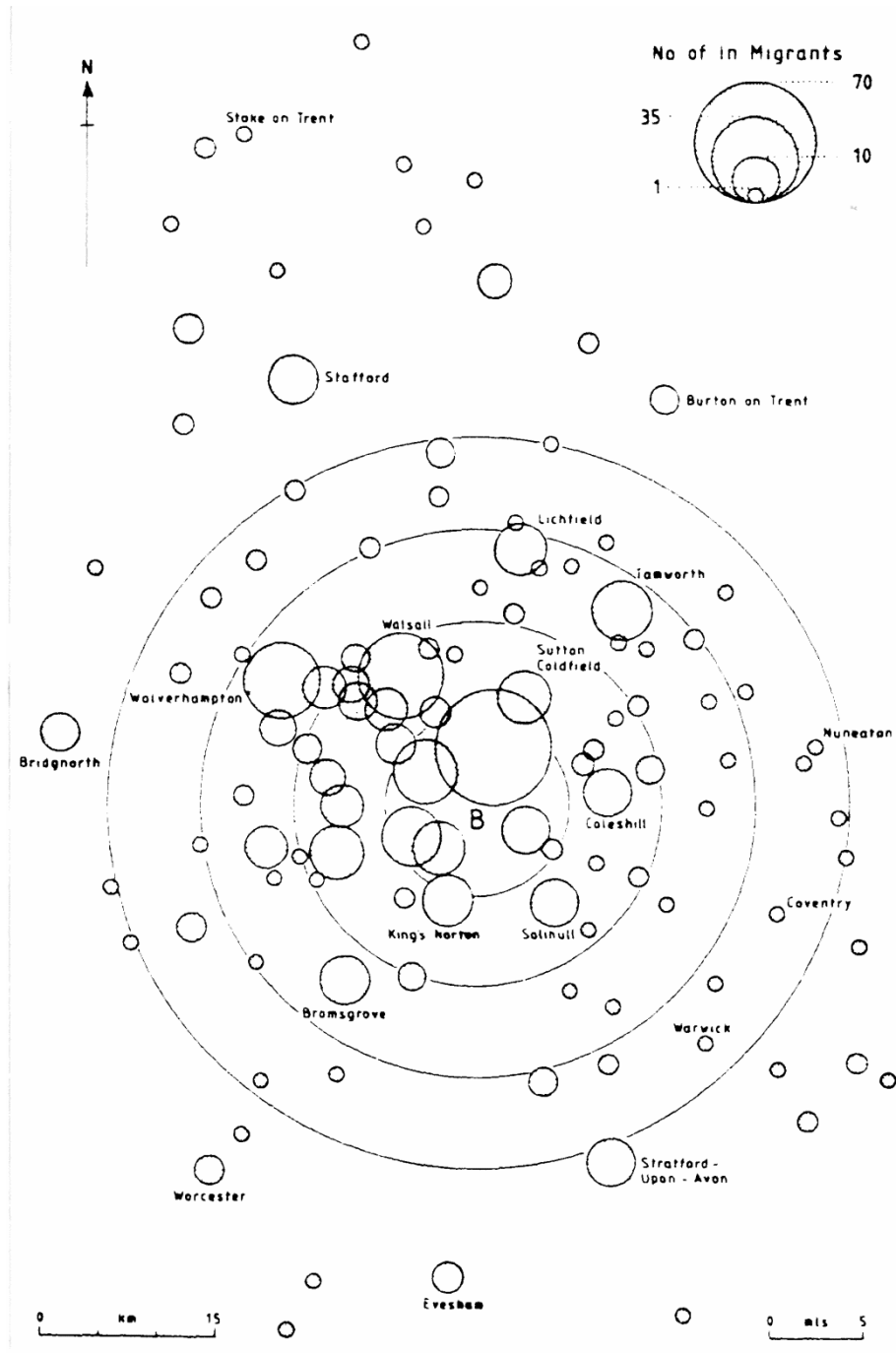
Source: Parton, 'Poor-Law Settlement Certificates and Migration to and from Birmingham 1726-57', p.27

Immigration particularly appealed to the young unskilled and semi-skilled men who were more flexible and attracted to the higher wages found in the towns. According to Arthur Young in 1771, a rural labourer rarely earned more than £15 a year, and yet no one in Birmingham earned less than 7s. each week and some received up to £3.[46] Even as late as 1843, Thomas Beckett, of Messrs Beckett Brothers, tin-plate workers, thought that 'many families moved to Birmingham because young people could easily find jobs earning half as much as men, so Birmingham had a large supply of unskilled heads of household'.[47] Such migration benefitted the markets as there was then a flexible workforce ready to respond to supply and demand although it did not always benefit the migrants. Joseph Shaw moved with his family to an industrial village near Lancaster in order to work in a mill. Trade in his native village was depressed and the mill offered good wages but he was made redundant two years later along with most of his family.[48]

Characteristics of the social classes in Birmingham

Social identity prior to the nineteenth century as defined by historian Harold Perkins during the 1960s was derived by rank which was established through honour, obligation, property and patronage from family and friends. If you owned land, then status and titles could be purchased if you had the money.[49] In an article in *The*

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[46] 'Economic and Social History: Industry and Trade, 1500-1880 [Accessed: 02 November 2014].'
[47] E.P. Duggan, 'The Impact of Industrialization on an Urban Labor Market : Birmingham, England, 1770-1860.' (University of Wisconsin, 1972), p.141.
[48] C. Pooley and S. D'Cruze, 'Migration and Urbanization in North-West England circa 1760-1830', *Social History*, 19.3 (1994), pp.343-4.
[49] H. Perkins, 'The Old Society', in *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880*, (University of Toronto Press, 1969), p.51.
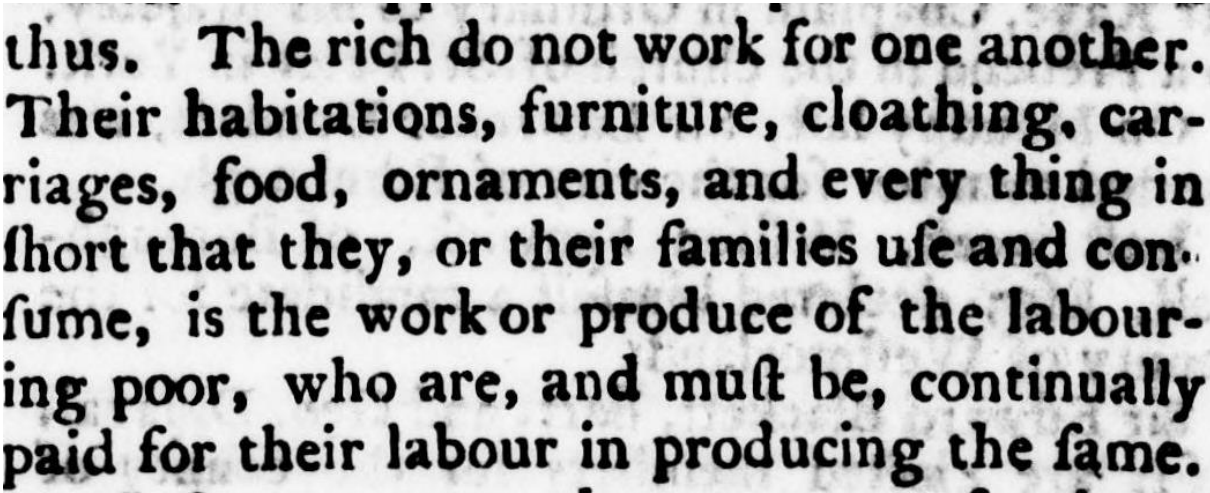
Leeds Intelligencer in 1768 seen in Fig. 8 below, the author defines two groups: the

'Rich' and the 'Labouring poor.'

Figure 8: The Rich and the Poor

thus. The rich do not work for one another. Their habitations, furniture, cloathing, carriages, food, ornaments, and every thing in short that they, or their families use and consume, is the work or produce of the labouring poor, who are, and must be, continually paid for their labour in producing the same.

The Leeds Intelligencer (Leeds, England), Tuesday, 5 April 1768; pg. 4; Issue 772. *British Library Newspapers, Part III: 1741-1950*

Increasingly, in the larger towns such as Birmingham where relationships were more

impersonal, this system of land and patronage was replaced by a hierarchy defined

by occupational roles which were grouped into 'classes' within society. In 1763 the

apothecary James Nelson saw France as being divided up into four classes, namely

the Quality, Noblesse, Artificers and the Peasantry whilst England was divided up

into five classes, the Nobility, Gentry, Mercantile, or Commercial People, Mechanics

and Peasantry.[50] The poet Thomas Gisborne, writing in 1794, did not believe his book

would be useful to the 'lowest ranks of society' and the 'common people'. It was

written for the 'Higher and Middle Classes' which in his estimation were the Peers,

the Government officials, the Military, the Clerics, Gentlemen and those in 'Trade &

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[50] J. Nelson, *An Essay on the Government of Children: Under Three General Heads, Viz. Health, Manners, and Education* (printed for R. and J. Dodsley, 1763), p.273.

Business' (such as the merchants and manufacturers).[51] There are indications that the phrase 'working class' was in common usage from at least 1803 as the *Morning Post* in London reported that 'The day being fine, the streets of London were unusually thronged with well-dressed persons of the working class making holiday.'[52] In an article in the *Mechanics Magazine* in 1861, the term 'working class' to define a particular group in society was said to have appeared during the 'past generation'.[53]

The changing language of class throughout the period in question reflects a changing level of class awareness. Historian E.P. Thompson believed that the 1790s was the defining decade for class consciousness with a growing recognition of the term from the 1830s onwards.[54] It is not within the scope of this research to present a detailed discussion of emerging class consciousness during this period, however it is important to recognise that class as a concept was rarely recognised by contemporaries in these early periods. Nonetheless, by circumspectly using primary source material from this period, it is possible to categorise people according to their lifestyle, material rewards, opportunities for education and mobility and other characteristics which broadly define them as belonging to a specific group.

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[51] T. Gisborne, *An Enquiry Into the Duties of Men in the Higher and Middle Classes of Society in Great Britain: Resulting from Their Respective Stations, Professions, and Employments* (London, 1794), pp.vi-vii.
[52] 'Easter Monday', *The Morning Post* 12 April 1803 (British Library Newspapers, Part II: 1800-1900).
[53] 'The Wages of the Poor Classes', *The Mechanics Magazine*, 1 June 1861. p.362.
[54] See E.P. Thompson, 'Class Consciousness', in *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), pp. 711–832.

The upper class (Aristocracy)

Birmingham was not a genteel town such as Bath or York. James Watt in 1774 stated 'politeness must be learned in better company than in this town.'[55] In 1785 it was said that 'the manufacturers of Birmingham who are generally accounted rich are such as possess fortunes from five to fifteen thousand pounds. A few are in possession of much larger capitals: but in general they may be said to be in easy and flourishing circumstances rather than very rich or affluent'.[56] Later in 1795, Hutton acknowledges that 'gentlemen, as well as buttons, have been stamped here; but like them, when finished, are moved off'.[57] Few of the local aristocrats owned large estates and on the whole they were not prominent figures at national level.[58] However, many had financial interests within Birmingham and they were influential at the local level where their patronage was eagerly sought.

In Hopkins' estimation there were few who could be classed as truly elite. Within this select group he included those who had houses in the country and private carriages in the 1780s and those who had fortunes of over £5,000 in 1828.[59]

[55] P.M. Jones, 'Industrial Enlightenment in Practice: Visitors to the Soho Manufactory, 1765-1820', *Midland History*, 33.1 (2008), p.76.
[56] W. Thomson, *A Tour in England Scotland, in 1785* (London, 1788), p.14.
[57] Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*, 3rd Edn. p.31.
[58] D. Smith, *Conflict and Compromise, Class Formation in English Society 1830-1914: A Comparative Study of Birmingham and Sheffield* (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1982), p.29.
[59] E. Hopkins, *Birmingham: The First Manufacturing Town in the World 1760-1840* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), p.135.

The middle class

The phrase 'middle class' may be dated to at least 1760. A letter which was sent to the Lord Mayor of London refers to a middle class of people who were in 'trade, commerce and manufactures which in all the kingdoms and nations are the most useful rank of people'.[60] In actuality, the term 'middle class' was one of a number of expressions used throughout the eighteenth century to describe a group of people alongside phrases such as 'middling class', 'middle rank' and 'middling sorts'. However, whilst the class label and some attributes may have changed during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the middle class remained throughout, a broad and diverse group situated below the elite but above the labouring poor.

The use of the term 'middle class' to distinguish a distinct class identity started to materialise in the late 1820s and 1830s[61] although by the late eighteenth century the middle class could be distinguished by ideals such as sobriety, respectability, morality and thrift.[62] A belief that an individual could improve their status through hard work and self-help was a particular feature of the middle class which appeared during the first half of the nineteenth century. Morris described this era as a period in which in which the 'middle classes took risks and responded to a disciplined 'work ethic'.[63]

Although Hopkins did not believe that Birmingham had many who could be classed as elite, there were many who could be classed as upper middle class. John Wade in

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[60] 'English Merchant of London. A Letter to the Right Honourable Sir Thomas Chitty, Knt. Lord Mayor of London' (London, 1760), pp.109-110.
[61] R. J. Morris, *Men, Women and Property in England, 1780–1870* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.21.
[62] M.R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (University of California Press, 1996), p.48.
[63] Morris, *Men, Women and Property in England, 1780–1870.* p.60.

1833, described the upper middle class as a 'class of capitalists in the business of life' and in this category we would have found the bankers, merchants, importers, wholesale dealers and retailers.[64] The clerks, surveyors, engineers and teachers were to be found in the lower end of the middle class hierarchy and the boundaries within this lower layer were such that socially they merged with the upper layer of the working class. However, those with manual occupations would never have been seen as belonging to the middle class. Hence the article which appeared in *Aris's Gazette* in 1837 which refers to a prisoner who said he was a shoe maker by trade. Such a trade was apparently was 'at variance with his elegant and even distinguished manners; a rather careful style of dress and gold spectacles which would denote that he belongs to at least to the middling class of society'.[65] According to an article in *Aris's Gazette* in 1861, the lower middle class consisted of 'small tradesmen, persons holding situations in which a certain appearance of respectability has to be maintained with limited means, and all who rank above the artisan class without claiming affinity with the affluent portion of the population'.[66]

Many local leaders and politicians came from the middle class. Men such as Thomas Attwood and Joshua Scholefield who were both bankers turned political activists. Attwood formed the Birmingham Political Union in 1830 and campaigned for parliamentary reform[67] whilst Scholefield became the deputy chairman of the same

[64] J. Wade, *History of the Middle and Working Classes: With a Popular Expositon of the Economical and Political Principles Which Have Influenced the Past and Present Condition of the Industrious Orders* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1833), p.177, p.183.
[65] 'London', *The Morning Post* (London, 18 December 1837), p.4.
[66] 'Aris's Birmingham Gazette'. 30 November 1861, page 4, issue 6264
[67] Behagg, C. "Attwood, Thomas (1783–1856), politician and currency theorist." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. (Oxford University Press, 2009). [Accessed: 10 June 2017] doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/878

political union and was a staunch defender of the working class.[68] Both went on to become the first men from Birmingham to enter parliament following the 1832 Reform Bill. William Scholefield, the son of Joshua also entered politics and he became the first elected mayor of Birmingham[69] whilst another political reformer, Joseph Parkes specialised in election law as a solicitor and later joined the Birmingham Political Union. He became the secretary of Birmingham Mechanics Institute.[70] A number of prominent intellectuals also came from the middle class including those who formed the 'Lunar Society' in the eighteenth century. As enterprising men of industry, they were able to combine innovation with commercial astuteness. They would meet to discuss theoretical ideas which could be developed and applied to manufacturing processes. For example, Josiah Wedgewood developed new forms of technology to improve the manufacturing processes in the pottery trade, Joseph Priestley undertook scientific research on the nature and property of gases and has been credited as being one of the discovers of oxygen, William Withering discovered digitalis which is invaluable in medicine and Matthew Boulton, perhaps the most innovative of the Lunar Society men, developed in partnership with James Watt steam engines which were to revolutionise the industrial landscape in Britain.[71] Whereas Hutton believed that foreign trade was the key to the growth of Birmingham. Pye, writing in 1818, attributed the growth of Birmingham to 'the enterprising spirit of

[68] Davis, R. W. "Scholefield, Joshua (1774/5–1844), politician and businessman." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. (Oxford University Press, 2013) [Accessed: 10 June 2017] doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24814

[69] Timmins, S. "Scholefield, William (1809–1867), politician." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. (Oxford University Press, 2015), [Accessed: 10 June 2017] doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24815

[70] Salmon, P. "Parkes, Joseph (1796–1865), election agent and reformer". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. (2013, October 03), [Accessed: 11 Nov. 2018] doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001.

[71] Revolutionary Players: Making the Modern World. www.revolutionaryplayers.org.uk/archives/people/ [Accessed: 10 July 2018].

the late Matthew Boulton'.[72] In the nineteenth century, a new group of entrepreneurial men emerged. Joseph Mason and Joseph Gillott during the 1820s, pioneered cheap and efficient methods of manufacturing steel pen nibs and hence made writing affordable for all. In 1850, a pen once costing 5 shillings, now cost one penny.[73] Robert Winfield took out a patent for the production of brass bedsteads in 1827 after developing a new technique for assembling iron and brass frames. His brass workshops were the largest in Birmingham in this period.[74]

Few of these great industrialists were born into the working class.[75] George Elkington who patented the first commercial electroplating process during the 1840s was the son of a spectacle manufacturer[76] and Matthew Boulton was the son of a metal manufacturer. Both were from lower middle class families. However, as masters often worked by the side of their workmen on the same bench, they developed a good relationship with their workers and had an understanding of their workers needs and attitudes.[77] As Thomas Osler, a large-scale manufacturer stated in 1824 '…if there is

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[72] Pye. *A Description of Modern Birmingham*. p.4

[73] C. Gill, *History of Birmingham Volume 1: Manor and Borough to 1865* (Oxford University Press, 1952), p.302.

[74] Roberts, S. "Winfield, Robert Walter (1799–1869), brass manufacturer." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. (Oxford University Press, 2013), [Accessed: 24 August 2018] doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/104913

[75] See F. Crouzet, 'Rags to Riches', in *The First Industrialists: The Problem of Origins* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 85–98.

[76] Harrison, W. J. "Elkington, George Richards (1801–1865), electroplate manufacturer." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* (Oxford University Press, 2004) [Accessed: 24 August 2018], .org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8640

[77] Alexis de Tocqueville who travelled through England in 1835 said that Manchester had 'a few great capitalists, thousands of poor workmen and little middle class' compared to Birmingham where workmen 'worked with the master himself' Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journeys to England and Ireland*, ed. by J.P. Mayer (Transaction Publishers, 1988), p. 104. See also A. Fox, 'Industrial Relations in Nineteenth Century Birmingham', *Oxford Economic Papers*, 7.1 (1955), p.57

a spot in the world in which perfect community of interest betwixt workmen and their employers is to be found, that spot is Birmingham'.[78]

Religion was associated with middle class morality and whilst some may have attended church as they felt it was part of their social obligations, many attended church through personal convictions, particulary during the late eighteenth century when evangelicalism spread amongst the middle class. Charity was a particular feature of evangelicalism and as such philanthropy became a fashionable pastime of the middle class during this period to such an extent that when the George Muntz, the well-known Birmingham politician and manufacturer passed away, he was criticised for not having given anything to charity.[79] Education and medical concerns were of particular interest, and consequently Birmingham saw the opening in 1765 of the General Hospital and a library in 1779. John Ash, a physician who was the son of a brewer instigated the foundation of the hospital whilst John Lee a button manufacture, set up the library. Twenty-four Sunday Schools had been established by 1784 and a dispensary by 1792.[80] Later in 1812, a lying-in-hospital was set up 'by the indefatigable exertions of a few charitable individuals; and nearly £1,500 was donated from the proceeds of a bazaar, held at the Town Hall'.[81] Later in the nineteenth century, Robert Winfield maintained the philanthropic tradition by opening

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[78] Behagg, *Custom, Change and Class*, p.464.
[79] V. Skipp, *The Making of Victorian Birmingham* (Brewin Books, 1983), p.113.
[80] Rowlands, *Continuity and Change*, p.203.
[81] Francis White & Co., *Birmingham. History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham, with the Remainder of the Parish of Aston ... Being Part of a General History and Directory of the County of Warwick ..* (Sheffield: J. Blurton, 1849), p.27.

up a school for the boys who worked in his brass works which they could attend during their work hours and he instigated advanced classes for the older boys.[82]

However, although leading families were keen to promote charitable concerns, their enthusiasm was sometimes short lived and donations often faltered. The hospital was finally completed in 1779, after money was raised via a music festival. It is telling that when the theatre in New Street burnt down in 1792, it was rebuilt within 4 years.[83] The 'People's Hall', which was opened in 1846, and contained amongst other things, a library, school room, lecture room and reading rooms, did not manage to sell the shares originally issued for its upkeep. Of the two thousand shares issued, only 600 were sold and the building closed in 1849.[84] Many in the middle class had progressive ideas but conservative attitudes especially when it came to education and class mobility. For instance, although the theologian Joseph Priestley was committed to the improvement of education throughout his life, he still believed that those in the working class should be taught 'contentment in their station and a firm belief in the wisdom and goodness of providence that has so disposed of them'.[85] MP Davies Giddy in 1807 campaigned against a bill which would provide free education arguing that giving education to the working class would 'be prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them

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[82] Gill. *History of Birmingham*. p.297.

[83] '*ibid*' p.130.

[84] Economic and Social History: Social History since 1815," in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7, the City of Birmingham*, ed. W B Stephens (London: Victoria County History, 1964), 223-245. *British History Online*, www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol7/pp223-245. [Accessed: 2 September 2007].

[85] J. Priestley, *Miscellaneous Observations Relating to Education* (London: Swinney, 1788), p.142.

good servants in agriculture and other laborious employments to which their rank in society had destined them'.[86]

The working class

In *A seasonable examination of the pleas and pretensions of the proprietors of, and subscribers to, play-houses, erected in defiance of the royal licence* published in 1735, the author expresses his disapproval of those in the lower class who found the theatre too engaging. He thought that the stage was a very improper diversion for those in the 'working class'. Plays, he says, are written for people in the 'upper life'.[87] We saw earlier how multiple expressions were used in contemporary accounts to describe the middle class and similarly, a variety of terms were used to describe the working class including the expressions 'labouring class', 'the lower orders', 'the industrious class', 'the lower ranks' and the 'industrious orders'.[88]

By the nineteenth century the plural term 'working classes' starts to appear in literature to denote a recognised hierarchy, although the writer Daniel Defoe as early as 1728 distinguished a multitude of economic categories under the banner of 'trading men'. At the bottom were the labourers and labouring poor and they were followed by the workmen or handicrafts. In the next category were the mechanics

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[86] *Parochial Schools Bill* (House of Commons Debate, 1807). 13 June 1807.
[87] *A Seasonable Examination of the Pleas and Pretensions of the Proprietors of, and Subscribers to, Play-Houses, Erected in Defiance of the Royal Licence. ...* (London: 1735), p.16.
[88] See for instance L. Levi, *Wages and Earnings of the Working Classes: With Some Facts Illustrative of Their Economic Condition, Drawn from Authentic and Official Sources, in a Report to Michael T. Bass* (John Murray, 1867). xxiii; F.M. Eden, *The State of the Poor : Or, An History of the Labouring Classes in England, from the Conquest to the Present Period* (J. Davis, 1797), Vol I., p.2; W. Playfair, 'Supplementary Chapter: On Education', in *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. by A. Smith (Cooke & Hale, 1818), p.239.

whilst at the top were the dealers, factors and merchants.[89] The working class

hierarchy in the nineteenth century consisted of three or more divisions with the

unskilled labourers and very poor forming the bottom layer, and the skilled 'labour

aristocracy' forming the top layer. They did not usually own property nor did they

possess many material goods, although the labour aristocracy earned good wages

which provided a degree of security. Occupations to be found within this latter group

include the shopkeepers, independent masters, and commercial travellers as well as

skilled artisans. Morris estimates that by the 1860s, just over 10 percent of the

working class fell into this category.[90]

Respectability and the working class.

Respectability as a concept within the working class is not easily defined. The

meaning was not clearly stipulated within eighteenth and nineteenth century literature

and contemporary historians have interpreted the meaning in diverse ways.

However, there is general agreement that it alludes to personal conduct, outward

appearance and behavioural traits.[91]

Before the late eighteenth century, the term rarely appeared and when it did appear it

referred to status.[92] However, by the nineteenth century, the term started to

incorporate moral and behaviour characteristics as is evident in expressions such as

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[89] D. Defoe, *A Plan of the English Commerce: Being a Compleat Prospect of the Trade of This Nation, as Well the Home Trade as the Foreign.* (London: Charles Rivington, 1728), p.5.
[90] R J Morris, 'The Labour Aristocracy in the British Class Struggle', *ReFresh (Autumn)*, 7 (1988), p.2.
[91] For a more comprehensive overview of the definition of 'respectability' see L. MacKay, *Respectability and the London Poor, 1780-1870: The Value of Virtue* (Routledge, 2016), pp. 7-10.
[92] W. Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability, 1600–1800* (Routledge, 2002), p.189.

'respectable artisans' and 'undeserving poor'.[93] George Heywood, a self-made man in Manchester in the early nineteenth century, typifies their idea of respectability. As Barker remarks, George was 'consistent in judging others in terms of their conduct and moral integrity rather than their status, including those lower down the social scale'.[94] Some historians such as Geoffrey Crossick have suggested that by the mid-Victorian period the language which epitomised class often took second place to the more diverse language which characterised respectability.[95] For instance, in this passage '...perhaps some little confusion arises from the use of the terms 'class' and 'respectable', I use the term respectable with reference to conduct rather than station',[96] the language of respectability did not equate to class.

Historian Peter Bailey in the 1970s believed that respectability was something which could be 'assumed or discarded, like a collar, as the situation demanded'.[97] In *Bleak House*, author Charles Dickens in 1853 describes the character Mr Vholes as a man who had a semblance of respectability. 'He has not a large business, but he is a very respectable man. He is allowed by the greater attorneys who have made good fortunes or are making them to be a most respectable man. He never misses a chance in his practice, which is a mark of respectability. He never takes any pleasure, which is another mark of respectability. He is reserved and serious, which

[93] Smith. *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p.189.
[94] H. Barker, 'A Grocer's Tale: Gender, Family and Class in Early Nineteenth-Century Manchester', *Gender & History*, 21.2 (2009), p.347.
[95] J. Rule, 'Classes and the Masses in Victorian England', *History Today*, 37.3 (1987), p.32.
[96] *Report from Select Committee on the Sale of Beer: With the Minutes of Evidence.*, House of Commons Papers ; Reports of Committes. (1833), p.96, 1502.
[97] P. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (Routledge, 1978), p.178.

is another mark of respectability. His digestion is impaired, which is highly

respectable.'[98]

Although the concept of respectability was embraced by both the middle and the

working class, the specific behaviour which signified the values of sobriety, self-help

and domesticity did differ between classes. For the working class, perhaps the most

important distinction between those who were perceived as respectable and those

who were not was the ability to be seen as independent. No self-respecting working

class man for instance would accept charity or parish relief and the 'ultimate

disgrace' was a pauper burial.[99]

Independence meant also having the ability to make life-style choices which would

impact on you materially and socially. This included such considerations as the area

in which you lived, the decor in the family home and the clothes you wore. For

instance, Ben Shaw a mechanic in Preston in the early nineteenth century was

critical of his wife because she could not manage the household finances nor was

she interested in 'clothes or furniture or caricature'.[100]

Behaviour characteristics were another aspect of respectability. For example,

honestly was valued as it was a good indicator of reputation. In the sixteenth century,

the meaning of honesty was 'deserving of honour' and before the term 'respectability'

came into general usage, is was common to describe an individual as having an

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[98] C. Dickens and D. Roberts, *Bleak House* (Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1993), p.467.
[99] F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain 1830-1900* (London: fontana Press, 1988), p.200.
[100] S. D'Cruze, 'Care, Diligence and "usfull Pride" [Sic]: Gender, Industrialisation and the Domestic Economy, C. 1770 to c.1840', *Women's History Review*, 3.3 (1994), p.329, p.336.

'honest reputation'.[101] Honesty was also associated with self-sufficiency and industry,[102] hence the common phrase 'he was honest and industrious.'

Another characteristic which symbolised respectability was the behaviour associated with drinking alcohol. It was class-specific behaviour because whilst those in the middle class drank in private at home or in clubs, the working class drank in public in a public house which became for many of them the centre of their life.[103] Nonetheless, Hutton testifies to the number of benefit clubs and societies which were to be found in the pubs. Ranging from sick clubs and breeches clubs (where every member ballots for a new pair of breeches), to watch clubs, cloth clubs and book clubs.[104] Apprentice japanner James Bissett, who moved to Birmingham in 1776 was not a drinking man but he would frequent the pubs for the company and there he would encounter members of the various societies including the Reading Society.[105]

The Birmingham mechanic was notorious for spending 'Saint Monday' in the pub squandering his hard earned wages.[106] In Birmingham in 1841 there was said to be 577 pubs and 573 beer shops[107] which gives some indication of the sheer number of people who drank in the pubs. It is unknown however, how many drank to excess at

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[101] K. Thomas, *The Ends of Life : Roads to Fulfilment in Early Modern England* (Oxford University Press, 2009), p.163.
[102] A. Shephard, 'Honesty, Worth and Gender in Modern England', in *Identity and Agency in England, 1500–1800*, ed. by Henry French and Jonathan Barry (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.101.
[103] John Rule, *The Experience of Labour in Eighteenth-Century Industry* (Law Book Co of Australasia, 1980), p.77.
[104] Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*, 3rd Edn p.210.
[105] J. Money, *Experience and Identity: Birmingham and the West Midlands, 1760-1800* (Manchester: University Press, 1977), p.141.
[106] D.A. Reid, "The Decline of Saint Monday 1766-1876," *Past & Present*, 71 (1976), p.81
[107] Ashley Shaftesbury, *Speeches on the Condition of the Working Classes in the House of Commons on Friday June 14, 1839* (London, 1839), p.10.

home. The author Mr Pratt, described the lower class in Birmingham as being 'violent when irritated' due to their love of alcohol.[108]

Alcohol was safe to drink unlike water and milk. It was also cheap. In 1830, a quarter of a pint of gin cost 3½d and 2 pints of ale cost 4d, compared to a pint of coffee for 3d or 4d.[109] Historian John Burnett found evidence in the working class autobiographies he analysed which seems to suggest that drink was the biggest break up of marriages prior to the First World War.[110] Working class author Edward Davis, born in Aston in 1828 said that his parents had both had a good education but his father was 'intemperate' and of 'irregular habits' and this brought the family down.[111]

Although religion was a feature of middle class respectability it appears that the working class were remarkably unenthused by religious ideals. William Allen Esq, representing the British and Foreign School Society was of the opinion that 'a very large proportion (of parents) could not decidedly say what religious system they preferred; in very many cases they have answered that they were of no religion'.[112] The Spitalfields Soup Society, which was supported by members from all religious denominations, found that twenty percent of those it interviewed in 1812 held no

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[108] Mr Pratt (Samuel Jackson), 'Harvest-Home: Consisting of Supplementary Gleanings, Original ..., Volume 1', 1805. p.310
[109] B. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872* (Keele University Press, 1994), p.40.
[110] J. Burnett, *Destiny Obscure: Autobiographies of Childhood, Education and Family from the 1820s to the 1920s.* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1982), p.244.
[111] E. G. Davis, *Some Passages From My Life* (Birmingham 1898), p.6.
[112] *Third Report from the Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders* (1818), HC 426, Vol 4. p.62.

religious belief and nearly half did not possess a Bible.[113] Horace Mann, who compiled the religious census in 1851, described the proportion of artisans in the congregations as being 'absolutely insignificant' and the majority were 'thoroughly estranged from our religious institutions'.[114] Whilst this pattern appears to have been the norm for industrial towns the attendance in Birmingham was even lower than that in nearby towns such as Coventry and places in the Black Country.[115] Perhaps low attendance could in part be attributed to the fact that there was a sense of alienation amongst the working class from a religion that was defined by the middle class. According to missionary Thomas Augustin Finigan during the 1830s people grumbled that 'ten or twelve times a day we have religion crammed down our throats as if it were with a drum-stick'.[116]

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[113] P. McCann, 'Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth Century.', in *Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth Century.*, ed. by P. McCann (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1977), p.28.
[114] H. Mann, *Census of Great Britain, 1851. Religious Worship in England and Wales. Abridged from the Official Report* (London, 1854), p.93.
[115] Hopkins, *Birmingham: The First Manufacturing Town in the World 1760-1840*. p.163.
[116] Economic and Social History: Social History since 1815 [accessed: 22 February 2017].

Summary

As has been established in this section, migrants were attracted to Birmingham initially from within the vicinity of the town and later from further afield throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century. It is probable that these migrants were semi-skilled or unskilled and they would have benefited from moving to a town which did not have incorporated status. Those within the working class were able to benefit from the relatively large number of entrepreneurs based within the town who not only helped to fuel the economic growth but who were also responsible for initiating a number of philanthropic enterprises. The concept of 'respectability' which influenced the behaviour of both the middle and working class was also examined in this section.

Conclusion

This first chapter explored the foundation of the Blue Coat School in the context of a town which expanded rapidly, both physically and economically during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It is now evident that economic expansion commenced earlier than the dates traditionally associated with the first industrial revolution and the Blue Coat School was built during this early phase of expansion. With few aristocratic families in residence, innovation and political leadership came from enterprising members of the middle class. The middle class was also responsible for the establishment and governance of many new charities within the town including the Blue Coat School.

New economic opportunities attracted migrants from the surrounding districts and we found that many of the families in the Blue Coat School had migrated to Birmingham at some point during their life course. After reviewing parental characteristics in relation to admission criteria we were able to locate the Blue Coat School families within the context of the respectable working class. As such, they were deemed to be 'industrious and honest' individuals who were associated with the established church. However, evidence suggests that some of them may not have been religiously inclined as their children were baptised prior to nomination.

Chapter 2 will identify the social and economic characteristics of the children who were nominated for entry into the Blue Coat School. Regulations stipulated that the children must be from needy and deserving families and as such, we will investigate

the specific circumstances which gained them admission into the school. The Blue Coat School families will be placed within the context of working class family in Birmingham to determine whether the economic and social conditions impacted on their ability to be socially mobile.

CHAPTER 2

THE WORKING CLASS FAMILY IN BIRMINGHAM

The philosopher Friedrich Engels, in his 1844 publication *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, painted a grim picture of the large industrial towns in England during the industrial revolution.

> 'What is true of London, is true of Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, is true of all great towns. Everywhere barbarous indifference, hard egotism on one hand, and nameless misery on the other, everywhere social warfare, every man's house in a state of siege, everywhere reciprocal plundering under the protection of the law, and all so shameless, so openly avowed that one shrinks before the consequences of our social state as they manifest themselves here undisguised'[117]

Engels vividly depicted daily life in Manchester during the 1840s where he lived for two years recording his own observations. He focused particularly on the squalor and poverty of the working class in New Town, also known as Irish Town which in his view was a consequence of the industrial revolution making the middle class even richer and the working class even poorer. In London he described the houses as 'filthy within and without, and their appearance is such that no human being could possibly wish to live in them.'[118] For other cities such as Birmingham, he used extensive secondary sources, such as journals, newspapers and reports to provide content to support his perception of industrial cities.

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[117] F. Engels, *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* (New York, 1892), p.24.
[118] 'ibid'. p.20

The social reformer Edwin Chadwick, followed a more conventional route, appointed as an assistant commissioner to help gather information in relation to the poor law system and later the inquiry which resulted in the 1833 Factory Act. However, he independently researched and financed a report in 1842 which investigated the *Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population.* His report established a link between insanitary living conditions such as overcrowded housing and the spread of disease which Engel used to compliment his own research.

Henry Mayhew, a journalist with the *Morning Chronicle,* published a number of articles in the newspaper between 1849 and 1850 which portrayed a link between the industrial revolution and poverty. The articles were based on a survey of the working class he undertook in London and other districts in England and Wales. Mayhew interviewed many men and women who had seen better days and described their descent into poverty, trying to support their families on minimal wages. He provided vivid descriptions of families affected by collapse in trade and the impact of industrialisation.

Whilst we do need to treat such reports with caution, the multitude of contemporary comments from this period suggest that the poor within the large manufacturing centres lacked access to good housing, sanitation, food and other necessities during the industrial revolution.

Chapter 1 introduced us to Birmingham, initially a small market town which developed into a major industrial centre through a combination of technical

innovation, financial and transport enhancements and proximity to raw materials. We saw how the increase in growth was partly driven by immigration as migrants from places as far away as Scotland and Ireland were attracted by the new employment opportunities on offer. However, economic growth in towns such as Birmingham, Manchester and London, came at a cost with an escalation of social problems as depicted in the descriptions above.

The first part of this chapter will identify the socio-economic composition of the children who were nominated for entry into the Blue Coat School. In line with the school admission requirements which stipulated that the children must be from needy and deserving families, we will examine the circumstances which sanctioned their entry into the Blue Coat School. The second part of this chapter will situate the families of the Blue Coat School within the wider context of working class families in Birmingham in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Economic historians Peter Lindert and Jeffrey Williamson have suggested that living standards did not rise until after 1820[119] and if this was indeed the case then it may have impacted on the ability of a working class family not only to be able to afford the trappings of respectable society such as quality housing and education for their children but also their ability to become socially mobile. Standard of living was also associated with household composition, as a large family would need to spend more on basic necessities and would be therefore disadvantaged. As such, attributes such as marriage and single parent households will also be considered in this chapter. Finally, the attitudes, values and aspirations of individuals will be examined in

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[119] Lindert, P., and J. Williamson, 'English Workers' Living Standards during the Industrial Revolution: A New Look', *Economic History Review*, 36 (1983), p.2.

relationship to the concept of respectability and deserving poor which were qualities

assessed for admittance to the Blue Coat School.

Who were the children of Blue Coat School?

This first section will establish the social and economic characteristics of the children who were nominated for entry into Blue Coat School. As we saw in the introductory chapter, admission to a charity school such as the Blue Coat School was generally regulated through specific entry qualifications. This indirectly ensured they excluded the poorest children and ensured that the children were 'proper objects of charity'.

In line with the school admission requirements, which stipulated that the children must be from needy and deserving families, Fig 9 will examine the circumstances which sanctioned their entry into the Blue Coat School.

Figure 9: Cause of destitution 1805 to 1845.

Deserted Wives (n=3)
Illness/incapacity (n=3)
Large family (n=6)
Mother remarried (n=3)
Orphan (n=81)
Reduced circumstances (n=2)
Single father (n=1) (see note 1)
Single mother (n=22) (see note 2)
Widow (n=213)
Widower (n=12)
Total n=346
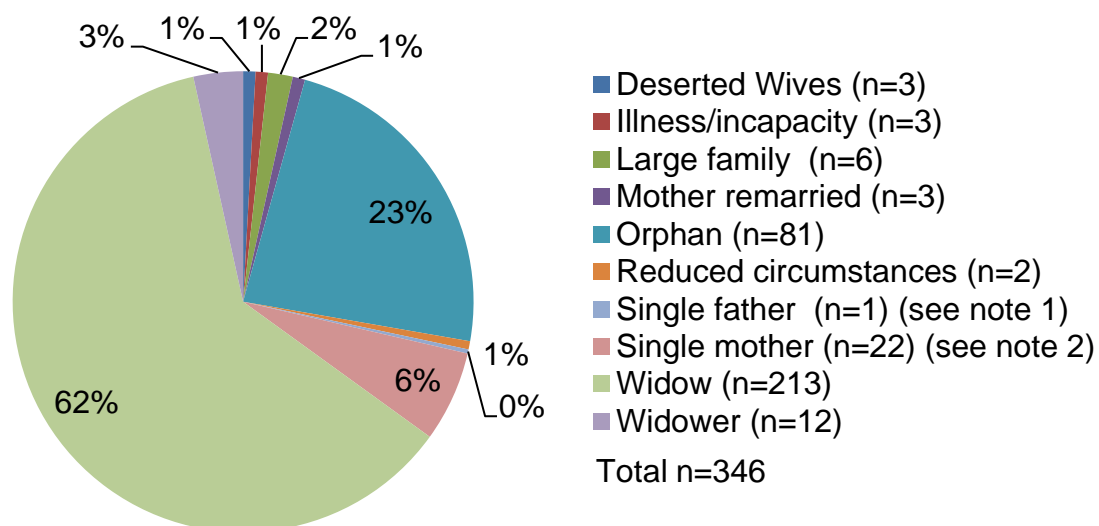
[1] It is not known why the father was single
[2] It is not known why the mother was single

Source: B.C.S Nomination Papers

In Fig 9, we can see that just under three quarters (72 percent) of children who were admitted to the Blue Coat School between 1805 and 1845 grew up in single parent households. This group includes widows, widowers, deserted wives and single father and mothers (reason for being classified single parent was not known).

Sixty-two percent, (potentially 84 percent if the 'single mother' category is included) of nominations were from widows and deserted women with children who were undoubtedly seen as the most needy group. Eleanor Howell was admitted to the Blue Coat School in 1828 as her mother was a widow who 'receives 2s 4d from the parish and has a daughter in the poor house and a young boy at home to maintain.'[120] In contrast, illegitimate children were not admitted to the school as the parents, in particularly the mother, were not seen as being 'worthy'. In August 1789 the school governors did suggest calling a meeting in order to discuss altering the rules so that illegitimate children could be admitted. It was resolved however, that such a meeting would have 'many inconveniences'.[121]

Three children were admitted because their father had deserted the family. Alfred Dudley was admitted in 1839 because his father had not only deserted the family but he was also said to be idle; James Thomas was admitted in 1812 as his mother had been deserted by her husband and was left destitute and Mary Ann Giles was left with three children to care for when her husband deserted her, including George Giles who was admitted into the Blue Coat School in 1832.[122]

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[120] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 1828.
[121] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. May 1779.
[122] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 1839, 1812, 1832.

Widows were seen as not being able to help themselves and hence were 'needy'. In contrast, widowers were usually not seen as 'needy' by the Blue Coat School. Only 9 children were nominated because their father was a widower and in the majority of cases, there was an additional motive behind the nomination. Alfred Griffin was nominated in 1838 because his father was a widower who was receiving an allowance from the workhouse *and* he was also said to be dying. In 1838 Catherine Baker was nominated because there were seven other children in the household *and* her widowed father was blind.[123]

The second neediest group were the orphans (23 percent). An orphan was seen as worthy and very deserving. When George Allan was nominated for admittance into the Blue Coat School in 1819 he already had a brother in the school, but as he was an orphan he was described as a 'great object of charity'.[124] Likewise, Jane Matthews was nominated for entry into the school in 1838 as both her parents had died. Her parents in this case were described as being 'deserving people'.[125] Just under a quarter (23 percent) of the children nominated for admission to the Blue Coat School from 1813 to 1845 had no parents at all although some of them were being looked after by kin. It is hard to identify those responsible for looking after the orphaned children as few of the records provide such insightful information and it cannot be assumed that the child was actually living with the person who signed the resignation contract. Only 18 records could be validated in Table 3 so the results are very tentative.

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[123] 'ibid'. 27 January 1845.
[124] 'ibid'. 1819.
[125] 'ibid'. 1819, 1838.

Table 3: Individuals or association responsible for caring for orphaned children from Blue Coat School 1813 to 1845

Carer of child on nomination record	Number of confirmed records
Sister	2
Brother	2
Uncle	5
Aunt	4
Grandparents	2
Workhouse/Asylum	3

Source: B.C.S Nomination Papers; B.C.S Resignation Register

Three of the children were living in the workhouse at the time they were nominated for admission. However Horatio Lucas, an orphan admitted in 1813 was said to be from 'creditable but latterly reduced parents', so it may be presumed that although his family were so destitute that Horatio had to live in a workhouse they were seen as 'respectable'. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find out further details of the other two orphans who were living in the workhouse.

Children from large families were also seen by the Blue Coat School as being in the 'needy' category. Charles Avery was nominated for admittance to the school in 1827 on the grounds that his parents had seven children[126] and John Day was admitted in 1820 as there were eight children in his family; the eldest was 17 and the youngest 4

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[126] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 1827.

months.[127] However not all children in the Blue Coat School came from large families. When Mary Ann Adams was nominated in 1839, both her parents lived at home and she had one brother.[128]

Not all children who were nominated for admission into the Blue Coat School came from destitute families. Surprisingly enough, the school did admit some pupils who do not seemingly appear to qualify under their admission requirements. For instance, more than a quarter (28 percent) of the children seen in the cohort in Fig. 10 lived with both mother and father.

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[127] ' B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 1820.
[128] Census 1841. HO107/ Folio 1128/58, page 17, 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 1839.

Figure 10: Number of destitute and non destitute children admitted to Blue Coat
School 1805 to 1845

Destitute children (n=346)

Both Parents still alive (n=132)

Total N=478
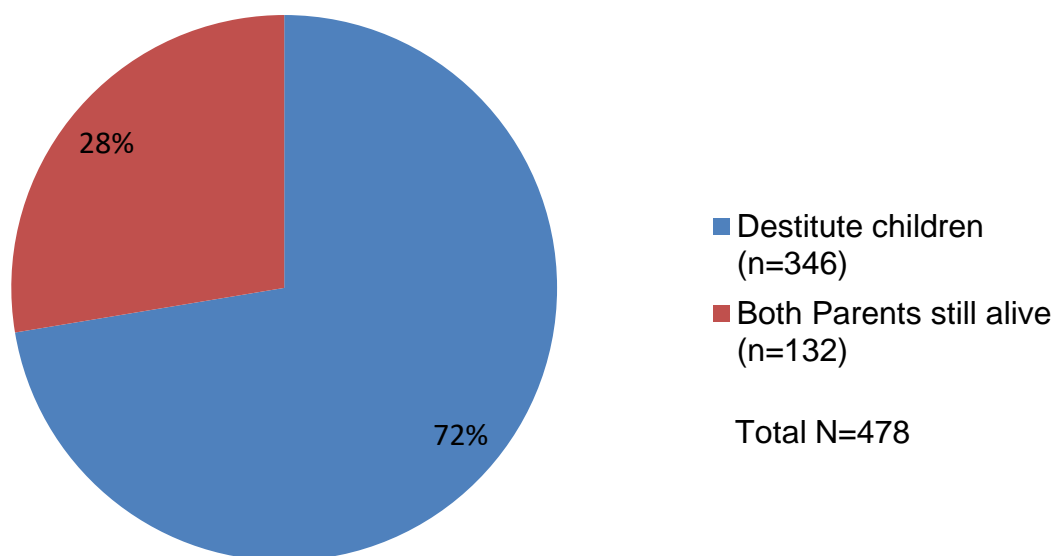
Source: B.C.S Nomination Papers

Unfortunately, there are no details in the records to establish whether their parents
were in reduced circumstances. For example, Mary Adams was admitted to the Blue
Coat School in 1839 and was back living with both her parents in 1841 in Sutton
Coldfield. She appears to have had only one sibling (hence not a large family) and
her father worked as a shop keeper.[129] Both Edward and Robert Davenport attended
the Blue Coat School. Their father founded the Davenport brewery and eventually
owned several properties.

Placing the abode of the families within the context of residential areas within the
town of Birmingham helps us to identify status, as some streets were seen as
'opulent' and others were notoriously poor.

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[129] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 1839; 'Census,1841.' HO107/ Folio 1128/58, page 17.

Table 4 below draws upon two surveys from the 1840s. Although time specific as the character of these streets may have changed over time, the Table shows us that the children who were admitted to the Blue Coat School during the 1830s and 1840s lived in some of the poorest areas of Birmingham. Nonetheless, some of the children did reside in areas considered to be fairly 'opulent' such as Paradise Street. Alfred Gee was living there with his parents at the time he was admitted to the school in 1843. His father was a fish monger which was a high status occupation within the working class.[130]

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[130] 'The Library of Birmingham. Records of the Blue Coat Charity School: Parents' Resignations, MS1622/3/5/1'.

Table 4: Characteristics of streets in Birmingham inhabited by children from the Blue Coat School 1832 to 1843

Name of Street	Characteristics of the street	Number of children from Blue Coat School who lived in this street
Barford Street	Poor street, prostitutes lived here	3
Cheapside	Water from the pumps said to be bad.	2
Colmore Street	Poor street, prostitutes lived here	1
Deritend	Good water from pumps	1
Dudley Street	Poor street containing lots of lodging houses	1
Edgbaston Street/Lease Lane	Poor street containing lots of lodging houses	3
Edmund Street	Courts mostly in bad state of repair and 'Disgraceful'.	3
Great Charles Street	'opulent' residents	3
John Street	Poor street containing lots of lodging houses	1
Lichfield Street	Poor street containing lots of lodging houses	4
Lionel Street	'Disgraceful' courts'	5
Moor Street	Poor street containing lots of	3

	lodging houses	
New Street	For 'opulent' residents	1
Newhall Street	For 'opulent' residents	1
Paradise Street	For 'opulent' residents	1
Park St	Poor street containing lots of lodging houses	3
Steelhouse Lane	Poor street containing lots of lodging houses	1

Source: Local reports on the sanitary condition of the labouring population of England, in consequence of an inquiry directed to be made by the Poor Law Commissioners. 1842. HC 007. Vol 27. p.211. (London, 1842) p.193; Supplement, p.41

Many of the families who lived in the poor areas of town had to take in lodgers to financially support their families. A sample of 391 households from the Blue Coat School dataset covering the period 1841 to 1861 shows us that 17.9 percent (n=70) of families had a lodger living with them who does not appear to be a relative. In thirty-four percent of cases (n=24) the head of the family was a widow. In only eight percent (n=6) of the households was the head a widower.

Similarly, fifteen percent (n=59) of households in the Blue Coat School had at least one servant living with the family. Of those eight families who had more than one servant in the household, four of the heads of household worked in manufacturing and (with one exception), all had master status. For instance, one was a builder employing 36 men and another was a head sword cutler.

Summary

As may be seen from the preceding information, the typical Blue Coat School child lived in a poor area of the town and was either an orphan, from a single parent household or living in household with multiple siblings. All would probably have been living in impoverished circumstances. Accordingly, families took in lodgers to provide additional income. Nonetheless, some of the children who were admitted to the Blue Coat School do not appear to conform to this pattern, although with limited knowledge of their particular circumstances it is not possible to confirm that they were indeed not 'needy' and therefore did not fulfil the entry requirements.

The following section will provide an overview of working class families in Birmingham to determine why the families in the Blue Coat School were destitute and whether they represent the working class norm.

The Working class family in Birmingham

This section will examine working class families within Birmingham in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The standard of living during this period will be reviewed to determine whether typical working class families such as those associated with the Blue Coat School would have had the capacity to be able to afford 'luxuries' such as education. It will also consider events such as marriage and death which would have impacted on their ability to pay for even the basic necessities. Finally, it will examine parental aspirations and values which may have impacted on the ability of their children to be socially mobile.

The Standard of Living in Birmingham

Whether the standard of living rose during this period is still open to debate. In 1805 Pratt, who was living in Birmingham during this period, believed the artisans of Birmingham were licentious, indolent, sloth and not very clean in their habits; yet he also considered them to be generally 'well fed and lodged'.[131] However, research suggests that living standards fell towards the end of the eighteenth century before rising again towards the mid nineteenth century.[132] Wars took their toll on exports and the value of British exports to America, which amounted to something like 8 million pounds in 1805 to 1807, fell to less than 1.5 in 1811.[133] Contemporary reports appear to support these findings. Hutton spoke of the destruction of commerce which caused

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[131] Mr Pratt (Samuel Jackson), *'Harvest-Home*'.p.375.
[132] See for example P. Sharpe, 'Explaining the Short Stature of the Poor: Chronic Childhood Disease and Growth in Nineteenth-Century England', *The Economic History Review*, 65.4 (2012), pp1475–1494.
[133] 'Economic and Social History: Industry and Trade, 1500-1880 [Accessed: 24 June 2013].

500 tradesmen to fail. At the same time, the currency stagnated and there was a diminishing population, which he suggests might be a consequence of the war with France.[134]

Peacetime brought its own problems, as manufacturers of military equipment saw their orders diminished and ex military personnel flooded the labour market. The price of labour fell and there was a corresponding increase in the Poor Rates particularly in 1817, which followed a poor harvest.[135] In February 1821 a petition was sent by the merchants, manufacturers and traders to Parliament to request a formal inquiry into the cause of the distress to be seen in Birmingham at that time. This was attributed in part to the cessation of the Napoleonic war and in part to the depression in the American market. There was only enough employment for the workmen for three or four days a week and many needed parish relief in order to support themselves. Petitioners in Parliament hoped that some measures might be adopted to relieve the distress. Meanwhile, those petitioners who had instigated an inquiry of their own found that consumption of meat, beer and other necessities by the working class had fallen by more than a third and many had to resort to credit to pay for their food.[136] Trade did pick up again, although exports in general did not regain their former significance.[137]

There were also intermittent periods of economic depression, especially during the late 1830s and early 1840s when the whole country entered a period known as the

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[134] W. Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*, 4th Edn (Knott and Lloyd, 1809), p.469.
[135] Hopkins, *Birmingham: The First Manufacturing Town in the World*, p.75.
[136] 'Trade of Birmingham-Petition of the Merchants', *HC Deb 08 February 1821 vol 4 cc523-42*.
[137] Hopkins, *Birmingham: The First Manufacturing Town in the World*, p.36.

'Hungry Forties', a combination of an economic depression and two bad harvests. The journalist and historian John Langford, in his book *A Century of Birmingham Life : 1741-1841* refers to a petition which he believed was signed by more than 13,000 working men concerning 'the want of confidence and suspension of business depriving the labouring classes of employment, and causing distress rapidly approaching to starvation'.[138]

It has been estimated that the proportion of the income spent by the working class in England and Wales on food, drink and rent each week from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century was around 86 to 89 percent.[139] However, these estimates varied noticeably according to the circumstances. A widow on a low wage with children would need to spend a considerably larger proportion of her earnings on food and rent compared to a single, skilled working class man. For example, in 1848 in the parish of St George in London, 15.4 percent of the income of widowers and married couples with children was earmarked for rent and 14.4 percent could not afford to buy meat once a week. In comparison, widows were obliged to spend 31.1 percent of their income on rent and nearly half of them (49.3 percent) could not afford to buy meat once a week.[140] William Angell was admitted into the Blue Coat School as his mother was a widow who was in domestic service but the wages were insufficient to maintain her two children.[141]

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[138] J. A. Langford, *A Century of Birmingham Life from 1741 – 1841*, Vol 2. (Birmingham 1868), p.571.
[139] P. Hoffman and others, 'Real Inequality in Europe since 1500', *The Journal of Economic History*, 62.2 (2002), p.326.
[140] Hopkins, *Birmingham: The First Manufacturing Town in the World*. p.314.
[141] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 1863.

In contrast, Chadwick in 1842 describes the labour aristocrats in Birmingham as being extravagant in their habits, spending their money on tea, coffee, sugar, butter and cheese. They also consumed a great deal of bacon as meat could be purchased cheaply in Birmingham. The men made sure they had a good joint of meat on the table each Sunday and would not put up with the inferior parts of the meat which was sold to the country people. On the other days of the week they had steak or chops. Many of the work men purchased their dinner from small cook shops and a plate of meat with either potatoes or bread would cost around 4d. In contrast, their wives and children dined mainly on potatoes and bacon[142] because they were not seen as the breadwinners of the family. The wife however, would still have to manage the family budget as well as wash, clean, cook, preserve, look after the water and heating, sort out the clothing and household goods as well as look after anybody who was ill, deal with medicine and provide hospitality.[143]

The average mechanics' wage in 1838 was reported to be 24s 3d for men[144] although a number of working men in Birmingham in 1842 earned 30 to 50s a week and many young women earned 10 to 14s a week.[145] The conclusion from a survey of the wages of members of a Birmingham Provident Society in 1840 was that their average weekly wage was 'adequate for the necessaries of life.'[146] However, when clothing

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[142] Local reports on the sanitary condition of the labouring population of England. (1842) HC 007, Vol 27, p.211.
[143] J. Bailey, *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.79.
[144] 'Contributions to the Commercial Statistics of Birmingham Prepared by a Local Committee.', in *The Ninth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (Birmingham: London: John Murray, 1839), p.437.
[145] Local reports on the sanitary condition of the labouring population of England. (1842) HC 007, Vol 27, p.210.
[146] 'State of the Public Health in Birmingham', *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, 2.37 (1841), p.213.

and fuel was paid for precious little would remain for items such as education. In *A New System of Practical Domestic Economy founded on Modern Discoveries and from the Private Communications of Persons of Experience* published in 1827, the author estimated the cost of living for varying levels of income. For a family earning 24s per week in 1827 with a wife and three children he calculated that it would cost 22s a week to buy provisions and pay for other necessities for all the family and they would be able to save 2s a week. For those earning 48s a week, the expenditure was 44s with 4s remaining at the end of the week.[147] For those on a low income there would be limited reserves at the end of the week to spend on education, especially if there were more than three children in the family. Apart from the additional tuition fees the parents would need to find enough decent clothing for all their children. For those who attended the Blue Coat School, clothing was not an issue as it was provided for them as part of their board and lodging.

For those living at the end of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, the standard of living for the working class was generally quite low in Birmingham and only the labour aristocracy would have been in a position to spend their income on anything other than the 'necessities of life'.

Housing

Respectability and social standing was and still is, closely tied to housing. Housing takes up a large part of the working class budget and therefore impacts on the

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[147] *A New System of Practical Domestic Economy Founded on Modern Discoveries and from the Private Communications of Persons of Experience* (London: Henry Colburn, 1827), p.394.

standard of living and status of an individual. Those with higher incomes aspired to live in a house which reflected their status. Landlords in Birmingham in 1884 found that even if they maintained their property it was impossible to attract respectable tenants in poor areas. The tenant would rather move to somewhere cheaper in the suburbs 'than live among a more depraved class'.[148] For the working class, respectability meant having the capacity to make a choice about where they lived. As we saw earlier, many families in the Blue Coat School did not have any option but to live in the poor areas of the town.

The town of Birmingham grew at an astonishing rate during the late eighteenth century. In 1781 there were said to be 125 streets and 12,000 houses. The manufacturer James Keir in 1784 believed that 60 percent of Birmingham's 10,000 dwelling houses had been erected since 1765.[149] By 1791 there were 203 streets and 12,681 houses.[150]

Although at the turn of the nineteenth century nearly every house still had its own garden, the land was rapidly being sold to build yet more houses[151] in order to house all the immigrants. However, the war with France in 1793 not only disrupted trade but also decreased the size of the population as many of the men in the town joined the army. As a result, it was said that nearly 1,200 houses lay empty[152] and a crescent in the Regency-style which was in the process of being built was abandoned as the war

[148] R Dennis, 'The Geography of Housing', in *English Industrial Cities of the Nineteenth Century:A Social Geography* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp.172-173.
[149] Jones, 'Industrial Enlightenment in Practice', p.75.
[150] W. Hutton, *The History of Birmingham*, 6th Edn (James Guest, 1836), p.77.
[151] Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*, 3rd Edn. p.5.
[152] 'ibid' p.469.

'thinned the inhabitants'.[153] This devastation lasted only a decade because by 1808 more houses were being built to try to house the rapidly increasing population.[154]

It has often been assumed that working class housing was always sub-standard[155] and the families who inhabited such buildings were morally corrupt, drunks, prostitutes and thieves. However, whilst Hutton in the late eighteenth century described the style of architecture in Birmingham as 'showy rather than lasting' built of inferior materials to save costs,[156] author George Yates in 1830 thought that the labouring classes 'maintained themselves and families in a very creditable manner' as nearly every individual family lived 'in a separate house of modern construction'.[157] Conversely, the author James Drake in 1831 described Birmingham as full of numerous narrow courts and yards filled with smaller dwellings although he also said the town was known for the cheap and comfortable, but not ornamental, houses of the middle and working class.[158] Later in 1843, the Children's Employment Commission described a house inhabited by a 'decent' working class family as being situated in a court which was 'large and spacious, being towards the outskirts of the town.'[159] Presumably, such families lived in one of the newer courts built after 1830 which were built on a more generous scale. However, even some the older courts were initially seen as respectable. The secularist George Holyoake was born in Inge Street. It was a street which he describes as being 'fresh and bright' in 1817 but by

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[153] Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*, 3rd Edn p.468.
[154] West, W., *The History, Topography and Directory of Warwickshire* (Wrightson, 1830), p.171.
[155] E. Hopkins, 'Working Class Housing in Birmingham During the Industrial Revolution', *International Review of Social History*, 31.1 (1986), p.80.
[156] Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*, 3rd Edn. p.71.
[157] Yates, *An Historical and Descriptive Sketch of Birmingham*, pp. 75-76.
[158] Drake, *The Picture of Birmingham*, (1831). p.31, p.28.
[159] *Children's Employment Commission. Second Report, Trades and Manufacturers.*1843. F.141.

the time he published *Sixty Years of an Agitators Life* in 1900, the 'grime of smoke, of decay and comfortlessness' was said to be upon it.[160]

Many of the poorer families were constantly on the move in search of cheaper lodgings. However, although in Preston 26 percent of men in 1861 were not living in the same location as they were in 1851, historian Michael Anderson found that the men had not moved further than 200 meters.[161] In Birmingham, 'occupational districts' evolved as workers liked to live near their place of work so workmen in the same job tended to live in the same area. Those in the gun trade for instance, migrated from the old centre of town to the St. Mary's district. This district was opened up for housing development during the 1740s and the gunsmiths were keen to take advantage of the new estates. By the late eighteenth century, half of gunsmiths were living in this area.[162] Migration of workers within the jewellery trade did not take place until the early part of the nineteenth century when workers could be found clustered around the streets north of St. Paul's Church[163] and later in 1845, around the east side of Great Hampton Street. Occupational districts did not evolve for all trades. In the button trade and later the steel pen trades for instance, the work was often outsourced, particularly to women and children.

Occupational districts may have encouraged networking on a social level. If families remained in the same location, they would then continue to have access to the

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[160] G. J. Holyoake, *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, 4th edt (London: T Fisher Unwin, 1900), Vol I. p.15
[161] M. Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* (Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 42.
[162] Wise, M. J., 'On the Evolution of the Jewellery and Gun Quarters in Birmingham', *Transactions and Papers (Institute of British Geographers)*,15(1949), p.66.
[163] 'ibid'. p.69.

network of support from family, relatives and friends. Many autobiographies also stress the sense of community in the area where they lived. During the summer, all the children would play in the street together and the parents would sit outside in the evening gossiping. Members of the community would also assist each other in terms of child minding, sickness and unemployment.[164]

The labour aristocracy paid around 7s a week in 1842[165] for accommodation such as that to be found in Tennant Street (see Fig. 11). These houses were built in pairs and had a parlour at the front with a kitchen at the back. They also had four bedrooms spread over two floors, a privy and a brew house. Five of the children who entered the Blue Coat School during 1831 to 1843, lived in Tennant Street.

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[164] Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*, p.234.
[165] M. Brickley and others, *St. Martin;s Uncovered: Investigations in the Churchyard of St' Martin's-in-the-Bull Ring, Birmingham, 2001* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006), p. 215.

Figure 11: Plan of houses in Tennant Street, Birmingham 1842

ELEVATION AND GROUND PLAN OF TWO THREE-QUARTER HOUSES
IN TENNANT STREET, BIRMINGHAM.
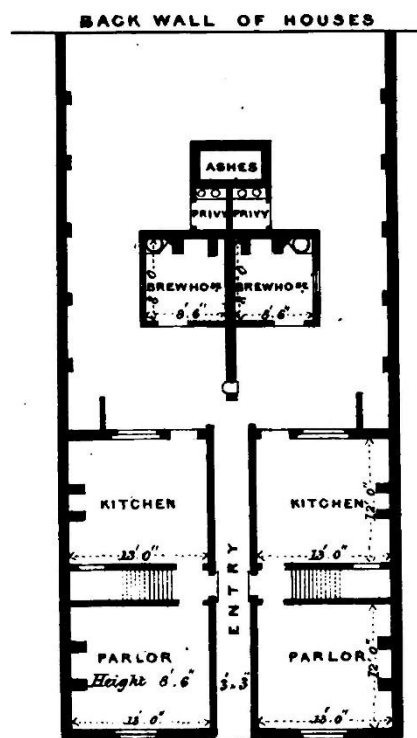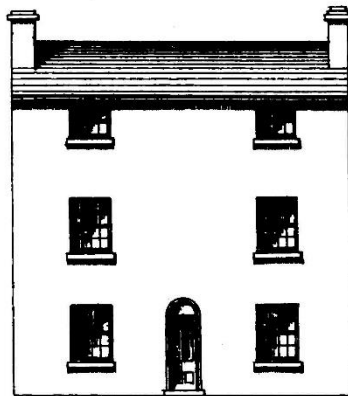
Source: Local reports on the sanitary condition of the labouring population of England. (1842)
HC 007, Vol 27, p.193.

According to Chadwick's report in 1842, the majority of the working class paid from 2s 6d – 4s 6d rent a week[166] with those at the bottom end of the social scale, tending to live in the older part of the town, in the old courts in dwellings which were often in an appalling condition. They lived in 'courts' of several houses clustered together and the only entrance was often through a very narrow passage. In the middle of the court were the privies, usually four or five houses to one privy. Not only were the privies unhygienic, but without proper drainage, stagnant pools would lie on the ground. One of the old courts was in Bromsgrove Street (see Fig. 12) and five of the children, who entered the Blue Coat School during 1832 to 1843, lived in this Street.[167]

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[166] Local reports on the sanitary condition of the labouring population of England. (1842) HC 007, Vol 27 pp.192-193.
[167] 'B.C.S. Parents' Resignations'.

Figure 12: Plan of houses in Bromsgrove Street, Birmingham 1842
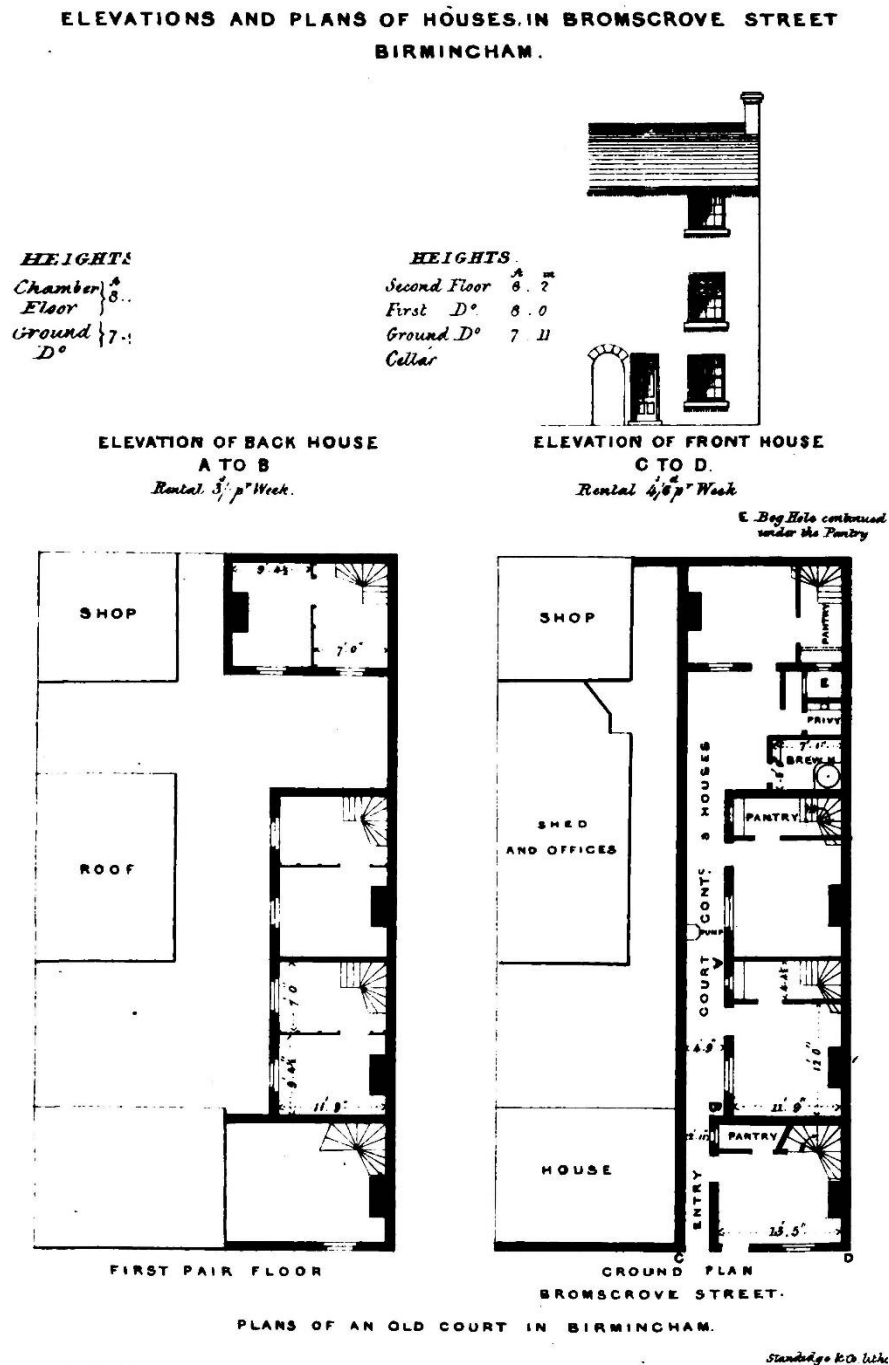
Source: Local reports on the sanitary condition of the labouring population of England. (1842) HC 007, Vol 27, p.193.

Common lodging houses were seen as very disreputable linked to drunks, prostitutes, criminals and transients and as such the antithesis of accommodation which was regarded as respectable.

It is evident that for the labour aristocracy, comfortable, pleasant housing could easily be found in Birmingham particularly towards the end of the eighteenth century. But for those families who were impoverished, they would have found it difficult to afford to live in areas seen as 'respectable'. We saw earlier how many of the families in the Blue Coat School were forced to live in deprived areas as a result of reduced circumstances.

Household Characteristics

The ability to own or rent a respectable property was not only related to the capacity to earn sufficient income but was also associated with household and family expenditure. The extra costs incurred through the need to provide for a wife and child (or children) may have indirectly impacted on the chances for social advancement.

<u>Marriage</u>

Marriage was often seen as a crucial turning point. Although it often brought independence from the parental household it may also have hindered the working class in their ability to be socially mobile through the additional expenditure incurred as a spouse or parent.

Within the working class it was not unusual for men and women to marry people who lived within walking distance to them, particularly if they lived in one of the occupational districts described earlier in this chapter. Consequently, both sets of parents would have had similar occupations and shared the same social background.[168] Couples relied on a variety of ways to meet their future husband or wife. Frost found that 42 percent of couples met through friends, relatives or neighbours, 27 percent met through work and 14 percent met through a connection with a religious activity. In such a closely knit society, many would have grown up with their future partner.[169] In 1821, the master of the Blue Coat School handed in his resignation as he wished to marry the mistress of the school (although he was allowed to withdraw his resignation as they did not have children).[170] Working class couples appear to have had a considerable amount of freedom during their courtship but this was brief with 17 months being the average length of time and 3 months the median although these figures are probably a little on the low side.[171] Engagements lasted longer, with the average being almost 3 years and the median 1 year and 3 months.[172] Once they had started to contemplate marriage the parents often began to take an interest and approval was sought from them.[173] Miles suggests that pressure could have been exerted by the parents if they were hostile to the idea of their son marrying a girl from a poor family or one who worked in a factory where the girls were said to have low morals.[174] As early as 1782 it was said that girls who worked in the

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[168] Burnett. *Destiny Obscure*. p.264.
[169] G. Frost, "Promises Broken: Breach of Promise of Marriage in England and Wales, 1753-1970." (Rice University, 1991), p.116.
[170] "B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book' January 1821.
[171] Frost, *Promises Broken* p.61.
[172] 'ibid'. p.62
[173] E. Griffin, "A Conundrum Resolved? Rethinking Courtship, Marriage and Population Growth in Eighteenth-Century England," *Past & Present*, 215 (2012), p.158.
[174] A. Miles, 'Social Mobility: In Nineteenth-Century England', *ReFresh* (Autumn 1996), p.169.

manufactories had morals which were 'almost sure to be corrupted,'[175] whilst more than eighty years later in 1865, button manufacturer John Turner feared that in his factory 'there are (among them as) many instances of a low state of education and morals as can be found in any other trade where many women and children are engaged'.[176] Far from being a corrupting influence, manufactories offered women a freedom which domestic service lacked. However, such independence was associated with a lack of moral respectability. Only those occupations which were seen as an extension of the home were seen as socially acceptable. By working in domestic service or in occupations such as teaching or the clothing trades they would be taught domestic virtues and be under the guardianship of a relative or a substitute family.[177]

Nationally, the mean age for marriage from 1830 to 1837 was 24.9 males and 23.1 for females, a fall of about a year in comparison to 1790.[178] However, in the Birmingham brass industry at least, it was said that the women married young as 'the girl-wife becomes a mother'.[179] Children would usually remain in the family home until they were married and had completed their apprenticeship (if apprenticed) according to the specification of their indenture. Although some research suggests that couples

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[175] Guardians and Overseers of the Poor. Birmingham, *The Present Situation of the Town of Birmingham, Respecting Its Poor, Considered. With a Proposal for Building a New Workhouse; Addressed to the Inhabitants by the Overseers of the Poor* (Pearson & Rollason, 1782), p.6.
[176] Timmins.*Resources, Products and Industrial History*. p.444.
[177] L. Davidoff, 'Landscape with Figures: Home and Community in English Society', in *Worlds Between : Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (Polity Press, 2013), pp.61-62.
[178] E.A. Wrigley and others, *English Population History from Family Reconstitution 1580-1837* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.134.
[179] Timmins. *Resources, Products and Industrial History*. p.364.

waited until they had sufficient savings before they got married;[180] historian Emma

Griffin found that there was little evidence in the autobiographies she examined that

this was indeed the case. Instead, couples appear to have based their decision to

marry on anticipated future earnings.[181] In a sample of 1,068 households in Preston in

1851, economic historian Michael Anderson found that only fifteen percent of married

couples lived with their kin after they were married. Twenty-eight percent of all

childless married couples (wife under the age of 45) lived as lodgers in another

household[182] and the majority of these couples would have been working class as the

middle class could afford to live in their own house.

Family size

The natural outcome of marriage for the majority of young couples was an increase

in family size. Families in general, were larger in size than today. For women born

between 1791 and 1820 the average family size in the autobiographies examined by

Humphries was 5.43 and this rose to 6.17 for women born between 1821 and

1850,[183] although she believes the autobiographers tended to under report the

number of siblings in their household. For instance, they would forget those who had

died.[184] For married women born between 1771 and 1831 the number of children

peaked at between 5.7 and 6.2 – the average was around 6 children per family.[185]

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[180] R. Wall, 'Introduction', in *Family Forms in Historic Europe*, ed. by Richard Wall, Jean Robin, and Peter Laslett (Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.15.
[181] Griffin. *A Conundrum Resolved.* p.138.
[182] Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* p.49.
[183] Humphries *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution,* p.5
[184] 'ibid', p.59.
[185] E. Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed: Working Class Children in Nineteeth Century England.* (Manchester University Press, 1994), p.102.

However, as we saw earlier, children were frequently recruited from large families in the Blue Coat School as they were seen as 'needy'.

Additional children placed a strain on household resources, particularly in the early years of marriage when the children were too young to be sent out to work. Many families would not have been able to spend their income on anything other than necessities. Humphries has shown that there was an inverse relationship between family size and education. The larger the family, the less likely all the children would receive some education.[186] In reference to his mother who had 15 children, George Holyoake a working class secularist born in Birmingham wrote, 'how much better it would have been for her how much more enjoyment, peace, repose, and freedom from anxiety would have fallen to her had her family been limited to three or four children'.[187] However, when there were numerous children in the household, tasks could be divided up by sex and age.[188] If a workshop was attached to the house then the boys were expected to help with the work whilst the girls looked after the younger children. Generally, the relationship between the children in such families, especially large families, was said to be very amicable. The children would support each other and play together in the streets. Memories of informal playtimes as recalled in autobiographies were usually fondly recollected.[189]

As Hopkins points out, figures which illustrate family size often represent the total number born and not the number in the family at any one time as children died or left

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[186] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* p.343.
[187] Holyoake, *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, Sixth, p.15.
[188] Burnett. *Destiny Obscure*. p.225.
[189] 'ibid' p.248.

home.[190] About 1 in 5 or 1 in 6 of the children who died were under the age of one.[191]

In 1838, more than half of the deaths registered were children who were under the age of five.[192]

Family size is not the same as household size. Sociologists and historians have been arguing about actual household size, as opposed to family size since the mid-nineteenth century, as a consequence of the pioneering work of Frederic Le Play (1855, 1872) and later historian Peter Laslett in the 1960s. Whether a nuclear or extended household was the norm is still being debated today.[193] In Birmingham, not many houses were inhabited by more than one complete family,[194] although there is no doubt that many households also contained individuals who were part of the extended family or not related to the family at all. In the 1851 census only 36 percent of families consisted of just parents and children, the majority of families had additional individuals living with them such as distant relatives, lodgers or servants.[195] In his 1851 sample from Preston, Anderson found that 18.9 percent of household heads shared their accommodation with a sibling or sibling-in-law and 15 percent shared with a niece or nephew (without a parent).[196] Aunts, uncles, grandparents and other relatives could all be found in his sample. Humphries, in her sample of

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[190] Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed.* p.101.
[191] Wrigley and others, *English Population History*. p. 249.
[192] 'State of the Public Health in Birmingham'. *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, p.207.
[193] See P. Puschmannab and A. Sollic, 'Household and Family During Urbanization and Industrialization: Efforts to Shed New Light on an Old Debate', *The History of the Family*, 19 (2014), pp.1–12.
[194] *First Report of the Commissioners for Inquiring into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts (1844)*, CP 572, Vol 17, [572], p.144.
[195] Hopkins *Childhood Transformed.* p.102
[196] Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire,* p. 45.

autobiographies found that 5.5 percent of families had one or more grandparents living with them in the household.[197]

As noted earlier, a number of families associated with the Blue Coat School had lodgers living with them. In the eighteenth century, five percent of all urban households had lodgers. This had risen to twelve percent by 1851 although Anderson found that 23 percent of the households in his 1851 sample from Preston had lodgers. Nearly half of them were unmarried and of those who were single, half of the men and three-fifths of the women were aged 15 to 24.[198] Forty-eight percent of lodgers were widowers with no children – widows with no children tended to live with kin.[199] The majority of lodgers may be found in semi-skilled working class households although some were in skilled households.[200]

The more affluent households would also have live-in servants. However, servants were not confined to just the middle or upper class households. Laslett, in a sample taken from one hundred English communities 1574 to 1821, found that 23.3 percent of tradesmen and craftsmen and even 2.2 percent of labourers had a servant who lived in the same household.[201] In a one-in-four household sample from the 1851 census in Rochdale, 16 percent of those households which had living-in servants

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[197] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* p.79.
[198] Anderson. *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* p.47.
[199] 'ibid' p.50.
[200] M. Anderson, 'The Social Implications of Demographic Change', in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950: People and Their Environment*, ed. by F.M.L Thompson (Cambridge University Press, 1990), II.p.64.
[201] P Laslett and R Wall (eds) *Household and Family in Past Times* (Cambridge University Press, 1972), p.154.

belonged to the artisan or unskilled class whilst in Rutland the proportion was 13 percent.[202]

Single parent households

As discussed earlier, seventy-two percent of children who were nominated for admittance to the Blue Coat School were from single parent households. This is a significantly higher figure than that found by sociologists Keith Snell and Jane Millar who found that approximately 13.5 percent of all households from 1801 to 1851 were headed by a single parent.[203] However, as the Blue Coat School only admitted those seen as needy this high figure is not atypical. Many children specifically grew up in families headed solely by their mother. Humphries found that 25.9 percent of boys in her autobiographies grew up without a father compared to 14.3 percent of who grew up without a mother.[204] Laslett in his 1574 to 1821 sample of 100 English communities found that 12.9 percent of households were headed by a widow and 5.2 percent by a widower.[205] In both cases, the number of widows was approximately twice the proportion of widowers.

Many of the widows had dependent children. In 1851 in the Parish of St Martin's Birmingham, 70 percent of all widows had dependent children (compared to 44

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[202]E. Higgs, 'Domestic Servants and Households in Victorian England', *Social History*, 8.2 (1983), p.207.

[203] K.D.M. Snell and J. Millar, "Lone-Parent Families and the Welfare State: Past and Present," *Continuity and Change*, 2 (1987), p.7.

[204] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution,* p.62.

[205] P. Laslett, 'Mean Household Size in England Since the Sixteenth Century', in *Household and Family in Past Times*, ed. by P. Laslett and R. Wall (Cambridge University Press, 1972), p.147.

percent of widowers). Of these, 40 percent had just one child, 27 percent had 2 children and the remainder had more than 2 children.[206]

The relatively high number of single parent households reflects the average life expectantly at birth which in 1841 in England and Wales was 40 for men and 42 for women. Taking a combined figure for men and women the life expectancy at birth for the decade 1851 to 1860 was 41.[207] However, these figures disguise the fact that life expectancy varied across the country. The average life expectantly at birth for the same decade in Birmingham was 37 years of age whereas in Bristol it was 39 and Liverpool it was just 31.[208] Furthermore, if the cities are broken down into registration districts, the life expectancy at birth for Birmingham in 1851 to 60 was 35 whereas in Aston it was 42.[209]

There are numerous reasons why life expectancy at birth was low. Accidents were common, mostly as a consequence of machinery used in the workplaces. The manufacture of percussion-caps used to prime guns was mentioned as being particularly dangerous in a public health report from 1841. These caps often exploded causing 'terrific accidents'.[210] Other occupations were responsible for some of the chronic health problems such as those which affected the air passages and

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[206] *Census of Great Britain, 1851, Population Tables. Number of Inhabitants Vol 1*.Cii, Table 14.
[207] *Mortality in England and Wales: Average Life Span* (Office for National Statistics, 2010), p.3.
[208] S. Szreter, 'Urbanization, Mortality and the Standard of Living Debate: New Estimates of the Expectation of Life at Birth in Nineteenth-Century British Cities', *The Economic History Review (New Series)*, 51.1 (1998), p.88.
[209] 'ibid' p.90.
[210] 'State of the Public Health in Birmingham'. *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, p.208.

lungs. Very few of these individuals lived 'beyond the age of forty years'.[211] The father of Thomas Mills in the Blue Coat School had lost some of the fingers from his hand in an accident whilst working as a gun stoker.[212] Families in the nineteenth century also lived in an environment which exposed them constantly to pests and diseases. Waves of cholera swept through England from the 1830s to the 1860s, killing thousands. Smallpox, typhoid, scarlet fever and tuberculosis (known as 'consumption' or 'phthisis') caused about 40 percent of the deaths in towns. There were also the recurrent and endemic stomach troubles that resulted from everyday poor sanitation and food hygiene. The lack of sufficient fresh food also meant that diseases such as scurvy were relatively common amongst the working class. Analysis of human bone from graves in St Martin's church in Birmingham revealed that 10.5 percent of working class children suffered from scurvy and both working class and middle class children were affected by rickets.[213]

Women had the additional burden of childbirth mortality. A midwifery report published in 1781 which was based on deliveries of the poor in Westminster between 1774 and 1780 produced a mortality rate of around 3 percent which was 25 to 30 deaths per 1,000 deliveries.[214] Death from puerperal pyrexia which followed 3 to 10 days after the birth was a major killer and accounted for at least half of the deaths.[215]

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[211] 'A Day at the British Needle-Mills, Redditch', *Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, 1842. p.33; *First Report of the Commissioners for Inquiring into the* State of Large Towns and Populous Districts p.142.
[212] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 1826
[213] Brickley and others, *St. Martin's Uncovered.* p.218
[214] I Louden, "Deaths in Childbed from the Eighteenth Century to 1935," *Medical History*, 30 (1986), p.18
[215] G. Chamberlain, 'British Maternal Mortality in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries', *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 99.11 (2006), p.559.

Even if the parents managed to evade an early death through disease or accidents, a child could still be brought up in a single parent household if the parents separated following marital difficulties, although documentary evidence for this is sparse. Historian Pamela Sharpe found evidence of 88 cases of separation in Colyton in Devon using an overseer's account book from an earlier period (1741 to 1769). For over a third (33) of these cases, the man appears to have instigated the separation, usually because he wanted to work elsewhere – at least half of them entered the militia.[216]

In an age when divorce was highly unlikely, especially amongst the working class (as it required an expensive Act of Parliament), desertion was relatively common. In the Birmingham Police Returns twelve men (and one woman) were convicted in 1841 for deserting their families. Eight years later in 1849, 36 men and one woman were convicted by the same courts.[217] The mother in these cases was seen as blameless and therefore deserving of support. Desertion was said to be a particularly common problem in manufacturing districts and not all of the men who deserted their families were from the lowest social group. Historian Joanne Bailey found that a third of the 196 men who deserted their families in the period 1660 to 1800 were from the labouring aristocracy - tradesmen, craftsmen and retailers.[218] Although 'desertion' was seen as acceptable grounds for admission to the Blue Coat School, the number of reported instances was surprisingly low. Historian David Kent found that the desertion rate for St Martin's Parish in London 1750 to 1791 varied from 7.1 percent

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[216] P. Sharpe, 'Marital Seperation in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', *Local Population Studies*, 45 (1990), p.67.
[217] *Table of the Revenue, Population, Commerce Etc of the United Kingdom and Its Dependencies, Part XI, 1841*, Command Papers, LVI. N218 and N193
[218] Bailey, *Unquiet Lives.* p.173.

to 18.2 percent (as a consequence of enlistment in times of conflict).[219] However, there were only three reported instances of desertion in the Blue Coat School nomination records, although as six percent of mothers in the nomination records were recorded as 'single', potentially some of these may have been deserted wives.[220]

For single parents, especially mothers, trying to fulfil their role as a family provider was often extremely difficult. Men who contributed to the 'friendly societies' or 'mutual savings institutions' could claim financial assistance in times of need but few women could afford the contributions to female friendly societies, which cost around sixpence a month in the 1840s with no opportunity to claim benefits for the first two years.[221] Some widows and widowers were supported at least partially by kin who lived in the same household. In his 1851 sample from Preston, Anderson found that kin provided an important means of support particularly for older widows and widowers.[222]

Some women could support themselves on their wages but for the majority, the wages were too low. For those women who were widowed, or who had husbands who had deserted them, they had no option but to work. Very few women undertook paid work outside the home instead they undertook piece work at home. Catherine Holyoake for instance, mother of George Holyoake, had her own workshop which was attached to the house. She employed several people in the manufacture of horn

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[219] D. Kent, 'Gone for a Soldier: Family Breakdown and the Demography of Desertion in a London Parish, 1750–1791', *Local Population Studies*, 45 (1990), p.30.
[220] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'.
[221] D. Jones, 'Self Help in Nineteenth-Century Wales: The Rise and Fall of the Female Friendly Society', *Llafur*, IV (1984), p.18.
[222] Anderson. *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* p.146.

buttons and was said to be 'an entirely self-acting, managing mistress'.[223] Many women worked as dressmakers or washerwomen although as the wages were so low they were often inadequate and some were forced to rely on the additional income they received from sending their older children to work. Mary Collings was a widow when her son John was admitted to the Blue Coat School in 1831. She had several children and earned her living working as a laundress.[224] Likewise Phoebe Allport who was a widow with eight children was working as a milliner in 1826.[225]

Autobiographies suggest that sometimes the mother sent her children out to work in place of herself.[226] There is just one specific reference to this happening in the Blue Coat School records. In 1845 Sarah Walker said she was being 'supported by my children', although it is unclear exactly how they did support her.[227] In the 1841 census her eldest child was 20 and her youngest was 8. They had nearly all left home by 1851 except for one of her sons who worked as a jeweller. However by this time, she was living with two (female) relatives who had their own income.[228]

Parish relief was available to some if they qualified for it although this was only considered as a last resort due to the stigma attached to it. An analysis of 62 individuals between 1823 and 1835 in Oxford found that married couples and widows

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[223] Holyoake, *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, Sixth, I. p.10.
[224] 'B.C.S. Resignation Register'. 5 July 1831.
[225] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'.1826.
[226] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* p.118.
[227] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 6 January 1845.
[228] 'Census,1841.' HO107/1143/22, 'Census Returns of England and Wales, 1851. Birmingham - Warwickshire'. HO107/2058 / 1090.

received more in poor relief payments than single people.[229] However as the average payment was 4s 6d a week for widows compared to the wage of a labourer who could earn 10s to 12s a week, it was rarely enough to support them.[230]

In a sample of 264 families with dependent children from south-eastern rural and market-town parishes receiving Poor Law relief between 1700 and 1850, three in ten of the recipients were lone parents and of these, 228 were women.[231] Referring to the *Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law* on which the New Poor Law Act of 1834 was based, economic historians Sidney and Beatrice Webb pointed out that:

> With regard to the really baffling problems, presented by the widow, the deserted wife, the wife of the absentee soldier or sailor, the wife of a husband resident in another parish or another country - with or without children -the Report is silent.[232]

Remarriage

Both single mothers and fathers often remarried with the financial welfare of the children usually being the primary consideration when contemplating remarriage.[233] Diana Eades, mother of Richard Eades a pupil in the Blue Coat School, was widowed sometime between 1841 and 1845. Her first husband was a candlestick maker and they had at least five children. She remarried in 1850 and her second

[229] R. Dyson, 'Welfare Provision in Oxford During the Latter Stages of the Old Poor Law, 1800-1834', *The Historial Journal*, 52.4 (2009), 943–62 <http://dx.doi.org/DOI: 10.1017/S0018246X0999032X>. p.951
[230] 'ibid' p.952.
[231] Snell and Millar. *Lone Parent Families*. pp.396-397.
[232] S. Webb and B. Webb, *English Poor Law Policy*, Second (Longmans, Green and Co., 1910), p.6.
[233] Bailey. *Unquiet Lives*. p.66.

husband was a brass founder master employing 6 men.[234] In this instance, the widow appears to have married advantageously although it is impossible to say whether this was deliberate or not.

For those widows who lost their spouse when they were under 30 years of age, the *mean* number of years before remarriage in the period 1750 to 1837 was 4.5 years (54 months). This decreased to just under 2 years (22.4 months) for those widows over the age of 50.[235] However, the interval for widows who remarried varied according to the number of children they had. The greater the number of children, the longer the interval before remarriage, as widows with children were less attractive to potential suitors.[236] Thomas Richards was nominated for admittance to the school in 1832. His father had died and his mother had remarried but the nomination included a letter from the Birmingham workhouse where it is assumed, the family lived for a time before his mother remarried.[237] The school did not usually accept children from the workhouse, and we can only speculate as to why Thomas was admitted. However, as his mother had remarried and hence would not require any form of parish relief, this may have made him a suitable object of charity.

Although widowers had a higher income than widows, they lacked the domestic skills necessary to manage a household. Consequently, it was common for a widower to remarry quickly in order to regain a wife who could look after the household and the children. If this was not possible then the eldest girl frequently had to take

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[234] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 31 January 1845 and 'Census, 1851.' HO107/2052 / 449.
[235] Wrigley and others, *English Population History.* p. 172.
[236] 'ibid'. p.178.
[237] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 1842.

responsibility for the rest of the household, doing the cooking and housework and looking after the other children. The interval before a widower remarried was always shorter than that of a widow. For the period 1750 to 1837, the national mean for widowers under 30 years of age who remarried was just over 3 years (37.3 months) decreasing slightly to around 2.5 years (30.9 months) for those aged over 50.[238]

Orphans

A considerable number of children had the misfortune to lose both parents. Whilst Humphries found that 6.4 percent of children in her autobiographies had lost both parents,[239] the proportion was much higher in Blue Coat School (23 percent, see fig. 9). This reflects the ethos of the school which was to admit children who were seen as 'proper objects of charity.' Where possible, kin would have provided assistance to the orphaned child. According to historian David Vincent, close kin felt it was their duty to provide support even to the point where they took over the household. Unfortunately, if a child could not be supported by his or her relatives then they usually ended up in the workhouse.[240] Samuel Howlett was living in the workhouse when he was nominated for admission to the Blue Coat School in 1836 even though his aunt Ann Freeth signed the resignation contract.[241] We do not know why he was not living with his aunt. Perhaps she could not afford to support him in her own home at the time. However, he did live with his widowed aunt together with her son and father in law when he left Blue Coat School in 1841, so clearly Samuel did not hold a

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[238] Wrigley and others. *English Population History.* p.172.
[239] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* pp.61-63.
[240] J. Burnett, D. Vincent, and D. Mayal (eds)*The Autobiography of the Working Class: An Annotated Critical Bibliography, Vol. 1: 1790-1900* (New York University Press, 1984), p.66.
[241] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 1836.

grudge against his aunt for apparently abandoning him in the workhouse.[242] Elder siblings sometimes took over the responsibility for bringing up their younger brother and sisters. When Fanny Clarke was nominated in 1842 she was living at the time with her 6 siblings, including Sarah who was the oldest aged 20 and head of the family.[243]

Anderson found that orphans frequently ended up living with their Grandparents.[244] Joseph Mills for instance, who was an orphan when he entered the Blue Coat School in 1822, was looked after by his elderly grandfather.[245] In contrast, historian Jenny Dyer found that orphaned children in her 1851 samples from Ladywood and Edgbaston were more likely to live with their uncle and aunt than the grandparents.[246]

As is evident, many working class families would have been financially under an immense strain especially those families with numerous children and single parent households. In both cases, it is likely that they were to be found living in one of the more poorer areas of the city and they may have been forced to take in lodgers or send their children out to work to supplement their income. Where both parents had died the children would have been particularly vulnerable but the fortunate ones would have received support from a network of family and friends.

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[242] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 1836 and 'Census,1841.' HO107/1148/24.
[243] 'Census,1841.' HO107/1141/5.
[244] Anderson. *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* p.148.
[245] 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. April 1822.
[246] J. Dyer, 'The Child Population of Ladywood and Edgbaston 1851', *Local Population Studies*, 47 (1991), pp.33-34.

Working-class attitudes, values and aspirations

As can be seen from Chapter 1, working class respectability embraced the ideals of sobriety, self-help, domesticity and particularly independence. But the degree to which the working class family sought these qualities will be briefly explored.

Child labour

Historian Hugh Cunningham believes that there was a lack of demand for child labour in towns up until the late eighteenth century.[247] Whether this was the case is debatable as in 1772, a local newspaper noted that [the people in Birmingham] 'make their little ones earn a subsistence at the same age in which little ones are learning vice through the streets of every other large town in the kingdom'.[248] In the Soho works in the late eighteenth century, around 14 men, 27 women and 16 boys were employed at Boulton and Watt's coinage works.[249] Certainly, by the mid-nineteenth century there was a demand for child labour as a study in the 1850s of 1,373 children from the age of 7 to 15 in Birmingham found that 38.5 percent were working.[250]

As children's wages made a valuable contribution to the income of the family they were not discouraged from working and the employment of children was not seen as objectionable. According to Humphries, childhood labour was very much part of

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[247] H. Cunningham, 'The Employment and Unemployment of Children in England c.1680-1851', *Past & Present*, 126 (1990), p.148.
[248] Gill, *History of Birmingham Volume 1*. p.67.
[249] H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor : A Cyclopaedia of the Condition and Earnings of Those That Will Work, Those That Cannot Work, and Those That Will Not Work* (London: Griffin, Bohn, and company, 1861), II. p.310.
[250] Duggan, *The Impact of Industrialization*. p.214.

contemporary culture and children felt no resentment towards their parents regardless of the circumstances. Economic concerns had to take priority over any educational or other aspirations.[251] After briefly attending a dame school, Edward Davis had to start work at the age of 6 years and 8 months in a button manufactory in Birmingham.[252]

The Blue Coat School was not immune to the employment of children. In 1788 it proposed employing children to spin cotton although some of the governing committee of the Blue Coat School did think it might be detrimental to their health.[253] Later in 1794 they suggested that the 'manufacture of playing balls would be a proper employment for children'.[254] In both cases, there is no indication that these proposals were carried through. However in 1804 a pin manufacture made an application to employ some of the children and the committee 'unanimously decided that it was not expedient to employ the children in the school at any kind of manufacture'[255] although this was followed in 1808 by a suggestion that the girls should be employed spinning linen yarn. In the latter case at least, it appears the school may have been motivated by low finances.[256] This suggests that the school was also not averse to sending the pupils out to work if circumstances warranted it.

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[251] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* p.178.
[252] Davis, *Some Passages from My Life*. p.6.
[253] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. February 1788.
[254] 'ibid' October 1794.
[255] 'ibid' July, August 1804.
[256] 'ibid'. December 1807.

<u>Attitudes towards Education</u>

Prat remarked in 1803 that the inhabitants of Birmingham seemed to have a 'voracious appetite for reading'.[257] There was in fact, a growing demand for newspapers and literature which were now cheaper to purchase as a consequence of mass production and new methods of distribution. Although many institutions were set up in Birmingham for intellectual improvement, the relatively high subscription and admission fees tended to exclude the majority of the working class. Nethertheless, some provision did exist; the Birmingham Sunday Society which offered instruction in subjects such as mechanics, hydrostatics and astronomy for those who had attended a Sunday school was founded by dissident Sunday school teachers in 1789, whilst in 1796 two Sunday school teachers opened up an artisans library for the working class.[258] In 1796 the Brotherly Society was established offering mutual improvement educational activities. This society was a precursor of the later Mechanics Institutes.[259] The first Mechanics Institute in Birmingham was set up in 1825 and this offered instruction in subjects such as hydrostatics as well as grammar, arithmetic and drawing for over 1,000 members. The institution proved popular amongst the working class, even though it failed to attract 'mechanics'. However it eventually got into debt and was forced to close in 1842. During the 1830s, the Friendly Societies started to incorporate the merits of self-improvement within their organisation and encourage members to believe they could become

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[257] Mr Pratt (Samuel Jackson), 'Harvest-Home: Consisting of Supplementary Gleanings, Original ..., Volume 1', 1805. p.315.
[258] *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7, the City of Birmingham.* [Accessed: 31 January 2017]
[259] Money, *Experience and Identity.* p.143.

manufacturers.[260] The author William Hawkes Smith in an article in *the Analyst* in 1835 spoke of the working man's desire for greater 'physical comforts' and the possession of good education was seen as the means of achieving this.[261]

Parental attitudes towards educating their children

Although there was a growing desire to acquire literacy skills amongst the adult working class population in Birmingham, the majority were not interested in educating their children as they saw no value in it as it was not considered necessary in order to be successful. Many men in the town were skilled and highly paid and yet illiterate.[262] The school inspectors frequently commented on the apathy and indifference of parents.[263] Even some of those from the middle class failed to find any benefit in education for the masses. Simmons, a civil engineer with an interest in the welfare of the working class in the mid nineteenth century believed that education was not beneficial to the working class except the 'industrious of those residing near manufacturing districts who are thereby stimulated to improve the minds of their children'.[264]

Nonetheless, there is limited evidence from the nineteenth century that some parents were ambitious and keen to get their children educated especially amongst the labour aristocracy. In 1835 it was said that the parents wished to educate their

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[260] "Public Education: Schools, A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7: The City of Birmingham", ed W.B. Stephens, (London, Victoria County History1964) [Accessed: 15 July 2014].
[261] 'The Analyst: A Monthly Journal of Science, Literature and the Fine Arts', II (1835), p.333.
[262] Stephens, *Education, Literacy and Society,* p.123.
[263] Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed: Working Class Children in Nineteeth Century England,* p.142.
[264] G. Simmons, *The Working Classes: Their Moral, Social, and Intellectual Condition; with Practical Suggestions for Their Improvement* (Partridge and Oakey, 1849), p.3.

children as they were 'impelled by the mere motion of getting their children on in the world'[265] and in 1843 a brass founder was quoted as saying that he believed the majority of parents in his neighbourhood were 'anxious that their children should have a good education'. [266]

Mothers were more likely to provide encouragement for their children than the fathers. As the father was absent from the home for lengthy periods, the children often felt closer to their mother who was responsible caring for the family and home and holding the family together. Many autobiographers remarked on the loyalty and devotion they felt towards their mothers and as a consequence, the mother was able to influence them in their attitude, lifestyle and choice of profession.[267] In contrast, the term used by many autobiographers to describe their father was 'remoteness.'[268] Mothers made sacrifices to secure education and training for their children[269] although economic need meant that many could not keep them at school for long.

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[265] *Report from the Select Committee on Education in England and Wales Together with the Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, and Index.*, House of Commons Papers, 1835, VII. p.6.
[266] Children's Employment Commission. *Second Report of the Commissioners. Trades and Manufactures* 1843. F.145.
[267] Miles, Social Mobility in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth England p.151.
[268] Burnett, *Destiny Obscure* p.243.
[269] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution,* p.146.

Summary

Although Birmingham experienced periods of relative prosperity, in general the standard of living was low. For those within the labour aristocracy, wages were high and they were able to live in a more affluent neighbourhood and they would be able to afford luxuries such as education for their children. However, many families lived in reduced financial circumstances, especially those with multiple children, or those in single parent households. Such families would have struggled to survive and would have been unlikely to have been able to afford to send their children to school on a regular basis. In such cases, it was more important for the child to contribute to the income of the family, even if the parent(s) did value education. We have seen that although there was clearly a desire amongst adults to improve their literacy skills during this period, in the majority of cases, this did not extend to the children.

Conclusion

In an address to the working class on domestic economy in 1836, Joseph

Livesey, a social reformer and politician from Lancaster, defined happiness as:

'living in a convenient, respectable cottage…… (with the) table constantly supplied with substantial food, the family suitably clothed for working days…..the father and the elder children pursuing a course of profitable labour through the week, and the education of the younger children properly attended to'.[270]

If the above definition was to be applied to working class families living in

Birmingham during this period, not many would be defined as 'happy'. With the

economy stagnating during the early nineteenth century, and the standard of living

for the working class generally quite low, only those families who were from the

labour aristocracy would have benefited from living in a comfortable dwelling with

sufficient food and surplus funds to spend on education. However, although some

parents were prepared to provide funds in order to provide schooling for their children

the majority did not see the value of educating their children, although amongst the

labour aristocracy, there was a desire to ensure their children had a good education

to enable them to move up in the world.

Although the children in Blue Coat School may have been seen as 'respectable'

within the eyes of the governing body at Blue Coat School, circumstances ensured

that those who were admitted did not live in affluent areas, nor live in a household

which had funds to spend on quality education. The majority of children were from

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[270] J. Livesley, *Domestic Economy. An Address to the Working Classes, on Several Important Points Connected with Domestic Economy* (Preston: J. Livesley, 1836), p.2.

single parent households or were orphans and as such the families may have struggled to survive. However in the Blue Coat School they would have been able to take advantage of the free clothing, board and lodging which was provided alongside the education they would have received. For those families in financial need, these would have been seen as attractive assets.

The next chapter will examine the extent and quality of education in the Blue Coat School and it will also explore the wider issue of educational provision for children from poor families within the town of Birmingham.

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATION FOR THE WORKING CLASS

According to Schofield, who used a random sample of parish records to extrapolate a

national literacy estimate, by around 1795 just over 60 percent of men could sign

their names and just under 40 percent of women.[1] Economists Eltjo Buringh and Jan

Luiten Van Zanden provide a slightly lower estimate of 54 percent based on book

consumption but this covers the period 1701 to 1800 and does not distinguish

gender.[2] Both sets of figures do not distinguish geographical variations although

Schofield does later acknowledge such a difference and uses Bedfordshire as a case

study to demonstrate the immense variations throughout the parishes in this

particular county.[3]

Stephens found that commercial and administrative centres had higher literacy levels

than rural areas and industrial towns and Londoners were more literate than those in

other parts of the country. He also found that those parishes which had higher levels

of illiteracy were those which had little or no available schooling.[4] In contrast,

historian Sylvia Harrop found that the lack of formal schooling in Mottram-in-

Longdendale in Cheshire between 1734 and 1777 did not result in a high level of

illiteracy as the overall literacy level was around 71 percent for males although for

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[1] Schofield, *Dimensions of Illiteracy*. p.446.
[2] E. Buringh and J. Zanden, 'Charting the "Rise of the West": Manuscripts and Printed Books in Europe, a Long-Term Perspective from the Sixth through Eighteenth Centuries', *The Journal of Economic History*, 69.2 (2009), p.434.
[3] Schofield. *Dimensions of Illiteracy* p.447.
[4] W B Stephens, 'Literacy in England, Scotland and Wales 1500-1900', *History of Education Quarterley*, 30.4 (1990), p.557.

females it was only 25 percent.[5] The differing results may reflect the fact that it is notoriously difficult to equate the ability of an individual to sign their name with the attainment of literacy skills gained through formal schooling.

There is some evidence that people learned to read independently with the help of family, neighbours or friends. The physician and author Thomas Pole writing in 1814, speaks of the 'aged instructing the young' which he said was a 'sight familiar to us all'[6] although cultural historian Thomas Laqueur believes that the evidence is patchy for such informal channels.[7] Regardless of whether people did learn to read informally at home, research from Scandinavia suggests that schooling was necessary in order to gain more advanced skills such as writing.[8]

The first section of this chapter will explore the education which was available to pupils within the Blue Coat School. It will cover the extent and quality of the schooling and provide an overview of the learning experience. The following section will then assess the choices which were available for formal schooling in Birmingham, especially for those families who had limited resources. This second section will provide an overview of the growth of formal education by focusing on the early period from 1780 to 1830 which incorporates the emergence of different educational systems and the later period from 1830 to 1850 when we see increasing state

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[5] S. Harrop, 'Literacy and Educational Attitudes as Factors in the Industrialization of North-East Cheshire, 1760-1830', in *Studies in the History of Literacy: England and North America*, ed. by W.B Stephens (University of Leeds Museum of the History of Education, 1983), p.39.

[6] T. Pole, *A History of the Origin and Progress of Adult Schools* (Bristol, 1814), p.52.

[7] T.W. Laqueur, 'The Cultural Origins of Popular Literacy in England, 1500-1850', *Oxford Review of Education*, 2.3 (1976), p.257 and K. Tveit, 'The Development of Popular Literacy in the Nordic Countries. A Comparative Historical Study', *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 35.4 (1991), p.248.

[8] E. Johansson, *The History of Literacy in Sweden in Comparison with Some Other Countries* (Sweden, 1977), XII.p.65.

intervention. Inherent within the changes which were taking place and which will be explored more fully is the growth of the teaching profession and revisions to the school curriculum. Lastly, issues such as attendance and discipline will be examined.

The education of children in the Blue Coat School

This first section will examine the type of education the children would have received when they were admitted to the Blue Coat School. It will review the physical environment and discuss their day to day life within the school. It will also provide details of the nature of the education and of the staff who taught the children within the school. Finally it will examine the extent and quality of the education in comparison to other charity schools within the locality.

The physical environment

The Blue Coat School, as we saw in Chapter 1, was built in the newly created parish of St Philip's. It stood in the centre of the town, opposite the church of St Philip's. In Fig 13 which is a copy of a print dated 1732, the school is bottom left in the image.

Figure 13: Location of the Blue Coat School, 1732 (bottom left in the image).
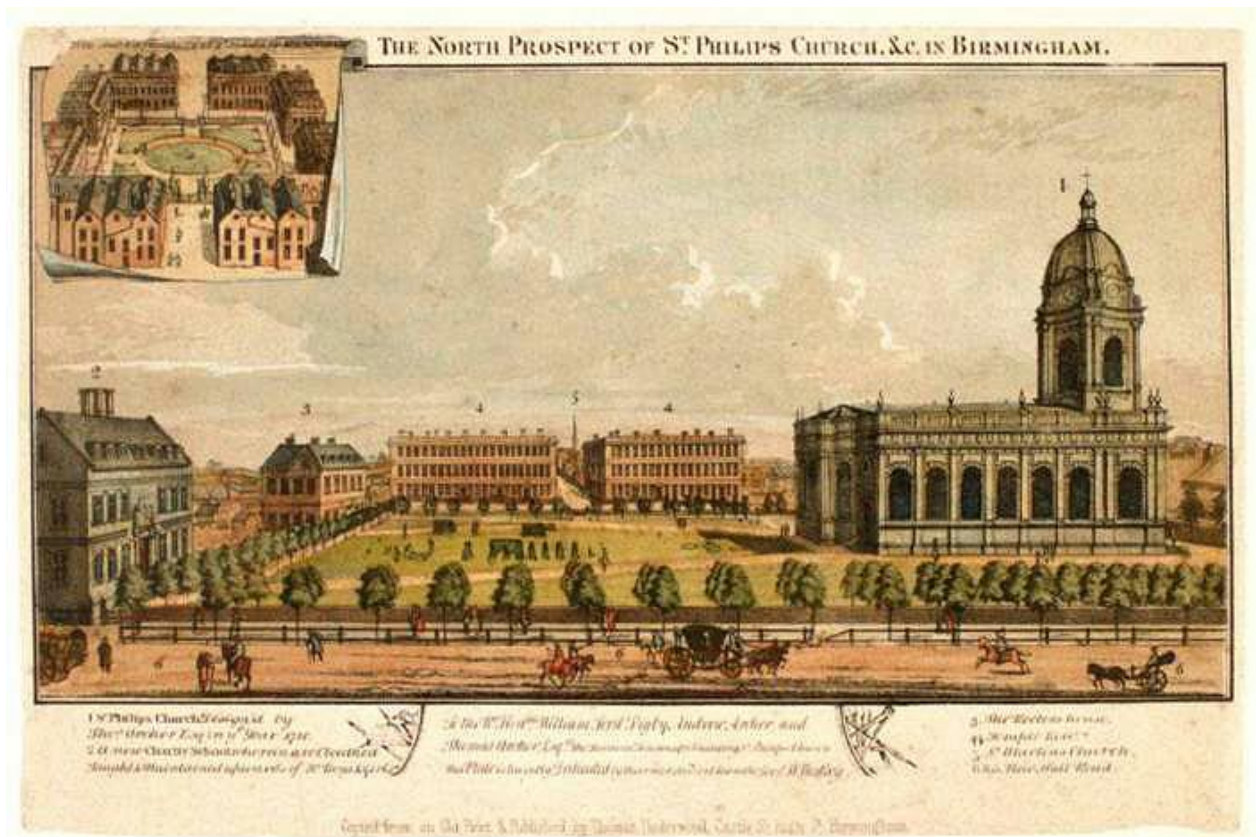
Source: The North Prospect of St. Phillips Church &c. in Birmingham. Drawn by Westley, engraved by Harris, 1732

When the school opened in 1724 there were only 62 children and just 30 of them boarded in the school[9] but after the school was enlarged first in 1794 and again in 1830 it was able to accommodate about 200 children.[10] In 1839 it was described as being a 'spacious, plain, stone-cased building'.[11]

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[9] J.D Myhill, *Blue Coat: A History of Blue Coat School, Birmingham 1722 - 1990* (Meridian Books, 1991), p.15.
[10] Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*, 3rd Edn, p.42.
[11] T. Roscoe and P. Lecount, *The London and Birmingham Railway, with the Home and Country Scenes on Each Side of the Line*, (London, 1839). p.184.

The furnishings were basic but adequate. In 1826 'a considerable sum of money' was spent in order to remove the old wooden bedsteads and replace them with iron ones. At the same time, they built a 'proper' washroom as many of the children suffered from eye infections.[12] Exercise was encouraged and the school had a playground which was enlarged in 1782 (although it was not to be used for flying kites).[13] In Fig 14, which is a plan of the school from 1907, we can clearly see the two playgrounds and the washhouse, which was built for the boys in 1844 in the boys' yard. At the same time the school also improved the supply of water and the drainage so that there was no longer moisture in the cellars and basement offices.[14]

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[12] B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book' 1826.
[13] 'ibid'. June 1782.
[14] 'ibid'. 1844.

Figure 14: Plan of the Blue Coat School, 1907
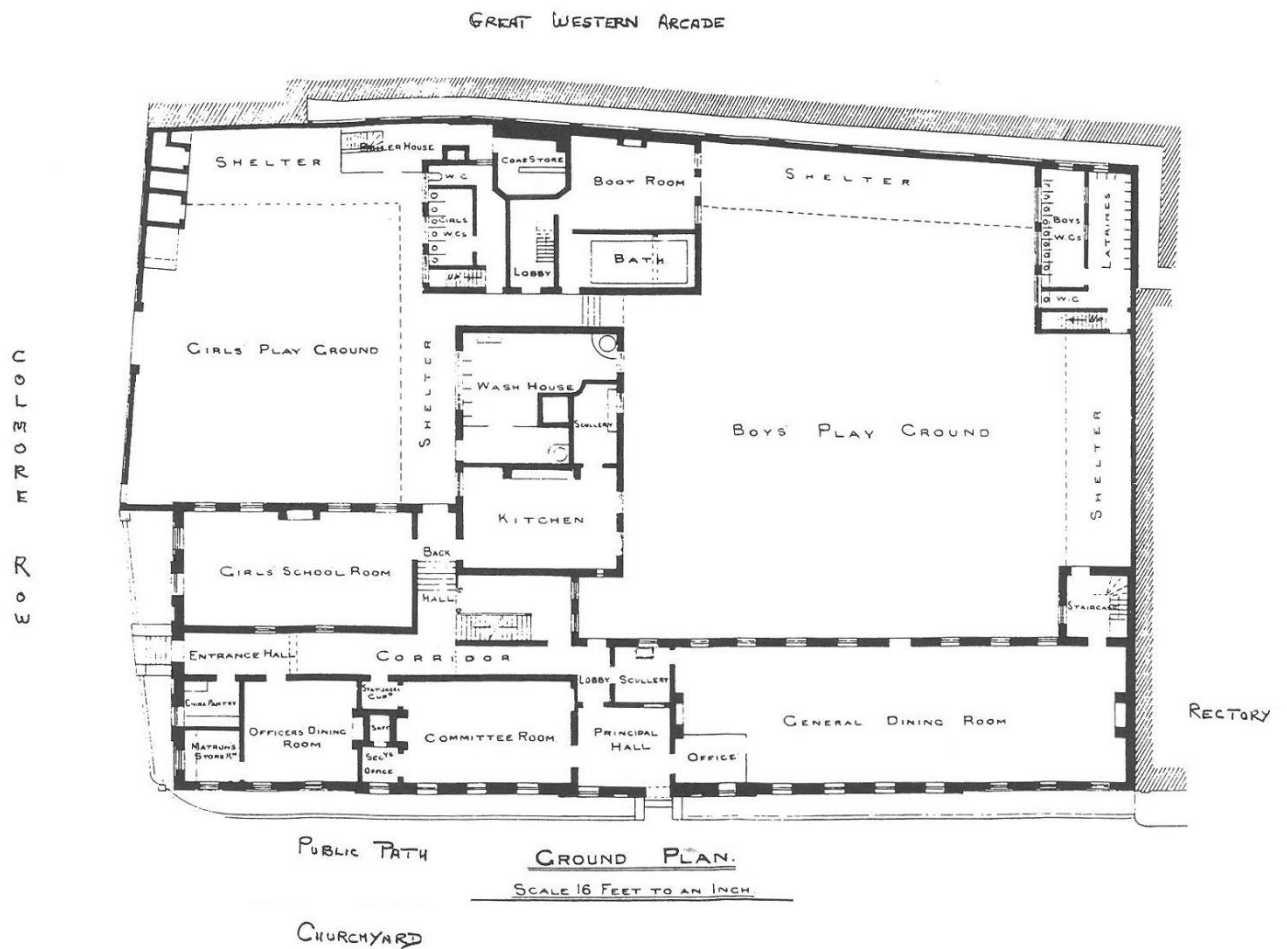
Source: J.D Myhill, *Blue Coat: A History of Blue Coat School, Birmingham 1722 - 1990*, p.134

The school experience

Once the children were in a position to be admitted to the school following their eligibility assessment, the parents were required to sign a form 'resigning' their children to the care of those who managed the school. As such, the school was responsible for the overall guidance and control of the children, which included

disciplinary procedings. The children were allowed to visit their parents once a month but were not allowed to leave at any other time except with the express permission of the master. They were allowed to visit their home at Christmas, Lent, Easter and Whitsuntide and 3 days during the Michaelmas Fair.[15] As such, attendance at school was regular, an unusual feature for schooling in this period.

The school day began when the children rose at 6.00am (7.00am during winter). Following prayers and then breakfast, the children had a short break before lessons began in earnest. The boys were divided up into six classes and there were four classes for the girls.[16] Lessons for the boys were from 9.00am to 12.00 and then from 2.00pm to 5.00pm with dinner at 1:00pm. The girls had lessons from 3.00pm to 5.00pm every day and on Wednesday and Friday they had lessons from 10.00am to 12.00. On Thursday they had lessons from 11.00am to 12.00. The school day finished between 5.00pm to 5.30pm and the children went to bed at 8.00pm after prayers.

In the Blue Coat School, there is little evidence of unwarranted punishment although discipline was strict. In 1784, two of the boys were accused of breaking into boxes which contained personal possessions; they stole clothes before running away. The penalty for the one boy, as it was his first offence, was to be flogged in front of the committee and the other boys whilst his companion was to be expelled as it was not his first offence.[17] More than 60 years later in 1848, the General Minute books detail similar punishments which were administered to a group of absconders. Two of the

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[15] Griffith. *History of the Free Schools.* p.92.
[16] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. May 1843.
[17] 'ibid'. October. 1784.

boys were expelled whilst the rest were severely whipped in front of the rest of the school.[18]

The school were keen to ensure that the children were healthy and followed through any recommendations from the medical officer who offered his advice and assistance free of charge. In March 1842 he recommended discontinuing the use of stays in the girls' clothing and later that year he suggested that the school should erect a gymnastics pole.[19] Diet was a topic which was frequently discussed. In1813 one of the parents raised a complaint as she believed that her daughter was not being provided with sufficient food. An investigation proved otherwise and in fact, they concluded that the children were being provided with too much food.[20] In 1836 the school medical officer noted an excess of food being consumed by the boys in the school.[21]

The quality of education

Fig 15 shows the proportion of charity schools in Birmingham in 1840 which provided tuition in specific subjects. We can see from this report that the majority of schools taught moral education, reading, writing and arithmetic together with sewing and knitting for the girls.

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[18] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. July 1848.
[19] 'ibid.'. March, November 1842.
[20] 'ibid.' June 1813.
[21] 'ibid.' November 1836.

Figure 15: Subjects taught in the charity schools, 1840
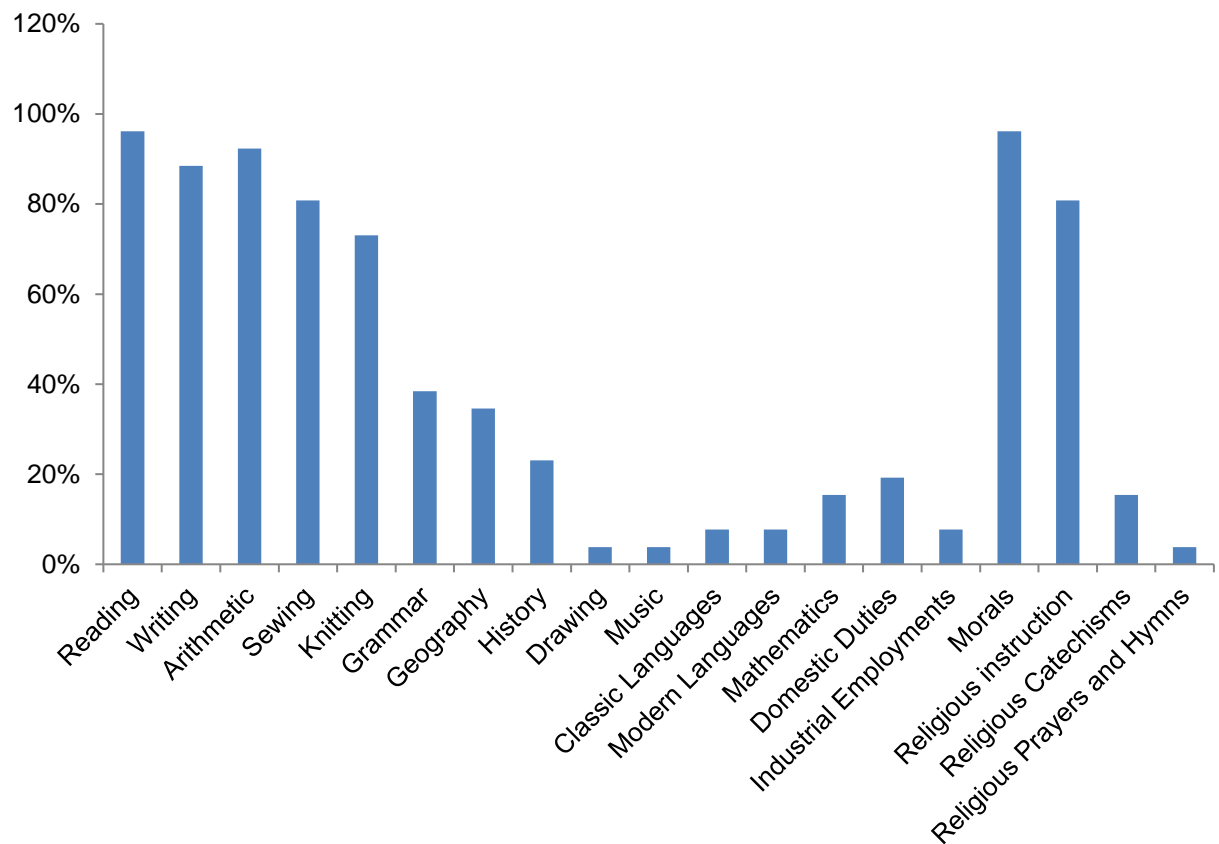
Whilst Fig 15 does not show us which schools taught each subject we know that in the Blue Coat School the boys in the lower classes studied reading, writing, arithmetic, scripture history, and ciphering whilst the upper classes also studied geography, grammar and the history of England. The girls studied reading, writing, scripture, arithmetic and ciphering but for only half the amount of time as the boys. The rest of the time they were taught needlework and other domestic tasks or they were required to help with the housework.[22] As such we can see that the education

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[22] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. May 1843.

for those in the upper classes at least, was superior in comparison to other charity schools as few schools taught geography, grammar and history.

It is unclear which system of education governed the Blue Coat School in the eighteenth century. However, in 1803 the school advertised for a new master and the applicant had to be someone who was 'properly qualified to teach reading, writing and arithmetic' as well as being 'an unmarried man and well recommended for his good moral character'.[23] Although not a condition of employment, the master also had to be proficient in the educational system in use at the school. In 1813, the governors of the Blue Coat School discussed adopting Mistress Harriet Howell's educational system in the girls' department. Harriet Howell was active in promoting the Lancasterian system of education and perhaps that is why the governors decided to first discuss the system with Miss Howell before adopting it.[24] It is not known whether the school did ever meet with Harriet Howell but by 1816 the school had adopted the alternative Madras system for all its pupils and in 1817 they sent the head teacher to London to be instructed in the new system.[25]

The Blue Coat School used books recommended or published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.), many of which were in common use throughout the country. The S.P.C.K reduced the price of its books as much as 75 percent to assist schools. [26] The boys in the top and bottom classes in the Blue Coat

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[23] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. October 1803.
[24] 'ibid'. March 1813.
[25] 'ibid' .August 1816 and December 1817.
[26] J.M. Goldstrom, *The Social Content of Education 1808-1870: A Study of the Working Class School Reader in England and Ireland*, 1972. p.18.

School used the following books in their lessons in 1843 which were repeated each week:[27]

The top class ('1ˢᵗ Class')

12 lessons	Arithmetic
3 lessons	The Bible
2 lessons	Woods collection, the History of England and Murrays Grammar
1 lesson	Church catechisms, Collect books (prayers) and Arithmetic table books (Dictionaries)

The bottom class ('6th Class')

12 lessons	Copy books
6 lessons	Testaments, Table books, Church catechisms
3 lessons	Second book (essay and verse on 'divine and moral subjects')
1 lesson	Collects (prayers)[28]

The list of books and material used for the girls lessons in the Blue Coat School in 1843 consisted of:

Bibles; Scripture lessons from the Old and New Testaments; Woods collection; 'Lessons in Humblelife'; a 'Second book'; Church catechisms broken into short

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[27] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. May 1843. The titles are written verbatim as described within the General Meeting Minutes books of Blue Coat School. The titles of the books were often abbreviated and as such it is difficult to substantiate the precise publication details.

[28] Five boys in this class were just learning to read and not to write ('B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book' May 1843.)

questions; Crossmans catechisms; small table books and portions of scripture and parables.[29]

Some of these books, such as the *Lessons for Young Persons in Humble Life* may be found in the supplementary section of the 1841 S.P.C.K. catalogue, which was comprised of books which combined 'amusement with instruction'. However, it is doubtful that very much enjoyment would have been obtained from a book which was designed to promote 'improvement in the art of reading; in virtue and piety; and particularly, in the knowledge of the duties peculiar to their stations'.[30]

In 1843 the committee in the Blue Coat School set up a special subcommittee which consisted of thirteen subscribers[31] to review the system which was being used to educate the children in the school. Their conclusion was that the monitorial plan was 'injurious in itself'. For instance, when the Bible was read aloud in the classroom there was no accompanying explanation of the text except in some of the lessons in the 1st and 2nd Classes. The subcommittee examined a number of children in the school and found that their reading was generally fair but the knowledge they gained from the books very deficient and unsatisfactory. The majority of children were said to be quite ignorant of 'the first and most common religious duties' although there was no confusion in their answers and they were readily given. Furthermore, the subcommittee believed that not enough hours were devoted to teaching the girls and

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[29] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. May 1843.
[30] Elizabeth Frank, *Lessons for Young Persons in Humble Life: Calculated to Promote Their Improvement in the Art of Reading; in Virtue and Piety; and Particularly, in the Knowledge of the Duties Peculiar to Their Stations*, Twelfth (York: Thomas Wilson & Sons, 1842).
[31] 'ibid'. May 1843.

their standard was low in comparison to the boys, 'not affording them similar advantages of such openings as may offer to improve their condition in after life'.[32]

The subcommittee recommended employing a steward to relieve the master of most of his administrative duties. Monitors would not then be used 'except to listen to those lessons learnt by heart' and the master would take the boys in the 1st and 2nd Class himself whilst the teachers took the other classes. At the end of every lesson the teachers would be required to question the boys on the meaning and purpose of the lesson and once a month each boy was to be examined on the amount of work he had completed, his progress and his character. In conjunction with this recommendation the school was to provide illustrations and explanations for the boys calculated to 'make a moral impression on them'.

When the school overhauled their books, the subcommittee recommended that the 1st Class now had lessons from:

> The Instructor Vol 7; Nichols Help to Reading the Bible; Hogarths Geography; The History of England; Murrays Grammar and Crossbys Practice, Interest, Fractions.[33]

However, lessons from *Help to Reading the Bible* could not have added much variety and although the *Instructor Vol 7,* focused on Modern History, it consisted of a

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[32] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. May 1843.
[33] 'ibid'. May 1843.

collection of assorted facts, not written in a language appropriate for children.[34] This book was introduced to all the classes with the exception of the 6th Class who were to be introduced to the countries of Europe and Africa by the use of maps. Maps of the world were to be purchased for use in the school rooms and cheap ciphering books for the girls' room.

The school made a determined effort to follow the changes through but by 1846, there still was not a steward in place as they could not afford to employ one. Instead, they decided in 1847 to employ an assistant secretary to ensure that the master could attend to his duties.

The girls were to have academic lessons every morning with the afternoon devoted to lessons in needlework, knitting and domestic duties. As with the boys, they were to be taught by the teachers and examined monthly. As part of the domestic curriculum, a rotation for cleaning the school was also to be put in place. Although it appears that the school was taking advantage of the girls services, Titus Hipkiss, father of one of the girls in the school, sent a letter to the committee in 1819 saying he was 'grateful for the benefits his daughter had received from the institution'.[35]

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[34] Goldstrom, *The Social Content of Education*. p.101.
[35] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. February 1819.

The teachers

In the mid nineteenth century the school employed one master and two assistant male teachers together with a matron and two assistant female teachers.[36] Some of the children also assisted the teachers working as monitors.

The school tried to ensure that the teachers they employed met explicit standards and they were particular as to whom they were willing to employ. When in 1847 the school interviewed two candidates to replace an assistant teacher who was leaving, they discounted the first candidate who had taught for 12 months in a school in a prison but decided that the second candidate was satisfactory as he had taught for 6 years in a National school and 20 years in Sunday schools. However, they thought that his attainments and his teaching methods were inferior in comparison to the teacher who was departing so that they did not appoint him.[37]

Whilst the school wished to recruit teachers of quality, it was not prepared to pay them a good salary. The wage for a master in the Blue Coat School in 1809 was £50 which rose in 1816 to £80 per annum plus a £20 annual bonus, accommodation and food. In comparison, in 1815 a general labourer earned £43 and an artisan earned around £52.18 per annum.[38] When in 1814 the master was forced to resign as his conduct in regard to some financial issues was deemed to be 'unsatisfactory', his replacement thought the wage was too low for the work he did and considered

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[36] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. May 1843.
[37] 'ibid'. 1847.
[38] Lindert and Williamson, *English Workers*. p.13.

leaving.[39] In 1835, a new female assistant teacher was requested from the central school in London to teach in the Blue Coat School. The central school recommended a 25 year woman and thought her wage should be at least £20 to £25 per annum. Nonetheless, although the committee at the Blue Coat School said they were happy to take her on, they were only prepared to provide her with a salary of £15.[40] The school mistress in the Blue Coat School received a salary of £25 in 1812 which rose to £35 in 1816, whilst the assistant teachers in the boy's school around 1825 received a salary of £25 - these assistants were still on the same salary in 1847. However, their salaries were increased later that year as the school committee realised that 'liberal' salaries were essential to secure the talent and experience they required to raise the educational standards at the school. From 1847 the master received £120 per annum[41] though Mr Wood, employed to make inquiries into the state of education in Birmingham back in 1838 for the Select Committee, believed that £150 per annum was a fair wage for a properly qualified teacher.[42]

In spite of their low salaries, the teachers in the Blue Coat School appear to have been committed individuals, because as a rule they remained in the school for lengthy periods and when they left, they often continued in the teaching profession. Master Benjamin Line taught in the school for 7 years and his replacement in 1803 remained in his post for 12 years.[43]

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[39] ''B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. November 1814; November 1820
[40] 'ibid'. July 1835.
[41] 'ibid'. October 1847.
[42] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales; together with the minutes of evidence, and index. (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, p.127, (1389)
[43] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'.

This longevity is reflected in comments made by James Wood who was employed by the Statistical Society of Birmingham to examine the state of education in the town. He believed that if the salary of a teacher was to match that of a mercantile clerk, he would be unlikely to leave his profession due to the 'very heavy responsibility' he felt towards his pupils.[44] When the teachers did leave the Blue Coat School they often remained in the profession but moved to another school. Assistant Joseph Lyndon left after 7 years to move to a school with a better salary. Master Mr Henry Jones moved to the Free School in Yardley in 1832 after working at Blue Coat School for 17 years and Mr Foster left to work in a school in Bewdley after being employed as master in the school for 7 years.[45] Unfortunately, the low wages did force some teachers to leave the profession to seek employment which had better prospects. An example was presented to the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales in 1838 of one of the 'best private schoolmasters in Birmingham (who) got an offer of a partnership lately in the coal business and he is now a coal merchant'.[46]

With little chance of promotion and no pension scheme, teachers were frequently forced to teach until they were physically not capable of doing the work. In the Blue Coat School in 1812, the committee decided to terminate the employment of the governess and matron as she was no longer capable of fulfilling her role due to her age and ill health although they did allow her to remain in the house and they

[44] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales; (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, p.128 (1393).
[45] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. September 1832; September 1833; August 1847.
[46] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales 1838 p.128 (1391).

provided her with board and lodging and a stipend of £16 in respect of her long service.[47]

Duration of education

The number of years the children spent in school varied according to the age they were admitted. Initially they could enter the school when they were aged 7 but in 1819 the admission age was raised to 9 and we can see the increase in Fig. 16 which takes the date they were born and the date they were nominated to calculate the age they were admitted to the Blue Coat School.

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[47] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. October 1812.

Figure 16: Age admitted to Blue Coat School (in months) 1810 to 1849 (n=746)
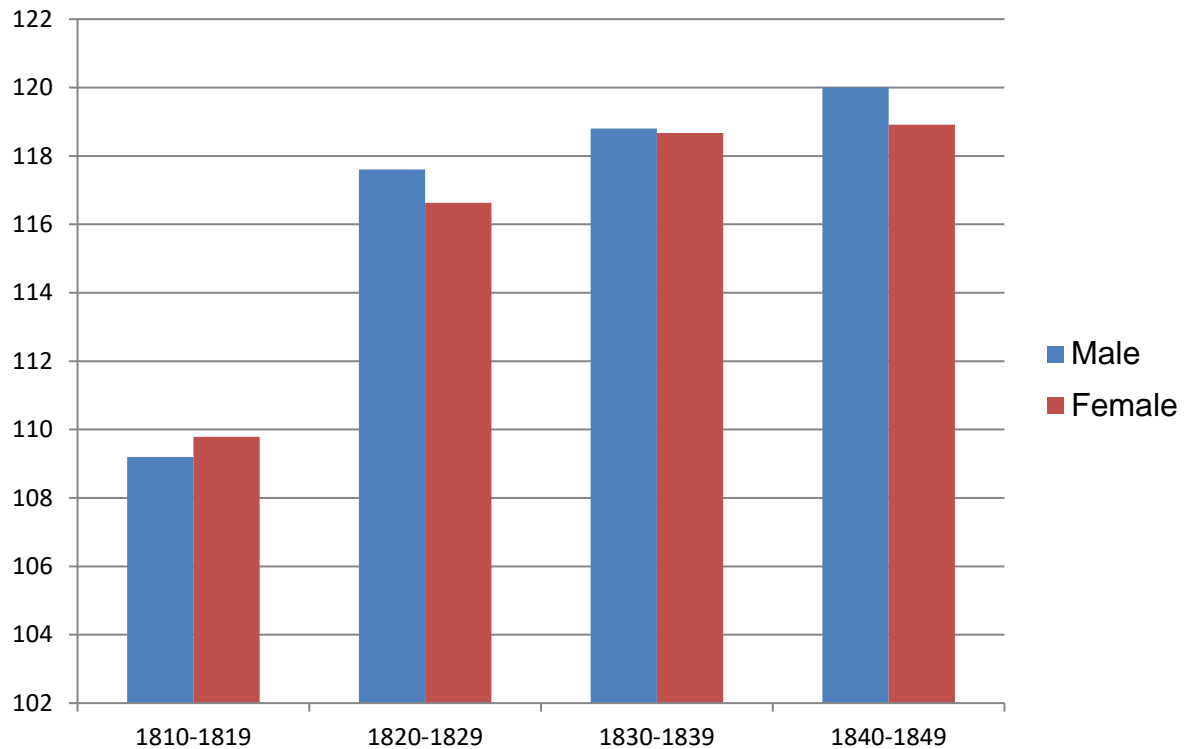
Source: B.C. S Nomination Papers

Whilst the age the girls commenced their education remained relatively constant post 1819, there was an increase in the age the boys began their education at the school during the 1840s. It is conceivable that this may be attributed to the increase in child labour in Birmingham which offered 'various employments for children under ten years of age which did not require bodily exertions detrimental to health'.[48] Unfortunately, there is no conclusive explanation for the rise in age of admission in the records under scrutiny.

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[48] "Economic and Social History: Social History before 1815," in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7, the City of Birmingham* [Accessed: 13 December 2013].

For the period 1800 to 1810 the average amount of time spent in the school for the boys was four years and eight months. This decreased to just over four years from the 1820s. In contrast, after an initial dip the number of years the girls spent in school actually increased over time. This may be explained by the fact that from 1843 some of the girls were allowed to remain in the school until they were aged 15, as the school felt 'this last year will be very important in preparing them for situations in service and the school will benefit by the use of their services during this last year'.[49] Potentially they could have received 5 (later 6) years of education. The amount of time both the boys and girls spent in school compares very favourably to other institutions as seen in Fig. 17. Undoubtedly, the duration of their education was above the norm for working class schools, and it also compares well against those who attended middle class and upper class schools, where the average period of schooling was said to be six years.[50]

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[49] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. May 1843.
[50] The National Society. *Thirtieth Annual Report of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church* (London, 1841), p.308.

Figure 17: Average time spent in Blue Coat School compared to other working class schools in Birmingham for the year 1837 (excludes data from the Deaf and Dumb Asylum)
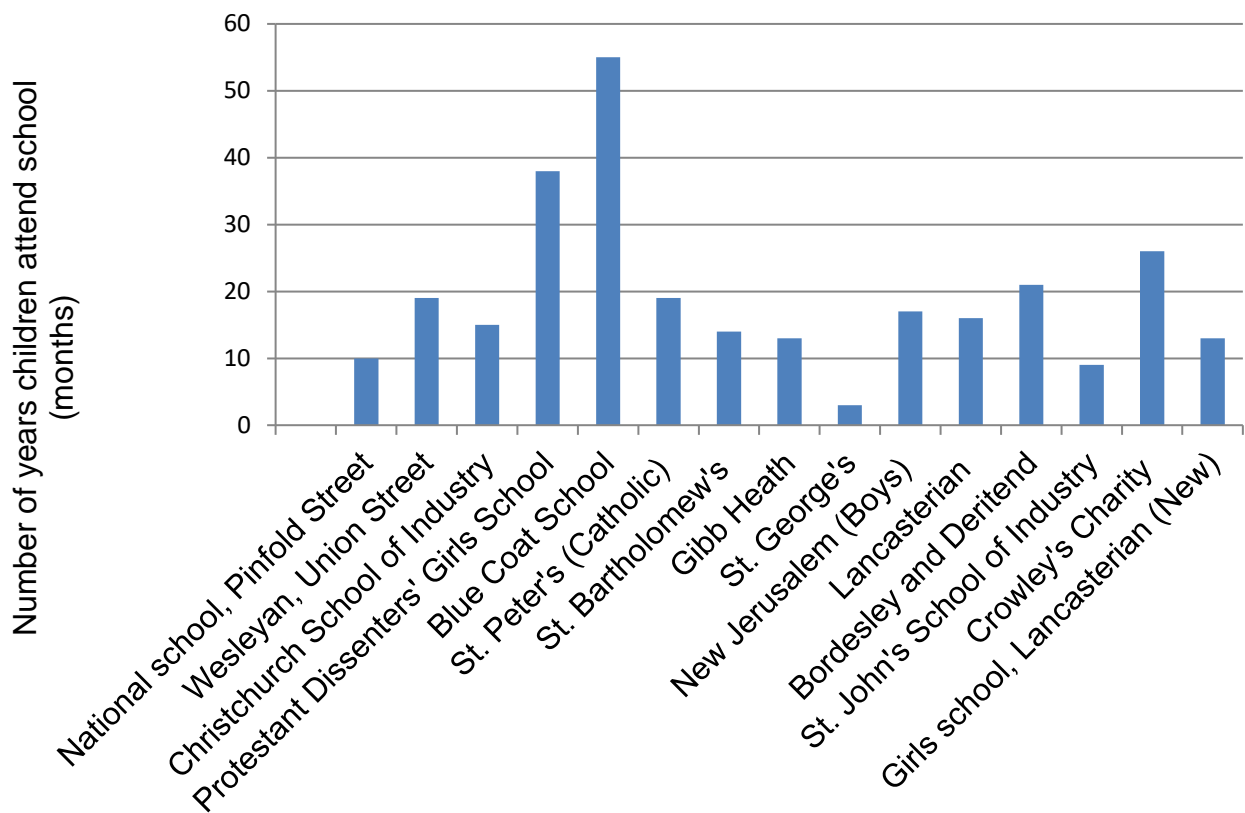
Source: Taken from Report on the State of Education in Birmingham, Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 1840

In 1837 the Blue Coat School was providing on average for 4 years 7 months tuition. In comparison, amongst the other working class schools only the Protestant Dissenters' Girls School and Crowley's Charity provided more than two years tuition. Both of these schools were founded pre nineteenth century, in contrast to the newer schools such as the National school in Pinfold Street which provided considerably less tuition.

Summary

The Blue Coat School was situated in a prominent position within the centre of Birmingham. It appears to have been a popular institution as the building was enlarged at least twice to enable more scholars to be admitted. Once the children had been admitted to the school the parents were expected to resign their children to the care of those within the school. However, whilst discipline was strict, the school did endeavour to improve the physical well-being of the children alongside their moral well-being.

The boys were subject to six hours of tuition each day, whilst the girls received considerably less as they were required to assist with domestic duties although this was seen as part of their training. However whilst the children, in particular the boys, appear to have been fortunate in the amount of schooling they received each day, it is debatable as to whether the quality of the tuition was sufficient to ensure they obtained a good education. Whilst the teachers were committed to their profession in spite of their low salary, the monitorial system in use by the school from the early part of the nineteenth century was unsatisfactory and the textbooks lacked diversity. Nonetheless, the duration of education and range of subjects taught compared very favourably to other charity schools within Birmingham.

The following section will explore the education which was available to all working class children in Birmingham.

The extent of working class education in Birmingham

This section will provide an overview of the schooling which was available in Birmingham for the working class from 1780 to 1850. It will first provide an outline of the growing provision of education in Birmingham detailed in two parts. Part one will cover the period from 1780 to 1830 which encompasses the emergence of Sunday schools and the National schools whilst part two will cover the period from 1830 to 1850 which discusses the increasing intrusion of the State in matters relating to popular education.

Features of the teaching provision will be explored, to include qualifications and training and lastly aspects of the educational experience such as the curriculum and teaching methods will be detailed.

Part one: 1780 to 1830

Children from working class families in Birmingham had limited opportunities for educational development, particularly in the early period when there were many obstacles to hinder progress. As Langford remarked; 'the literacy progress of the town between 1791 and 1801 was not encouraging. War, distress, political instability a+nd religious intolerance were enough to check any efforts for increasing the educational resources of the town'.[51]

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[51] Langford, *A Century of Birmingham Life from 1741 – 1841*. p.123.

Before 1800, the options for elementary education for working class children in England and Wales were domestic (taught by relatives within the home), private or charitable. State provision did not exist. The largest number of educational establishments were the private fee paying schools, which varied immensely in both style and standard. Dame schools for instance, which catered for the younger children were run by elderly women (hence the name) and some of them were nothing more than child minding institutions.[52]

Edward Davis, brought up in a working class household, attended a dame school for a year during the 1830s when he was aged six and in his autobiography he wrote 'the short time I spent at this school was divided between wading through a few words in a much-thumbed primer and playing with coloured pieces of paper, whilst my respected governess attended to her domestic duties'.[53] Teacher Frederick Hobley, in his autobiography, reflects on the fact that he was not even three years of age when he first attended a dame school in Oxfordshire. He remembers the teacher 'giving me a needle and thread and a piece of rag to pass away my time during one of the afternoons'.[54] As no formal registration was required to open a dame school, it is difficult to provide an estimation of how many existed in Birmingham although a report from the Birmingham Statistical Society in 1838 suggests around 3,900 children attended such schools.[55] The private day schools which were often called 'common day schools' (and shall be hereafter referred to as common day schools),

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[52] Dr Higginson gathered together numerous literacy descriptions of such schools in the eighteenth century and his conclusion was that the education was 'home spun' and part of the domestic culture. See J. H. Higginson, 'Dame Schools', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 22.2 (1974), pp.166–81.
[53] Davis, *Some Passages From My Life* p.6.
[54] Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*, p.177.
[55] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.29.

were run along similar lines to the dame schools but for older children and they also varied in quality.

In 1838, the cost of sending a child to a dame school was on average 2½d a week for reading, rising to 3 $^3/_4$d a week if you included sewing. In the common day schools the rate ranged from 4$^7/_8$d for basic tuition to 9½ d for reading, writing and arithmetic.[56] However, it appears that the standard of education did not always reflect the fee. Some of the more superior schools were in fact inferior to those with lower fees and as a consequence, higher status pupils could be found in lower status schools.[57]

Many of the charity schools (sometimes referred to as 'public' schools in the contemporary educational reports) provided free education for the working masses although some charged a small fee. Although some charity schools provided a superior education in comparison to both the dame and common day schools as they taught writing and how to cast accounts in addition to reading,[58] the redoubtable educationalist and author Mrs Trimmer, was keen to point out 'the children of the poor should not be educated in such a manner as to set them above the occupations of humble life, or so as to make them uncomfortable among their equals, and ambitious of associating with persons moving in a higher sphere'.[59]

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[56] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales; (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, p.121.
[57] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.32.
[58] Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, p.160.
[59] Mrs Trimmer, *Reflections upon the Education of Children in Charity Schools; with the Outlines of a Plan of Appropriate Instruction for the Children of the Poor; Submitted to the Consideration of the Patrons of Schools of Every Denomination, Supported by Charity* (London: T. Longman, Paternoster-Row; and J. and F. Rivington, 1792), p.8.

The earliest charity school in Birmingham was the 'Free' Grammar School (later renamed King Edward's School) founded in 1552 by the Royal Charter of King Edward VI. This was followed by several subsidiary schools scattered around the town. These grammar schools were open to anyone in theory, but as the ability to read and write was usually a requisite for admission, this restricted those who could apply. Consequently, for subjects such as handwriting and simple arithmetic, students usually needed to go elsewhere. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, many grammar schools were forced to choose between continuing with their classical education but losing poor students or continuing with their charity function but losing students who wished to be educated in the classics. For those schools which chose to continue with their classical education, the syllabus grew increasingly narrow over the years and they were apt to attract children principally from the middle class. King Edward's School in Birmingham chose to follow the classical route until 1837 when they created a new commercial department. A look at the lists of exhibitioners sent to Oxford and Cambridge show us that quite a few of their alumni were the sons of lawyers, surgeons, manufacturers and merchants.[60]

As well as the Blue Coat School founded in 1722, there was the Ann Crowley Trust which was established in 1733 to teach up to 10 children to read English.[61] In line with its charity status, it was a requirement that the school mistress of the Trust was to be a poor woman chosen by the trustees.[62] The Protestant Dissenters Charity School in Graham Street was founded in 1760 and was open to children of any

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[60] T.W. Hutton, *King Edward's School Birmingham: 1552-1952* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952).p.137
[61] Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*, 3rd Edn p.286.
[62] "Charities for the Poor," in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7, the City of Birmingham*, ed. W B Stephens (London: Victoria County History, 1964), 556-567. *British History Online*, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol7/pp556-567 [Accessed: 6 June 2014].

denomination and initially any sex, although after 1813, only girls were admitted. Ages ranged from 9 to 15 and the children were apprenticed out on completion of their schooling.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, a new form of schooling emerged. The pioneering evening and Sunday schools, promoted by Robert Raikes, were successful because they enabled children to work during the day so that they could still contribute to the family income. The first Sunday school opened in Birmingham in 1784, four years after the first one was set up by Raikes in Gloucester.[63] Preference was given to those children who worked in the manufactories and the focus was on moral instruction. Accordingly, the children not only received a rudimentary education but also attended Sunday service within the church or chapel associated with the school. According to the '*Rules and Orders for Sunday Schools*, the education was such that 'whatever be taught in the Schools (but what) is suited immediately to the Design of the Sabbath Day, and preserving Young People from Idleness, Immorality, or Ignorance'.[64] Seven years after the first school opened in Birmingham, around 13.5 percent of working class children were attending Sunday schools and ten years later in 1801 the proportion had risen to 16 percent.[65]

Some of the children before being admitted to the Blue Coat School had attended a Sunday school. For example John Cottrill, prior to his application in 1825 attended St

[63]J. A. Langford, *Modern Birmingham and Its Institutions: A Chronicle of Local Events from 1841 to 1871*, (Birmingham, 1868), p.409.
[64] P. B. Cliff, *The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement in England 1780-1980* (NCEC, 1986), p.53.
[65] M.B Frost, 'The Development of Provided Schooling for Working Class Children in Birmingham 1781-1851' (University of Birmingham, 1978), p.48.

Martin's Boys Sunday school and James Bailey nominated in 1838 attended St Paul's Sunday school for around 3 years.[66] Initially, only reading was taught in these schools. Later writing and arithmetic were added, although whether writing should be taught on the Sabbath was open to debate.[67] As a rule, the children seemed to have enjoyed their time in Sunday school and valued their education[68] although there is no evidence as to whether such schools were a satisfactory substitution for full-time education at a day school.

The aim of the Birmingham 'Sunday Society', which was established in 1789 by some of the dissenting Sunday school teachers, was to continue the education of children who had left the Sunday schools. Subjects included arithmetic, good morals, geography and book keeping. Later in 1796, the Brotherly Society grew out of the Sunday Society with similar objectives. The manufacturer Thomas Ryland, writing about dissenter Sunday schools around 1830, in particular the school at the Old Meeting House, said that 'the schools had become known for turning out lads who could read, write, and do something in arithmetic, which was a good deal in those days'. He went on to add 'I have in my time, met with many men who have told me that they obtained all their education at these schools. Among others, I may refer to John Hinks and his brothers….all men who have prospered'.[69]

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[66] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book', April 1838.
[67] K.D.M. Snell, 'The Sunday School Movement in England and Wales: Child Labour, Denominational Control and Working-Class Culture', *Past & Present*, 164 (1999), p.129.
[68] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution*. p.321 and *Langford, A Century of Birmingham Life*, p.137.
[69] W. H. Ryland, *Reminiscences of Thomas Henry Ryland*, ed. by Edited by his nephew, 1904. p.79.

The Sunday school movement was still going strong at the turn of the century and demand often outstripped supply. When the Deritend Sunday school opened in 1808 with six pupils, it reportedly had so many attendees that a month later some of them had to be taught in the street, although this statement cannot be verified.[70] According to Frost, between 1801 and 1831 there was a 24 percent increase in the number of working class children in Birmingham attending Sunday schools although he admits that he has possibly overestimated the numbers for 1831.[71]

In 1781, about 1 in 20 of working class children received some sort of education in a charity school.[72] However, the arrival of the Sunday schools which proved to be so popular meant that charity schools were no longer the only establishments which provided free or cheap education for working class children. Nonetheless, the charity schools generally provided a superior curriculum and the pupils were taught skills more appropriate for the labouring aristocracy.[73] Mrs Trimmer even proposed using the Sunday schools as probationary schools to identify the best children who would then be sent to the charity schools whilst the worse ones would be sent to the Industrial schools.[74]

Joseph Lancaster and the Reverend James Bell both independently devised their revolutionary monitorial teaching methods during the early nineteenth century which enabled schools to vastly increase the number of children who could be educated.

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[70] T. Harman and W. Showell, *Showell's Dictionary of Birmingham* (reprinted by S.R. Publishers Ltd, 1969, 1885), p.283.
[71] Frost, 'The Development of Provided Schooling for Working Class Children in Birmingham 1781-1851', p.48.
[72] 'ibid'. p.32.
[73] Jones. *The Charity School Movement* p.161
[74] Mrs Trimmer. *Reflections upon the Education of Children in Charity Schools*, p.12, p.16

Bell's system which was non-secular in nature originated in Madras hence it was often called the Madras system whilst Lancaster's secular system was known as the Lancasterian system. Lacking finance which would enable them to pay for more teachers in their schools, they devised a system which enabled the pupils to teach each other.

The monitorial system proved to be immensely popular and vastly increased the number of working class children who could be educated. In fact, a common complaint in this period and during the years which followed was the scarcity of buildings suitable for teaching due to the large increase in the number of school children attending school. In Birmingham, the 'Royal Lancasterian Free' School was erected in 1809 by the Lancasterian Society (this society later in 1814 became the British and Foreign Schools Society) and until 1826, it was the only non-sectarian school in Birmingham.[75] Whilst the pupils were required to attend a place of worship on Sunday, it did include boys from all dominations.[76] The school taught reading, writing and arithmetic and in 1816 it also set up an evening school which was open from 7.00am to 9.00pm, four days per week which cost 3d per week.[77] However, of those 206 who left in 1814 only 138 had actually been taught arithmetic and 71 'were in addition and subtraction'.[78]

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[75] "Public Education: Introduction," in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7, the City of Birmingham*, ed. W B Stephens (London: Victoria County History, 1964), 486-500. *British History Online*, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol7/pp486-500. [Accessed: 17 December 2013].
[76] Pye, *A Description of Modern Birmingham, 1818*. p.20.
[77] Langford, *A Century of Birmingham Life from 1741 – 1841*, p.372.
[78] Public Education: Schools ," in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7, the City of Birmingham* [Accessed: 17 December 2013].

In contrast, there was the 'National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principle of the Established Church in England and Wales' which was set up in 1811. Its schools were called 'National' schools and the focus was principally on non-secular education (Church of England) using the monitorial method established by Bell. In 1812, there was a request from the National Society in the *Aris Gazette* asking for 'large rooms' to use as temporary school rooms as the committee wished to set up a 'number of schools in different parts of the town' and did not wish to wait until schools had been built. A National school was opened for around 400 boys in Birmingham in 1812 and one for about 275 girls in 1814. There were so many applications for admission to this school that the original plan for the new school building in Pinfold Street was extended in order to accommodate around 1,000 children.[79]

Though the Lancaster and Bell systems were similar in so far as they both used monitorial methods and they both attempted to instil obedience, submission and good work habits in their pupils,[80] there was an element of competition between the different educational systems. William Allen from the British and Foreign Schools Society went so far as to state that threatening letters were being written by churchwardens or parish officers to parents who sent their children to the British and Foreign schools, requesting that they withdrew their children from the school and sent them instead to a National school.[81] However, as he was one of the founders of

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[79] Langford, *Modern Birmingham and Its Institutions:* p.362.
[80] McCann, *Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth Century*. p.25.
[81] *Third Report from the Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders.* (1818), HC 426, Vol 4. p.64.

the British and Foreign School Society, presumably he had a vested interest in trying to discredit any competitors.

Although the religious wrangling between the different institutions proved problematic amongst the hierarchy of the town, the National Society found that 'the majority of the lower orders call themselves members of the Church, yet they are too often found to be indifferent, as to the school in which their children are educated, and to be rather influenced in their choice by the advantages of clothing etc which are offered in different schools'.[82] Such findings from the National Society correspond to findings from the Blue Coat School as seen in Chapter 1, which found that many of the parents of the children did not appear to be religiously inclined.

Though the government had rejected a bill to provide two years free schooling for all poor children in 1807, this did pave the way for the first state enquiry into education within the country. Alongside the economic changes arising from the industrial revolution, there were political and social changes led by philanthropists such as Henry Brougham, a parliamentarian reformer who campaigned for better education for the poor. We find from 1816 onwards, the emergence of a number of official documents which surveyed the extent of elementary education for working class children such as the reports from the Select Committee on 'Education of the Lower Orders' from 1816 onwards and the 'Digest of Parochial Returns' which detailed the degree of education within each parish in 1818.

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[82] The National Society. *Annual Report of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church*, 1818. p.195.

However, the accuracy of the data in the parochial returns and other reports is questionable. The first issue encountered is one of definition as the term 'school' was loosely defined. As already stated, dame schools were often little more than child minding institutions and technically would not today be included in any educational count, as little education actually took place. The general impression received by the Birmingham Statistical Society was that 'the children are only sent there to kept out of the way, (and that) there will be some danger of over estimating their value if they are set down, as a whole, as representing much more than nurseries'.[83] It is therefore likely that the number of children receiving education in the dame schools was in some cases overestimated. As the parochial reports in particular detailed the capacity for education, it was advantageous for the state to ensure that there was not a need for more facilities although this cannot be verified. According to the Committee on the education of the Lower Orders, 'a moderate sum of money was all that would be wanted for this purpose' of supplying more facilities and this could be met from public sources and money from the state would not be required.[84] In the case of the common day schools, it is quite likely however, that the number of scholars was regularly underestimated, as it was sometimes difficult to estimate pupil numbers in any of the schools since they were not required to keep registers until 1853. Attendance was often irregular and sometimes even the school did not know exactly how many pupils it had. It was also in the interest of the educational

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[83] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.32.
[84] Motion For A Committee On The Education Of The Lower Orders HC Deb (5 March 1818) vol. 37, col. 816. Available at: http://bit.ly/2R6BRaE

reformers who wished to establish state run school to underestimate the extent of

private schooling.[85]

If a child attended more than one school, the numbers may have been overestimated

as opposed to underestimated. For instance, a child may have been attending a

Sunday school as well as a day school and as such they may have been counted

twice. In some schools, overestimation may have occurred as a means of self-

promotion. Certainly there was rivalry between those schools which were run by

voluntary funding such as the British and Foreign schools and the National schools.

Frederick Hill, an economic and social reformer, was astounded to find that the

National Society were claiming that one million children were attended its schools in

England and Wales around 1836. [86]Educationalist Patrick Ressler believes that

competition between the schools led to an early form of marketing in order to attract

funding in the form of donations or subscriptions.[87]

In Vol 1 of the parochial returns of 1818 it can be seen that 500 children in the parish

of St Martin's were said to be in day schools or schools of industry and about 800

children in Sunday schools, plus there were a number of dissenters schools. In St

Philip's there was a National school for about 400 boys and 275 girls and a Sunday

school for 100 boys and 450 girls plus a school of industry for 40 girls. The report

concluded that there was sufficient means of education for the poor in the parish of

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[85] A.J. Coulson, *Market Education: The Unknown History* (TransactionPublishers, 1999), p.94.
[86] Hill, F., *National Education: Its Present State and Prospects* (London: C. Knight, 1836) p.7
[87] See P. Ressler, 'Marketing Pedagogy: Nonprofit Marketing and the Diffusion of Monitorial Teaching in the Nineteenth Century', *Paedagogica Historica*, 49.3 (2013), pp.297–313.

St Martin's but not enough in the parish of St Philip's.[88] However, Lord Brougham, felt

compelled to raise concerns from members who opposed his education bill who

believed 'that the whole mass of information, so industriously collected by the

resident parochial clergy was a mere bundle of errors and that all conclusions drawn

from it must necessarily fall to the ground'.[89]

Whilst state intervention was seen as interference in the rights of an individual and

opposed by some,[90] the educational establishments did agree that limited state

assistance for the provision of buildings which were in short supply would be

welcome. As such, in 1820 a bill to provide funding for the erection of parochial

schools was proposed with the cost of school masters to be met partly from the local

rates and school fees charged with special provision being made for poor children.

However, the schoolmaster was to be a churchman in the proposed bill and Bible

reading was to be included in the curriculum. It was therefore strongly opposed by

the dissenters, Roman Catholics and British and Foreign School Society.

Consequently, the bill was withdrawn.[91]

It was during this early period that the attitude to popular education started to change

and a diverse number of institutions emerged to educate working class children.

Whilst there are indications that from around 1818 to at least 1828 educational

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[88] A digest of parochial returns made to the select committee appointed to inquire into the education of the- poor: session 1818. Vol. I. Brougham. p.997.
[89] 'Popular Education', *The Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature, January to December Inclusive*, xvi.i (1821), p.502.
[90] S.J. Ball, 'The Reluctant State and the Beginning of the End of State Education', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 44.2 (2012), p.91.
[91] N.J. Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change: British Working-Class Education in the Nineteenth Century* (University of California Press, 1991), pp.73-74.

provision actually declined within the Anglican schools[92] growth did continue within the dissenting schools. Theodore Price, a magistrate who spoke to the Select Committee in 1816 for their report on the State of Children Employed in the Manufactories of the United Kingdom said that in Birmingham 'there is education to be had for anyone who will apply for it; there is no difficulty on that head.'[93]

Part two: 1830 to 1850

By 1837, it was thought that around 1 in 12 of working class children in Birmingham were receiving some sort of education although nearly half of the scholars (45.6 percent) only attended a Sunday school.[94] The contemporary view was that the extent of education in Birmingham provided for the working class was satisfactory. Frederic Hill, in 1836 remarked 'among the towns in which education is comparatively in a good state, we think we may safely put Birmingham, Stockport and Stroud…..among the towns in which education is comparatively and absolutely in a bad state, we fear we must enumerate London, Manchester, Oldham, Wolverhampton, Durham, Stafford and Bristol'.[95] However, whilst the *extent* of education in Birmingham appears to be satisfactory, debates at national level were taking place as to the *nature* of the education. For instance, on 30th July 1833 a

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[92] Frost. The Development of Provided Schooling for Working Class Children in Birmingham 1781-1851', p.166.
[93] *Report of the Minutes of Evidence, Taken Before the Select Committee on the State of the Children Employed in the Manufactories of the United Kingdom.* (1816), HC 397, Vol 3. p.124.
[94] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales; (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, p.114, (1240).
[95] Hill. *National Education: Its Present State and Prospects,* p.248.

resolution was put to the House of Commons to consider the means of establishing a National Education system. In this instance, the motion was withdrawn.[96]

Many parents still sent their children to dame schools. As previously stated, the provision of education within these places was poor but the general consensus was that that the dame schools in Birmingham were better than those in Manchester and although the school rooms were fairly confined, none of the ones in Birmingham were 'in a cellar'.[97]

The first infant schools in the early part of the nineteenth century were intended to 'keep the children out of vice and mischief'.[98] They provided child care and a basic education which was seen by the establishment as being higher in quality than that provided by either the dame or day schools. Henry Althan, a school inspector, believed that he had 'never met with any of those children (in a dame school) who could read unless they had been taught in public infant schools.'[99] Althan however, was biased towards public education and very dismissive of private education. Regardless of whether dame schools were inferior, parents were reluctant to send their children to infant schools because they were of the opinion that 'they learn nothing' and 'do nothing but play'.[100] In Spitalfields for instance, children were taken

[96] Commons Sitting of Tuesday, July 30, 1833. *National* Education, HC Hansard Sessional Papers, *Third Series Vol 20* cc.139-174.

[97] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales; (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, p.199 (1277).

[98] S Wilderspin, *The Infant System: For Developing the Physical, Intellectual and Moral Powers of All Children, from One to Seven Years of Age*, 5th edn (London: Simpkin & Marshall, 1832), p.71.

[99] Gardner, *The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England*, p.171.

[100] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales; (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, p.122 (1306).

away from the infant schools as the parents felt they were not 'learning their lessons' and sent to common day schools instead.[101]

The common day schools were still very popular although it was unclear exactly how many schools existed. In Lord Kerry's Parliamentary Returns on Elementary Education (1833), a note was added to the effect that the figures in the report represented only about half of the common day schools 'on account of the masters and mistresses declining to make returns'.[102] In 1835, according to the Birmingham Statistical Society, there were 177 known common day schools in Birmingham (of which 54 were run by masters and the remainder by mistresses)[103] although again this figure may be inaccurate as many schools were not acknowledged by the proprietor in this survey.

Many parents preferred to send their children to a fee paying common day school instead of a National school if they had the option, because there was less (if any) religious education.[104] The common day schools were sometimes also perceived as being genteel as they were more expensive and as such, were used as an indicator of status.[105] By their very nature, as the common day schools were set up solely to generate an income for their owner, they provided the type of education working class parents wanted for their children; 'reading', a 'little writing' and 'a very little

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[101] McCann, *Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth Century*, p.29.
[102] *Education Enquiry. Abstract of the Answers and Returns Made Pursuant to an Address of the House of Commons, Dated 24th May 1833. England. Vol. I. Bedford--Lancaster.*, House of Commons Papers ; Accounts and Papers, 1835. p.991
[103] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.27.
[104] Gardner, *The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England*.p.165.
[105] *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the State of Popular Education in England.*, Command Papers ; Reports of Commissioners, 1861. p.90.

ciphering'.[106] These schools were more attuned to the needs of their pupils because if they did not provide the type of education desired by the parents then they probably would not have lasted very long. They were also more tolerant of pupil absences than other schools which meant that the parents could intermittently remove their children if they were required elsewhere. However, even as late as 1876, education officials were still perplexed as to why the common day schools were continuing to thrive. This demonstrates a certain amount of ongoing parental discontent with the education provided by the charity and state schools.[107]

The common day schools as a rule were less ephemeral than the dame schools and up to fifty percent of them were still in existence after seven years.[108] However, distortion of figures may have occurred as there was an element of blurring between the dame and day schools. In Kerry's 1833 educational report for instance, he classed both dame and day schools as 'private schools'.[109] Where a report did divide schools into 'dame' and 'day' there was often confusion over which category a school belonged to as the definition fluctuated over time, place and the economic climate.[110]

The majority of the evening schools in Birmingham were run by the teachers from the common day schools. In 1838 there were said to be 36 evening schools and roughly half of them were for children between the ages of 5 to 15 and the rest for children over the age of 15 (hence they were for adults). The only complaint against evening

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[106] Gardner, *The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England,* p.170.
[107] M. West, 'State Intervention in English Education, 1833-1891: A Public Goods and Agency Approach', *Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History*, 37 (2000), p.19.
[108] Gardner, *The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England*, p.136.
[109] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.27.
[110] Gardner, *The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England*, p.19.

schools from Birmingham Statistical Society was that the long hours the children

were required to work during the day reduced their usefulness.[111]

The numbers attending Sunday schools in Britain rose from 425,000 in 1818 to over

1,500,000 in 1833.[112] In 1831, educational reformer James Luckcock, was presented

with a medal to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Old and

New Meeting Sunday schools. On the back of the medal it states that there were

'1,364 pupils and '150 gratuitous teachers' in these schools (See Fig. 18).

Figure 18: Nineteenth Century Commemorative Medal, James Luckcock, Sunday School Jubilee

Source: Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery

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[111] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.38.

[112] Snell, *The Sunday School Movement in England and Wales* p.126.

In 1835 there were 56 Sunday schools in Birmingham but apparently this was not enough to satisfy demand and by 1841 many of the applicants who applied for places within the schools had been on the waiting list for months.[113] The Reverend Joseph Wigram may have complained about the 'indifference of the parents to their children acquiring anything more than an ability to read and write' but the parents were still willing to send their children to Sunday schools despite their dislike of non-secular education. Once the children had learnt to read and write the parents had 'got the chief thing they want and they do not choose to be under any restraint or to conform to the discipline arising out of settled rules'.[114]

Demand for more advanced education was satisfied partly through attendance at the evening schools attached to the Sunday schools.[115] Additionally, when in 1834 the Sunday School Union found that few of the schools had libraries attached to them they began to distribute books and by 1840, at least half of the Sunday schools within urban areas also had libraries.[116]

In 1835 there were 26 charity schools; seven were free and the remainder charged a small fee from 1d to 4d per week.[117] Two years later in 1837, four elementary schools for poor children were built by the governors of King Edward free grammar school. They were run on the lines of the monitorial system. Unfortunately due to their

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[113] Frost. The Development of Provided Schooling for Working Class Children in Birmingham 1781-1851, p.12.
[114] *Report from the Select Committee on Education in England and Wales Together with the Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, and Index.*, (1835) HC 465, Vol 7. p.4 (14).
[115] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.38.
[116] Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability : Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture, 1780-1850*. p.117.
[117] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.35.

excellent reputation, once again, they attracted children mainly from the labouring aristocracy and middle class instead of the labouring poor. The parental occupations included those who were clergy, doctors, solicitors and managers as well as tradesmen and clerks.[118]

The demand for additional school places was such that when the government finally provided financial aid for elementary education in 1833, they specified that the annual grant of £20,000 was to be used solely to help the National Society and the British and Foreign School Society build or extend their schools with half the cost to be met by the private subscription. As the number of applications far exceeded the amount of funding available, only those applications which would benefit a large number of scholars received any funding. In 1846 the grant was extended to the dissenter groups and the Catholic Church. This grant is doubtless one of the reasons why quite a few schools were built during the 1830s to 1840s in Birmingham. For example, we find that Holy Trinity National School which opened in 1825 with 190 pupils had a new school room built in 1831; Christ Church National School which in 1829 was an industrial school with 600 pupils but no building, received grant aid in 1834. It received another grant in 1837 to enlarge the school so it could receive an additional 200 pupils and St Bartholomew National School was finally built in 1834 in order to educate 450 scholars. Prior to this, lessons for the boys had been held in a rented school room and for the girls in a public house.[119] In spite of these apparent improvements, a report from the Committee of Council on Education in 1865 shows us that that the number of grants awarded to Birmingham compared to the rest of the

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[118] Hutton, T.W., *King Edward's School Birmingham*.p.138.
[119] Economic and Social History. *Social History Since 1815* in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7, the City of Birmingham* [Accessed: 21 December 2013].

country was below average. The awards were supposed to be proportional to the size of the population but there was a deficit which was put down to the increase in the population in Birmingham as well as the great demand for youth employment in the town.[120]

Another type of school for the working class opened in Birmingham during this period. The 'ragged' schools were so called because the children who attended them did not possess clothes suitable for attending any other type of school and as such, they were for the most destitute of children. The schools were free and they taught the basics. They often provided the children with food and even provided them with accommodation in severe weather as the welfare of the children was prioritised above their education. A ragged school in Birmingham opened in Lichfield St in 1846 which was run by a master and his wife. The HM inspection thought it was well managed but the standard of education was low.[121] This particular ragged school evolved to become St. Philip's Free Industrial School and then later, Birmingham Free Industrial School when it moved to new premises in 1850.

It was in this later period that the problems caused by the 'religious difficulties' were at their most severe. The increasing involvement by the state in popular education was seen by the various religious bodies as interference and there was a fear that religion would become just another subject taught within the schools instead of being at the heart of their foundation. Nevertheless, for those families who wished to send their children to school, it is evident that by the middle of the nineteenth century there

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[120] *Report of the Committee of Council of Education with Appendix*, 1865. p.49.
[121] Stephens, 'Public Education: Schools' [Date accessed: 21 December 2013].

was a multitude of diverse institutions available which were suitable for not only those who could afford the additional expenditure but also for those with a limited income, although in such cases it is debatable as to whether the education was beneficial.

The teachers

Whilst the provision of education for the working class may have increased we cannot assume that there was a corresponding increase in the supply of qualified teachers because during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there was a lack of proficient teachers for working class schools. Anyone could set themselves up as a teacher, including at the lower end, local clerks and dames. Neither qualifications nor training were required.

In 1840, it was noted by Birmingham Statistical Society that more than two thirds of the teachers in dame schools had another occupation and were usually 'persons destitute of every qualification for teaching'.[122] In the same year the report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales stated that teachers within the dame schools were generally totally unqualified with little or no teaching experience as the majority had taken up the work due to a disability or they had some other issue which had stopped them gaining alternative employment. For instance, female teachers often had to support their family because their

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[122] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', pp.30-31.

husband had died or ran away. The few who were better qualified were primarily dissidents and they were usually religiously motivated.[123]

Teaching quality in the common day schools was variable. As in the dame schools, most of the teachers were individuals, in this case usually men, who had failed in other pursuits. The majority had no formal training, so in order to hide their lack of qualifications it was not unknown for teachers to provide false claims and references. For instance, one gentleman in Birmingham who had written 'Scientifick school' in his school window was said to be a 'very illiterate character indeed'.[124] In 1861 it was said that the teachers who taught in the dame and common day schools included former 'grocers, tobacconists, linen drapers, tailors, attorneys, painters' as well as 'German, Polish and Italian refugees, bakers, widows or daughters of clergymen, barristers, surgeons, housekeepers, ladies maids and dressmakers' and that 'hardly anyone is brought up to the business unless he suffers from some bodily infirmity'.[125]

Unlike the dame schools, the majority of common day school teachers did not hold an additional occupation. It is significant however, that when they did take on additional work, they thought so little of their teaching role that when asked to supply details of their employment they almost inevitably gave the name of their other occupation as their main occupation due to the low status of the teaching profession

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[123] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales; (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, p.116 (1241).
[124] 'bid', p.120 (1284).
[125] *Reports of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the State of Popular Education in England*, (1861), p.93.

within the private sector. For example, a dressmaker who was also a school mistress would say she was a dressmaker not school mistress if questioned.[126]

On the whole, Sunday school teachers were not well qualified academically but they were highly motivated and there was a good pupil to student ratio. Although the dissident schools had around ten pupils per teacher compared to the Anglican schools where the ratio was around 22 pupils per teacher. However, the Anglicans did pay their teachers. In 1816 in Manchester, at least half of the budget of the Anglican schools was used to pay the salaries.[127] The Sunday schools which were run by dissenters were usually run by volunteers who were ex pupils.[128]

The quality of the teachers in the charity schools was generally regarded as superior in comparison to the common day schools. Partly, this was because of the preference of the charity schools for male teachers. The London Statistical Society for instance, remarked that 'the opinion of the promoters of charitable education at the present moment is much in favour of employing male teachers in preference to females…'.[129] Males were not only seen as more disciplined but judged to be more successful when it came to teaching children to write although many writing schools were run by women.[130] The ability to write well was highly regarded and it was said that 'a schoolmaster who can write well is almost sure of a large school, irrespective

[126] Gardner.*The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England* p.56.
[127] Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability* p.110.
[128] Frost. *Development* of Provided Schooling for Working Class Children in Birmingham 1781-1851, p.361.
[129] Report of the Educational Committee of the Statistical Society of London on the Borough of Finsbury (1843) Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Vol 6, p.31.
[130] Gardner. *The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England,* pp.112-113.

of his other qualifications'.[131] When Henry Dunn from the British and Foreign School Society was questioned by the Select Committee in 1838 in regard to the type of people who applied to train as teachers, he said that they were generally young men who were working as clerks, although some of them were mechanics. In general, they had been inspired by the instruction they had received in the Sunday schools.[132] However, as early as 1809, a report from the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, remarked on the fact that due to the increase in commercial activities in Britain and in the colonies, there was a growing demand for clerks and accountants and schools were unable to retain any suitable youths.[133] None of the teachers were likely to be from the middle class. As Kay Shuttleworth, politician and educationist said in 1846 'it cannot be expected that members of the middle class of society will to any extent choose the vocation of teachers of the poor' although he did think it would be a popular occupation amongst the working class.[134]

Unfortunately, for many of the teachers the responsibility of teaching was wearing and they felt restricted by a system in place which did not enable them to provide the best education for their pupils. Referring in particular to the British Schools, an article in the *Education Magazine* in 1838 said that 'the masters of the schools, however ardent they may be when they commence their work, are soon chilled by this opposition and indifference'.[135] The lack of professional status within the teaching

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[131] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales; (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, p.119 (1281).
[132] 'ibid'. p.48 (353).
[133] The Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, *Of the Education of the Poor: Being the First Part of a Digest of the Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor* (London, 1809). p.27.
[134] Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed: Working Class Children in Nineteeth Century England* p.140.
[135] Birchenough, *History of Elementary Education in England and Wales from 1800 to the Present Day.* (London: University Tutorial Press, 1920), p.255.

profession meant that outside of the metropolis of London, the salary was relatively low so the schools did not attract the best talent. Henry Brougham in 1818 thought that a maximum salary of £24 per year for a school master would be sufficient, with the opportunity to take on paying pupils.[136] However, in the 1820s, lesser and minor clerks could earn from £100 to £150.[137] The situation was still the same twenty years later as the average salary for a master of a boys school in the Midlands during the 1840s was £51[138] whilst the salary for a master in a British or National school was under £60.[139] In comparison, as we saw in Chapter 2, the average weekly wage of a mechanic in 1839 was reported to be 24s 3d which equates to a salary of approximately £63 a year, although this assumes that the work was constant throughout the year.

Qualifications and training

The majority of teachers did not possess any sort of qualifications nor did they receive any form of training, and as such the standards in the schools were often low. There were exceptions where the quality of teaching was higher than the norm as some schools would only recruit teachers who met a specific standard. In the S.P.C.K schools for instance, it was stipulated that the school master should be somebody who 'could write a good hand and who understands the grounds of

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[136] *Third Report from the Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders.* (1818) p.57.
[137] H.M. Boot, 'Real Incomes of the Bntish Middle Class, 1760-1850: The Experience of Clerks at the East India Company', *Economic History Review*, LII.4 (1999), p.640.
[138] *Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education with Appendices* (1845), CP 622, Vol 35. p.498.
[139] 'Schools for the Industrious Classes: Or, the Present State of Education among the Working People of England', published in the *Monthly Review*, Vol III (London, October 1837), p.249

arithmetic' and who had 'a good genius for teaching'.[140] This was in addition to them having the prerequisite of good character and being of the established church - prerequisites which were obligatory for the majority of teachers in this period. In *An address to Sunday school teachers* in 1815, John James Angell a nonconformist clergyman, informed teachers that they should be competent to teach the 'elements of common education', be 'conversant with all the decencies and proprieties of general behaviour' and be capable of teaching their 'uncultured charge how to conduct themselves in the station where providence has placed them'. However, the most important aspect of the 'necessary qualifications' that they needed to possess was 'the possession of real personal religion'.[141]

In the British and Foreign School Society, the specific virtues required by employers were listed in the 'Manual'. Potential teachers were to be of good character, and have a 'deep sense of the importance of religion', as well as a temperament suitable for teaching children. Regarding their academic qualifications, the Manual states; 'as far as regards mere learning, (which) is principally confined to reading, writing, needlework and arithmetic; nothing more will be absolutely required in a master or mistress of these schools, than a perfect knowledge of these branches of instruction'.[142] If a teacher possessed only a moderate degree of academic knowledge, this was considered not to be a problem as long as he or she possessed the higher qualifications of character, belief and temperament, qualities which were

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[140] Jones. *The Charity School Movement,* p.98.
[141] J. J. Angell, 'An Address Delivered to the Teachers Belonging to the Birmingham Sunday School Union', 1815. p.10.
[142] The British and Foreign School Society, *Manual of the System of the British and Foreign School Society of London for Teaching Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and Needle Work in the Elementary Schools*, 1816. p.67.

still a feature in the twentieth century when the emphasis was on 'proper persons, proper behaviour, character, personal qualities, experience and age'.[143]

Specific teacher training centres were non-existent in the eighteenth century although there was an awareness of the need for one. The S.P.C.K had contemplated establishing a teacher training centre but lacked the finance to take this further.[144] During the early part of the nineteenth century the widespread use of the monitorial system did nothing to encourage teacher training. As Lancaster remarked 'any boy who can read can teach'.[145] The master of the school assumed the role of a manager who supervised the teaching of his assistant teachers so lengthy formal training was not seen as requisite by monitorial schools. When in 1838 the question of teacher qualifications arose, it was suggested that four months was sufficient to train a teacher to teach with the expectation that they would already be familiar with the subjects they would be teaching. However, representatives from both the National Society and the British and Foreign School Society suggested that two years would be the ideal length of time to train teachers in 'the system'.[146]

Lancaster established a training centre at Borough Road in London in 1804 to 'learn the system' as it was termed. The trainee teachers were generally around 19 to 24 years of age and many had formerly worked as mechanics before moving into the

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[143] I. Grosvenor and M. Lawn, '"This Is Who We Are and This Is What We Do": Teacher Identity and Teacher Work in Mid-Twentieth Century English Educational Discourse', *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 9.3 (2001), p.357.

[144] Jones. *The Charity School Movement* p.101.

[145] J. Lancaster, *The British System of Education: Being a Complete Epitome of the Improvements and Inventions Practised by Joseph Lancaster to Which Is Added, a Report of the Trustees of the Lancaster School at Georgetown, Col*, 1807. p.47.

[146] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales; (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, p.86 (880)

teaching profession. The training was extensive; the trainees rose at 5.00am, undertook private study for an hour before being put in charge of different classes from 9.00am to 5.00pm. From 5.00pm to 7.00pm a master would instruct them in the different subject areas and this was followed by lesson preparation for the following day which lasted until 9.00pm or 10.00pm. Not unsurprisingly, some individuals suffered from health problems following this routine but this was put down to them being 'unaccustomed to mental occupations'. After they had completed their course of instruction, a certificate was issued to them to prove that they had been trained by Lancaster and not an imposter. The training centre would have preferred to have kept their trainees for three years but were forced to let them go after the minimum three month period due to the demand from the schools for more teachers.[147]

Alongside the training institutions run by Lancaster there were some which were indirectly established as training centres for teachers of the Bell system via the National Society which incorporated the Bell system of training. In 1812, the National Society set up a training school in Baldwin Gardens in London and a certificate was issued for trainees following an examination and a one week probationary teaching period. Trainee masters were admitted into the training school between the ages of 14 and 17 and they spent all their time teaching, initially in the junior classes and then in the senior classes. Their day would start at 8.45am and once their teaching had finished they would often have to study and prepare lessons for the following day from 6.45 to 9.00pm.

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[147] Report from Select Committee on the State of Education; with the minutes of evidence, and index. (1834) HC 572, Vol 9, p.17 (229).

Some schools also ran an apprenticeship system. As early as 1715, a school in London had an apprentice system in place so that teachers 'might gain the art of teaching school on the old master's methods'.[148] In the Blue Coat School in 1804, the governing body agreed to take on Thomas Daley, a former pupil, as an apprentice although Thomas was clearly not enthused by his vocation as he ran away in 1806 with the intention of 'going to sea'.[149]

Once they were employed by a school, teachers were sometimes provided with additional training, albeit very limited. Some of the schools formed societies so that the teachers could in effect, train themselves. In 1810, the Old Meeting Sunday School Friendly Society in Birmingham was formed and members would read two papers each month which had been written by other members of the society.[150] A few years later in 1818 the New Meeting Sunday School Teachers Society was established which concentrated on more functional matters such as pupil and teachers attendance levels.[151] James Wood, who was employed by the Statistical Society of Manchester thought that a society for teachers had been established in Birmingham 'during the time I was there' and that they 'hope to include masters and mistresses of private schools'. He thought that some of the Sunday school teachers also hoped to join the 'Society of Masters' or the 'Birmingham Society' but there was jealously amongst the school teachers in the common day schools especially if they lived in the same area as they were competing for business. It was said that this

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[148]Jones., *The Charity School Movement,* p.101.

[149] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'.January 1806.

[150] Frost. *The Development of Provided Schooling for Working Class Children in Birmingham 1781-1851* p.210.

[151] 'ibid'. p.209.

latter society was started by a few individuals who wanted to 'do something towards stimulating their fellow teachers to increased exertions'.[152]

As providing qualified teachers for schools was a never ending problem, the state in 1846 attempted to resolve the problem of both staffing and training by introducing the pupil-teacher training system, whereby pupils within the schools were apprenticed to a master for five years training with annual examinations. After the apprenticeship period, the pupil-teacher could ask to be admitted (via a competitive examination system), to a training college for another 3 years which would lead to a formal qualification.

Lastly, the state recognised the need for a salary increase which was to be partly guaranteed by the government. The sum a teacher was entitled to receive from the state depended on the level of certification achieved and also a satisfactory school inspection report. The norm for a man who had spent three years in a college was a grant from £25 to £30 together with accommodation and a further salary of at least twice that provided by the government. A pension scheme also came into effect five years later for those teachers who had at least 15 years service. Within two years, more than 2,000 pupil teachers had been apprenticed[153] and teaching at long last became a recognised profession.

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[152] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales; (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, p.106 (1138),1141.

[153] Birchenough, *History of Elementary Education in England and Wales from 1800 to the Present Day,* p.348.

The curriculum and teaching methods

There was no standard curriculum operating within schools in this period. Subject choice was dictated by the ideology behind the educational institution and a child was said by some to be educated if he could 'read words of two or three syllables'.[154]

As the majority of dame schools were principally child minding institutions, the curriculum was very basic or even non-existent. In 1838, a school mistress working in a dame school acknowledged that the children 'are only sent to be taken care of; I am only paid 2d or 3d a week for it, and of course I cannot pretend to give much time to them for that'.[155] At best, the dames taught all children to read and additionally the girls were taught to sew and perhaps to knit. The dame schools often included handicrafts and other activities in their curriculum although sometimes this was for the benefit of the teacher who gained from the cottage industry which took place in their home.[156] The author Samuel Johnson attended a dame school in 1755 where 'he was first taught to read English by dame Oliver, a widow who kept a school for young children in Lichfield…. she could read the black letter, and asked him to borrow for her from his father a Bible in that character'.[157] Books in dame schools were always in short supply but the dame schools in Birmingham had more than many other towns.[158]

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[154] D. Stow, *National Education: The Duty of England in Regard to the Moral and Intellectual Elevation of the Poor and Working Classes : Teaching Or Training?*, 1847. p.4.
[155] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales; (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, p.117 (1255).
[156] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution*. p.357.
[157] Higginson, *Dame Schools*, p.167.
[158] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales;. (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, p.116 (1249).

In the common day schools, the teachers stuck to the old 'individual method' of teaching, whereby each child received limited individual attention from the teacher in a mixed class of differing ages and ability. The 'new method' using the monitorial system and classification of scholars by ability was not suitable as the schools were too small. Payment for attendance was usually charged per subject and the advanced subjects were more expensive. In 1838, within the common day schools in Birmingham, reading cost on average 4 $^7/_8$ d per week, reading and writing was 6 ½ d and reading, writing and arithmetic was 9 ½ d.[159]

Once a scholar had mastered reading, there was usually the option to move onto writing and accounts. Occasionally elementary grammar, history and geography were also taught. However, as the more advanced skills were taught after reading had been mastered, a boy who moved to one of the National schools was at a disadvantage as he was often described as 'fit for one of our higher classes in reading but in writing and accounts only fit for the lower classes'.[160] For reading material, the teachers would use one of the many cheap spelling books available at this time which ranged from those with a few lessons to more substantial ones such as *Mavors Spelling* Book,[161] although sometimes the children brought their own reading material with them. The children were rarely examined and less than a quarter of these schools provided any form of prizes.[162]

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[159] 'Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales;. (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, p.121.
[160] *Children's Employment Commission. Second Report of the Commissioners. Trades and Manufactures.*1843. Evidence collected by J.C. Symons Esq, Sheffield, E2
[161] Gardner. *The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England* p.175.
[162] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.43.

As the primary motive for educating the children in Sunday schools was to impart religious knowledge the main book used for instruction was the Bible, although a large number of additional handbooks, sermons and hymnbooks were published by the Sunday School Union and[163] the Sunday School Society.[164] Laqueur estimates that over 10 million copies of the two most popular school readers were sold between 1809 and 1830.[165] Historian Philip Cliffe lists several books in use by the Sunday Schools, including John Collyer's *Reading Made Easy; Henry Dixon's The English Instructor, or the Art of Spelling Improved* and *Watts' Divine Hymns*.

The Sunday School Union was keen on David Stow's training methods developed in Glasgow. The Scottish educationalist produced a manual in 1826, on '*the Training System, Moral Training School and Normal Seminary for Preparing School Trainers and Governesses'* which promoted a questioning and answering approach aimed at either individuals or the whole class who answered simultaneously*.* Even before this period, the Sunday schools were not against the introduction of new teaching methods. For instance, in 1819 in the Old Meeting Sunday school, it was suggested that dictation be introduced to the writing class.[166] However, the impact of the teaching within these schools was severely limited by the low ability of the teachers and the hours of instruction which were confined to Sunday (and this was to include time for singing and prayers). Nevertheless, when Laqueur analysed data from four Sunday schools he came to the conclusion that 3 to 5 hours of instruction per week

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[163] P. B. Cliff, 'The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement in England 1780 - 1980' (University of Birmingham, 1982). pp. 91-92.
[164] Snell. Sunday School Movement in England and Wales. p.129.
[165] Laqueur. *Religion and Respectability*, p.114.
[166] Frost. '*The Development of Provided Schooling for Working Class Children in Birmingham 1781-1851'* p.213.

over about four years did have a significant impact on literacy rates. Data taken from the New Meeting Sunday school in Birmingham in 1843 reveals that 52 percent of children aged 12 or less could read well rising to 70 percent for those aged 12 or more. Whilst only 26 percent of the children aged 12 or less could write well this rose to 56 percent for those over the age of 12.[167] In the 1836 sixth edition of William Huttons *History of Birmingham* which contains additional material written by the publisher James Guest, it was said that the Sunday schools attached to the Old Meeting House had obtained a certain 'celebrity' status as he termed it, as they had enabled many of the working class to 'raise themselves above the sphere into which chance had thrown them'.[168] However, he deplored the fact that some Sunday schools were now unwilling to teach writing and arithmetic as the tuition took place on a Sunday.[169]

The custom of prize giving and the use of examinations for formal assessment appears to have been common practice in the Sunday schools. Birmingham Statistical Society found that children were examined in more than half of the Sunday schools, sometimes only yearly but in some schools monthly.[170] In 1813, the Old Meeting Sunday school for instance, introduced a rule which said that 'in future, no boy to be advanced into the writing or arithmetic classes until he has undergone an examination before the society'.[171] In two thirds of the Sunday schools prizes were given and medals were also awarded for merit. The Sunday school Union divided

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[167] Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability* p.120.
[168] Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*,6th Edn. p.275.
[169] Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*, 3rd Edn p.361.
[170] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.47.
[171] Frost. The Development of Provided Schooling for Working Class Children in Birmingham 1781-1851' p.212.

their schools up into six grades with the 1st Class studying the alphabet and words of two letters and then progressing through the grades until they reached the 6th Class where they read the Old and New Testaments as well as studied the third part of the Spelling Books.[172]

Up until the beginning of the nineteenth century, children in charity schools were taught by the 'individual' method.[173] However, this method was reliant on a well-staffed school. With finance always in short supply, the schools could usually only afford to employ one adult teacher. The introduction of the monitorial system within many of the charity schools revolutionised teaching as it enabled them to provide cheap education for a large number of children. Schools for 500 or more pupils[174] were known where this system was in place as can be seen in Fig. 19.

Figure 19: A large monitorial school in the East of London, 1839
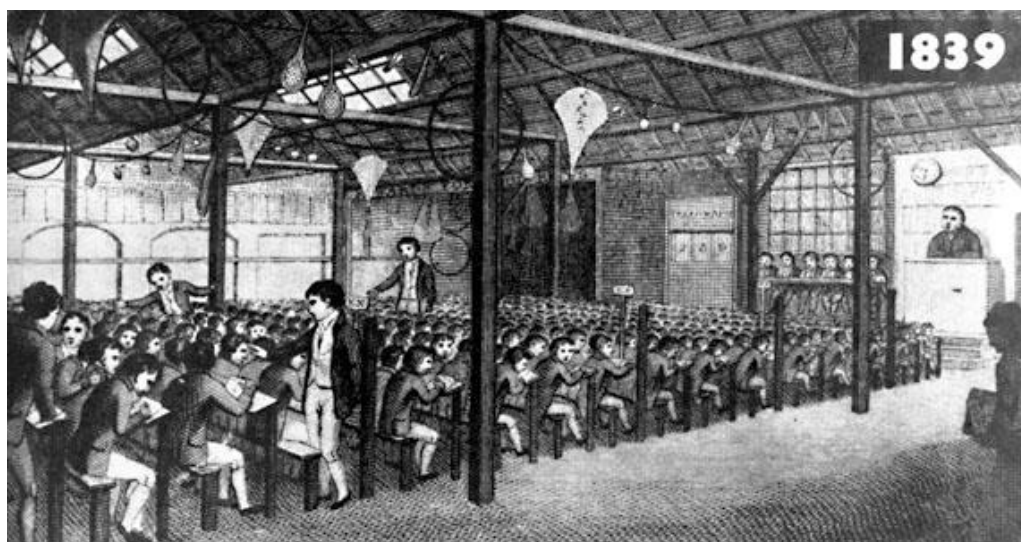
Source: Rischgitz—Hulton Archive/Getty Images

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[172] Cliff, *The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement* (NCEC, 1986). p.114.
[173] J. Gill, *Introductory Text-Book to School Education, Method, and School Management* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1876), p.66.
[174] D. Wardle, *English Popular Education 1780-1970* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), p.88.

The monitorial system relied on the use of 'monitors' to provide instruction as the role of the master was 'not to teach, but to look after the various departments of the institution'.[175] The master would teach a select number of the pupils chosen from those who had made the greatest progress (the 'monitors'). These pupils would then teach the lower classes along with the assistant teachers. Sometimes the monitors were a very young age. The first annual report of the National Society (which used Bells system) gave an account of a Birmingham National school which was under a very 'diligent and zealous' master with several classes which were apparently very well disciplined under teachers of 'not more than seven years of age'.[176] Richard Tangye, the son of a farmer who became a well-known manufacturer and philanthropist, attended a National school during the 1820s and he was appointed a monitor at the age of eight as a consequence of the fact that he had spelt a five syllabled word correctly.[177]

The children in the monitorial schools were divided up into classes according to their ability. The Lancastrian system used 8 to 12 divisions[178] whereas Bell's system did not use a specific number of divisions but favoured a few large divisions.[179] Lessons from the monitors took place in designated stations around the edge of the classroom as can be seen in Fig 20. below. Both systems regularly examined the children to

[175] A. Bell, *The Madras School or Elements of Tuition: Or, Elements of Tuition: Comprising the Analysis of an Experiment in Education, Made at the Male Asylum, Madras; with Its Facts, Proofs, and Illustrations; to Which Are Added, Extracts of Sermons Preached at Lambe* (London: Printed by T. Bensleyfor J. Murray [etc.], 1808), p.157.
[176] National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, *First Annual Report of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church* (London, 1812), p.139.
[177] Richard Tangye, *'One and All': An Autobiography of Richard Tangye of the Cornwall Works, Birmingham / with Original Illustrations by Frank Hewett* (London : S.W. Partridge, 1889), p.38.
[178] Lancaster, *The British System of Education* pp.6-8.
[179] A. Bell, *Instructions for Conducting Schools Through the Agency of the Scholars Themselves*, 5th edn (London, 1816), p.38.

ascertain whether pupils could progress up into the next class (or be relegated down). In essence, as noted by social historian David Hogan, the monitorial system was a reflection of the class system with opportunities for progression through its hierarchical system to the top class.[180] At the same time, its focus on discipline, industry achievement and ambition was a reflection of a market society.[181]

Figure 20: A monitorial school in operation
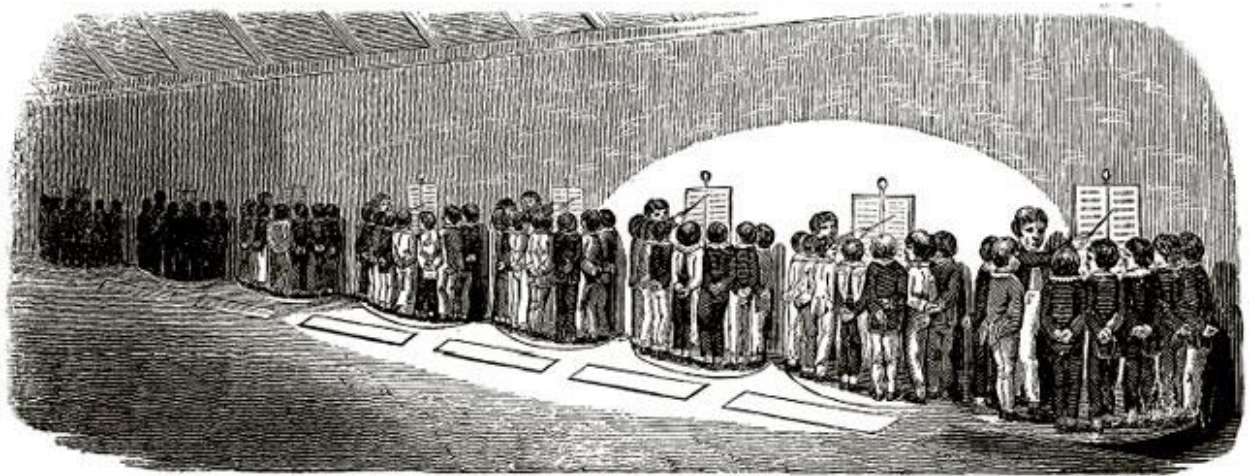
Source: Paul Monroe, *A Cyclopedia of Education*, New York, Macmillan, 1913.

At Lancaster's Borough Road school they were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, geometry and geography[182] and this was the syllabus in many of the charity schools throughout this period. In Old Swinford Hospital School, the syllabus remained essentially the same from 1838 to 1876 with the focus on reading, writing and

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[180] D. Hogan, 'The Market Revolution and Disciplinary Power: Joseph Lancaster and the Psychology of the Early Classroom System', *History of Education Quarterly*, 29.3 (1989), p.389.
[181] 'ibid', p.397.
[182] P.E. Hager, 'Nineteenth Century Experiments with Monitorial Teaching', *PHI DELTA KAPPA International*, 40.4, Africa: Its Educational Problems and Promises, p.165.

arithmetic together with geography, scripture and grammar.[183] In contrast to the

common day schools, subjects were usually taught concurrently. The lessons

typically used word building techniques which starting with words of one syllable and

moved onto words with two, three or more syllables. Arithmetic followed the same

pattern. All lessons were learnt by patterns and repetition.[184]

An emphasis on non-secular content was the norm in many monitorial schools in this

period. The only reading practice children in monitorial schools received was in the

form of extracts from the scriptures and scripture maps which formed the basis of

their geography lessons.[185],-James Bonwick, who was educated at Borough Road

National School in 1823 and later in life wrote his memoirs, said that 'our only reading

was from the scriptures, that is, selections from the Bible, not the Bible itself'.[186]

However evidence from the lending libraries in the 1830s suggests that such reading

material was not very popular as the books most in demand by the children were

biographies and literature on history, voyages and travel.[187]

By the late 1830s, the state was beginning to question the educational systems

which were being utilised in working class schools. The monitorial method was

criticised because it taught by rote which did not encourage comprehension and

consequently, children educated by this method were often unable to read later in life

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[183] E. Hopkins, 'A Charity School in the Nineteenth Century: Old Swinford Hospital School, 1815-1914', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 17.2 (1969), p.181.
[184] D. Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750-1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1993). p.76.
[185] Burnett, Vincent, and Mayal. *The Autobiography of the Working Class.* p.174.
[186] Burnett. *Destiny Obscure* p.173.
[187] Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader: a Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (London: The University of Chicago, 1957), p. 152.

and they forgot what knowledge they did acquire due to the mechanical method of teaching them. Discipline was also said to be bad and the monitors were sometimes bullies[188] whilst the parents disliked the system as they saw their children being taught by other boys instead of a master. As a consequence, the monitorial system was gradually replaced by the pupil-teacher scheme during the 1840s with monitors, as we saw earlier, apprenticed at the age of 13 for 5 years to a teacher. Charity schools also suggested a broadening of the curriculum as in their opinion introducing secular material would enhance the religious understanding of the pupils.[189]

It appears that few working class schools had a curriculum which covered more than the basic literacy skills. Furthermore, the educational material they used within their lessons was usually non-secular in nature and not very stimulating. The most popular system in use at the time – the monitorial system - was far from perfect. With large class sizes, few qualified teachers and limited reading material, schools using the monitorial system would have struggled to have provided even an elementary education for the majority of children. The Blue Coat School at least was prepared to acknowledge its deficiencies and attempts were made to modify its system albeit with limited success.

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[188] Birchenough, *History of Elementary Education in England and Wales from 1800 to the Present Day*, p.229.
[189] Goldstrom, 'The Content of Education and the Socialization of the Working-Class Child 1830-1860'. p.101.

The learning experience

In both the dame and common day schools, teaching usually took place within the home of the teacher. The 'school room' served a dual function as a domestic room and a school room. The children would crowd into the school room and sit down in any available place. Although the set up was the same for both types of fee paying schools, the Birmingham Statistical Society found that there was a tendency for a greater number of children to be crowded into rooms with poor ventilation in the common day schools than in the dame schools.[190] Children were left to their own devices for much of the day and progress was often slow although there was a degree of control over the learning. No recreational breaks were provided as the teachers said they could not afford to spare the time.[191]

Sunday school teaching took place either in dedicated buildings or buildings attached to a religious organisation, although this later proved to be inconvenient due to the increase in the number of children attending these schools. In 1811, there was a request from St Philip's Sunday school to use the buildings in the Blue Coat School for a temporary Sunday school. However, in 1820 the Blue Coat School said that a 'very serious inconvenience' had arisen from the great increase in the number of children belonging to the Sunday schools who used the school rooms and that they were to find alternative premises by mid-summer. St Philip's Sunday school did formulate plans to build their own school in 1822 but this was not completed until

[190] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.34.
[191] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.34.

1843 when St Philip's National School was built to house both the day and Sunday schools. Meanwhile they continued to use hired halls.[192]

Space was always at a premium. The congregation in the New Unitarian Chapel in Cambridge Street in Birmingham initially shared their rented premises with an attached Sunday school but due to lack of space, only half the pupils could attend the school on alternate Sundays until around 1834 when they constructed a purpose built chapel and school room for about 1,000 pupils.[193]

In the Sunday schools, hours were generally 9 to 12am and 1 to 6pm[194] but the pupils were required to attend church in the morning and afternoon and on average, received no more than four hours of instruction.[195]

For those children who attended a monitorial school, their school day was a highly disciplined and regimented affair. Many of the schools were large. The National school in Pinfold Street was built in 1812 to educate up to 500 pupils. It consisted of one room with a ceiling that was 'supported by a row of very high cast iron pillars which divide it (the room) lengthways into two equal parts but do not all obstruct the sight of the master who, from his desk, has a distinct view of every class'.[196] The long rows of numbered desks were set out with military precision with a rule book

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[192] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. September 1811, 1821, 1822, 1843.
[193] 'New Unitarian Chapel and School-rooms, Birmingham' in 'Intelligence', *The Christian Reformer,* ed. by Robert Aspland, *January to December* (London, 1839), p.548.
[194] Birchenough, *History of Elementary Education in England and Wales from 1800 to the Present Day* p.193.
[195] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.38.
[196] National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor. Annual Report 1812. p.138.

providing explicit instructions as to their lay-out. For example, there was one rule in the Lancasterian manual which stipulated that 'every child being seated upon his form occupies a space from 15 to 18 inches in front of the desk'.[197] There were also rules for scholarly conduct. Each scholar for example, was expected to march to his or her desk in an orderly fashion and Joseph Lancaster even went so far as to provide rules for how hats should be placed across shoulders.[198] The role of the master was that of a manager overseeing his assistants who would be expected to tutor up to 70 or more pupils. The level of noise would have been horrendous as most of the teaching was done orally. Furthermore, several classes were taught at the same time in the school room, although this was a recognised problem and attempts were made to reduce the levels as much as possible.

In general, the National and British and Foreign schools did not have playgrounds. It was always the intention of the National schools to have playgrounds but by 1841 there were only three or four in the whole of the Diocese of Worcester (which included Birmingham from 1837) which had allocated space for recreation.[199] Of the charity schools, some did have playgrounds attached to them but few of them actually had recreational breaks.[200]

Within the monitorial schools, the hours were generally from 7.00am to 11.00am and from 1.00pm to 5.00pm (4.00pm in winter) and the lessons for the day were mapped out with military precision. As both Lancaster and Bell believed that each lesson

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[197] The British and Foreign School Society. *Manual of the System* (1816), p.12.
[198] Birchenough, *History of Elementary Education in England and Wales from 1800 to the Present Day* p.218.
[199] The National Society, *Thirtieth Annual Report* (1841), p.119.
[200] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.36.

should only last for a very short period of time, none of the lessons with the exception of reading, lasted more than 30 minutes. In fact, Bell thought that no reading lesson within the lower classes should last more than 15 minutes, although he then goes onto to say that no class should be dismissed until it was 'well said'.[201]

Attendance

One of the most noticeable features of education within the majority of schools during this period was the irregular attendance. Children were removed from the fee paying schools when the parents could not afford the cost. They were also removed in order to care for younger siblings, or in the case of seasonal occupations, sent out to work. In their 1841 annual report, the National schools noted that attendance registers could not be kept in several of their schools in Birmingham as the time and cause of a child's absence was frequently unknown, 'as children sometimes return after many months absence, having found work in the interval or perhaps had gone to some other school'.[202] The author of an article in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1850 found numerous examples of children on the books who attended school for only one or two days a week and against their names was written 'gone to work'.[203] Attendance within the Sunday schools was more consistent. According to the Birmingham Statistical Society the average attendance in 1838 in schools was 72.8 percent.[204] Children who were in the boarding schools, inevitably attended on a regular basis as

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[201] Bell, *The Madras School*. p.42.
[202] The National Society, *Thirtieth Annual Report* (1841), p.108.
[203] 'Labour and the Poor: The Employment and Education of Children. Letter VIII', *The Morning Chronicle*, 2 December 1850.
[204] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.38.

they remained in the schools and were sometimes not allowed to return to their

home.

Not only was attendance erratic, it was also often short term even though some

children had the option of staying in their school for several years. Not surprisingly,

the length of attendance varied enormously depending on the location and type of

school. The National Society for example, sampled 30 schools in the London area for

their 1834 annual report and concluded that the average attendance was 3 years and

3 months, whereas the average attendance for Mitcham National School in South

London during 1830 to 1839 was 2 years 10.5 months.[205] However, the National

Society also admitted that the 'succession of scholars has been so rapid as to cause

(upon an average) a complete change of the children in the schools once every two

years'.[206] In 1816, an officer from the Sunday School Union testified that the average

pupil spent just two years in a Sunday school[207] whilst in 1840 the Birmingham

Statistical Society claimed that out of 16 charity schools the average attendance in 9

of the schools was 1 to 2 years.[208] In 1857, at a conference in London on school

attendance, it was reported that 42 percent of children attended school for less than

1 year and 22 percent attended less than 2 years.[209] On average there was no

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[205] B. Madoc-Jones, 'Patterns of Attendance and Their Social Significance: Mitcham National School 1830-1839', in *Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth Century.*, ed. by P. McCann (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1977), p.45.
[206] The National Society, *Annual Report* (1830), p.86.
[207] Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability* p.131.
[208] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.25.
[209] Birchenough, *History of Elementary Education in England and Wales from 1800 to the Present Day* p.108.

increase in the length of education during this period within the schools. Studies in fact, suggest a decrease from late eighteenth century until around the 1840s.[210]

Few children stayed at school until they were 14. Even by the mid-nineteenth century only around 30 percent of pupils remained in school after the age of ten. An educational enquiry in Birmingham in 1857 revealed that by the age of eleven more than 73.5 percent of boys and 46 percent of the girls who had formerly attended a day school were working.[211] In the same year at an educational conference in London, Reverend Mitchell, one of the government school inspectors, quoted official figures which revealed that the average leaving age overall was ten and that only 6 out of every 100 children in school remained until they were aged fourteen. Consequently, he believed that the expectation for the average working class boy would be that he would leave school being able to write from dictation, be acquainted with the four simple and compound rules, know some grammar, have some knowledge of general geography, map drawing, the Bible and the History of England and be able to read 'fairly and intelligently'.[212] Frederick Hill, in his assessment of national education in 1836, quoted from Dunn, who thought that three years was the shortest time a child could be expected to learn reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and basic geometry.[213] Horace Mann, in his 1862 report, suggested that 30 percent remained in the charity schools beyond the age of ten, 20 percent beyond the age of eleven and 11 percent beyond the age of twelve but thought that these

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[210] See Humphries *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* p.314.
[211] Birmingham Educational Association, *A Report or an Enquiry into the State of Education of the Children of the Working Classes in Birmingham as Affected for the Demand for Labour and by Other Causes* (London, 1857), p.13.
[212] "Essays Upon Educational Subjects," read at the *Educational Conference.* Edited by Alfred Hill (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1857), p.2.
[213] Hill. *National Education* (1836), p.87.

figures were higher in the common day schools which were frequented by children of the artisan class.[214]

Discipline

Discipline within the schools was often harsh and the use of the cane and verbal abuse were regular features. A school mistress, whilst talking to one of the state commissioners was seen to shout 'hold your tongues, you little devils' before striking one of the children in her class.[215] Autobiographies frequently record instances of violence such as that recorded by James Hillocks who suffered 'hatred, rage, terror and beatings' and relied on teacher favouritism to survive.[216] Even Lancaster, in a book published in 1807 recommended tying a wooden log around the neck of a child and making him (or her) walk around the room until he was tired as one of a number of punishments[217] although the usual mode of punishment was some form of humiliation such as the use of the dunces cap or the placing of placards around the neck. Such punishments were designed by Lancaster to restore order and discipline and set an example to the others in the school. Through humiliation he used the power of psychology rather than physical violence to shame the offender.

In contrast, autobiographers who attended dame schools usually spoke favourably of them although Mr James Wood, providing evidence to the Select Committee said

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[214] Horace Mann, "The Resources of Popular Education in England and Wales Present and Future," *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 25 (1862), p.52.

[215] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales; (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, p.116 (1247).

[216] Humphries *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution*. p.360.

[217] Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed: Working Class Children in Nineteeth Century England* p.139.

that in the dame schools, 'the cane is always lying by them (the mistress), if not the rod and you cannot stay many minutes before you see it in use'.[218] Furthermore, according to Birmingham Statistical Society, 76 percent of dame schools admitted that they administered corporal punishment.[219]

In the charity schools, discipline appears to have been less severe, partly due to the responsibility the committee members had for the children they nominated - although in the Grey Coat Hospital School in London around 1788 the children were flogged to such an extent that the matron was arrested[220] and in Old Swinford Hospital Boarding School, nearly half the boys ran away, complaining of 'severe and cruel treatment by the master, being struck by the porter with a cane and insufficient food'. Investigators deemed their assertions to be unfounded, although the porter did get reprimanded.[221] Many charity schools used *The Christian Schoolmaster* as their guidebook.[222] The book recommended using admonition and reproof in the first instance but where this was ineffective or where the fault was deemed to be severe, than some form of 'corporal correction' was to be administered. If corporal punishment was unsuccessful, then the offender was expelled to discourage others from copying the crime. All the crimes were judged against the Ten Commandments in the Bible,

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[218] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales; (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, 1838 p.116 (1248).
[219] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.31.
[220] Jones. *The Charity School Movement* p.103.
[221] Hopkins, A Charity School in the Nineteenth Century, p.184.
[222] Jones. *The Charity School Movement* p.76.

although idleness was seen as an independent issue as it impacted on 'one main end of their education'.[223]

Although corporal punishment was inflicted in some Sunday schools (eight schools, out of a total of thirty-seven acknowledged this in 1838[224]) without exception, all the autobiographers examined by Jane Humphries, enjoyed their time at Sunday school. Parents on the whole, did not appear to take issue with any of the abuse in the schools and even supported the teachers in some instances.[225] According to Assistance Poor Law Commissioner James Kay Esq, parents thought that 'the best way to make boys learn is to whip them well'. As such, the blame for the extent of corporal punishment within the schools was laid to rest mainly on the shoulders of the parents and not the master.[226]

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[223] J. Talbot, *The Christian School-Master, Or the Duty of Those Who Are Employ'd in the Publick Instruction of Children, Etc* (London, 1707), pp.96-109. The 1811 edition is comparable to this 1707 edition. Very little changed over the century since it was first published.
[224] Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education, 'Report on the State of Education in Birmingham', p.47.
[225] Humphries. *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* p.361.
[226] Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales; (1838). HC 589. Vol 7, p.4 (28).

Summary

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there was an increase in the provision of education for working class children. However there was a fear that religion would become just another subject taught within the schools instead of being at the heart of their foundation. Additionally, the increasing involvement by the state in popular education was seen as interference.

The content and quality of the schooling remained variable. As is evident from the material presented in this section, teachers were not highly qualified and the lack of a good salary discouraged the more highly qualified applicants from entering the profession. However, there was recognition within the profession of the need to improve the standard of teaching and this led to the establishment of societies for teachers and training centres for trainee teachers. Unfortunately, although the training in those centres was more rigorous, it was still limited in duration and it was often considered secondary to the primary requirement which was the possession of good character.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter we have explored the opportunities for formal schooling in Birmingham for those within the working class. Initially, we focussed on the education within Blue Coat School and found that the school, appears to have been fairly exception in comparison to the norm. By the standards of the day it is clear that the school did provide a superior education. As the children boarded at the school, attendance was regular and it was also lengthy in comparison to the norm. The school offered a range of subjects and whilst the quality of the schooling may have been far from perfect, over the years they were in the school they would have acquired sufficient literacy skills to perhaps secure them a valuable apprenticeship. As such, it remained a popular institution which was enlarged at intervals to accommodate more pupils.

In the rest of Birmingham, it is apparent that at least initially, there was a lack of suitable educational provision with the exception of the Blue Coat School and a few other establishments. Numerous reports from the early nineteenth century onwards emphasised the need for more schools and this led to the creation of a diverse range of educational institutions which were suitable for not only those who could afford the additional expenditure but also for those with a limited income. However, it is also evident that whilst the number of institutions may have increased, the majority did not provide good quality education.

For many children who attended school in the early nineteenth century, they spent the day in an environment which was inhospitable. Many schools did not have playgrounds and discipline was strict. The quality of the teaching was also dubious in an age when the status of teaching as a profession was low. The lack of training and poor salary did not incentivise people to enter the profession. The curriculum itself was very limiting, as few schools taught more than basic literacy skills and some did not even offer writing as an option as that was seen as an advanced skill. Along with the limited curriculum, the resource material used in the lessons was far from stimulating as it was usually non-secular in nature in line with the ethos of the school. However, as academic achievements were secondary to qualities such as religious morality and other values, many schools did not feel the need to further develop their curriculum.

As we saw in Chapter 2, many parents within the working class did not see the value of educating their children and as such, attendance was often low and erratic. Notwithstanding the parent's attitude towards education, the poor quality of the schooling would not have motivated them to send their children to a school as they would not have gained any skills deemed to be useful to them.

Chapter 4 will examine the options available to the children once they had left the Blue Coat School and it will endeavour to determine whether their educational achievements made a difference to them at the start of their working lives.

CHAPTER 4

OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING

> 'Do not let the bribe of so much money paid down at signing his indentures, or the prospect of a seven years' service, induce you to accept one of an untoward disposition, evil inclinations or unprincipled in virtue and good manners: it is not to be imagined what disorder such will create in your family, and what vexation to yourself: but, for the sake of good qualities, sober education and a tractable, obliging temper, abate in the consideration'.[1]
> *A Present for an Apprentice,* Thomas Tegg, 1843

The choice of a suitable profession together with its associated formal or informal training was something taken seriously, if circumstances permitted this option. John Shinn, born in 1837 in London had no such choice. He was sent into the family workshop to give him something to do as his parents could not afford to send him to school. He did not enjoy the work but as he said 'there was nothing to be done but to remain and do my best and wait and see what the future brought.'[2]

The governors of the Blue Coat School however, appear to have harboured ambitions for the children within the school. In 1847, an advertisement in *Aris's Gazette* for a new Headmaster stipulated that the person must be qualified to educate the children for employment within 'commercial, official and domestic' situations.[3] This was not an unusual ambition for a charity school, as many of the schools established in this period shared the same objective. In Old Swinford

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[1] T. Tegg, *A Present For an Apprentice: To Which Is Added, Franklin's Way to Health*, 2nd edn (London: William Tegg & Co, Cheapside, 1843), p.343.
[2] Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*. p.189.
[3] 'Blue Coat Charity School, Birmingham' *Aris's Gazette*. 1st November 1847.

Hospital School for instance, the boys were to be provided with an education which would prepare them for employment within 'mining, manufacturing, agricultural and commercial pursuits'.[4]

For those who had a choice regarding their vocation, books abounded providing advice to parents and young people on their choice of profession, such as *The Book of Trades or Library of Useful Arts* published in 1804 which references parents who are 'often at a loss to determine the future situations of their children.' This book was described in a review as 'for the instruction and entertainment of young persons'.[5] In a similar vein, the *Book of English trades, and Library of the Useful Arts* published in 1821 were written to 'acquaint the rising generation with details of various trades.'[6] *Kearsley's Table of Trades* offered more practical advice on the cost of apprenticeship and laws relating to masters and other useful information for 'the acceptance of parents and guardians and for the benefit of young men who wish to prosper in the world and become respectable members of society'.[7]

Choosing an appropriate profession was only the start. Once the choice was made, the next step was to decide on the nature of the training. Certainly, not all trades required skilled workmen and in such cases, it would not be necessary to provide extensive – if any - training. John Blews, employed in the locks and candlesticks

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[4] Hopkins, *A Charity School in the Nineteenth Century* p.182.
[5] Art. 22. "The Book of Trades, Or Library of the Useful Arts." *The British Critic, 1793-1826* 25, (01, 1805), p.94.
[6] *The Book of Trades. The Book of English Trades, and Library of the Useful Arts.* (Sir Richard Phillips and Company, 1821). p.iii.
[7] G. Kearsley, *Kearsley's Table of Trades, for the Assistance of Parents and Guardians, and for the Benefit of Those Young Men, Who Wish to Prosper in the World, and Become Respectable Members of Society. Shewing at One View What a Master Requires on Taking an Apprentic* (London, 1786), p.3.

trade told the Factory Inquiry Commission in 1833 that he employed 3 boys and 2 girls but none of them were apprentices. The boys were paid 3s 6d to 5s per week for regular work and the girls were paid slightly less.[8]

Sometimes children were provided with a form of industrial training whilst still at school. However, the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor believed that when taught a trade in school, hardly any of the children retained the skills they learnt on leaving and would end up employed as errand boys, servants or labourers, the same as their parents.[9]

Following on from Chapter 3 which assessed the education the children would have received as pupils in the Blue Coat School, this chapter will explore the training they received once they had left the school. As the traditional pathway for those who wished to acquire skills was through the apprenticeship route, Chapter 4 will commence by examining the main channels used by Blue Coat School to secure apprenticeships for the children. It with also discuss specific features such as location of the apprenticeship and aspects of the indenture. The primary occupations will be reviewed, alongside the children's educational achievements.

In the subsequent section, there will be a brief discussion of the benefits accrued through the apprenticeship system and an assessment of the premium fees which secured the higher status apprenticeships. Finally, the experience of undertaking an

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[8] Factories Inquiry Commission. *First Report of the Central Board of His Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Collect Information in the Manufacturing Districts, as to the Employment of Children in Factories, and as to the Propriety and Means of Curtailing*, House of Commons Papers ; Reports of Commissioners. (1833) HC. 450. Vol 20. P.B1, p5.
[9] The National Society. *Annual report* (1833), p.55.

apprenticeship will be explored. This will include the acquisition of a situation, the

transfer and cancellation of an indenture and the move towards informal contracts.

The Blue Coat School apprentices

This section will first discuss the location and acquisition of an apprenticeship for children in the Blue Coat School. The apprenticeship itself will be examined, including treatment of the apprentices, administration of complaints and the cancellation and transfer of the indenture. Finally, some of the features of the occupations will be considered.

The regulations of the Blue Coat School specified that a child could be apprenticed out any time after the age of 12. In reality, all of the children in the records were apprenticed out after they had finished their schooling at the age of 14 although as we saw in the previous chapter, some of the girls were apprenticed out at the age of 15. On leaving they were 'given their best clothes, a change of linen, a complete suit of new clothing, a bible, book of common prayer, the whole duty of man and an exposition of the church catechism'.[10]

By securing apprenticeships for them the school was ensuring that the children would become self-supporting working class individuals. The boys would learn a 'useful trade' and the girls would learn skills which would enable them 'a reasonable prospect of proving comfortably and creditably for themselves in the different situations of life which shall place them'.[11] However, as the majority of employers would only accept an apprentice if they were paid a premium (fee) and the children in the Blue Coat School were not provided with any premium on completion of their

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[10] B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book' January 1831.
[11] Griffith, *History of the Free-Schools*, p.72.

education,[12] the school had to rely on alternative means to secure the apprenticeships.

The majority of apprenticeships were obtained through accessing an extended network of associates, family and friends to source vacancies which did not require a premium fee. At least 17 of the boys were apprenticed formally or informally to their father. In 1823, John Taylor from the Blue Coat School was apprenticed to William Ryan who was a gun maker by trade. As Johns' father worked as a gun finisher one assumes that a working relationship existed between the two families. William Barker was apprenticed to his uncle who was in the brass foundry trade[13] and George Taylor was apprenticed to his uncle Joseph Riley in Tamworth who was a boot maker.[14] Several of the girls were also apprenticed out to relatives. Mary Taylor was apprenticed to her father in 1791. Eleanor Jane was apprenticed to her mother in 1788 and Hannah Yates was apprenticed to her brother-in-law in 1789. [15]

Some of the individuals who supported the school in a financial capacity also secured apprenticeships for the children. Out of the 269 masters who apprenticed out a child from the Blue Coat School, at least 48 of them paid an annual subscription or left a donation to the school. For instance, Richard Rabone from Birmingham who apprenticed Charles Summer left a legacy of £300 to the school in 1831; Edward Palmer Esq. who apprenticed William Fitter was described as a 'gent' and he

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[12] C. Knight, *The Penny Cyclopaedia of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* (London, 1835), IV. p.447. Note that the school did pay sixty-three pounds to apprentice Edward Allen to Benjamin Line who was the Schoolmaster in the Blue Coat School in 1787. 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. June 1787.
[13] B.C.S Apprenticeship Indentures'. 12 Dec 1808.
[14] 'ibid'. Feb 1814.
[15] 'ibid'. 1788, 1789, 1791, 1812, 1814.

bequeathed £500 to the school in 1820.[16] The solicitor Mr Whateley who supported

the school financially as a subscriber, informally apprenticed at least three boys from

the school to work as office boys; Thomas Greensil in 1844; Thomas Simpson in

1845 and George Ashford in 1848.[17]

Many of these subscribers appear to have had a long-standing interest in one or

more of the children at the school initially nominating a child for admittance before

later providing them with an apprenticeship. For instance, Thomas Longmoor a brass

founder, nominated Henry Roome for admittance to the school in 1818 and he later

provided him with an apprenticeship. Hannah Lambeth was nominated by Robert

Shaw who worked as a dentist and he later engaged her as an apprentice to work as

a domestic servant.[18]

Periodically, an employer would approach the school direct to request an apprentice.

The school would check the character of those who submitted such requests to

assure that they were of the established church and were 'honest and industrious

tradesmen'.[19] For instance, when in August 1791 Richard Cotton applied for an

apprentice from the school for his buckle cutting business, the school asked one of

the governors to make enquiries regarding his character and report back.[20] In June

1811, Mr Richards from West Bromwich School applied for an apprentice but his

request was turned down as the school was not associated with the established

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[16] Griffith. *History of the Free-Schools*, pp.82-83.
[17] 'B.C.S Apprenticeship Indentures'. 30 February 1845, 1 January 1844 and 31 August 1848
[18] 'ibid'. 1788, 1793, 1823, 1813 'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 1818, 1807.
[19] Griffith. *History of the Free-Schools*, p.72..
[20] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. August 1791

church.[21] On the other hand, Mr Sidaway who took John Bourne on as an ironmonger apprentice in 1819 was said to be a churchman and a 'proper person',[22] therefore he was explicitly suitable. Taking such an approach ensured that the children would not be apprenticed out to unscrupulous masters who saw the school as a source of cheap labour and it kept the children within the folds of the established church. Occasionally a master would be deemed suitable but stipulations would be attached. When Andrew Brookes was apprenticed to John Hart in 1810, a supplementary note specified that the boy must not follow his occupation as liquor merchant on the Sabbath day as this 'is a business that too frequently occupies the Lord's Day'.[23]

There are references in the Blue Coat School records to children being returned to their parents, friends or guardians on leaving school as no apprenticeship could be found for them. In March 1816 and in January 1818, an advertisement was placed in a local newspaper publicising the fact that the school had children ready to be placed out as there had not been enough applications for children to be taken on as apprentices.[24] In 1821 only four children had been placed out as apprentices and the remaining 25 had been sent home to their family and friends.[25] However, although some of the children in the Blue Coat School may have initially been sent home they were not forgotten by the school as apprenticeships were often found for them at a later date. Henry Chatterton was initially sent home to his parents when he left the school in 1822 as an apprenticeship could not be found for him but in 1825 he was

[21] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. June 1812.
[22] ibid'. 29 March 1819.
[23] ibid'. March 1810.
[24] 'ibid'. March 1816, January 1818.
[25] 'ibid'. January 1821.

apprenticed to Thomas Luckett, an ivory bone and toy maker. Ebenezer Salt was also sent home to his parents in 1822 but was apprenticed out to a boot and shoe maker in Oldbury in 1823.[26]

In spite of an apparent shortage of apprenticeships, it is clear that in the Blue Coat School, the preference of the parents, friends or guardians was taken into account where possible and the children were not forced into an apprenticeship they did not desire. For instance, in 1793, friends of two of the boys within the school refused 'several apprenticeship offers' for them.[27] In 1811 when several positions were offered to Richard Bragg and his friends objected to them all, they were informed that if he did not go to one of the situations on offer they must provide a place for him.[28]

Location of apprenticeships

Historian Joan Lane found that some apprentices had to travel quite a distance to secure their apprenticeship particularly in the higher status professions such as medicine or the grocery trade.[29] Pauper children in particular were sometimes forced to travel a great distance as officials would use the opportunity to facilitate the removal of the child from the parish thus avoiding financial responsibilities.[30] However, there is no evidence that the Blue Coat School governors deliberately tried to remove children from the town of Birmingham. Of the 265 recorded male indentures only 74 were not apprenticed to a trade within the town and of those

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[26] 'B.C.S Apprenticeship Indentures'.and 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'.
[27] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. June 1793.
[28] 'ibid'. June 1793, January 1811.
[29] J. Lane, *Apprenticeship in Warwickshire 1700 - 1834* (University of Birmingham, 1977), p.17.
[30] J. Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914* (London: UCL Press, 1996), p.75.

apprenticed to trades outside of Birmingham the majority were sent to places in the

surrounding locality, particularly in areas in the industrialised north-west of the town

as seen in Fig. 21.

Figure 21: Male apprenticeships located outside the town of Birmingham (n=74) 1786 to 1851
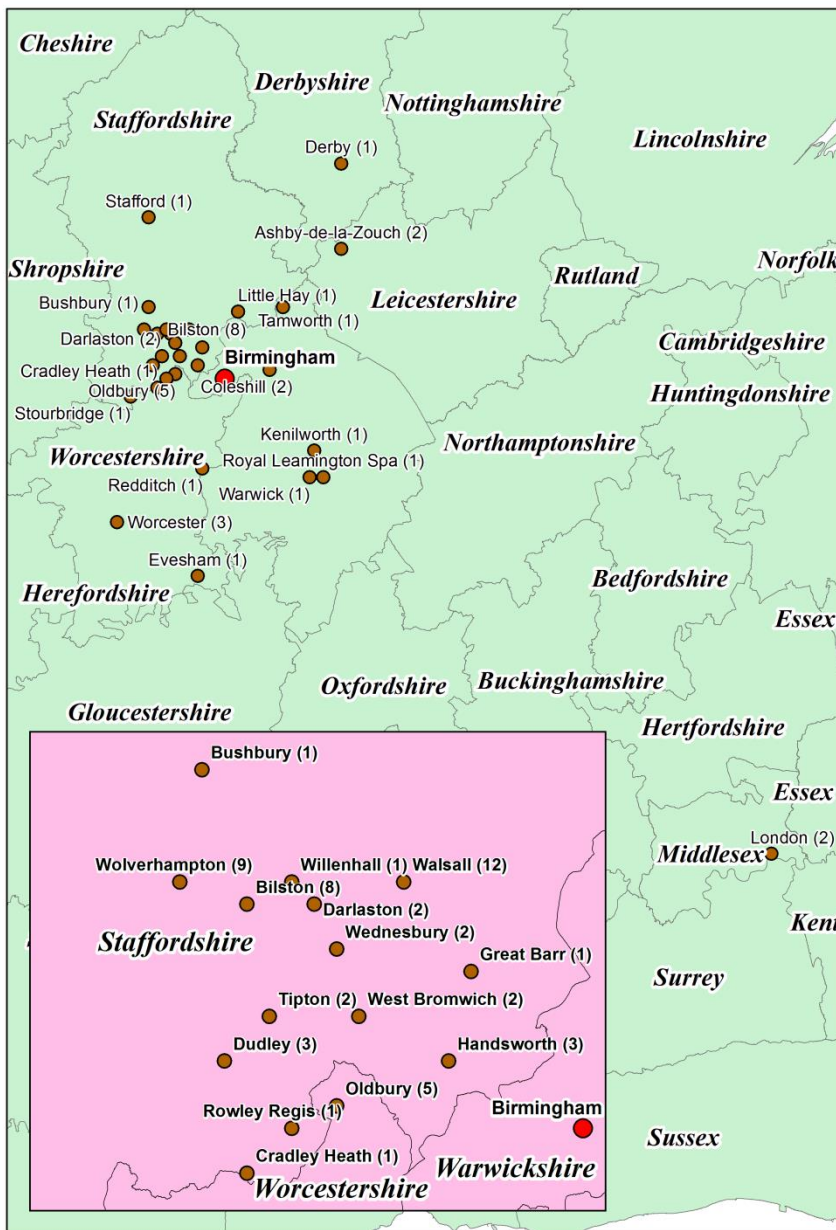
Source: B.C.S. Apprenticeship Indentures

As Birmingham was a large town with a thriving economy, there was perhaps no need to send children to another location unless there were specific reasons. An exception was John Salter who was to have been sent to South America with the merchant Francis Barker Copper. The school was going to provide John with suitable clothes for the voyage and climate but as the merchant returned to Birmingham, it is feasible that John did not end up going to South America[31] although this has not been confirmed through census linkage.

In some cases, there appears to have been a clear reason for sending the apprentice to a location which was outside the town of Birmingham. For instance, Walsall was an important centre for leather working in this period hence some (but not all) the bridle and spur apprenticeships were located there. However, there does not appear to be an immediate connection between Walsall and the four boys who were apprenticed to surgeons in the town.

The majority of girls in the Blue Coat School from a cohort of 158 were apprenticed out to places within Birmingham (86.8 percent) although some were apprenticed out to places in surrounding locations such as West Bromwich, Wednesbury, Handsworth and Walsall. One girl however, was sent to Dunstable and another to London.

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[31] 'B.C.S Apprenticeship Indentures'. July 1819.

The apprenticeship

The Blue Coat School was still adhering to the old system as late as 1816 whereby an apprentice lived in his master's household. This was documented in Rule 27 in 1816 which stipulated that 'no apprentice (was) to board out of the house of his apprentice master'.[32] However, there are frequent references to apprentices being paid a boarding out wage from the late eighteenth century onwards. Edward Horton was apprenticed to a plater in 1793. In his first year he was earning 6s 6d a week and this rose to 7s in the second year. By the fourth year he was earning 8s a week. Charles Street, who was apprenticed to a jeweller in 1823 was paid a weekly wage of 3s 6d initially which rose to 5s in the second year. It kept rising until he earned 10s a week.[33]

A satisfactory apprenticeship did not warrant entry within the Blue Coat School minutes and we have no records of their daily life as a Blue Coat School apprentice. However, cases of alleged ill-treatment were followed up and as such were recorded in the minutes. Disagreements between employers and apprentices were brought before the school governors and if the master was found guilty he would be punished, but the onus was put on the child to prove the crime or for outsiders to provide evidence. Where evidence was limited it appears that the school usually gave the benefit of the doubt to the master, although there are several instances where the complaint was upheld.

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[32] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. March 1816.
[33] 'B.C.S Apprenticeship Indentures'. 1823.

Lane found that the most common complaint was that the master had ran away, followed by complaints that the master had not provided maintenance for his apprentice.[34] There is no evidence that any of the masters who apprenticed boys from the Blue Coat School ran away although there are some recorded cases of ill treatment. In 1782 for example, a complaint was received by the committee in the school detailing the ill treatment of Edward Chiswell, apprentice to Mr James Bayliss. As the committee all agreed that Edward did indeed appear to have been ill-treated, they issued a warrant to force Mr Bayliss to attend a meeting. As he confessed to the ill treatment and he promised to behave well, the proceedings were dropped. In October 1792, one of the boys complained that his master William Askey, had not paid him enough each week to live on nor given him any clothes. Mr Askey attended a meeting at the school and the committee sided with the boy. Although Mr Askey agreed to provide William with clothes, following several more complaints from both parties they concurred that it would be best if the boy was to end his apprenticeship a few months early.[35]

Disgruntled masters also brought complaints to the school to be resolved. A common grievance was that their apprentice had absconded and in Birmingham, this was a particularly common occurrence in the small metal industry trades (for example the locksmiths and toy-makers)[36] although it was a feature of all trades, especially those which were low in status. In January 1790 for instance, Benjamin Pearson complained to the Blue Coat School that his apprentice Thomas Hicks had

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[34] Lane, *Apprenticeship in Warwickshire 1700 - 1834*. p.67.
[35] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. January 1782, November 1789, October 1792.
[36] Lane, *Apprenticeship in Warwickshire 1700 - 1834*.p.60.

absconded. Thomas was to be sent back to him and the master paid for his time.[37]

Joan Lane believes that the non-corporate nature of Birmingham meant that runaway apprentices could find alternative employment quite easily but she also noted that absconding in general was higher in times of war.[38] Another frequent complaint by the masters was that their apprentice was dishonest. For instance, John Chant from the Blue Coat School was accused of lying in January 1783 and he was whipped after apparently confessing to his crime. Other complaints from the masters focused on the health of their apprentices. Thomas Thompson complained that his apprentice was 'unsound' in 1806 and also thought he had scrofula. The school medic examined him and found him to be rheumatic. His recommendation was that the school should find him another occupation where he did not have to stand.[39]

Joan Lane recorded 74 cases of immoral conduct against girls who were apprenticed out and instances of this may be found amongst female apprentices from the Blue Coat School. In June 1787, Charlotte Burton complained that her master, Mr Bond, had taken off her stays and shift although Bond responded by saying that he had taken off her stays to threaten her. The school placed advertisements in the local paper for more information from other inhabitants in the town and the committee visited the girl who appeared in good health. However, as Mr Bond then admitted he had ill treated the girl he was required to pay 10 guineas to the school. We can only speculate as to the true state of affairs as in December, Charlotte was said to be in

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[37] ' B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. 1790.
[38] Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914*. p.202.
[39] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'.

such a state of health that she was not fit for service and the committee decided to keep her in the school until her health was 're-established'.[40]

In September 1782, Elizabeth Fieldhouse who was apprenticed to the Reverend Downing, approached the committee at the Blue Coat School with claims of ill treatment. The school made some enquiries which seemed to verify her narrative and they sent a letter of reprimand to the Reverend Downing. However he responded by saying that her 'dress is mean and paltry and she had not had a shift for a month.' The school in turn, reciprocated by informing him that in future he was to 'dress her in a decent manner, as a servant ought to be, take care of her morals and send her to church every Sunday, to treat her with humanity and tenderness (not to beat her) and let her have a good bed to lie on.' Further ill treatment led the committee to apply to the magistrate in order to ensure the Reverend and his wife attended a committee meeting, but as Elizabeth then eloped from service, the Reverend retaliated by saying that the girl would be persecuted if she did not return. The school committee backed off and returned the girl to her employer but further complaints followed from both Elizabeth Field and Reverend Dowling. Finally her indentures were cancelled in August 1783 and she was taken on by another master in February 1784.[41]

These case histories demonstrate how far the school was willing to pursue cases of ill treatment. Whilst they were willing to investigate claims, to the extent that they placed advertisements in the local newspaper to try to determine the facts, the threat of persecution in the one instance led them to withdraw from confrontation.

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[40] B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book. December 1787.
[41] 'ibid'.August 1782.

Cancelling the indenture

In the Blue Coat School records there is scant evidence that indentures were frequently cancelled. There was a case in 1790 where an indenture was cancelled as the master was in prison. The school had to apply to the magistrates to find out how to dispose of the boy but in this instance, as the boy was then unemployed, the school resolved to find him another apprenticeship.[42] Ill treatment occasionally led to the cancellation of an indenture. For instance, in November 1789 Joseph Macker complained that his nephew had been very ill treated by Mr Price, a surgeon. The boy was released from his apprenticeship and his uncle then found him a job. In some cases, it was the master who applied to the magistrates to cancel an indenture. One such contract was cancelled because the apprentice had been imprisoned for misconduct and another because the apprentice had been found guilty of robbery. In the latter instance, the master said that the apprentice 'had conducted himself in such a manner that he had been obliged to apply to the magistrates for permission to have his indentures cancelled'.[43]

Apprentices could cancel their own indentures although that did not appear to have happened in the Blue Coat School. The author Dyke Wilkinson, born in Birmingham in the 1830s was apprenticed to a rule maker for $8^{1/2}$ years at twelve years of age. He cancelled his indentures early and worked for a time as a rule-maker before entering partnership as a manufacturing jeweller. He then worked as a factor, a book maker at race meetings and undertook commercial undertakings. He also ran a newspaper

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[42] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. July 1790.
[43] 'ibid'. March 1833.

and was later a director of two public companies. It is clear that in this case cancelling his indenture did him no harm.[44]

Transferring the indenture

In the Blue Coat School, fourteen boys are recorded as having transferred their indenture. At least half of these boys transferred to another trade. For example, Benjamin Crumpton was first apprenticed to a steel toy and watch maker before moving into the burnishing trade and Matthew Smith was apprenticed to a plate and buckle maker before he transferred his indenture to a brass founder. At least two of the boys left their initial apprenticeship to go and work for their father (as an apprentice). Henry Kempson was apprenticed to a tin worker and factor before transferring his indenture to his father who worked as a book keeper and Edward Reddell was first apprenticed to a grocer before transferring his indenture to his father who worked as a jobbing smith.[45] Unfortunately there are no details as to why these boys transferred their indenture.

Apprenticeship occupations

We saw earlier how children from the Blue Coat School were not forced to accept the offer of an apprenticeship. Nonetheless, their personal circumstances may have restricted their ability to secure a respectable and skilled position which offered satisfactory training.

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[44] D. Wilkinson, *A Wasted Life* (London: Grant Richards, 1902), from p.18 onwards.
[45] 'B.C.S Apprenticeship Indentures'. 1791, 1795, 1796, 1801, 1811, 1812.

Fig 22 presents the leading occupations for male apprentices from Blue Coat School from 1784 to 1851. Appendix one provides further details on each of the individual occupations.

Figure 22: Leading occupations for male apprentices (formal and informal indentures) in the Blue Coat School 1784 to 1851 (n=344)
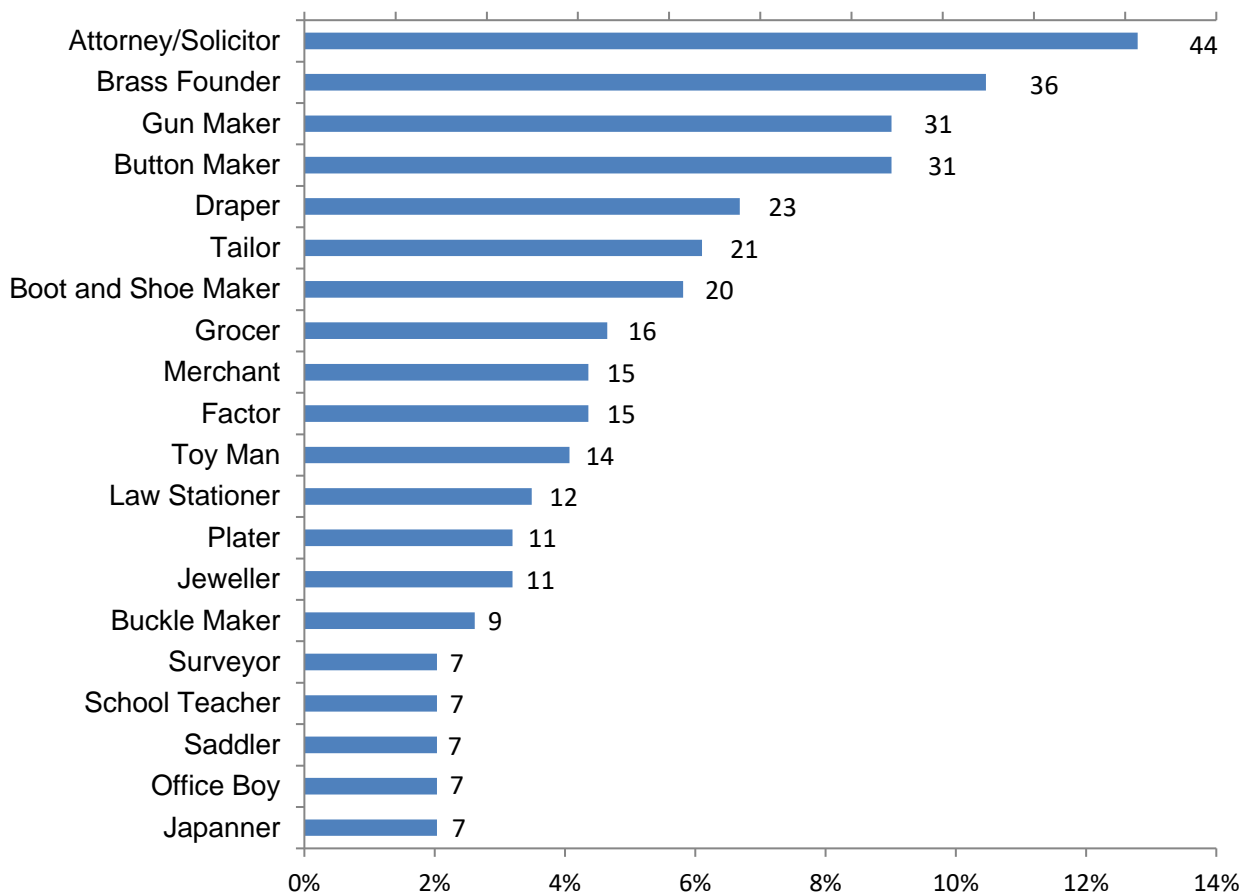
Proportion of Blue Coat School boys in principal trades in Birmingham

Note: 'Toy Man' encompasses a variety of trades, as it refers to the manufacture of small metal items, so potentially these individuals may have been manufacturing for example, buttons and jewellery.

Source: B.C.S Apprenticeship Indentures; B.C.S Application Register

A considerable number of the boys served out their apprenticeship in an attorney or solicitors office. Such a profession usually commanded a high premium, therefore it is

likely that the boys would have been employed as office boys and would not have

served a clerkship unless they were apprenticed to a benevolent attorney. However,

an apprenticeship based within an office was still a respectable position. Fifteen boys

from the Blue Coat School were apprenticed out to merchants including one who was

apprenticed to the manufacturer Matthew Boulton. In *Recollections of a blue-coat*

boy, or, A view of Christ's Hospital, it was said that nearly all the boys who did not go

to sea or to college wanted to 'be placed as clerks in merchants counting houses'.[46]

Twenty-three boys were apprenticed out to drapers. This was also considered a high

status apprenticeship although some did not work in the wholesale trade but were

employed as book keepers and shop assistants.[47]

Although not all the boys obtained such esteemed apprenticeships, it is apparent that

none of the boys were apprenticed out to nailers who were said to be the 'poorest

and most despised of all workers',[48] nor pin makers who were regarded as the 'most

wretched part of the population'.[49] In comparison, 82 boys out of 203 in Birmingham

Asylum were employed in the pin trade.[50] Lane believed that some attempt was

made to place children who were from respectable households but who became

destitute through a change in circumstances (for instance the death of the father) in

an apprenticeship which was suited to the status of the parent[51] and this may be the

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[46] W. Scargill, *Recollections of a Blue-Coat Boy, or, A View of Christ's Hospital* (Swaffham: F. Skill, 1829), p.149.
[47] Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914*. p.109.
[48] D. Mills and J. Mills, 'Occupation and Social Stratification Revisited: The Census Enumerators' Books of Victorian Britain', *Urban History*, 16 (1989), pp.63–77." 'Economic and Social History: Industry and Trade, 1500-1880 [Accessed: 16 December 2014.]".
[49] Eric Hopkins, *The Rise of the Manufacturing Town: Birmingham and the Industrial Revolution* (Sutton Publishing Limited, 1989), p.107.
[50] Children's Employment Commission. *Second Report of the Commissioners. Trades and Manufactures* 1843. F.126.
[51] Lane, *Apprenticeship in Warwickshire 1700 - 1834*. p.79.

case for those children from the Blue Coat School, although it is not possible to validate this claim using this particular data set.

The trend over time was for a rise in the number of boys apprenticed out to an occupation within the non manufacturing sector as can be seen in Fig. 23

Figure 23: Growth of non manufacturing sector apprenticeships in the Blue Coat School 1784 to 1852 (n=218)
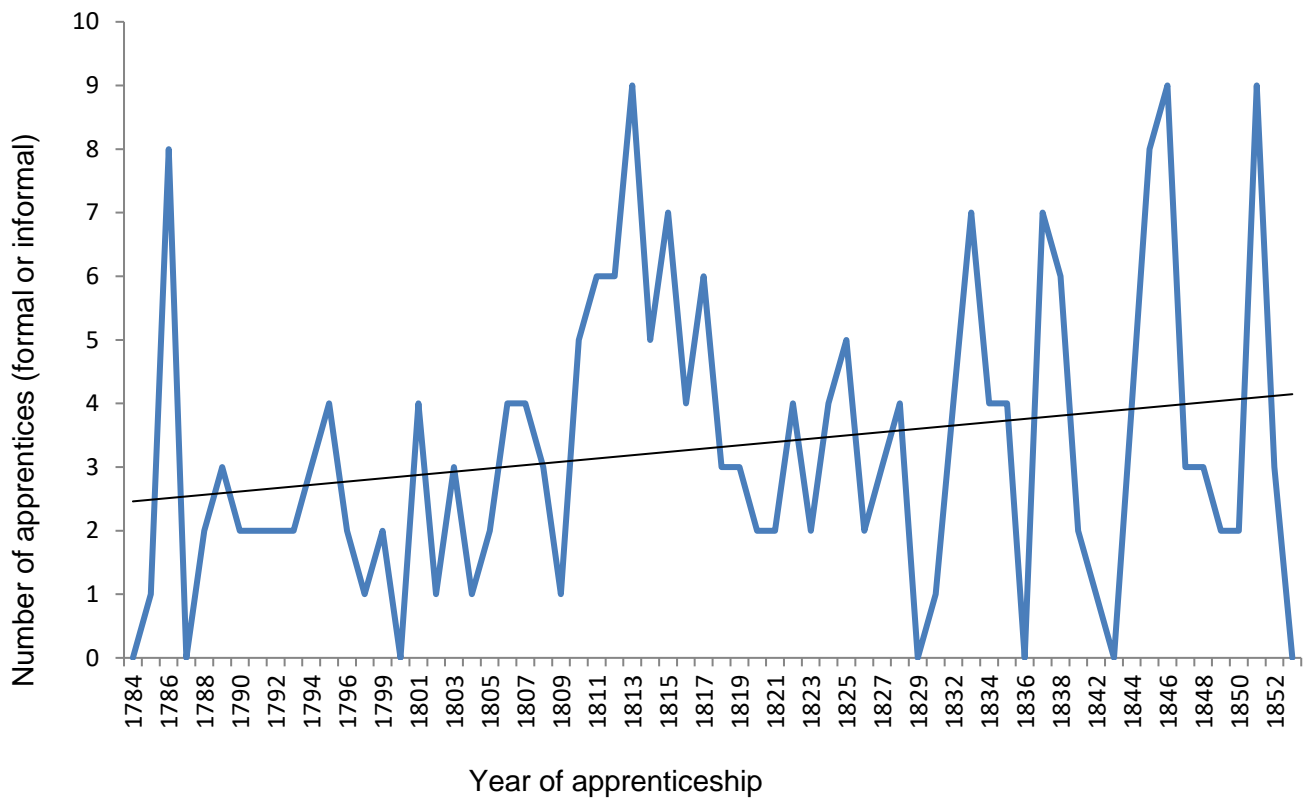
Source: B.C.S Apprenticeship Indentures

The increase in non-manufacturing occupations may be a consequence of a rise in the number of vacancies on offer. There was noticeable growth in this sector from the eighteenth century onwards as confirmed by a survey of Sun Insurance Policies from

1777 to 1786. The largest polices were taken out by the button and toy manufacturers but over half of the policy holders were from the non-manufacturing sector.[52] This is not surprising as an increase in population leads to a demand for service sectors commodities such as housing, clothing, food and other necessities. The growth in retail was fastest in the emerging industrial centres such as Birmingham. In 1831, the author William West described Bull Street as commanding the 'current and full tide of retail trade'.[53] Conversely, Henry Booth writing in 1824, thought that there were not enough vacant positions for boys from Liverpool Blue Coat School who wished to work as clerks whilst the education the pupils received made them unfit to work as labourers. Nonetheless, he believed that the pupils still aspired 'to the situation of office-boys, apprentices and clerks'.[54]

We saw earlier how some of the subscribers appear to have taken an interest in the child they nominated by later securing them an apprenticeship. As such the occupations seen in fig 22 may reflect the interests and professions of the subscribers who supported the school. Establishing whether there was any linkage is problematic as the subscriber lists rarely provide details of occupation. By cross referencing the subscriber list from 1831[55] (which provides names and abode) and the 1835 Directory of Birmingham[56] (which provides name, abode and occupation) against details of the masters who apprenticed boys from the Blue Coat School it

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[52] Hopkins, *The Rise of the Manufacturing Town*. p.66.
[53] W. West, *The History, Topography and Directory of Warwickshire* p.184
[54] H. Booth, *Thoughts on the Condition of the Poor, in Large Towns, Especially with Reference to Liverpool,* 1824. pp.18-19.
[55] *A Short Account of the Blue Coat Charity School,* pp.58-88.
[56] *The Directory of Birmingham; Including an Alphabetical List of the Inhabitants of the Town; a Classification of Its Merchants, Manufacturers &c. ... Together with an Alphabetical Street Directory, &c. &c.* (Birmingham: Wrightson & Webb, 1835).

was possible to link nineteen of the subscribers with the apprenticeship masters (see

Table 5).

Table 5: Occupation of Subscribers 1831 to 1835

Occupation of the subscriber	Number of Subscribers who followed this occupation
Brass Founder	5
Attorney	1
Accountant	1
Draper	2
Gun maker	1
Awl Blade Maker	1
Plater	1
Button Maker	1
Druggist	1
Land Surveyor	1
Jeweller	1
Malster	1
Printer	1

Source: *A Short Account of the Blue Coat Charity School,* and *The Directory of Birmingham 1835*

With such a small cohort, it is not possible to draw any definitive conclusions as to

whether the occupations are a reflection of the professions associated with the

subscribers. However six of the nineteen subscribers had an occupation which was not in the manufacturing sector which suggests that the boys in the Blue Coat School were able to benefit from such an association. Further research would confirm whether this was indeed the case or whether there were additional factors which influenced the pattern of apprenticeship recruitment.

The majority of girls in the Blue Coat School were apprenticed out to work in domestic service as this was the primary occupation for women and girls in Britain. Occasionally you do find girls who were apprenticed to other occupations and Snell suggests that the range of trades which girls they were apprenticed to was quite extensive in the eighteenth century.[57] However, those apprenticeships deemed to be respectable were usually restricted to a narrow range of occupations such as the mantua makers and glove makers.

Under the heading of domestic service, eighty-two percent (n=118) of the girls were employed as house servants, including one within the Blue Coat School itself and fifteen percent (n=21) were employed as nurse maids or under nurse maids (including one whose principal role was to sew). Margaret Dollman was apprenticed to a grocer although it is not possible to say whether she was apprenticed to work in the trade or actually worked as a servant. Three girls had dual occupations. Martha Johnson was employed as an apprentice servant and mantua maker and Catherine

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[57] K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.300.

Ashford as a servant and warehouse girl. Ann Stevenson was apprenticed to a manufacturer in the leather box trade, but she also worked as a servant.[58]

It is interesting to note that none of the girls were apprenticed to a master within the button making industry, even though this industry employed a large number of women. The women were employed to grind and polish the steel and they 'expressed their satisfaction with their earnings' which were superior to anything they could earn within the needlework industry.[59] However, the button making industry employed a considerable number of paupers[60] therefore the trustees of the Blue Coat School may not have regarded it as a suitable occupation for respectable girls from the school. Domestic service was seen as a more respectable occupation and hence, it was believed, would attract a better quality of suitor. It was thought that working in a factory made the girls 'deficient in domestic knowledge' and reduced their moral values. One mechanic, providing evidence for the Children's Employment Commission in 1843, blamed his father's drunkenness and dismal childhood on the fact that his mother worked in manufacturing[61] and a former button maker believed that when women worked in factories and mixed with the men, it led to them getting married too early and hence the reason there was often insufficient funds to set up a household.[62]

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[58] 'B.C.S Apprenticeship Indentures'.
[59] 'Birmingham', in *The Victorian Working Class: Selections from Letters to the Morning Chronicle*, ed. by P.E. Razzell and R.W. Wainwright (London: Frank Cass, 1973). Letter IV, p.294.
[60] I. Pinchbeck, *Women Workers in the Industrial Revolution 1750 - 1850* (Routledge, 2004), p.234.
[61] Children's Employment Commission. *Second Report of the Commissioners. Trades and Manufactures* 1843 p.176.
[62] Razzell and Wainwright. *The Victorian Working Class*, p.296.

Training

In spite of comments from distinguished speakers such as Lord Henry Brougham, who believed that a knowledge of science made 'men more skilful, expert and useful in the particular kinds of work by which they are to earn their bread',[63] it appears that few of the occupations within the manufacturing sector had need of an apprentice who had literacy skills, although an education would ensure that the boys were not seen as 'dull' and possessed a certain amount of ingenuity. Details of the requisite qualifications seen as necessary for recruitment to the main occupations are outlined in Appendix one. Within the service sector the need to 'write well' was usually the qualification apprenticeship providers were looking for and as such the boys from the Blue Coat School would have been suitably qualified.

Unfortunately, for the greater part, it has not been possible to find out which specific skills were being acquired by the apprentices from the Blue Coat School. For instance, Joseph Hodgeths was apprenticed to the proprietor of *Aris's Gazette* in 1825 but we do not know what aspect of the business his apprenticeship covered. In comparison, when James Smith was apprenticed in 1808 to Joseph Perry who was a coal master, his indenture stated that he was to 'learn the art of book-keeping'.[64] In other instances, we are only to find out more about the nature of the training through grievance issues. Hence, Thomas Dunn was apprenticed to a tray maker master in 1808 but we find out that the master put him to work in a puddling furnace.

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[63] H. Brougham, 'A Discourse of the Objects, Advantages and Pleasures of Science', in *Mathematical Science* (London: The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, 1827), p.41.
[64] 'B.C.S Apprenticeship Indentures'. 1825, 1808.

For those few apprenticeship and service application records which do provide additional information, it has been possible to take a more in-depth look at the nature of the work. Table 6 details the role of the male apprentice together with the business of his employer.

Table 6: The role of the apprentice

Business of employer	Role of apprentice
Accountant clerk	Accountant clerk (n=1)
Architect	Clerk (n=2)
Attorney/Solicitor	Attorney (n=2)
	Scrivenor (n=6)
	Writing Clerk (n=2)
	Office boy (n=15)
Auctioneer	Auctioneer (n=1)
Book Keeper	Book Keeper (n=1)
Brass Founder	Factor and counting house (n=1)
Factor	Factor (n=9)
	Office boy (n=1)
	Warehouse boy (n=1)
Insurance Office	Office boy (n=2)
Ironmonger	Clerk (n=1)
	Warehouse boy (n=1)
Land Surveyor	Land Surveyor (n=1)

	Office Boy (n=3)
Lime Works Owner	Managing Lime Works (n=1)
Line Draper	Book Keep/Warehouseman (n=2)
Merchant	Merchant (n=5) Office boy (n=2)
School Master	Assistant to Master (n=2) School Master (n=3)
Scrivener	Scrivener (n=1)
Stationer	Stationer (n=3) Office boy (n=4)
Stock Broker	Office Boy (n=1)
Surgeon	Surgeon (n=4)
Tray Maker	Iron puddler (n=1)
Writing Master	Writing Master (n=3)

Source: B.C.S Apprenticeship Indentures; B.C.S Application Register

Whilst the cohort is small, the data in Table 6 does show us that nearly three quarters (72.9 percent) of the boys were seemingly being taught skills related to the business of their employer.

Apprenticeship attainment and academic qualifications

According to the author Charles Lamb in 1812, a good clerk 'writeth a fair and swift hand, and is completely versed in the four first rules of Arithmetic, in the Rule of Three'.[65] The four first rules were addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

From 1843 onwards, the Blue Coat School examined the children prior to their departure. They were assessed on their reading, writing and arithmetic skills as well as their general character and behaviour. Of the 229 examinations records which exist for the boys,[66] forty-eight records have been linked to the apprenticeship records.

To find out whether their academic qualifications influenced their choice of apprenticeship, these records were examined to see if those boys who did well in their examinations obtained a superior apprenticeship.

Reading

The customary notation for reading skills was 'good'. One boy had 'indifferent' reading skills and he became an apprentice shoemaker. Six boys had 'very good' or 'very satisfactory' reading skills; three of them obtained positions in an office, one went to work for a jeweller, another for a plater and one went to work for a brass founder.

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[65] C. Lamb, 'The Good Clerk, a Character; with Some Account of 'The Complete English Tradesman', *The Reflector*, 2.4 (1812), 432–34. Cited by G. Spurr, 'Those Who Are Obliged to Pretend That They Are Gentlefolk: The Construction of a Clerking Identity in Victorian and Edwardian London' (McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, 2001), p.39.
[66] ' B.C.S Examination Records'.

Writing

Again, the customary notation was 'good'. Two boys had 'very fair' writing skills and one of them went to work for an ironmonger and another went to work in an office. Seven boys had 'very good' writing skills; five went to work in an office, one in a brass founder's warehouse and one worked for a jeweller.

Arithmetic

The results of the arithmetic examination show us the maximum complexity achieved by the children. For example, 'fractions' or 'rule of three'. The majority of boys just mastered the 'four rules' of Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication and Division. The more advanced lessons covered 'Reduction', 'Rule of Three' and 'Practice'. Of the twelve boys who studied advanced arithmetic, eleven worked in trade or a warehouse and one in an office. One boy mastered 'decimals' and in the examiner's report it said that 'he appears to be a promising youth and so far as the examination is concerned he has proved himself by far the most superior boy'. He went to work in a warehouse in a brass foundry. The Blue Coat School also covered elements of accounting and two boys studied 'interest' although only one went on to work in an office, the other worked for a brass founder. Two boys studied profit and loss and one went on to work in the warehouse at a brass foundry whilst the other became a builder.

Moral behaviour and general conduct

Of the nine boys whose behaviour was said to have been 'very good' whilst at school, five went into trade and the three went to work in an office. One boy was said

to have been idle and he went to work for an ironmonger whilst it was said that one boy 'might have been better' although he was able to obtain an apprenticeship within in an office.

On viewing these examination results it appears that those boys who excelled academically obtained an apprenticeship in a higher status occupation. In particular, those who excelled at writing were able to obtain an apprenticeship within an office or warehouse. Whilst the expectation is that those whose conduct was exemplary would have obtained a superior post, this does not appear to be the case. John Cheshire became a monitor in the school and received commendation for his conduct in spite of the fact that he had reportedly accidently wounded another boy with a knife and was given corporal punishment. In 1844 he was awarded a prize as he was 'ready in his answers and intelligent'. He was in the First Class and was said to have been 'very good' in his reading and writing examinations and mastered 'partnership' in his arithmetic examination. He went to work as a clerk in an architect's office.[67]

When viewing the examination results for the girls there does not appear to be any correlation between the type of domestic service they entered and their academic achievements.

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[67] 'B.C.S. Examination Certificates'. 29 August 1844; B.C.S Resignation Register. 22 August 1844.

Summary

For those children in the Blue Coat School who did not have financial backing from their parents, being able to obtain an apprenticeship without the need of a premium would have been of estimable value. Furthermore, it is clear that those without suitable connections would have benefitted from the influence of patrons associated with the school who were able to arrange respectable apprenticeships for the children. The children were also fortunate to live in a town with a strong diverse economy so the majority of apprenticeships were locally based and they did not need to go outside the locality for their training.

There is scant information on the specifics of the apprenticeship itself except in relation to cases of ill treatment. Such cases were pursued by the school until a satisfactory outcome was reached. In regard to their training, the boys appear to have been taught skills which were consistent with the nature of the business of their chosen occupation whilst the girls received training which was said to prepare them for a life of domesticity.

When viewing the leading occupations, we found a growing proportion of the boys over time were obtaining an apprenticeship within the non-manufacturing sector and that some of these occupations were relatively high in status. We also found that those boys who excelled academically usually obtained an apprenticeship which was higher in status than the norm. Although the girls do not appear to have benefitted from their academic achievements, domestic service was seen by the school as a

more respectable occupation in comparison to an apprenticeship within the manufacturing sector.

The following section will provide an overview of the apprenticeship system. It will first consider the relationship between high status occupations and the premium fee. It will then discuss how parents located apprenticeship vacancies for their children and it will review the formal and also the informal indenture. Finally, it will assess the leading occupations in Birmingham for those boys who were under 20 years of age. This will include assessment of the local market conditions and the relative merits of individual occupations, including specific qualifications and the need for literacy skills.

The apprenticeship system

This second section will consider general features of the apprenticeship system and also discuss the apprenticeship in the context of Birmingham.

Until the early nineteenth century, the apprenticeship system was seen as one of the most important ways through which a child of the working class could acquire an occupational skill. In early modern England, between 7.5 and 10 percent of the adult male population were apprenticed out (into a non-agricultural occupation).[68] Jane Humphries found that 45 percent of the children in her autobiographies had served an apprenticeship[69] and even in places such as Birmingham where the trades could be 'most easily learned', the respectable inhabitants still preferred to apprentice out their children in order that they did not become 'vagabonds and blackguards'.[70]

For disadvantaged children who out of necessity received some form of financial assistance, an apprenticeship was seen as a means to make them independent and less reliant on parish relief. When the overseers in Northamptonshire in 1830 were examined about a decision to fund a parish apprenticeship it was said that having a trade would enable the boy to 'to bring up a family independent of parochial assistance'.[71] Unfortunately, children who were financed by the parish often ended up

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[68] J. Humphries, 'English Apprenticeship: A Neglected Factor in the First Industrial Revolution', in *The Economic Future in Historical Perspective* (The British Academy published by the Oxford University Press, 2003), p.81.
[69] J. Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* p.260.
[70] *Novum Organon Parliamentarium, or A New Catechism for St. Stephen's* (London, Barfield 1814). p.13.
[71] NRO, 110p/138/13 cited in J. Bailey, '"Think Wot a Mother Must Feel": Parenting in English Pauper Letters C. 1760–1834', *Family & Community History*, 13.1 (2010), p.7.

in an apprenticeship which offered them little in the way of skills and therefore there was little hope of them acquiring gainful employment at the end of their apprenticeship.

Those apprentices who were funded by a charity such as the Blue Coat School tended to fare better and usually had an opportunity to acquire more skilled employment but there was still an expectation from those who supported the Blue Coat School that the apprenticeships were to prepare children to become self-supporting working class individuals.

Parents saw the training as invaluable and indicative of their social standing in the community. They were proud of their child's apprenticeship.[72] Even if their child failed to establish himself or herself as an independent master or mistress the skills they acquired would hopefully enable them to secure long-term employment. Therefore, sorting out an apprenticeship whether formal or informal was one of the most important things a parent could do for their child. There was a need for the father or guardian to be willing to find a situation for his child, pay the premium and sign the contract. For those boys who were paupers without the support of a father or relative, they would find it difficult to become a skilled artisan – unless sponsored by an individual or charity such as the Blue Coat School.[73]

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[72] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution*. pp.263-264.
[73] See Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914*, p.72 for a description of the different forms of apprenticeship in relation to specific categories of children.

Premiums and status

The majority of trades and professions in this period commanded a premium which enabled the master to make a profit to offset the fact that the apprentice would initially be unskilled and the master would therefore not recoup the initial costs of training. Kearsley, writing in 1786, believed that parents and guardians only wanted to apprentice their sons to genteel trades or trades which satisfied their notions of grandeur.[74] However, the reality was that the majority of parents were constrained by the extent of the premium they could grant to their children as the more elite occupations commanded higher premiums. Although economists Chris Minns and Patrick Wallis suggest that only eight percent of premiums nationally were higher than fifty pounds and generally premiums ranged from around ten pounds or below for manufacturing trades,[75] this still would have been a financial burden for parents. This may have provided a barrier to occupational training, especially for the higher status professions.

The relative status awarded to each occupation by those seeking training, may be derived by constructing a table based on the cost of premiums taken from Kearsleys 1786 *Book of Trades.*[76] As may be seen in Table 7 the highest premiums, even at the end of the eighteenth century, were in the non-manufacturing sector.

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[74] Kearsley. *Kearsley's Table of Trades*. p.35.
[75] C. Minns and P. Wallis, *Why Did (Pre-Industrial) Firms Train?: Premiums and Apprenticeship Contracts in 18th Century England*, Economic History Working Papers, (London, 2011), p.9.
[76] Kearsley. *Kearsley's Table of Trades*. pp.5-24.

Table 7: Evaluation of apprenticeship status by means of the premium fee, 1786.

Occupation	Premium fee £
Merchant	100 - 600
Draper	100 - 200
Coal Merchant	80 - 300
Surgeon	60 - 400
Attorney	50 - 500
Iron monger	30 - 200
Grocer	20 - 200
Saddler	30 - 100
Toymaker	20 - 200
Druggist	20 - 200
Scrivener	20 - 50
Brass founder	15 - 20
Jeweller	12 - 60
Silversmith	10 - 200
Land Surveyor	10 - 100
Cabinet Maker	10 - 100
Printer	10 - 60
Tailor	10 - 30
Japanner	10 – 30
Boot and shoe maker	10 - 20

Iron Trade	10 - 12
Baker	5 - 20
Gun manufacture trade	5 - 20
Bridle Cutter	5 – 20
Builder	5 - 20
Umbrella Maker	5 - 20
Buckle maker	5 - 10
Burnisher	5 - 10
Button maker	5 - 10
Glass Manufacturing	5 - 10

Source: Kearsley's table of trades, 1786

For those children who were orphans or were from single parent households, the only means by which they could usually obtain a premium through the parish apprenticeship scheme. The Board of Guardians paid out small premiums to apprentice out such children to masters who invariably were only interested in the money. The master would exploit the children by only providing them with menial tasks and as such at the end of their indenture they would have gained no useful skills. Premiums however, were not compulsory and were not always paid. The guardians in Aston Workhouse did not provide premiums and took care to make sure the children were apprenticed out to respectable masters.[77] Nor did the Foundling

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[77] 'The Workhouse' <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Aston/>. [Accessed: 12 May 2014]

Hospital in London provide premiums, as it believed that providing the children with a premium would attract undesirable masters.[78]

Finding an apprenticeship

It was often quite difficult finding sufficient and suitable apprenticeships for charity children although Jones did find that some of the requests for apprentices from the charity schools in the early eighteenth century came not only from 'lesser tradesmen' but also from 'artisans, respectable tradesmen and professional men'.[79] Sometimes the schools, parents or guardians would place an advertisement in the local papers soliciting an apprenticeship position. Likewise, a master with a vacancy might advertise for a boy or girl as can be seen in the example in Fig.24 taken from the *Aris Gazette* in Birmingham.

Figure 24: Example of a typical advertisement for an apprentice

WANTED a Situation for a respectable Youth in a light business, as an in-door Apprentice, either in or out of Birmingham ; the latter will be preferred. A premium will be advanced.—Address (post paid) G. H. at the Printer's.
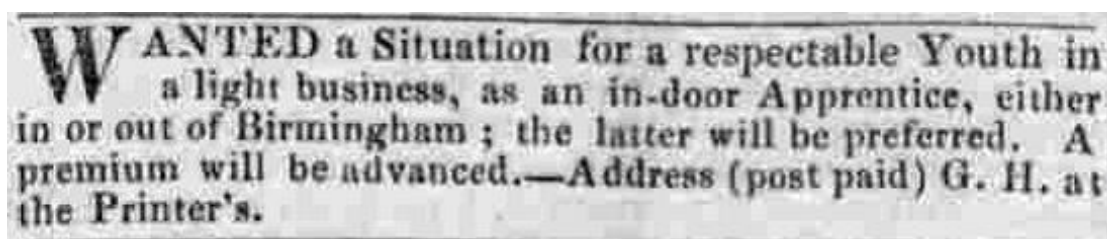
Source: *Aris's Gazette*, Birmingham 8 December 1832

In some cases, a child was apprenticed out to his or her father, particularly in those occupations which were passed down through the family. Historian Sheila Cooper

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[78] A. Levene, 'Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence: Master-Apprentice Relations in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England', *Social History*, 33.2 (2008), p.184.

[79] Jones, *The Charity School Movement* p.50.

references one family where the trade – that of butchers – was passed down through eight generations,[80] although Leunig, Minns and Wallis found relatively few sons were apprenticed to the same trade as their father. Whilst their data was from an earlier period and they focussed just on London, they suggest that other towns might have experienced the same openness whereby the father was in a different occupation.[81] Unfortunately, it has not been possible to confirm that those boys who were from the Blue Coat School and were apprenticed to their father were following the same occupation.

The Indenture

The indenture provided a binding contract for both the apprentice and the master for a specific term. The average age of an apprenticeship was 14 although children could be apprenticed at a very young age, especially pauper children. Some chimney-sweeps for instance were apprenticed at the age of six (and even younger). An attempt was made to regulate this trade in 1788 with the *Act for the Better Regulation of Chimney Sweepers and their Apprentices*', which stipulated that the minimum age for apprenticeship was to be eight years. However this act was never enforced.[82] Generally, the average length of an apprenticeship was seven years so the children were fully trained by the age of twenty-one.

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[80] Cooper M. S., 'Intergenerational Social Mobility in Late-Seventeeth- and Early-Eighteenth-Century England', *Continuity and Change*, 7.3 (1992), pp.283–301, p.287.
[81] T Leunig, C Minns and P Wallis, 'Networks in the Premodern Economy: The Market for London Apprenticeships, 1600—1749', *The Journal of Economic History*, 71.2 (2011), p.437.
[82] Knight, C., ed., 'Chimneys and Chimney Sweepers', *The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, August 1842 p.322.

The indenture itself changed remarkably little over time, with the same legal terminology used in 1784 and 1825. The contract bound the apprentice to obey and serve his or her master whilst learning his 'art, trade or mystery'. At the same time the contract ensured that the apprentice did not profiteer from the trade by buying or selling goods. The apprentices were also banned by terms of the indenture contract from playing 'cards, dice, tables or any other unlawful game' and they were not to 'haunt taverns or ale-houses.' The master in turn had to offer suitable training, as well as provide 'meat, drink, apparel, washing, lodging and all other necessaries' (if they were an indoor apprentice). At the end of the apprenticeship, he also had to provide the boys with 'two good suits of wearing apparel of all sorts, one suit for working-days and the other new suit for holy days'.[83]

By the late eighteenth century, the traditional apprenticeship system was in decline nationally and alternative forms of apprenticeship arose although not all manufacturers in Birmingham favoured the decrease in formal apprenticeship. They thought it was impacting on the prosperity of the town which depended on skilled workmanship to attract foreign trade and investment.[84] Nonetheless, the majority of manufacturers in Birmingham did support the changes which occurred within the system as conversely, they believed it did benefit trade. In 1816 the Committee of the Manufacturers of Arms and Materials for Arms went so far as to amend the terms of the indenture agreements for some of their apprentices to deal with a bottleneck in production. They agreed to pay their apprentices two guineas once they had learnt

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[83] 'B.C.S Apprenticeship Indentures'. This was the standard format.
[84] Children's Employment Commission. *Second Report of the Commissioners. Trades and Manufactures* p.167.

the art of forging and the instructor would have three guineas. Additional skills would ensure additional earnings.[85]

Snell refers to 'clubbing-out' apprenticeships which were more informal and were just simple written contracts or verbal agreements. Although a formal apprenticeship contract with a signed indenture could still be obtained, the custom of living within a master's household became the exception, especially in Birmingham. The boys enjoyed living out as it meant that they were no longer under the control of a master who in his rule as loco parentis was expected to provide moral guidance and discipline as well as training. The boys were now also free to pursue after work leisure activities and socialise with fellow apprentices. Whilst it was frowned upon in public for those under the age of 21 to enter a Public House, those who owned beer-shops had no such misgivings and so the apprentices would spend their time smoking, drinking and gambling. Theodore Price, a magistrate in Warwickshire in 1816, believed that the practice of out-door apprenticeship, led to apprentices staying out late at night and getting into a 'great deal of mischief'.[86] There is little evidence that this was a frequent occurrence in the Blue Coat School although in 1791 it was said that apprentices from the School were behaving in 'a very insolent manner to the master and assistant of school and letting off pistols in front of the children'.[87]

Some of these informal apprenticeships varied in duration. The authors of the *Parents Hand-Book* (1842) believed that the 'old-fashioned' system of apprenticeship

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[85] Clive Behagg, "Mass Production Without the Factory: Craft Producers, Guns and Small Firm Innovation, 1790–1815," *Business History*, 40 (2006), p.11.
[86] *Report of the Minutes of Evidence, Taken Before the Select Committee on the State of the Children Employed in the Manufactories of the United Kingdom.* (1816), HC 397, Vol 3. p.124.
[87] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. November 1791.

of seven years which was formerly the rule was 'now the exception'.[88] Many parents favoured this informal system as it meant that their children could start earning a full man's wages earlier than they would have been if they were bound for a number of years. Boys also preferred these informal agreements as it meant that they were not tied to just one place and if they did not like the establishment where they were working, they could go somewhere else.[89]

Figure 25: Example of an informal apprenticeship advertisement

WANTED.
TWO or three young Men, from 16 to 18 years of age, who write good hands, may be instructed in a business that will insure them a most respectable livelihood.—Applications to be made to Mr. CHARLES DOCKER, Great Hampton-street.

Source: *Aris's Gazette*, 11 December 1824

Snell refers to the growing tendency for young people to arrange their own apprenticeship following a period of employment which enabled them to save sufficient money to afford the premium.[90] There is no indication that this was the case in the Blue Coat School, particularly as the school did not provide premiums; however there are references to the fact that parents, guardians or friends sometimes found employment for their children and we need to assume that some form of informal training would have been attached.

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[88] J.C. Hudson, *The Parent's Hand-Book: Or Guide to the Choice of Professions* (Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1842), p.215.
[89] Children's Employment Commission. *Second Report of the Commissioners. Trades and Manufactures 1843* p.27.
[90] Snell, 'The Apprenticeship System in British History: The Fragmentation of a Cultural Institution'. *History of Education*, 25 (1996),p.316.

Opportunities for apprenticeships in Birmingham

As we saw from the list of premiums in Table 7, there were a variety of apprenticeships on offer both within the manufacturing and non manufacturing sectors. However, earlier we saw how the Blue Coat School was sometimes unable to find sufficient apprenticeships for all the children and they had to be sent home. Whilst it is possible that the lack of apprenticeships was a consequence of the school not providing premiums for the children, the numbers of apprenticeships on offer for each trade was also a reflection of product demand. For instance, in 1831 Mr Thomas Messenger, a brass founder in Birmingham, believed that masters would not take apprentices on due to the state of trade at the time.[91] As noted in Chapter 2, the 1830s was the start of a period known as the 'Hungry Forties' with a series of bad harvests and an economic depression and this may have influenced the number of apprenticeship vacancies on offer.

Whilst no specific statistics exist as to the number of formal and informal apprentices in Birmingham in 1841, the census does provide a breakdown of the number of boys under the age of twenty for each occupation in Birmingham.

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[91] *Effects of the Orders in Council*, ed. by H. Niles, *Niles' Weekly Register*, 1813, VII. p.107.

Figure 26: Leading occupations for males under 20 years of age in Birmingham 1841 (n=4,048)

Occupation	Count
Brass Founder	833
Button Maker	426
Gun Maker	389
Jeweller	287
Glass manufacturer	257
Boot and Shoemaker	237
Clerk	190
Tailor	146
Plater	146
Painter, Plumber, Glazier	143
Iron Manufacturer	121
Nailer and Nail Maker	118
Carpenter/Joiner	107
Wire drawer	104
Cabinet Maker	100
Blacksmith/Smith	97
Porter/Errand Boy	93
Japanner	93
Butcher	83
Printer	78

Proportion of males under 20 in principal trades in Birmingham

Source: Census Returns of England and Wales, 1841. Birmingham – Warwickshire

The most noticeable feature of the occupations shown in Fig. 26 which focuses on the twenty leading occupations for males under 20 years of age in Birmingham is the extent to which the manufacturing sector dominates. This is in contrast to the leading occupations for the Blue Coat School as seen in Fig 22. The brass founders in particular recruited a significant number of boys. However, this is not unexpected as the brass industry expanded rapidly during the eighteenth century and it was the most important industry in Birmingham by the end of the century. In contrast to the Blue Coat School, few professional occupations appear under the leading

occupations seen in Fig 26, whilst low status occupations such as nail making do make an appearance.

Figure 27: Leading occupations for females under 20 years of age in Birmingham 1841
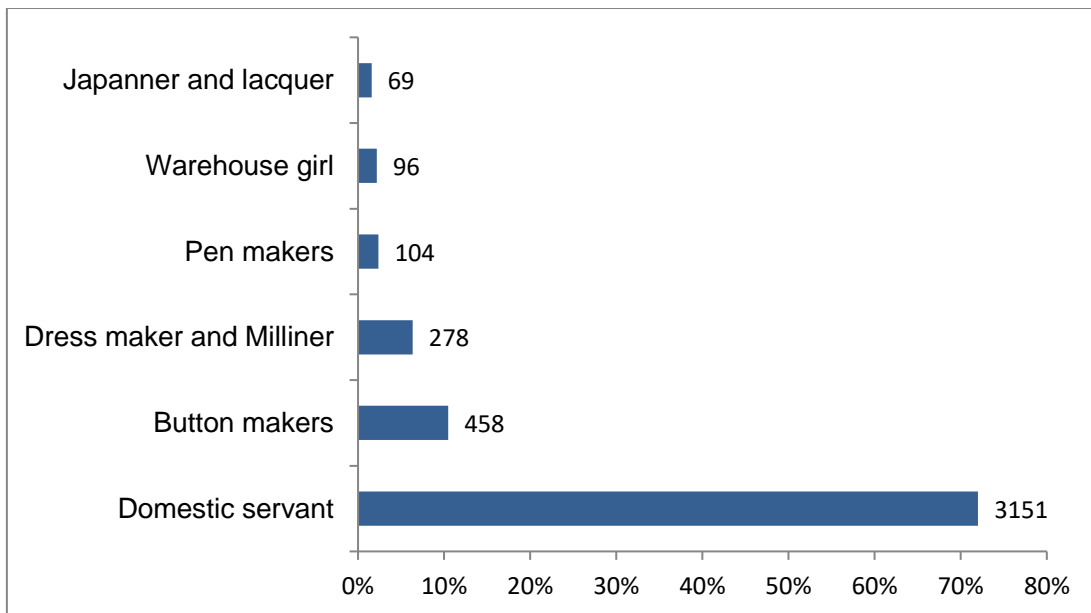
Source: Census Returns of England and Wales, 1841. Birmingham – Warwickshire

More than seventy-five percent of the girls in Birmingham worked in domestic service in 1841 (Fig. 27), although as manufacturing became more mechanised, there were more opportunities for girls to obtain employment within industry performing unskilled manual tasks such as lacquering. Eleven percent of girls in Birmingham were employed in the button manufacturing industry. This is in contrast to the girls in the Blue Coat School.

Apprenticeship training

It was the start of a new life for the boys as an apprentice, albeit one of servitude and still under constant supervision. The working day as defined by the Statute of Artificers was from 5am to 7 or 8pm during the summer, including food breaks not above 2 ½ hours. In the London trades in 1747 just over half (52.3 percent) of trades had a working day which was from 6am to 8pm if you were an apprentice. In at least 11 percent (n=29) of trades, they had to work longer hours.[92] A century later in 1842 in Birmingham, it was said that the average number of hours worked was ten although in some manufactories, thirteen hours was the norm. However, on the whole, the number of hours they worked was considered by the Children's Employment Commission to be shorter and less fatiguing than in other large manufacturing towns.[93]

The apprentice would be expected to undertake many of the menial tasks such as fetching the water, sweeping the floor, running errands and cleaning the premises. However, as an indenture was legally binding, this ensured that the master fulfilled his obligations, which included teaching his apprentice the trade as well as providing him with living necessities (if he was an indoor apprentice) as well as moral training and leadership.

However there was concern that corruption within the system left many apprentices untaught and unskilled. For instance, the watch and clock-making trade took in vast

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[92] Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914.* p.96.
[93] *Children's Employment Commission. Second Report of the Commissioners. Trades and Manufactures* 1843. p.51.

numbers of out-door apprentices to ensure they made a profit but at the end of their apprenticeship the apprentices remained unqualified.[94] In those manufactories where a division of labour was in place, some apprentices may only have learned certain aspects of the trade. Huttons 1836 edition of the *History of Birmingham*, refers to a brass manufactory which employed 23 boys who all performed different tasks. For instance, one apprentice drilled holes in nuts, another put threads on a nut and one boy just drilled holes to add handles. However, in this instance they did this just for three weeks and then swapped with another apprentice.[95]

If the apprenticeship was arranged informally than there was no legal obligation for the employer to provide training. Many of the youths employed in the large retail, wholesale and mercantile houses had an informal apprenticeship and sometimes they were only taught basic skills and were unable to progress further. As Thomas Smith remarks in 1851 in his book *Smiths Practical book-keeping, commercial reference, and counting-house & school assistant*, 'the junior hands are too constantly kept at junior work, and in the course of five or seven years scarcely have an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the duties of a book-keeper or cashier, and not infrequently enter into business devoid of that valuable and important knowledge which has so intimate a reference to their success'.[96] According to historian Gregory Anderson, for those apprentices who were employed as clerks in Liverpool's cotton brokerage trade, it was a 'period of servitude,' as they spent their

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[94] *Report from the Committee on the Petitions of Watchmakers of Coventry, &c. With the Minutes of the Evidence Taken Before the Committee; and an Appendix.*, House of Commons Papers ; Reports of Committees, 1817. p.5.
[95] Hutton, *The History of Birmingham*, 6th Edn p.190.
[96] T. Smith, *Smiths Practical Book-Keeping, Commercial Reference, and Counting-House & School Assistant* (Liverpool, 1851), p.5.

days not only undertaking routine work such as copying letters and checking invoices but they also had to deliver circulars and postage and collect invoices and receipts.[97]

Although domestic service was classed as an unskilled occupation, the tasks performed by girls were perceived as training for a life of domesticity in their own home or within the homes of others. Around forty percent of households employed servants and the majority of girls were young and single.[98] For some girls, domestic service was seen as a way to save money before marriage as full board was usually provided together with a small amount of cash. However, for others an apprenticeship in domestic service was not well regarded. It was unregulated and the hours could often be longer than when employed in a factory. Their wages were paid at the end of each year and they had very little freedom; they could also feel quite isolated if they were the only servant in the household. In contrast, working in a factory could be quite sociable. Lane believes that some of the girls would have preferred to work in a trade where they could earn more to buy finery for themselves and have more free time.[99]

In law, although the master was supposed to act towards the apprentice in loco parentis and as such a basis standard of care was to be expected, frequent references to ill treatment may be found in contemporary reports.[100] The children in Birmingham however, appear not to have been treated very harshly by the standards

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[97] G. Anderson, *Victorian Clerks* (Manchester University Press, 1976), p.14.
[98] R.C. Richardson, *Household Servants in Early Modern England* (Manchester University Press, 2010), p.62.
[99] Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914.* p.39.
[100] Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed: Working Class Children in Nineteeth Century England* See examples on pp. 27-29.

of the day if the reports are to be believed, although visitors would have been unlikely to have witnessed any beatings. If they got into trouble, their wages would be stopped but they were rarely beaten. Those employed directly by the proprietor of the business were also said to be better treated; if employed by a workman their welfare decreased in direct proportion to the status of the workman.[101]

Transfer and cancellations of indentures.

The 1563 Statute of Artificers and Apprentices act stated that it was unlawful for anyone to follow a trade unless he had been apprenticed for at least 7 years, but Humphries found that this figure declined from 5.45 years to 4.90 years over the period 1791 to 1820.[102] Snell, researching apprenticeship records in southern England also found that there was a decline from a mean of 6 to 7 years in the early eighteenth century to a mean of four years by 1814.[103] Needless to say, not all apprentices completed their training; in fact completion rates were low.[104] Humphries found that 20.6 percent of autobiographers in her sample from Coventry did not complete their apprenticeship[105] whilst Lane found that apprenticeships were on average cancelled 5.6 times per year. In nearly a third of the cases, they were cancelled because the master had absconded.[106] Minns and Wallis found that those with family connections, in particular those from wealthier backgrounds, tended to

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[101] *Children's Employment Commission. Second Report of the Commissioners. Trades and Manufactures* 1843 p.79, p.86.
[102] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution.* p.262.
[103] Snell, *The Apprenticeship System in British History*, p.314.
[104] Minns and Wallis. *Why Did (Pre-Industrial) Firms Train?* p.6.
[105] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution.* p.260.
[106] Lane, *Apprenticeship in Warwickshire 1700 - 1834.* p.67.

leave early, whereas those who were poor and who had few connections stayed.[107]

Conversely, Schalk et al. found that in Shrewsbury strong local ties to institutions

ensured apprentices were less likely to terminate their contract early.[108]

Sometimes, an apprentice would transfer his contract and move to a different trade to

fill a skill gap or extend his knowledge. Wallis estimates that about ten percent of his

sample transferred their indenture in order to work with another master.[109] In her

study of children from the London Foundling Hospital, Levene noted that several

masters specifically stated that their apprentice had found alternative employment in

order to better himself by learning another aspect of the trade.[110]

[107] Minns and Wallis. *Why Did (Pre-Industrial) Firms Train?* p.11.
[108] Schalk. R. and others, *Failure Or Flexibility? Exits from Apprenticeship Training in Pre-Modern Europe*, Economic History Working Papers (252/2016). London School of Economics and Political Science, Economic History Department, (London, 2016), p.12.
[109] P Wallis, *Apprenticeship and Training in Premodern England*, Working Papers on The Nature of Evidence: How Well Do "Facts" Travel?, London School of Economics (London 2007), 22/7 p.14.
[110] Levene, *Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence* p.192.

Summary

The apprenticeship system was highly valued by parents and institutions alike during the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. The system was seen as a mechanism by which a child could acquire useful skills and not be a future burden on society. The indenture provided a legal framework which ensured the master provided training and if the child was an indoor apprentice he would also provide him or her with lodging, clothing and food. However, the master was not under a legal obligation to provide skilled training with informal apprenticeships and it is possible that an apprentice could remain unqualified and unskilled at the end of his apprenticeship.

We saw how the premium fees acted as a barrier, thus ensuring only the wealthy acquired high status apprenticeships, although the number of vacancies on offer was also a consequence of product demand. Few of the boys were employed within the professional sector in Birmingham in the 1840s, most of them employed in manufacturing. Whilst the majority of girls were employed within domestic service, some of them opted to work in manufacturing.

Conclusion

In *A short Account of the Blue Coat School* published in 1832 the school was referred to as an 'asylum for them in those years which most require superintendence and protection'.[111] Thus, the responsibility of the school extended beyond the in-house care it provided to the pupils. It is clear that the school did take their responsibilities seriously although it can be seen that the school did struggle at times to provide for the boys and girls who were under its care. However, the children were able to obtain an apprenticeship which not only met with the approval of their family but aided by the diverse economy in Birmingham as seen in Chapter 2, were able to obtain an apprenticeship which was located within Birmingham or in the surrounding areas.

In general, we found that the apprenticeship system was valued by parents and the institutions alike although the premium fees acted as a barrier to the high status occupations. However, the children in the Blue Coat School were able to gain an advantageous apprenticeship through patrons associated with the school. For those with no connections and no finance to enable them to afford an expensive premium, an apprenticeship arranged through the school would have been priceless.

Furthermore, whilst the majority of male apprenticeships were within the manufacturing sector as would be expected, a growing number of boys were able to obtain an apprenticeship in the non manufacturing sectors, notably those boys who excelled academically as seen in Chapter 3. In all sectors, the boys appear to have

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[111] *A Short Account of the Blue Coat Charity School,* (1832) p.3

been taught skills which were consistent with the nature of the business of their chosen occupation.

There were limited opportunities for the girls who almost invariably entered domestic service after they left the Blue Coat School and there is no indication that their academic achievements provided them with a situation in a superior household. It is debateable as to whether the girls appreciated the life skills which domestic service was said to provide them with, although an occupation as a domestic servant was seen as respectable in comparison to an occupation within the manufacturing sector.

The next chapter will investigate what happened to the children from the Blue Coat School once they had completed their apprenticeship to determine whether their education was beneficial to them in the long-term and whether it enabled them to become socially more mobile.

CHAPTER 5

DID EDUCATION PROMOTE SOCIAL MOBILITY?

For individuals living in a town without any guild or corporation restrictions such as Birmingham there were opportunities for enterprising working class individuals. According to Hutton, 103 manufacturers 'began the world with nothing but their own prudence'.[1] For instance, Edward Reddell who was born around 1765 was educated at the Blue Coat School in Birmingham. On leaving the school he was apprenticed to a printer and publisher and he continued to work with the same master for many years as his 'kindness and liberality induced an active exertion to his interests'. He accumulated and invested a large sum of money and went into partnership with a Mr Charles Grafton before moving to Tewkesbury to work as a printer and book seller. On retirement he travelled on the continent for two years before settling in London where his son entered the legal profession. Unfortunately his son died early and it was said that he was so distraught that his thoughts turned 'in gratitude to the patrons of his early and destitute boyhood'. As a result, he left the school part of his library and also £200 in his will in gratitude for 'securing a moderate independence'.[2] Alfred Pettitt, born in 1820 was the son of a Glove and Brace maker. His father died leaving a large family 'without any means of support'. He was apprenticed to a fell monger but became a well-known landscape painter. [3]

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[1] Hutton, *A History of Birmingham*,4th Edn. p.137.

[2] Mr Edward Reddell, 'Obituary', ed. by William Pickering, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (London, June 1839), p.663.

[3]'B.C.S. Nomination Papers'. 1829, ''B.C.S. Apprenticeship Indentures'.1834, Census 1861, 1871.

The migrants discussed in Chapter 1 might not have ultimately been high achievers but they may well have harboured ambitions for their children when they moved to Birmingham. Though many working class families were very poor as seen in Chapter 2, some were still prepared to make sacrifices for their children in order to provide them with enough education to enable them to 'get on in the world'.[4] However, even the most determined parents may have struggled to provide a decent education for their children, as their options were restricted by the limited working class schooling on offer. As we saw in Chapter 3, whilst a good private education could be found, the majority would not have been able to afford the fees and the public schools were not very effective. In contrast, the Blue Coat School offered a superior education at no cost to the parent(s) or guardians if they were prepared to surrender their child to the jurisdiction of the school.

In the school itself, there was an expectation that the educational provision the boys received would enable them to become respectable tradesmen and mechanics[5] following their apprenticeship, and this would enable them to lead an independent life as head of the family. For the girls, education was seen as preparation for their married life when they would need to manage the household and care for her family. As a future wife and mother it was essential that they learnt values which would ultimately benefit their husband and children.

This final chapter will follow the children through their adult working life to ascertain whether the time spent in the Blue Coat School was indeed beneficial to them in the

[4] *Report from the Select Committee on Education in England and Wales* (1835) HC 465, Vol 7. p.6 (17).
[5] Griffith, *History of the Free-Schools.* p.71.

long-term. The first section, following an introduction to social mobility during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, will review the varied classification systems which have been used to code historical data. Such a review will help determine the differing aspects of social mobility which influences the choice of scheme chosen to evaluate the data from the Blue Coat School.

The second section will discuss the extent of both inter and intra generational mobility for pupils in the Blue Coat School. During such discussion, specific issues will be investigated in relation to sector, status and class mobility. These issues will address mobility between generations, the impact of literacy on achievements and the pathway which was followed by those who were high achievers. Although this chapter will focus mainly on the boys from Blue Coat School due to the lack of sufficient data in relation to the girls which limits any mobility outcomes, the section will include some specifics relating to female mobility. The emphasis throughout the section will be on Relative Mobility although there will also be some discussion based around Absolute Mobility.

The final section will examine the characteristics of the primary occupational sectors in Birmingham to determine which occupations were the most beneficial in terms of pay, working conditions and social mobility. This influences the potential for social mobility.

Background to historical social mobility

In Chapter 1, we outlined the varied social classes which existed in Birmingham during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and found that in the majority of cases, leading industrialists were born into the lower middle class and not the working class. In towns such as Manchester, the owners at the top were alienated from the workers at the bottom, but as the focus in Birmingham was on small workshops rather than large firms and factories, it was easier to become your own master and hence become socially mobile.[6] George Holyoake, a secularist who wrote about his early life in Birmingham in the early nineteenth century, thought it had always been 'a peculiarity of Birmingham that numerous small household trades existed, which gave the inmates independence and often led – if the trade continued good – to competence or fortune'.[7]

The apprenticeship system had been the main mechanism by which some professionals learnt their trade and they did not need to take examinations. However, by the 1840s some occupations were becoming professionalised with the introduction of formal qualifications and training. For instance the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain which was founded in 1841 was followed by the Pharmacy Act in 1852 which set up a legal register. It restricted registration and the use of its title to those pharmaceutical chemists who had taken the society's examinations. In 1868 it became compulsory for all pharmacists to undertake the examinations and only through the Pharmaceutical Society. In order to obtain such positions, it was

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[6] Crouzet. *Rags to Riches* p.92.
[7] Holyoake, *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, P.10.

now necessary to have the finances to undertake the extensive training and education. This limited the ability of those from the working class to join such elite positions and hence these occupations were now seen as belonging to the upper middle class.[8]

Whilst some occupations excluded those from the working class, the success of the self-made man prompted a belief that self-help and hard work would allow you to succeed. Prizes, which were awarded for essays submitted to St. Martin's Workingmen's Association in 1846 on the subject of 'co-operation of the working classes and other classes of society for the elevation of the former'[9] appear to support this conviction. Frances Knight however, found evidence that churches set up such associations not to directly help the working man but to further the popularity of the church.[10] Other examples of self-help include industrialist Samuel Garbett born in 1707 who was believed to be entirely self taught,[11] and Hutton who taught himself the bookbinder trade whilst apprenticed to a stocking maker. He opened up a bookshop and eventually ran a successful paper making business. He was later named on a list of 100 self-made men in *The Family Friend* in 1850 alongside the motto 'I will try'.[12] Social historian Hartmut Kaelble however, believes that opportunities for mobility out of the working class only existed in certain sectors where capital investment was low and technical knowledge was valued. Where

[8] See H. Marland, 'The Medical Activities of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Chemists and Druggists, with Special Reference to Wakefield and Huddersfield', *Medical History*, 31 (1987), pp.415–39.

[9] Economic and Social History: Social History since 1815 [Accessed: 15 July 2015].

[10] F. Knight, *Religion, Identity and Conflict in Britain: From the Restoration to the Twentieth Century: Essays in Honour of Keith Robbins* (Routledge, 2016). p.198.

[11] Campbell, R. H. "Garbett, Samuel (1717–1803), industrialist and ironmaster." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. October 03, 2013. Oxford University Press. [Accessed: 30 October. 2018].

[12] 'Self-Made Men: A Stimulus for the Young and the Industrious', *The Family Friend* (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1850), p.247.

capital investment was considerable, businessmen were still mostly recruited from the higher classes.[13]

Before examining the data which will allow us to consider the degree of mobility experienced by those who had attended the Blue Coat School, the data first needs to be coded to facilitate analysis. As such, the first section will review all the data coding options which are available for classifying the indicators to enable us to measure the extent of social mobility.

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[13] H. Kaelble, 'Eras of Social Mobility in 19th and 20th Century Europe', *Journal of Social History*, 17.3, Spring (1984), p.493.

Data Coding

Contemporary studies may use a range of indicators to measure social mobility such as income, level of deprivation within an area, cultural background and type of school but historical studies are obliged to rely on the use of a just few key indicators such as age, occupation and birthplace. As occupations are usually the preferred option for measuring historical social mobility, this section will examine which techniques are suitable for coding and measuring this particular indicator.

Currently, no consensus exists as to which is the best technique to use if you want to measure social mobility using coded occupational material. However in the main, there are three differing approaches. Firstly, there are the *socio-economic status indices (SES)*. These classify occupations in terms of their social and economic status using variables such as income, status, prestige and education. The second approach uses *social grouping* which classifies occupations according to their social standing. Society is seen as being divided into a number of distinct social classes which define the position of an individual within society. Thirdly, *interaction scales* may be used. These scales use patterns of interaction between the occupational groups centered on relationships such as friendship and marriage. The theory is based on the fact that individuals interact more often the closer they are in terms of social position.

Within these differing approaches, the variables may be measured either categorically or on a continuous scale. If the incorrect system is chosen, it could lead

to results which are too broad to be of use or conversely, if the results which are too refined and there are a large number of categories, the quantity of data in each category may result in totals which are so small that any variation or score may be a matter of chance.[14] As such it is important that the most suitable system is used for the purpose of the research.

Categorical systems

To classify data categorically, occupations or other indicators are grouped into clearly defined categories. The assumption is that members of the same group share similar characteristics. Whilst individuals have traditionally been classed as falling into one of three broad categories – for example, upper, middle and working (or lower) class – for the purpose of identifying changes within the class system, it is necessary to use more detailed categories.

Many categorical systems have been developed and modified over the years. Examples include the one produced by the social reformer Charles Booth in 1886. He created a number of poverty maps and tables using data which he grouped into 10 major categories and a number of sub-groups. These groups were then modified during the 1960s by Armstrong.[15] Also during the 1960s historian Peter Tillott, devised a system with 13 major groups and sub-groups which was used primarily to categorise rural communities. His coding system contained elements of both socio-

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[14] Armstrong, *The Use of Information About Occupation*. pp. 226–53.
[15] 'ibid'.

economic and class categories.[16] Goldthorpe developed a sevenfold scheme during

the 1970s. His modified coding system which uses eleven categories is still widely

used around the world.[17] In 2008 Wrigley, a historical demographer devised the PST

system to code occupations according to whether the activity fell within the Primary,

Secondary or Tertiary sector. He describes his system as being demand rather than

production orientated.[18] Recently, a new scheme has emerged, the 'Historical

International Social Class Scheme' (HISCLASS) which was developed by

sociologists Leeuwen and Maas. It uses the manual/non-manual divide together with

details of the skill set and the degree of supervision. It also breaks the economic

sector into primary or non-primary and it has been devised so that comparisons can

be made across different countries, time periods and languages. It has 12 classes

(which can be collapsed to 7) and it is based on the HISCO occupational continuous

ranking scheme which is discussed below. It was validated by asking a team of

seven experts in the field of work to independently assign occupations to the 12

classes.[19] For details of the classes see appendix 3.

There are a number of issues associated with measuring data using a categorical

system. By artificially grouping data into different categories, problems arise if

different interpretations of the categories are used and indeed, if different

classification groupings are used. Historians Denise and Jean Mills used their own

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[16] D. R. Mills and K. Schürer, 'Employment and Occupations', in *Local Communities in the Victorian Census Enumerators' Books*, ed. by D.R. Mills and K. Schürer (Oxford, 1996), p.142.
[17] See J. Goldthorpe, C. Llewellyn and C. Payne, *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).
[18] See http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/occupations/categorisation/pst.pdf for a full explanation.
[19] See M.V. Leeuwen and I. Maas, *HISCLASS: A Historical International Social Class Scheme* (Leuven (Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2011).

classification system and also one devised by Armstrong to demonstrate that when

analysing the same 1851 data set, the proportion of household heads assigned to

each group varied according to which classification system was used. The difference

was particularly noticeable in the Class II and III groups.[20] Here, the Class III group of

skilled workers appeared to be overly large in size using Armstrong's system which

does not reflect the known nineteenth century social structure. This problem is

compounded if international comparisons are required. To give just one example, in

Leicester the Booth-Armstrong industrial system was used to categorize occupations

for the nineteenth century small towns project. The system developed in Leiden, in

the Netherlands to classify occupations, was based on the nature of the work in the

pre-industrial 1889 census. In the Leiden system for instance, there is one category

for 'manufacturing of food, drink and tobacco', whereas in the Booth-Armstrong

system, there are 3 separate categories. As a result the classes did not always

correspond.[21] Consequently, if you wish to directly compare your data to another data

set, than ideally you need to use a classification system which is comparable to other

systems.

Stratification Scales

The alternative method of measuring the variables ranks the data on a continuous

scale from 1 (Low) to 99 (High) by allocating a score for relative ranking between

occupations. This allows an unlimited number of distinctions and there is no

expectation that individuals will share the same characteristics. Another

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[20] Mills and Mills, *Occupation and Social Stratification Revisited*. p.63
[21] Diedericks and Tjalsma. *The Classification and Coding of Occupations of the Past*. pp. 38-39.

distinguishing feature of the continuous scale is its ability to recognise small occupational variations which would not be picked up using a categorical system. Whilst using the stratification scales does make it easier to analyse some data sets it does not allow comparisons to be easily made with any grouped data. For instance, it would be difficult to compare the father's occupational class to the son's occupational class. Movement between groups is not part of the analysis. However, movement along the scale in both directions can be analysed.

An example of one such stratification system is Treiman's Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale (SIOPS) which he based on existing prestige studies where respondents in the studies were asked to rank occupations on prestige or status. His scale consists of 11 major groups, 84 minor groups and 288 unit groups.[22] Another example is the 'Historical International Classification of Occupations' (HISCO) system. This is a modification of the 1968 Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) system devised by several sociologists including Leeuwen, Maas and Miles. It incorporates occupational data from 1690 to 1970 but mainly from the nineteenth century and attempts to standardize occupational terms. It uses 8 major groups, 83 minor groups and 284 unit groups. For example a railway clerk would be coded as 3-99-60 (See the Appendix 4 for a list of major HISCO groups). Additionally, those who are connected to an occupation in some way but do not necessarily work within it, for instance wife or male relative may be provided with a code as *status variations*. It is an economic not a social classification system, but it has been devised so that the results can be reassigned into groups more suitable for

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[22] See D. Treiman, *Occupational Prestige in Comparative Perspective* (Academic Press, 1977).

social classification. One of the advantages of this system is that it is flexible enough to incorporate new codes, a necessity when you are dealing with some of the specialised occupations to be found in Birmingham and also some of the more generic occupations. When several more specialised tasks are combined you can use the code '10' at the end. For instance, whilst the code for a bread baker is 7 -76-20 and a confectioner 7-76-60, a general baker may be coded as 7-76-10. Where the occupational title is very general the code '00' is used at the end. For example, a lamp maker may be coded as 7-24-00 as it is a specialism of the brass trade and all metal related specialisms are coded 7-24 (for instance, a metal pourer is 7-24-20).

Another stratification system is 'Historical CAMSIS' (HISCAM) which has been developed by the same authors as HISCO. It is a status scale and a modification of the Cambridge Social Interaction and Stratification scales (CAMSIS) which were developed during the 1970s. CAMSIS uses occupational titles and employment status to create networks of relationships such as friendships and parent-child relationships, in order to create the social stratification scales. It uses the assumption that the more people interact, the closer they are in terms of social position. This means that the hierarchical position of occupations within society determine these social interactions.[23] HISCAM is based on similar social interactions but uses marriage records to gather occupational information for pairs of individuals who have a social connection. Each occupation has a HISCO code with a corresponding HISCAM code.[24] For example, a Law Stationer has a HISCO code of 39-32-0 which

[23] See http://www.camsis.stir.ac.uk/index.html for more information on CAMSIS.
[24] For more information on HISCAM see P. Lambert and others, 'The Construction of HISCAM: A Stratification Scale Based on Social Interactions for Historical Comparative Research', *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, 46.2 (2013), pp.77–89.

represents clerical and service workers and a HISCAM code of 58.68. A book-keeper has a HISCO code of 33-11-0 which is also in the clerical and service HISCO group, but a HISCAM code of 62.86 which means it has a higher occupational status as it ranks higher on the stratification scale.

Whilst using a stratification scale does eliminate problems associated with a categorical system such as group definition, it is not always clear if minimal changes in the position on a scale do represent a degree of mobility as the changes may be too small to be regarded as meaningful.

Generic terminology

One particular issue which may impede any occupational coding is the terminology used in the documentation. We find that in many cases, the occupation of an individual, whether in the census or other document such as the baptism certificate, was *not* clearly defined. For example, was a 'cutter' a glass cutter or file cutter? Was a 'gardener' a domestic or market gardener? Did a 'baker' sell or make the bread? Alternatively, there are the generic terms such as 'labourer' which give no indication of specific trade. Birmingham had some trades which were highly specialised such as the gun trade. A 1777 directory listed 36 gun makers, together with 3 gunlock masters, 4 gun finishers, 6 gun barrel makers, 2 gun rod makers and 2 gun stock makers.[25] However in documentation, this specialism was not always defined. In the case of women, did 'household servant' refer to a general household servant who

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[25] Scarse. *Birmingham 120 Years Ago*, ed. by C. Scarse (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1896), pp.113-114.

assisted with all aspects of running a household, or someone such as a 'laundry maid', who was responsible for specific duties within the house? The girls apprenticed out in the Blue Coat school were all described as 'household servants' in the early apprenticeship indentures but in the later service applications, the requests were for 'waiting maids', and 'under nurses' so it is clear that they did sometimes undertake specific duties within the household as a servant.

Occupational skill levels

In some instances, the level of skill changed over time, and an occupation once considered highly skilled may need to be downgraded or upgraded. For instance, the introduction of the sewing machine in the 1850s led to a decline in the position of shoemakers and tailors.[26] Furthermore, even if the level of skill remains the same, the salary level may change due to technological or economic transformations. For example, aesthetic changes within the button making industry led to a decrease in demand for gold and horn buttons. This led to an overstocked market and consequently, a fall in wages. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the introduction of machinery and steam power in the iron screw industry led to increased demand, lower prices and higher wages.

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[26] "Bethnal Green: Economic History," in *A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 11, Stepney, Bethnal Green*, ed. T F T Baker (London: Victoria County History, 1998), 168-190. *British History Online*, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/middx/vol11/pp168-190. [Accessed: 20 April 2017].

Multiple occupations

People often had more than one occupation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and it can be difficult to extrapolate which is the primary occupation. For example, in 1834 Thomas Bladon, father of William was described as both a 'carpenter and victualler' in the nomination records, and in 1845, John Hobson, father of Edward, was described as both a 'pawn broker and japanner'.[27] Historian Matthew Woollard suggests as a rule of thumb to consider the first occupation as the primary one and this was also the opinion of the census office in the nineteenth century when issuing instructions to the enumerators.[28] The problem with multiple occupations as Woollard points out is that it can be difficult to make an informed decision regarding the status of an individual when the main source of income derives from one of the occupations, but the status derives from the other. However, remarkably enough there are few instances of multiple occupations in the Blue Coat School data set, although this may just indicate unwillingness on the part of the informant to provide secondary occupations.

Coding the Blue Coat School data

Following a review of all the classification systems currently in use for coding historical material, the HISCAM occupational interaction scale and the HISCLASS class system were adopted to code the Blue Coat School material in order to facilitate analysis. Using HISCAM which places occupations on a stratification scale

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[27] B.C.S. Nomination Papers'.
[28] Woollard, M., 'The Classification of Domestic Servants in England and Wales, 1851-1951', in *Proceedings of the Servant Project* (Oslo: Department of history, University of Essex, 1999), p.8.

allows minute changes to be observed and the use of HISCLASS, enables

comparisons to be made with other data sets which traditionally use a categorical

coding system. The systems are also flexible enough to incorporate the issues

around terminology and upgrading or downgrading of occupational skills.[29] The

HISCO codes, which underpin the HISCAM codes, also have the flexibility to support

the coding of specialisms found within the Birmingham trades. Furthermore,

numerous other studies have used the same coding system for a diverse range of

projects which also opens up the prospect of using any new findings from the Blue

Coat School for comparative analysis.[30]

Although the HISCO/HISCAM/HISCLASS scales have been extensively validated by

the creators,[31] to ensure that this coding was fit for the purpose of this research (to

analyse data from the Blue Coat School) a sample of occupations were examined to

ensure the coding reflects the underlying data.

The following four examples serve to illustrate the merit of using these systems.

Jewellery trade

Although workers in the jewellery profession suffered from trade fluctuations, in

general jewellers were very well paid. It was said by Wright in his article on the

jewellery trade in Birmingham in 1866 that they also occupied a higher social position

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[29] Lambert and others. *The Construction of HISCAM*, p.85.
[30] See for example: R. Zijdeman, *Status Attainment in the Netherlands, 1811-1941: Spatial and Temporal Variation Before and During Industrialization*, 2010.; M. Dribe and J. Helgertz, 'The Lasting Impact of Grandfathers: Class, Occupational Status, and Earnings over Three Generations in Sweden 1815–2011', *Journal of Economic History*, 76.4 (2016), pp.969–1000.
[31] Art in Scotland, Ireland and the Provinces, in *The Art Journal,* 1867, p.58.

than other artisans[32] and this is reflected by a high score of 77.12 in the HISCAM

scale and Class 7 in the HISCLASS groups (skilled workers).

Metal workers

This large group may be broken down into a number of sub-groups and here we find

brass founders, braziers, casters, lamp makers, brass tube makers and others.

Whilst the brass founders poured molten cooper alloys into moulds, the braziers

wrought goods by hand from sheet brass and this was seen as a separate trade until

the nineteenth century when their work was taken over by machine stamping.

Those who headed the shops could earn 35 to 50s a week in 1865. Those lower

down the scale and who worked as stampers or raised the ram of the press earned

only 15 to 25s a week[33] but at least the work tended to be fairly constant.

There is not a HISCO code for the lamp makers. However as this occupation was a

branch of the brass trade it was given the same code as the brass founders and

castors (see Appendix 4 for a list of additional codes) who each have a HISCAM

score of 43.27. The braziers are slightly higher in the hierarchy and have a HISCAM

score of 46.65. It can be seen the metal workers in general are around the middle on

the HISCAM stratification scale and all are Class 9 in the HISCLASS group (Skilled

workers).

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[32] Leeuwen and Maas. *A Historical International Social Class Scheme*. p.453.
[33] Timmins. *The Resources, Products and Industrial History of Birmingham*. p.310.

Landscape painters

Good painters were highly valued as may be seen by the advice given to parents in the *Parents Handbook* in 1842. It was said that if a painter wished to succeed he 'must be a man of genius, and must possess the power of seeing, comprehending, and analysing, as well as delineating the beauties of nature in a degree superior to that which belongs to ordinary faculties'. The author of the handbook believed that there was 'no reason whatever to doubt that competence and even affluence may be acquired' by accomplished artists as there was a growing number of people buying paintings and producing illustrated works.[34] Landscape painters have a HISCAM ranking of 76.81 and are in HISCLASS group 4 (Lower professional and clerical, sales).

Glass cutters

Glass cutting was performed by grinding and was very laborious. The trade was also easily learnt. According to the London Tradesman, the trade required 'neither great strength, nor much ingenuity and it is, in fact, but a poor business.'[35] Consequently, it has a HISCAM score of 33.04 and is in HISCLASS group 11 which is for those who are 'unskilled'.

Since no standard approach currently exists as to how best to code the occupational material, the decision to adopt one particular coding system has been based on the requirements of the study in question but the choice of using HISCLASS and

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[34] Timmins. *The Resources, Products and Industrial History of Birmingham* p.191, p.193.
[35] Hudson, *The Parent's Hand-Book.* p.164.

HISCAM does not support the uncritical acceptance of this classification over

alternative choices for future mobility research.

Summary

In this first section, we provided an overview of the diverse classification systems which may be used to measure occupational indicators and outlined their main strengths and weaknesses. The rationale behind choosing the HISCAM and HISCLASS systems for this research was also discussed.

The following section will use the coded source material to analyse intra and inter – generational mobility in both male and females from the Blue Coat School.

The extent of intra- and intergenerational mobility in the Blue Coat School

*Intra*generational mobility, sometimes termed career mobility, is change which occurs within the lifetime of an individual and can lead to a change in status or class. In this section we will first consider whether the children from the Blue Coat School experienced any initial occupational mobility once they had finished their apprenticeship. We will then examine occupational mobility during their adult working-life which resulted in a change in sector and/or status and we will consider whether there is any indication of class mobility.

*Inter*generational mobility refers to the extent to which mobility differed between two generations of the same family. We will begin by comparing the occupations of both father and son to see if the son 'followed in his father's footsteps'. We will then take this further and compare the occupational sectors. Changes in status will then be considered and finally we will review the social class of both father and son or daughter to consider whether there is any indication of class mobility. Finally, we will briefly examine the 'high achievers' from the Blue Coat School who excelled academically, to ascertain if they benefitted from their education achievements.

As the size of the female cohort is very small any results must remain inconclusive, however this section will explore through intergenerational mobility, whether employment or marriage led to enhanced status and whether educational attainments made any difference to their life outcomes.

Intragenerational mobility

Did the boys change their occupation following their apprenticeship?

Of those 90 boys who could be traced through at least one census following their apprenticeship (formal or informal) just under half (48.8 percent) do not appear to have continued with the same occupation during their adult working life. However, it has not been possible to confirm that the initial apprenticeship was completed. It is possible that some of the boys may have transferred their apprenticeship to follow an occupation which they then continued throughout their adult working life but the record has not survived. Certainly Birmingham was well known as a town where it was possible for apprentices to train in one branch of the manufacturing industry and then transfer to another.[36] The lure of better prospects may be the reason Edward Harper from the Blue Coat School changed his occupation. He was informally apprenticed to a jeweller around 1844 but in the 1851 census he was working as a railway clerk.[37] Although the jewellery profession was seen as a very respectable occupation, as we saw earlier, the expansion of the railways during the 1840s led to the creation of numerous station and clerk employees. Edward had 'very good' reading and writing skills according to his final year examination report which would have made him ideally suitable for such an occupation. The historian Robert Gray suggests that men sometimes changed their occupation to acquire new skills as their

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[36] *Minutes of Evidence, Taken before the Committee of the Whole House, to Whom It Was Referred, to Consider of the Several Petitions Which Have Been Presented to the House, in This Session of Parliament, Relating to the Orders in Council.*, House of Commons Papers ; Reports of Committees. 1812. p.58.

[37] B.C.S Resignation Register.1843 'Census, 1851.' HO107; Folio 2060 / 515; Page 29.

apprenticeship did not provide them with adequate training.[38] However, when we examine the HISCAM codes we find that nearly two thirds (58.1 percent) of those from the Blue Coat School who changed their occupation during their apprenticeship, moved to a lower status occupation on completion of their apprenticeship. Just 37.2 percent found employment in a higher status occupation (two boys made a sideways made into an occupation which was the same status and one boy could not be coded as his occupation was too vague). Humphries found evidence of downwards mobility in her cohort of autobiographies along with stories of crime, social exclusion and lost opportunities.[39] We can only speculate as to the reasons for downwards mobility amongst the Blue Coat School boys. Perhaps it was boredom, better long-term prospects or employment security? Joseph Horsfell, who was apprenticed out to an engineer, worked as a wire drawer all of his life – which happened to be the same occupation as his father. Frederick Jones was apprenticed in 1823 to a saddler but he was working as a warehouse clerk in 1851. In contrast, John Joseph Willison as an apprentice worked in a solicitor's office but he was then employed as a book binder finisher. Charles Baddesley was apprenticed to a jeweller and factor and his brother apprenticed to a surgeon; both were later found to be working as painters.[40]

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[38] R. Gray, *The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh* (Clarendon Press, 1976), p.129.
[39] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution.* p.281.
[40] 'B.C.S Apprenticeship Indentures'.1823 Census 1851 HO 107/Folio 1537 / 55; p. 30.

Status mobility

Where it has been possible to provide linkage through more than one census return we can find out if the boys changed their occupation during their adult working life, and if this was the case, whether they experienced upwards or downwards status mobility.

Out of the 186 records examined where positive linkage has been obtained, 61.8 percent (n=115) remained in the same occupation throughout their adult working life and 38.2 percent (n=71) changed their occupation, although this figure could be higher in those cases where the linkage was achieved through only two consecutive census returns (they may have changed their occupation in a later census return). In comparison, only 20.7 percent (n=101) of the fathers changed their occupation which suggests that occupational mobility increased over time.

Fig. 28 shows the extent of both the upwards and downwards status mobility along the HISCAM scale (where linkage was possible through more than two census returns, the data was taken from the first and the last census returns). For example, 17 boys experienced upwards movement of between 1 to 10 points on the HISCAM scale whereas 23 boys experienced downwards movement of between 1 to 10 points.

Figure 28: Extent of status mobility for those boys from the Blue Coat School who changed their occupation during their adult working life from 1841 to 1881 (n=71)
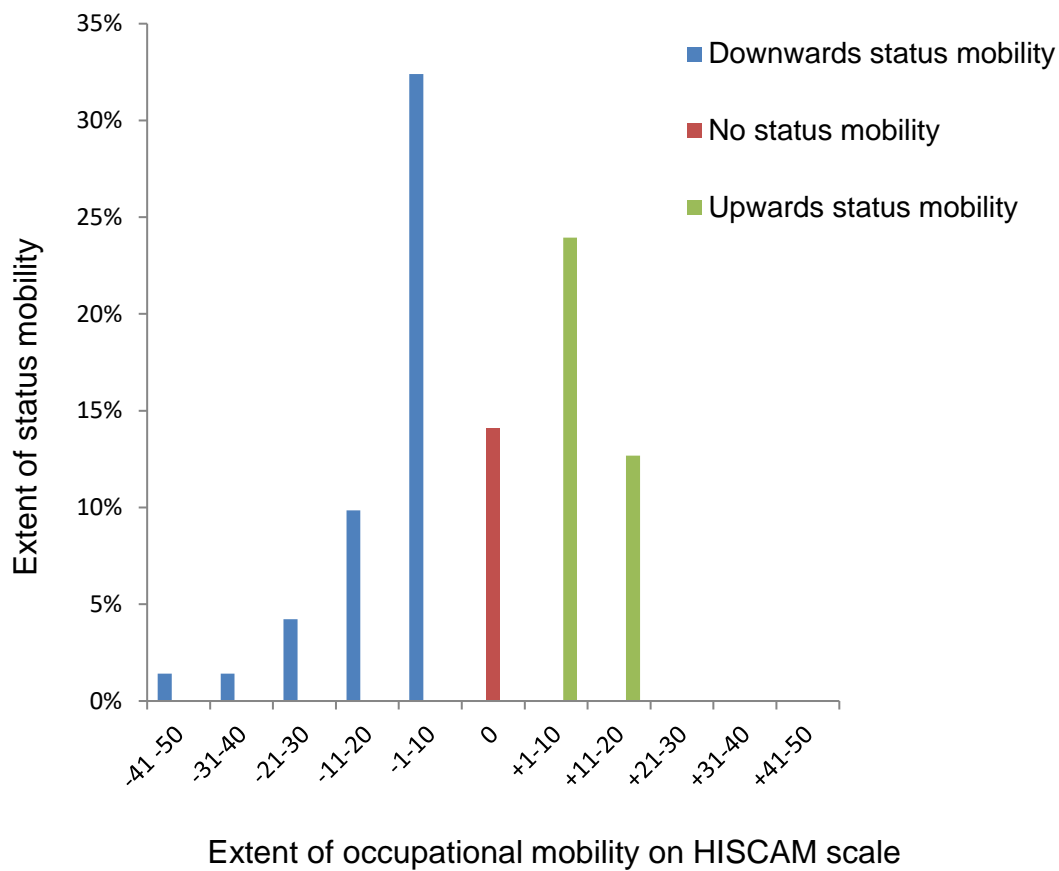
Source: Census Returns of England and Wales

Although 38.2 percent of the boys changed their occupation at some point during their working lives, it did not necessarily lead to a significant change in their status. For 14.1 percent of boys there was no change in status at all. Altogether, 49.3 percent of boys who changed their employment moved into an occupation which was lower in status and 36.6 percent of boys moved into an occupation which was higher in status although none of the boys moved into an occupation which was significantly higher in status (for instance they moved more than 21 points on the HISCAM scale).

It has proven difficult to trace the girls from the Blue Coat School as they changed their surname on marriage but Emily Kimberley never married and lived at home with her parents and later her widowed mother. Hence we can see that in spite of her 'unsatisfactory testimonials' whilst at the Blue Coat School, she still managed to secure employment as a seamstress, which in contrast to her siblings who worked as button makers was a higher status occupation.[41]

It was possible of course, to experience some form of upwards status mobility by remaining within the same occupation and working your way up to the top. Unfortunately, occupational status is referred to only sporadically within documentation. In the 1841 census, it did not record master status at all although you do find reference to journeyman status. In the 1851 census 'master' was added to the classification scheme, however this did not completely eliminate the problem of addressing rank within an organisation. For example, was the recorded individual a foreman or manager? Was he self-employed, or did he employ 10 men? It is entirely possible that the 'baker employing 3 men' and the 'master baker' may end up being classed under the generic term 'baker'. In the Blue Coat School records, we can only find reference to seven confirmed individuals who made the move from journeyman to master. For instance, David Bushell became a master jeweller (although in later life he became a coal merchant) and Charles Mysing became a bridle cutter employing 80 men.[42] However, whilst such men would have achieved some measure

[41] 'B.C.S. Examination Certificates'. And 'Census Birmingham. 1861 and 1871.' RG9/Piece 2162/Folio 33/Page 8, RG10/Piece 3125/Folio 125/Page 38.

[42] 'Census, 1871.'HO107, Piece 2023, Folio 300, Page 27; 'Census, 1851.' RG09, Piece 2166, Folio 79, Page 10; 'Census, 1861.' RG10/Piece 2965/Folio 127/Page 25.

of status mobility with independence and freedom from waged labour, the majority of small masters rarely achieved upwards class mobility.

Some of the Blue Coat School boys experienced mixed fortunes during their working lives. 23.7 percent (n=14) initially experienced upwards social mobility at the start of their career followed by downwards social mobility in later life. For example, although Edwin Sunderland first worked as a clerk and later a mine agent, in his later years he was employed as a toy maker.[43] Few employers were prepared to pay older workers the same wage as the younger workers when productively decreased, although they were prepared to offer their aged workers alternative work to enable them to earn an income, albeit at a reduced rate.[44] It is likely that some men changed their occupation more than once through fluctuations in trade. Certainly those working in the gun trade experienced fluctuations although specifics varied depending on what aspect of manufacturing they were engaged in. Trade fluctuations may explain why William Lowe was working as a gun finisher in 1841 but as a travelling printer in 1851 although by 1861 he was working as a gun finisher again.[45]

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[43] 'Census,1841.' HO107, Piece 1150, Folio 27, Page 8; 'Census,1881.' RG09, Piece 4272, Folio 28, Page 4; 'Census, 1861.'; RG10/Piece 3089/Folio 70/Page 19'Census, 1871.' RG11, Piece 2834, Folio 19, P. 32.

[44] J. Quadagno, *Aging in Early Industrial Society: Work, Family, and Social Policy in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Academic Press, 1982), p.141.

[45] 'Census,1841.' HO107, Piece 1140, Folio 17, Page 26; 'Census, 1851.' HO107, Piece 1495, Folio 716, Page 7; 'Census, 1861.' RG09, Piece 2154, Folio 162, p. 55.

Sector mobility

Of those who moved from one sector into another, few (14.1 percent) made the move

from the non-manufacturing sector into the manufacturing sector as can be seen in

Table 8.

Table 8: Extent of mobility within the manufacturing sector 1841 to 1881

Sector	N=71
Moved from one manufacturing sector to another manufacturing sector	28
Moved from a manufacturing sector to a non-manufacturing sector (i,e service, clerical or sales, professional)	13
Moved from a non-manufacturing sector to another non-manufacturing sector	20
Moved from a non-manufacturing sector to a manufacturing sector	10

Source: Census Returns of England and Wales

Of those 71 boys who changed their occupation, more than two thirds of them (67.6

percent) made a lateral move into an occupation which was within the same sector.

This was particularly the case for those who worked in the manufacturing sector. It

appears that once you were working within manufacturing, you were unlikely to make

the move to one of the other sectors. 28.2 percent moved from a non-manufacturing

sector to another non-manufacturing sector. Philip Sanders for instance, first worked as a clerk before becoming a factor (he moved from the clerical sector to the sales sector).[46] In this instance, it was no doubt another aspect of the same business. Joseph Luckett may be found working as a clerk early in his working life but later on he worked as a draper.[47] Gray also found some evidence of status promotion whereby those working in managerial and clerical roles were recruited from within the skilled labour force, such as a printing manager who initially worked as a compositor.[48]

Using autobiographies, Andrew Miles analysed the proportion of writers who mentioned specific factors which motivated them to change their job. For those autobiographers who were born during the period 1723 to 1825, the foremost motivation for moving to another occupation was ill-health (named by 52 percent of writers). For those born during 1816 to 1864, victimisation or the employer dies, moves or folds were also listed as being significant factors, although 46 percent still cited ill health as a primary motivation.[49] There were several trades in Birmingham which were detrimental to health, such as mercury gilding which 'seriously injured' workers in Birmingham prior to electro plating[50] and dry grinding, such as needle pointing which affected the respiratory system.[51] Workers in the brass foundries suffered from stomach problems as well as respiratory illnesses and this was

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[46] 'Census, 1851.' HO107; Folio 2054 / 306; p.14 and 'Census, 1851.' RG09; Folio 2132 / 130; p.1.
[47] 'Census Returns of England and Wales, 1861. Birmingham -Warwickshire'. HO107; Folio 2052 / 41; Page 25 And 'Census, 1851.'
[48] Gray. *The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh* p.130.
[49] Miles, *Social Mobility in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England*. p.124.
[50] *Report from the Select Committee on Letters Patent; Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, and Index*, House of Commons Papers; Reports of Committees, 1872. Item 1107, Wednesday 24th April.
[51] 'ibid'.

probably the reason that Aitkens thought that brass finishers did 'not appear to be a long-lived race'.[52] As we saw in Chapter 2, accidents were also common and poor environmental conditions contributed to occupational health issues. Financial concerns relating to lack of work for one reason or another also featured strongly throughout both periods in the autobiographies, but only in the period 1723 to 1825 did the writers express a strong dislike of their occupation as being one of the primary motivations for changing their employment. During the earlier period (1723 to 1825) 44 percent of the autobiographers used family influence to obtain another occupation. Although family influence was still seen as one of the main avenues for obtaining a new situation, 36 percent of the autobiographers born during 1816 to 1864 informally sought out alternative occupations for themselves.[53]

We can only hypothesise as to why some of the former Blue Coat School boys changed their occupation during their working life. Was it a lifestyle choice or financial gain which led Henry Ogden to move to Cleobury Mortimer and become a farmer employing 3 labourers and 1 boy in his later years whilst still working as a master law stationer?[54] For Henry Rogers, the decision to change his occupation may have been financial security. He was working as a tin plate worker in 1851 but by 1860 he was working as a letter carrier for the Post Office.[55] Wages for the lowest letter carrier in London in 1860 ranged from 18s to 25s and not only was it a relatively secure occupation, but letter carriers benefitted from a clothing allowance, free

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[52] Timmins. *The Resources, Products and Industrial History of Birmingham* p.140.
[53] Miles, *Social Mobility in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England*. p.124.
[54] HO107; Folio 2059 / 298; Page 33 'Census, 1851.' RG09; Folio 2173 / 124; Page 27 'Census, 1861.' 'Census Returns of England and Wales, 1871. Birmingham -Warwickshire'.RG11, Piece 2626, Folio 20, p.17.
[55] 'Census Returns of England and Wales, 1881. Birmingham -Warwickshire'. HO107; Folio 2058 / 470; Page 28; 'Census, 1851.'; 'Census, 1861.' 'Census, 1871.' RG10/Piece 3119/Folio 91/Page 1

medical attendance and medicine as well as a pension and life insurance.[56] Miles names matrimonial considerations as another motive for occupational change.[57] Edwin Bland worked as a law writer for at least 10 years after completing his apprenticeship but then changed his occupation to become a gas fitter sometime before 1870. As he was married by this period and had at least five children this may have motivated him to secure a more prosperous occupation. Gas fitters, according to Whittock, could earn around £150 per year and they also had the advantage of being their own master.[58]

Some boys remained in the same occupation but changed their location, perhaps to secure higher wages. Humphries found many examples in her autobiographies of boys who trained in one area and then migrated to obtain work or set themselves up in business in another area.[59] In the Blue Coat School, former pupil James Herbert moved to London with his two young children and his father during the mid-nineteenth century and was still living there later in life.[60] Whilst some may have moved for financial reasons, others may have been motivated by a desire to experience working and living in a different environment for a few years before moving back to Birmingham; a process made easier after the Birmingham to London railway opened in 1837. For instance, George Thorneywork and his brother James

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[56] *Reports from the Commissioners: Sixteen Volumes: Coal Mines; Customs; Inland Revenue; Post Office; Ordance Survey; Defence of the United Kingdom*, Session 24 January - 28 August, 1860. p.40.
[57] Miles, *Social Mobility in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England*. p.123.
[58] Whittock, N., J. Bennett, J. Badcock, C. Newton, and And Others, *The Complete Book of Trades* (London, 1837), p.263.
[59] Humphries *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution,* p.293.
[60] RG09; Folio 2180 / 40; Page 15; 'Census, 1861.'; RG10/Piece 355/Folio 67/Page 18 'Census, 1871.' RG11, Piece 481, Folio 40, p.11.

from the Blue Coat School were working as goldbeaters in London in 1851 but were back in Birmingham by 1861.[61]

Class mobility

Whilst the boys may have experienced some degree of *status* mobility they may not have experienced any *class* mobility. We can see from Table 9 that 0.5 percent of the boys were in HISCLASS group 7 at the start of their working lives but ended up in HISCLASS group 3 so they were upwardly mobile whereas 3.2 percent of boys started in HISCLASS 7 but ended up in HISCLASS 9 so they were downwardly mobile.

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[61] 'Census, 1881.' HO107, Piece 1521, Folio 74, Page 13; 'Census, 1851.' RG09; Folio 2164 / 111; Page 18.

Table 9: Intragenerational class mobility (percentage) 1841 to 1881

HISCLASS	Start of working life												
End of working life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	n
1		0.5		0.5									*4*
2		2.1			1.0								*6*
3		0.5		0.5	0.5		0.5						*4*
4		0.5		5.9	4.3		3.2		1.0				*28*
5					14.5		2.1		0.5				*32*
6													*0*
7					1.0		34.9		1.6		1.0		*72*
8													*0*
9					1.0		3.2		11.8		1.6	0.5	*34*
10													*0*
11				0.5	1.1		1.1				1.1		*7*
12					0.5								*1*
n		7		14	45		84		28		7	1	*186*

Source: Census Returns of England and Wales

Altogether 19.3 percent (those above the diagonal line) experienced upwards social class mobility through their life course whereas 9.4 percent (those below the diagonal line) experienced downwards class mobility. Conversely, 70.3 percent did not experience any class mobility. Those from the lower clerical and sales group (Class 5) were most likely to experience upwards class mobility into the lower professional

and higher clerical group (Class 4), whilst those in the manual skilled workers group (Class 7) were most likely to experience some form of downwards mobility to the lower skilled group (Class 9). It was those in the skilled group who were least likely to experience any change (as can be seen from those figures on the diagonal line which includes 34.9 percent of skilled workers).

Long found that the rate of total upwards mobility in his study for the same period was 26.8 percent and the downwards mobility 23.3 percent.[62] However, he only used five categories (I – professional, II – intermediate, III – skilled, IV – semiskilled, and V – unskilled) so it is difficult to make a direct comparison, particularly as he used the classification system devised by Armstrong which combines manual skilled workers with non-manual clerks in Class III. (This corresponds to HISCLASS 4, 5, 6, 7.)

Regarding the girls who entered domestic service, there is no evidence that they experienced any degree of mobility. In fact, according to guidance in *A New System of Practical Domestic Economy* published in 1827, a master or mistress should not raise a servant too high as 'servants still ought to be servants, not gentlemen or ladies as some of them will assume in high establishments'.[63]

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[62] Jason Long, 'Social Mobility Within and Across Generations in Britain Since 1851', *Journal of Economic History*, 2008. p.12.

[63] *A New System of Practical Domestic Economy Founded on Modern Discoveries and from the Private Communications of Persons of Experience* (London: Henry Colburn, 1827). p.340.

intergenerational mobility

Mobility between generations

There is conflicting evidence as to whether society became more mobile following industrialisation with increasing opportunities for upwards mobility.[64] Whilst increased mobility could be seen as an indicator of economic growth, it could also signify changes within the family and social environment.

The extent of mobility is measured by evaluating the degree of mobility between two generations. Modern intergenerational comparisons use data taken from matching points in the life cycle of the same family, for example when the father and son were both aged 35. Typically, the occupation associated with the middle of an adult's working life is used for the comparison as occupational stability usually does not occur until a person reaches their mid 30s. If you use data from the middle of the working life, not only does this maximise the number of linked historical records which may be used for the analyse but contemporary studies have shown that intergenerational mobility can be overstated if you use data from individuals who were very young or old.[65] Unfortunately, with historical data such precision is not usually possible. This may not be an issue when the occupation remains constant over the working life, however as we have seen with intragenerational mobility, many

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[64] See for example Prandy and Bottero, *Social Reproduction* p.275., A. Miles and D. Vincent, 'A Land of "Boundless Opportunity"?: Mobility and Stability in Nineteenth-Century England', in *Life and Work History Analyses: Qualitative and Quantitative Developments*, ed. by Shirley Dex (Routledge, 1991), pp. 43–72.

[65] See Mazumder Bhashkar and Miguel Acosta, 'Using Occupation to Measure Intergenerational Mobility', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 657 (2015), pp.174–93.

individuals did change their occupation, sometimes more than once. Nonetheless, by using a linked data set which incorporates data from different sources (such as census records, nominations records, marriage records), it has been possible to compare two generations of the same family at approximately the same life-cycle point.

Following in their father's footsteps – Occupational mobility

As early as 1911 economist Stanley Chapman, who sampled select schools in Lancashire to determine whether the scholars followed the same occupation as their parents, concluded that the tendency of a male child to follow in his father's footsteps was 'strongly marked'.[66] This assertion has been corroborated by more recent studies. Long found that 40 percent of men in his data set from England and Wales (which compared the occupations of the sons from the 1881 census with the occupation of the father from the 1851 census) followed their father into the same occupation.[67] Mitch, in his sample of 29 counties across England for 1839 to 1843 found that 48 percent of sons inherited their occupation from their father. However, he found that this figure varied according to occupation. For example, the figure was 33.5 percent for manufacturing labourers and 16.9 percent for clerical workers.[68] Anderson, using data from Preston in 1851, also found that the proportion of sons who followed their father into the same occupation varied according to the sector. For example, 37 percent of sons under the age of 20 followed their father into trade

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[66] S J Chapman and W Abbott, 'The Tendency of Children to Enter Their Fathers' Trades', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 76 (1913), p.599.
[67] Long, *'The Socioeconomic Return to Primary Schooling in Victorian England'*. p.8
[68] Mitch. *Education and Skills of the British Labour Force* p.336

whereas 42 percent followed their father into a non-manual occupation.[69] Humphries likewise found that the sons of clerical workers scored highly on her index of patrimonialism whilst in comparison, retention rates were lower for those in trade.[70]

Whilst it is not possible to examine the birth order for the children from the Blue Coat School to determine whether the son was in fact the eldest child in the family, we can still examine the records to find to what extent roles were inherited within families. Of the 245 records where it has been possible to obtain details of the occupation of both the father and son, in only 33 cases (13.4 percent) did the son follow his father into the same trade or profession. Five of the boys started their working life in the same trade as their parents but swopped to another occupation later in life. This inheritance figure appears to be a very low in comparison to the norm.

As many of the boys in the Blue Coat School were orphans or came from single parent households, it is possible that this would account for the lack of inheritance. However, details of the parentage exist for 124 of these boys and we find that 67 of them (54 percent) had a father who was still alive. Out of these latter 67 boys, only 10 (14.9 percent) had the same occupation as their father which is approximately the same proportion as the overall cohort. We can only surmise as to this lack of inheritance. Sheila Cooper who examined data from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in England, found that amongst those families where the son was apprenticed to the same trade as the father, no mobility occurred which she

[69] Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire*. p.121.
[70] Humphries. *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* p.227.

classed as 'occupational stasis'.[71] We saw in Chapter 4 that Leunig, Minns and Wallis found relatively few of the sons in their data sample were apprenticed to the same trade as their father and they suggested that the openness of London made it possible for the sons to change to a different occupation. Certainly, the particular occupational structure of Birmingham, with the emphasis on a multitude of small firms manufacturing a vast range of products, encouraged occupational mobility. As reported in Chapter 1, forty-two percent of children in the Blue Coat School had parents who had migrated to Birmingham and it is also possible that these parents encouraged their children to follow a different pathway which enabled them to be more socially mobile.

Table 10: Comparison of the occupation of fathers and sons (unlinked) from the Blue Coat School working in the manufacturing sector.

	Percentage in each trade	
Trade	Fathers 1820 to 1841	Sons 1841 to 1881
Brass Founders*	11.8	9.3
Gun makers	9.4	11.3
Platers	5.9	3.3
Carpenters	3.5	1.3
Goldsmith/Jewellers	2.3	4.6
Button Makers	2.3	2.0
Japanners	1.7	2.6

[71] Humphries *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution*.p.288

Porters, errand boys	1.1	4.6
Glass Manufacturers	1.1	3.3
Boot and Shoe Makers	1.1	2.0
Total numbers in all trades in the Production sector	n=169	n=150

*includes Cabinet makers, Stampers, Casters and Harness Makers

Source: Census Returns of England and Wales, 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871; B.C.S: Nomination Papers.

As can be seen from Table 10, the principal occupation for those former boys from the Blue Coat School who had completed their apprenticeship and who were now working adults was the gun trade and not the brass industry in comparison to the previous generation. There was a 1.9 percent increase in the number of boys from the Blue Coat School working in the gun trade in comparison to the previous generation although it is no surprise that they were attracted to such work.

Sector mobility

In his study of a charity school in Lancashire from 1770 to 1816 Sanderson found that when he compared the occupations of the fathers and sons, there was a decrease in the number of sons obtaining unskilled occupations whilst at the same time he found that the boys were obtaining more literacy based occupations even though there was a rapidly growing textile industry in the area. He surmised that the boys were not attracted to an occupation which did not require literacy skills.[72] Fig. 29 will show us whether the proportion of individuals employed in any one sector

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[72] Sanderson. *Literacy and Social Mobility in the Industrial Revolution in England*. pp.97-98.

changed over time. At the same time we can determine whether there was an

increase in those occupations which required literacy skills.

Figure 29: Comparison of fathers (1816 to 1851) and sons (1841 to 1881) working in the different sectors in Birmingham (unlinked data set, n=245)
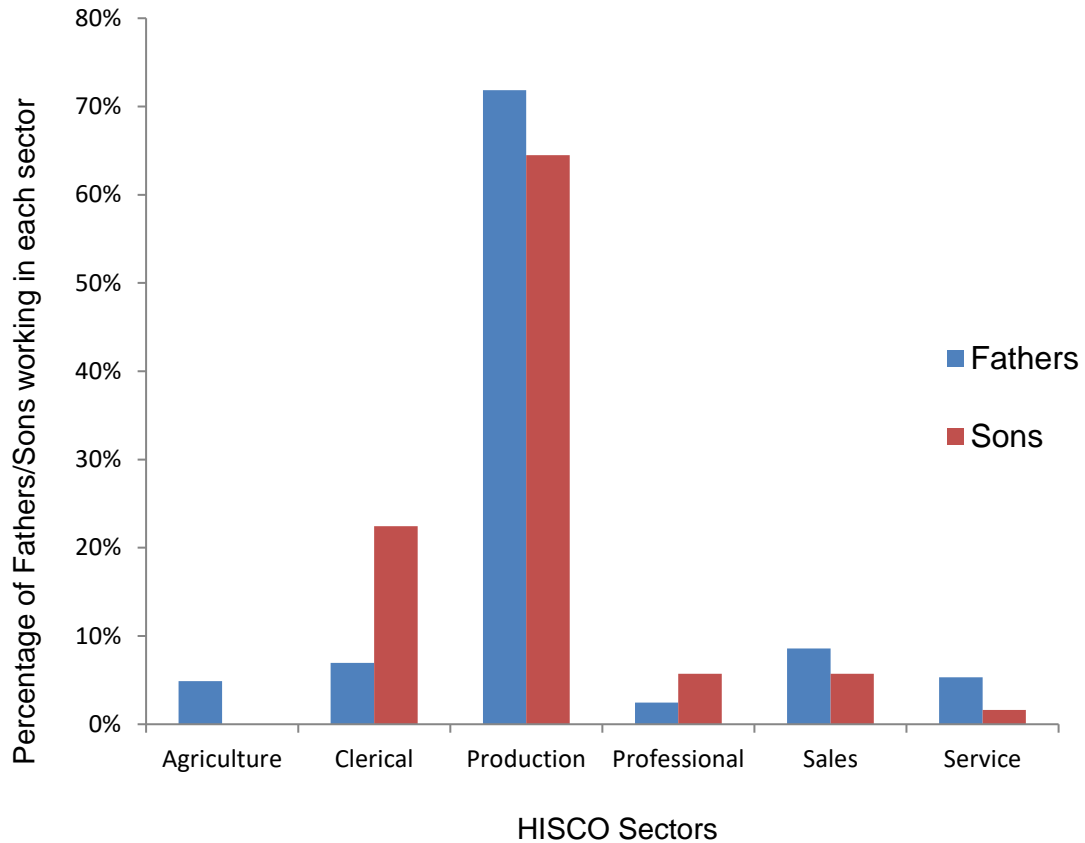
Source: Census Returns of England and Wales; B.C.S Nomination records

We can clearly see that between the two generations there was movement from the

manual to the non-manual sectors. None of the sons may be found working within

the agricultural sector and there was a reduction in the number of sons working

within manufacturing (the production sector), although only by eight percent.

Evidently, manufacturing remained a significant sector for those seeking employment.

The professional and clerical sectors

There was a large increase in the number of boys working within the clerical sector (an increase of 15 percent), though there was only a modest increase in the number employed in the professional sector. The growing professionalism of many occupations in the profession sector would no doubt have impacted on the number of working class boys who were able to obtain such posts.

Table 11 breaks down the data into individual occupations and we can see that numerous boys were employed as commercial clerks as might be expected in a major trading centre such as Birmingham but a number of boys also worked as clerks in other capacities such as within the legal industry.

Table 11: Number of Blue Coat School boys employed in the professional and clerical sectors grouped by year of census (Unlinked data)

Occupation	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
Accountant	1	2	1		1
Accountants Clerk		1	1		
Agent with canal company				1	
Architects Clerk				1	
Artist	1	2	1	1	
Articled Clerk	1				

Attorney/Solicitor		1	2	2	2
Attorney/Solicitors/Law Clerk	1	9	4	4	2
Auctioneer			1	1	
Book-keeper		1			
Broker		1			
Chemist/Druggist	1	1		1	
Civil Engineer			2		
Clerk (unspecified profession)	15	15	3	3	1
Clerk with Coal Agent					1
Clerk in Commerce/ Manufacturing	2	11	15	8	9
Clerk in Government Office		2	1	1	1
Clerk with Railway		5	3	1	
Clerk in Warehouse	1	4	2	1	1
Clerk – Writing		1			1
Commercial travellers			4	1	2
Land Surveyor/surveyors assistant		2	1		1
Law Stationer		1	2		1
Librarian		1		1	
Photographer			1		
Railway ticket inspector		1			
School Teacher		2	1		

Total number of occupations	83	223	152	107	77
Percentage of non-manual occupations as a proportion of all occupations	27.7 percent (n=23)	28.2 percent (n=63)	29.6 percent (n=43)	25.2 percent (n=27)	29.8 percent (n=23)

Source: Census Returns of England and Wales, 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881

The professional (HISCO Major Group 0/1) and clerical sectors (HISCO Major Group 3) expanded considerably over the whole of Great Britain during the nineteenth century. Twenty-five percent of the boys from the Blue Coat School obtained employment in these sectors compared to nine percent in their parents' generation. However, recruitment did not increase significantly over time.

Status mobility

When analysing the difference between the two generations using the HISCAM ranking, we find that at least half (52.6 percent) of the sons acquired an occupation which was higher in status than their father, 9.1 percent had an occupation which was the same status and 38.1 percent had a lower status occupation. However, the paired scatterplot in Fig. 30 shows us that whilst a degree of status mobility was experienced by the sons, it was not noticeably significant.

Figure 30: Comparison of status between father (1816 to 1851) and sons (1841 to 1881) (linked data set, n=261)
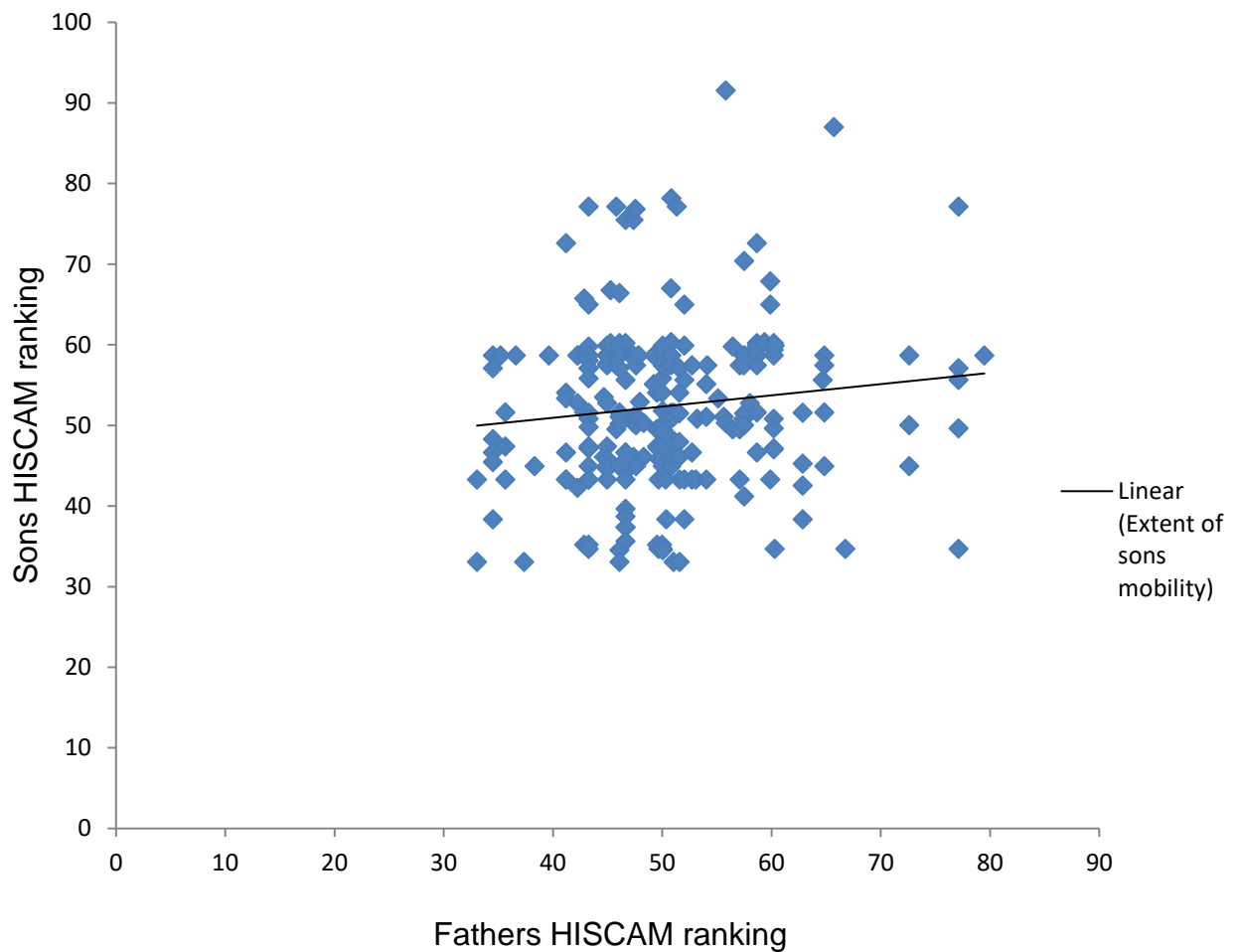
Source: Census Returns of England and Wales; B.C.S Nomination records

In fact, if we examine the mean for both cohorts we find that the mean for the fathers is 50.2, whereas the mean for the sons is 52.3, a difference of only 2.1 on the HISCAM scale. To exclude any outliers which may distort the result, we can also view the median which is 50 for the fathers and 51.6 for the sons.

Previous studies show us that those boys who did experience some form of upwards intergenerational status mobility were likely to have had a father who already held a high status occupation. Sanderson for instance, found that some of the boys in his study who worked as clerks and book-keepers had parents who were gentlemen, railway managers and clerk accountants.[73] Using the marriage certificates of men who married in Anglican churches taken from two parishes in Birmingham, Crossick found that only 37.6 percent of grooms with non-manual occupations had a father who was from the working class.[74] When Humphries examined her autobiographies, she found that many of her occupational groups recruited from groups which were close in terms of status. For example, a boy was more likely to obtain a clerical occupation if his father worked within the service industry rather than manufacturing.[75]

However, there is no indication that the boys from the Blue Coat School who had fathers with relative high status occupations were more likely to obtain a high status position themselves. In Table 12 which takes the twenty highest HISCAM ranking of all the fathers and compares them to HISCAM ranking of their sons we find that in seventeen cases, the son had a lower status occupation.

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[73] Sanderson. *Literacy and Social Mobility in the Industrial Revolution in England* p.92.
[74] Hugh McLeod, 'White Collar Values and the Role of Religion', in *The Lower Middle Class in Britain*, ed. by Geoffrey Crossick (London, 1977), p.84.
[75] Humphries *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution*. p.228.

Table 12: Fathers with high-status occupations

Fathers HISCAM Ranking	Sons HISCAM Ranking	Difference between HISCAM rankings
79.48	58.68	-20.8
77.12	77.12	0
77.12	77.12	0
77.12	57.11	-20.01
77.12	49.63	-27.49
72.62	44.95	-27.67
72.62	58.58	-14.04
72.62	50.04	-22.58
65.72	87.01	21.29
64.83	58.68	-6.15
64.83	57.45	-7.38
64.83	51.61	-13.22
64.83	44.95	-19.88
62.86	38.33	-24.53
62.86	42.54	-20.32
62.86	51.56	-11.3
62.86	45.27	-17.59
60.31	60.22	-0.09
60.22	77.12	16.9
60.22	59.38	-0.84

Source: Census Returns of England and Wales; B.C.S Nomination records

Again, could the fact that many of the boys came from single parent households or were orphans could be a significant factor? Of those thirteen boys where we have knowledge of their personal circumstances, nine came from single parent households where the mother was a widow and one boy was an orphan. Research in the Netherlands suggests that absent fathers significantly reduces occupational inheritance and might have led to inferior occupations.[76]

The girls did not experience any status mobility through the associated occupational status of their father. Mobility for the girls had to be acquired via other channels. There is some evidence to suggest that the majority of women only experienced upwards social mobility through marriage after leaving the parental home. Miles found that this was the case with his analysis of women from 1839 to 1854 through the use of marriage certificates. He found that 43.4 percent of women married a man who was from a different class in comparison to their father although there was no evidence that marriage significantly led to increased upwards mobility.[77] Cooper found that many daughters in fact, married men who had the same occupation as their father and hence, no mobility would have occurred.[78]

It has only been possible to confirm linkage for 13 records from the Blue Coat School where both the occupation of the father and the husband has been recorded. Therefore it has not been possible to provide a conclusive answer regarding the

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[76] See Poppel, F. Van., Jong, J. de and Liefbroer, A.C. The Effects of Paternal Mortality on Sons' Social Mobility: A Nineteenth Century Example. *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, 31, 3 (2010), pp.101-112
[77] Miles, '*Social Mobility: In Nineteenth-Century E*ngland', p.4.
[78] Cooper. *Intergenerational social mobility in late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth century England.,* p.290.

impact of marriage on mobility. However, of these 13 girls, five of them married a man who was higher in occupational status (using the HISCAM scale) in comparison to their father. For example, Jane Phipps, whose father worked as a brass founder, married a jeweller (although ten years later she was a widow living with her parents once again and working as a lacquerer). Sarah Stretton married a man who was a scale beam maker which was a skilled occupation in contrast to her father who was an agricultural labourer. At the other end of the scale, Mary White married a file cutter whilst her father worked as a cheese monger and grocer.[79] None of the girls married a man who had the same occupation as their father; perhaps in a town with such a variety of trades there were more opportunities to mix with others who had different occupations.

Class mobility

Although the majority of boys from the Blue Coat School did not follow in their father's footsteps when we examined status mobility, work done by Miles suggests intergenerational continuity by social class background was the norm. In his sample, 60 percent of ten men did not change their social class, particularly those who originated in his social class III and V (skilled working class and unskilled working class).[80] In fact, Savage and Miles calculated the odds for the son of a father from the skilled working class entering the middle class from 1839 to 1914 as being 200 to one against and for the son of an unskilled father this was more than 2,000 to one.[81]

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79 'Census, 1851.' HO107, Piece 2058, Folio 78, Page 6; 'Census, 1861.' RG9/Piece 2181/Folio 7/Page 7; 'Census, 1871.' RG10/Piece 3117/Folio 77/Page 49.
80 Miles, *Social Mobility in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England*. p.22.
81 Savage and Miles, *Remaking of the British Working Class*. p.34.

During 1927 and 1928, sociologist Morris Ginsberg sought to measure the degree of social interaction amongst teachers, students, second-class civil servants, clerks and other salaried officials and wage earners. His data incorporated contemporary generational comparisons (fathers and grandfathers) from the middle to latter part of the nineteenth century and he found that 71.9 percent of fathers who were in Class II (in this instance, the employers, salaried workers and those working on their own account) had paternal grandfathers who were in the same class. However, nearly a quarter of the fathers (22.1 percent) did make the move from Class III (in this case, it refers to those who were wages earners, skilled and unskilled) into Class II.[82]

Table 13 uses HISCLASS to compare the social class of fathers and sons from the Blue Coat School. As the data is linked, it examines movement within each individual family. Data below the diagonal line shows us that the extent of upwards social mobility which was 41 percent whilst the data above the diagonal line which is 25.7 percent represents downwards mobility.

[82]Ginsberg, M., 'Interchange Between Social Classes', *The Economic Journal*, 39 (1929), p.560.

Table 13: Intergenerational Class Mobility 1810 to 1885 (Linked data)

HISCLASS	Son's Class												
Father's Class	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	*n*
1													
2													
3				0.4	0.4		0.4						*3*
4		0.8	0.8	2.0	3.6		3.6		2.8		0.8		*36*
5			0.4	1.6	2.8		0.8		1.2				*17*
6													
7		0.8		2.0	7.7		21.2		8.5		1.6		*103*
8													
9		1.2	0.4	1.6	4.4		8.5		6.1		1.6		*59*
10													
11					2.0		2.0		2.0				*15*
12		0.8		0.8	1.2		0.4		1.6				*12*
n		9	4	21	55		91		55		10		245

Source: Census Returns of England and Wales; B.C.S Nomination records

Around a third (32.1 percent) did not change their social class and remained in the same class as their father. This was particularly the case for those in Class 7 (skilled workers). Whilst it is evident that within the Blue Coat School there was a high degree of class mobility (67.7 percent), it is also apparent that the number of categories utilized within a classification system will influence the overall results. A

greater number of classes will increase the degree of mobility. However, regardless

of the number classes used for the analyse, we can see that overall there was

distinct movement from the lower social class groups into the higher social class

groups in the Blue Coat School. In particular, a large number of boys moved up into

Class 5 (lower clerical and sales). It is significant that none of the fathers were in

Class 2 (higher professionals) and none of the boys were in Class 12 (unskilled farm

workers). In fact, Mitch found a notable increase in class mobility for those living in

Birmingham where the fathers were classified as unskilled.[83]

Although there was an increase in absolute mobility during this period (an overall

increase in the number of non-manual occupations which were available), the

buoyant manufacturing sector no doubt accounts for the relatively large number of

boys still to be found in Class 7 (skilled workers). In Class 9 we find little sign of class

mobility and it is here we find all the lower skilled workers.

Mitch found that over 60 percent of grooms in his sample from Birmingham 1837 to

1873 had the same social class as their father at marriage and also ten years later,

particularly in his skilled occupations class (Class III).[84] Likewise, Miles found that for

the period 1839 to 1854, 67.8 percent of sons were in the same social class as their

father.[85] Conversely, Long who compared records from the 1851 census (fathers

social class) against records from the 1881 census (sons social class) using a 9 class

[83] Mitch, '*Literacy and Occupational Mobility in Rural versus Urban Victorian England*, p.33.
[84] 'ibid'. p.31.
[85] Miles, '*Social Mobility: In Nineteenth-Century England*',

group classification system found that a third of the sons were in the same social class as their father[86] which is comparable to the outcome for the Blue Coat School.

As we saw in Table 11 only one boy was employed as a broker and two became civil engineers. One boy initially worked as a printer before embracing the (relatively new) world of photography during the 1860s.[87]

We saw earlier that some of the girls had married men who had an occupation which was higher in status than that of their father. However this did not necessarily mean that their husband was in a higher social class as seen in Table 14.

Table 14: Social class of husbands and fathers 1815 to 1863

	HISCLASS Group												
Husband	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	9	9
Father	2	4	5	7	7	7	7	9	9	11	11	7	9

Source: Census Returns of England and Wales; B.C.S Nomination records

Five of the spouses belonged to the same social class as the father-in-law whilst four belonged to a lower social class. Only four belonged to a higher social class. However again, with such small numbers in the cohort we cannot assume that this result reflects a general trend in upwards class mobility.

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[86] Long, *The Surprising Social Mobility of Victorian Britain'*, p.11.
[87] 'Census, 1851.' HO107, Piece 2054, Folio 433, Page 41'Census, 1851.' RG09, Piece 2167, Folio 63, Page 5, 'Census, 1861.'

Literacy rates amongst parents

Mitch found that the ability of parents to sign their name raised the probability that their son would have a skilled occupation and/or achieve middle class status.[88] Schofield found that 60 percent of males could sign their names on the marriage registers nationally in 1795 and by 1850 this had risen to 70 percent although he did find wide regional variations.[89] Likewise, Mitch found that 69.2 percent of grooms in Birmingham in a sample of marriage records from 1851 could sign their name which rose to 74.3 percent in 1881.[90]

To help gauge the extent of literacy amongst the parents of the children who attended the Blue Coat School and determine if there was any correlation between parents who were literate (at least one of the parents was able to sign their name) and the level of literacy, a cohort of 235 (parents of the boys) and a cohort of 68 (parents of the girls) were examined for literacy skills. Signatures extracted from resignation books, medical examination certificates and marriage registers were used as evidence of literacy although it is recognised that the ability to sign a name does not necessarily signify that their literacy skills were necessarily sophisticated. In those cases where both parents were alive but only the mother had made a mark, the record was discounted as the father may have been able to sign his name. However, if the father had died then the record was included.

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[88] Mitch, '*Literacy and Occupational Mobility in Rural versus Urban Victorian England* p.36
[89] 'ibid'. p.446.
[90] 'ibid'. p.30.

In the Blue Coat School, out of those records where confirmation has been assured, we find that 84.2 percent of the boys had at least one parent who was able to sign their name. Of those few parents who could not sign their name it was inevitably the mother of the child as would be anticipated. Regarding those boys who had a father or mother who was illiterate, there is no evidence that they were any less successful than those who had literate parents but the numbers are too low to assume that this represents the norm. For the girls, 80.8 percent had at least one parent who could sign their name.

The results for both the boys and the girls seems to suggest that the parents of the children in the Blue Coat School were slightly more literate than the average, but as the school only accepted children from families which they considered to be 'respectable' and not from the unskilled lower working class, this may account for the higher literacy rate.

High achievers

Of those boys who had a high status occupation, did they excel in school or benefit from any useful connections? To discover whether this was the case, the attainments of the top ten boys were examined. They had all been ranked at 77.12 or higher on the HISCAM status scale at some stage during their working-life.

Table 15: The educational achievements and social networks of high achievers

Sons occupation	Fathers occupation	Educational achievements and social connections
Clerk in court	Guard on mail coach	'very satisfactory examination and report'. He was apprenticed to a Mr Piddock who was a solicitor in Ashby de La Zouch. In 1737 there was a Mr Piddock at the Blue Coat School in Ashby de La Zouch so it is feasible that there was some linkage although not conclusive.
Librarian	Chaser	Average attainments although the master of St Thomas day school sent a report saying he was a 'teachable and interesting boy'.
Surveyors assistant	Servant to surveyor and auctioneer	Average attainments. Connections to the profession through his father's employer.
Broker	Unknown	Average attainments.
Law Clerk	Unknown	Average attainments but was employed by one of the school subscribers who was an attorney.
Solicitors Managing Clerk	Unknown	Average attainments but was employed by one of the school subscribers who was an attorney.
Solicitors clerk	Unknown	Middling writing skills but was employed by one of the school subscribers who was an attorney.
Solicitors Managing Clerk	Unknown	Average academic attainments. Informally apprenticed to an attorney.

School Master	Unknown	Average attainments.
Jeweller	Waiter blank maker	Average attainments. Informally apprenticed to a jeweller/

Source: Census Returns of England and Wales; B.C.S Nomination records; B.C.S: Examination Certificate Counterfoil Volumes

Was there anything outstanding about those particular boys who did manage to obtain a professional occupation? David Walter Jenkins became an accountant although his father was a farmer. When he left the school they provided him with 'very respectful testimonials'.[91] On the other hand, James Penrose Kerry who also became an accountant had a troubled school history. He left the school without permission in 1840 and had to be returned by a policeman. He was duly punished and allowed to continue at the school but in 1843 he was found guilty of stealing bread, meat and bacon and was severely flogged before all the pupils. Nonetheless, in spite of all his problems, by the time he left in 1844 he was second best in his class and his behaviour was said to be latterly 'very good.' In these two cases, there appears to be no common trait which links the boys.[92]

Schofield suggests that for the majority of men, literacy was not essential during the nineteenth century[93] and as can be seen in Table 15, few of the boys excelled academically. As we found earlier in Chapter 4 when we reviewed occupational training, the most important prerequisite to obtaining a high status occupation was to acquire a suitable connection within the labour market on leaving school. Family

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[91] 'B.C.S. Application Register'. 1836; 'B.C.S. Examination Certificates' 1836.
[92] B.C.S General Minutes November 1840; 1843; 'B.C.S. Examination Certificates'. 1 August 1844.
[93] Schofield. p.452.

connections were usually the preferred method when trying to obtain employment and the Blue Coat School could be seen as a substitute family in this regard; we have seen how those who subscribed to the school also provided employment opportunities for pupils once they had completed their studies. Members of the *Grateful Society* may also have provided assistance to pupils in the school. This society was formed early in the nineteenth century and consisted of former pupils who wished to give something back to the school. They presented £52 10s 3d to the school in 1805 for instance as a 'mark of gratitude and respect for the benefits they received by them from an early education therein, to which they owed their comfortable and respectable situations in life.' The society later became the *True Blue Society* and they continued to make regular payments to the school.[94] Evidence that members of the society also assisted in providing employment opportunities for pupils in the school is elusive due to the limitations of the data. For instance, there was a Charles Cooper in the *True Blue Society* and a Mr Cooper employed one of the pupils from the school but it has not been possible to link the two individuals.

Educationalist Meg Gomersall, on investigating the rationale behind education for girls in the nineteenth century found no evidence that schooling was responsible for any upwards mobility[95] and likewise we find no evidence in the Blue Coat School records that any educational attainments made a difference to their life outcomes. Only two of the thirteen girls in the cohort were deemed to be outstanding academically. Mary Ann Bruff was in the 3rd Class and in 1848 she was awarded a merit award for her achievements. However she married a brass tube maker which is

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[94] Griffin. *A Conundrum Resolved*? p.78.
[95] Meg Gomersall, 'Education for Domesticity? A Nineteeth-Century Perspective on Girls' Schooling and Education', 1994, p.243.

in Class 11 in the HISCLASS grouping (unskilled workers).[96] Sarah Toy was not only in the 1st Class but she received a merit award in 1848 for needlework, church catechisms, scripture, reading and spelling and arithmetic. It is possible that these awards enabled her to obtain what might be seen as a fairly comfortable situation working as a servant in St Philips's Rectory which was affiliated through the church to the school, particularly as the Rector of St Philip's was rarely in residence.[97] However by marrying a painter, she did not experience any upwards mobility as her father was a jeweller.

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[96] 'Census, 1861.' RG09, Piece 2170, Folio 32 and 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. February 1848.

[97] 'Census, 1851.' HO107, Piece 2055, Folio 17, Page 27, 'Census, 1871.'and 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. February 1848.

Summary

After examining the extent of intragenerational mobility we found that nearly half of the boys from the Blue Coat School did not appear to have continued with the same occupation after they had completed their apprenticeship. However, the majority did then remain in the same occupation for the rest of their adult working life. Of those who did change their occupation, just over a third experienced some degree of upwards status mobility. Although most of the boys did not change their occupation throughout their adult working life they may have moved up through the ranks and experienced upwards status mobility. However, there is insufficient documentation to confirm whether this was the norm. Regarding class mobility, the majority of boys did not experience any change in their social class during their adult working life. Altogether, less than a quarter experienced any upwards mobility.

Overall, few of the boys followed in their father's footsteps. Instead, we find that the boys were more initially likely to be working in the professional and clerical sectors in comparison to their father although by the 1850s there was an increase in the number of boys working in manufacturing to the detriment of the professional sector. There is no evidence that occupational status was inherited but there is evidence of movement from lower to higher class groups although only a few managed to acquire an occupation which may be classed as professional.

Those boys who acquired a superior occupation do not appear to have excelled academically during their time at school. However, there is some evidence that they

were able to make use of social capital. For the girls, domestic service was the

primary occupation and there is no evidence that they gained any benefit from

obtaining superior academic achievements. Additionally, the lack of parental literacy

skills did appear to influence the achievements of the children in the school, although

the majority of parents were literate to a certain degree.

In the final section, the potential for movement within the social hierarchy in the

working class will be examined through focussing on the key occupational sectors

within Birmingham during the nineteenth century.

The potential for social mobility in Birmingham

This second section will explore the potential for social mobility in Birmingham during this period. To determine whether the mobility in the Blue Coat School was a reflection of conditions within Birmingham during this period, this section will review the occupational sectors for both males and females which existed in Birmingham during this period. This will allow us to determine which roles were profitable, which sectors employed the most people and which ones were seen as high in status. We will also consider the attraction - or otherwise – of some of the occupations.

<u>Male occupations</u>

The manufacturing sector

As we saw in Chapter 1, by the eighteenth century Birmingham had developed into a large and important industrial town and as such, the expectation is that the majority of the working class population would have been employed in the manufacturing sector. Whilst there was limited class mobility within this sector, there were opportunities to become your own master and acquire status mobility. In places such as Birmingham where small workshops were the norm, you did not require much capital to set yourself up in business and become a master. Historian Clive Behagg found that out of the thirty-one men describing themselves as 'gun makers' in early nineteenth century wills, fifteen of them had left personal estates which were worth

more than £1,000.[98] Describing the sub-division of manufacturing in Birmingham in 1844, the *Penny Magazine* went on to say that 'with the exception of the metropolis, there is perhaps no town in England where there are so many persons combining in themselves the characteristics of master and workman as in Birmingham',[99] although out of 8,000 men and women employed in the jewellery trade in 1866 only about 500 to 600 had obtained their 'masters' status.[100]

The manufacturing sector corresponds to the Production Group within the HISCO coding system (Major Groups 7, 8, 9). Within the early census returns, this corresponds to the 'Industrial Class' albeit with some variations. For instance those who traded in drinks and stimulants were classified as belonging to the Industrial Class as some occupations were categorised by the industry they were associated with. Out of the six classes listed in the 1861 General Census Report for Birmingham, at least half of males aged 20 years and above (50.8 percent) were said to be in the Industrial Class whilst 2.2 percent were in the Professional Class and 5.2 percent were in the Commercial Class.[101]

Table 16 below, shows us the numbers employed in the main industries in Birmingham in the 1841 and 1861 census who were *over* the age of 20. Although any calculations will always be approximate due to the inconsistencies which appear within each census return, we can still see that proportionally those industries which

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[98]' Behagg. *Custom, Class and Change* pp.455–80.
[99] 'A Day at the Birmingham Factories', *The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, 1844. p.465.
[100] G. C. Allen, 'The Industrial Development of Birmingham and the Black Country 1860-1914' (University of Birmingham, 1926), p.77.
[101] *Census of England and Wales, General Report: Appendix*, 1861. Table 83, p.129.

increased the most between 1841 and 1861 were the gun, glass and jewellery trades. If we compare the principal trades for those *under* the age of 20 in the 1841 census, which were outlined in Chapter 4, we can see that the brass industry still employed the most workers. This is not unexpected as the brass trade expanded considerably throughout the nineteenth century and by the 1860s it was the foremost industry in Birmingham.[102] The second most populous occupation were the shoe and boot manufactures and not the button manufactures. As many button makers were under the age of 14[103] this could explain the discrepancy.

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[102] *Census of England and Wales, General Report: Appendix*, 1861. p.15
[103] E. Hopkins, *Birmingham: The Making of the Second City 1850-1939* (Tempus Publishing Ltd, 2001). B1, p.2.

Table 16: Number of males aged 20 years and above employed in the principal trades in the manufacturing sector in Birmingham 1841 and 1861

	Number in each trade (20 years and above)	
Trade	1841 Census	1861 Census
Brass founders	2271	3836
Boot and Shoemaker	1740	2801
Gunsmith	1613	3437
Button maker	1306	1526
Carpenter	1168	1942
Goldsmith/Jeweller	1062	2254
Plater	603	734
Japanners	272	333
Glass manufacturers	633	951
Porter, errand boys	600	948

Source: Census Returns of England and Wales, 1841 and 1861. Birmingham – Warwickshire

There are well known issues relating to the occupational totals in each census. For instance, those who were not working because these were too old, infirm, or unemployed were may not have been counted as active although in later census reports, those not working were encouraged to name their occupation when active,

thus increasing the overall occupational totals.[104] However, even allowing for these discrepancies as well as the trade fluctuations noted in Chapter 2 in the early part of the nineteenth century, it is clear from Table 7 that the manufacturing sector was both substantial and still expanding during the mid nineteenth century.

With so many conflicts during the nineteenth century such as the Napoleonic Wars from 1790 to 1815, the Crimean War from 1853 to 1856 and the American Civil War from 1861 to 1865, the gun trade was often brisk and then wages were good. Strikes occasionally occurred, one of the most serious being in 1859 which lasted 2 months when the gun-screwers objected to the prices being offered for their work.[105] Whilst the wages may have been good, the work itself was not always that satisfying. Henry Mayhew interviewed a man living in London who had been brought up in Birmingham. He had attended a charity school and was apprenticed out to a gun-smith where he worked as a gunlock filer but as he told Mayhew 'I can't say as ever I liked it; nothing but file file all day'.[106] The guns were made predominately by hand in workshops until 1861 when a small arms factory was set up by a group of gun-makers who were alarmed at the competition from a factory which had been set up by the government in 1858 at Enfield. Thomas Blakesley from the Blue Coat School was already working in Enfield as a gun-maker in 1851 and would have experienced

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[104] See C. Topalov, 'A Revolution in Representations of Work : The Emergence over the 19th Century of the Statistical Category "Occupied Population" in France, Great Britain, and the United States', *Evue Française de Sociologie*, 42.1 (2001), for an overview of these issues.
[105] Timmins. *The Resources, Products and Industrial History of Birmingham*. P.395.
[106] Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*. II. p.428.

these changes. However, they do not appear to have disadvantaged him as he later

worked for the Civil Service in the War Department before retiring in Leicestershire.[107]

The plated trade did not employ an extensive number of adult men; two thirds of the

workforce were women and young people. The trade declined from around 1830 as it

was said that the increase in the number of small masters in the trade and hence

competition, brought down the price of the goods being sold and one of the

manufacturers spoke of wage reductions from £3 to £4 a week during the 1820s to

1830s to £1 to £1 5s a week.[108] However, changes in fashion and distaste for shoddy

'*Brummagem*' gilt plated goods also contributed to its decline. Nonetheless, the

introduction of electro-plating in 1840 revolutionised the industry and although initially

it resulted in a financial loss for some businesses, it also created a new class of

skilled workers who were responsible for the designing, modelling and chasing of the

items and who were described as being of a 'superior class'.[109] The *Cyclopedia of*

Useful Arts described the electro platers as being of a 'superior class'. It was said

that together with their employers, they hoped to establish a school for their children

and for the boys who worked in the business. They also hoped to set up a reading

room and library for the adults.[110]

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[107] Census 1851 HO107, Piece 1703, Folio 597, Page 11; 'Census, 1881.' RG11, Piece 3131, Folio 9, Page 10.
[108] 'Census, 1881.'
[109] 'Labour and the Poor', *The Morning Chronicle*, 17 February 1851. p.576.
[110] Charles Tomlinson Esq, ed. *Cyclopædia of Useful Arts, Mechanical and Chemical, Manufactures, Mining , and Engineering* (London: Virtue and Co., 1866), p.576.

As such it is surprising to see a reduction in the numbers entering this trade.

However, as is clear from Fig.31 the boys from the Blue Coat School would have

lacked suitable drawing and design skills and this may have hindered their progress.

Figure 31: Illustration of the need for qualified drawing and design workmen 1851

Another reason why this trade has declined—and it is as strong, perhaps, as any I have given—is the want of education of a suitable kind amongst the workmen. A knowledge of drawing and design is invaluable in gilt toy making. I am every day reminded of its importance by the inferiority of our English workmen, and I think it would be well for employers to require these qualifications of every boy whom they take into the trade. With proper attention to drawing and design, in which the French so infinitely excel us, I think that a little spirit and energy among the manufacturers would enable us

Source: Morning Chronicle, Birmingham, 17th February 1851

If we revisit Table 10, we can see that there was a 2.3 percent increase in the

number of males working in the jewellery industry. However, this is not unexpected

as those working in the jewellery trade were the best paid of the skilled workers. A

master could earn £3 to 5 a week and a journeyman could earn nearly as much

whilst those beneath them could earn from 25s to 35s a week.[111] Those working in

the jewellery trade were also seen as highly intelligent artisans. Langford describes

the number of jewellers who availed themselves of the free library in 1870 as

'considerably above the average of other trades, being represented by 576

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[111] Tomlinson. *Cyclopædia of Useful Arts*. p.305

borrowers'.[112] As such it may have been seen as an attractive proposition for those boys who had attended the Blue Coat School.

The number of boys who were employed as porters, moving the manufactured products around the town, increased steadily over time. Humphries believes that such an occupation, at least for children, was particularly bleak[113] and certainly it was seen as unskilled labour. In comparison to an unskilled bricklayer in 1854 who would earn around 16s a week, a porter would earn around 18s a week.[114] Those boys from the Blue Coat School who worked as porters do not appear to have climbed far up the social ladder. John Goodby from the Blue Coat School worked for the General Hospital as a porter. He was initially sent home to his parents on leaving school because no position could be found for him.[115] Henry Chambers was a porter in the oil trade but later in life was an out of work labourer[116] and Samuel Petty worked as a labourer before becoming a porter.[117]

The sales and service sectors

It is difficult to estimate the numbers were employed who in the sales (HISCO Major group 4) and service sectors (HISCO Major group 5) which includes the factors, auctioneers, pawnbrokers, cooks, domestic servants, hairdressers and guards

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[112] Whittock and others. *The Complete Book of Trades*. p.43.
[113] Humphries. *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* p.222.
[114] *Report from the Select Committee on Poor Removal; Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index*, House of Commons Papers, 1854, XIII , 1832 and 'B.C.S. Application Register'. Item 213, p.15.
[115] 'Census,1841.'HO107, Piece 1141, Folio 61, Page 9.
[116], Census 1871 RG10 GBC/1871/4021/0104, Census 1881 RG11, Piece 3965, Folio 107, Page 27
[117] 'Census, 1881.' RG09, Piece 2138, Folio 129, Page 45; 'Census, 1861.' RG10/Piece 3102, Folio 110, page 48.

amongst others. Hopkins believes that around forty percent of the population of Birmingham were working in the service industry in 1861,[118] although he includes within this figure both clerical and professional occupations. Regardless of the numbers working in sales and service, it is evident that these sectors were growing over time if you view the census returns in Table 17 which list the principal occupations for 1841 and 1861.

Table 17: Number of working class males 20 years and above employed in the principal sales and service sectors

	Number in each trade (20 years and above)	
	1841 census	1861 census
Painter, plumber and glazier	660	1264
Grocer and tea dealer	303	738
Factor (Commercial traveller)	213	308
Milk seller and cow keeper	211	285
Merchant	169	139
Warehouseman	163	404
Greengrocer and fruiterer	107	366
Hairdresser	171	216

Source: Census Returns of England and Wales, 1841 and 1861. Birmingham – Warwickshire

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[118] Duggan, *The Impact of Industrialization on an Urban Labor Market.* p.226.

In the nineteenth century, the warehouse was the central pivot through which the manufactured goods flowed and the factor was a key figure in the production process. Warehousemen were seen as a superior class of people. In the 1835 edition of *Fraser's Magazine,* in an article entitled *Advice to Clerks, Shopmen and Apprentices,'* it was said of all the hired assistants in trade, that warehousemen were the 'most respectable, intelligent and moral' and that their salaries ranged from £100 to £400 a year.[119] They needed to be good communicators in order to form links with buyers of goods and when they changed jobs they took their business connections with them, hence they were seen as valuable employees.

In Sheffield the number of high-end greengrocers did not appear to increase very rapidly after 1830 and they had to amalgamate their trade with other high class trades.[120] However in Birmingham, the number of greengrocers increased from 303 in the 1841 census to 738 in the 1861 census which shows the growing demand for such commodities. Although small shopkeepers in the nineteenth century were often to be found within the working class, they were also seen as a superior class of people, alongside mechanics and master artisans. Social historian Christopher Hosgood sees them acting as 'bankers of the poor'[121] providing goods on credit when ready-money was in short supply. Conversely, there was a risk of bankruptcy if trade was poor. The Mayor of Manchester, writing in the early 1840s said that the shopkeepers 'are generally the first to feel reverses in manufacturing districts; and in

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[119] 'A Few Words of Advice to Clerks, Shopmen and Apprentices', *Fraser's Magazine*, 1835, p.279.
[120] Janet Blackman, 'The Development of the Retail Grocery Trade in the Nineteenth Century', *Business History*, 9.2 (1967), p.116.
[121] Christopher P. Hosgood, 'The "Pigmies of Commerce" and the Working-Class Community: Small Shopkeepers in England, 1870-1914', *Journal of Social History*, 22.3 (1989), p.439.

all circumstances of considerable depression in trade numbers of them are ruined'.[122]

This lack of security may explain why two of the parents of children in the Blue Coat

School worked as shopkeepers but their children did not follow them into the

business. In fact, none of the children from the Blue Coat School ended up either

owning or working in a shop.

Factors were previously renowned for being inebriated but an increase in the number

of travellers and hence the introduction of an element of competition induced them to

improve their conduct. Although a factor was seen as being below a warehouseman

in class, he was still seen as being above a retail salesman. Their position was

described as 'well defined, both socially and commercially'[123] and certainly in the late

nineteenth century, a factor would have been well respected amongst both the lower

and middle class.[124] They could earn from £100 to £200 a year (plus expenses)[125] and

once they had enough experience it was possible for them to set up their own

business. As they would have built up a considerable network of links whilst training

they would have been well placed to make a considerable profit.

The downside to life as a factor was the amount of time spent actually travelling. In

the 1840s, the majority of factors spent around 300 days on the road. Any absence

such as an illness or holiday could result in loss of customers and if they were

married, they would have been away from the home for lengthy periods. Throne

Crick enjoyed his work as a factor as he said it occupied both mind and body and he

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[122] Blackman, *The Development of the Retail Grocery Trade* p.113.
[123] Society of Commercial Travellers., *The System of Commercial Travelling in Europe and the United States: Its History, Customs and Laws.* (New Year, 1869), p.9.
[124] 'ibid' p.10.
[125] 'A Few Words of Advice to Clerks, Shopmen and Apprentices'. Vol 12, p.279.

enjoyed the freedom which came with the work.[126] There were 68 merchants and

factors listed in a local directory in 1770 and by 1802 this had risen to 140.[127]

Although eventually the number of factors declined due to the cheapness of credit

and low postage, it was still seen as an important profession in 1869.[128] Thomas

Meeson from the Blue Coat School initially worked as a clerk for a factor but by 1861

he was working as a factor himself, boarding in a hotel in East Dereham in Mitford.[129]

The professional and clerical sectors

The professional (HISCO Major Group 0/1) and clerical sectors (HISCO Major Group

3) expanded considerably over the whole of Great Britain during the nineteenth

century. Twenty-five percent of the boys from the Blue Coat School obtained

employment in these sectors compared to nine percent in their parents' generation.

However, recruitment did not increase significantly over time. Table 10 broke the

data down into individual occupations and we can see that numerous boys were

employed as commercial clerks as would be expected but a number of boys also

worked as clerks in other capacities such as within the legal industry.

New industries meant new opportunities for boys who were literate which were

mirrored in other towns across the country. In Orme's Charity School in Newcastle, it

was said that 'Clerks are sought from the school by attorneys, by officers of railways

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126 ' T. Crick, *Sketches from the Diary of a Commercial Traveller* (J Masters, 1847), p.9.
127 "Economic and Social History: Social History before 1815," in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7, the City of Birmingham* [Accessed 13 June 2014].
128 Society of Commercial Travellers., *The System of Commercial Travelling in Europe and the United States: Its History, Customs and Laws.* (New Year, 1869), p.10.
129 Census Returns of England and Wales, 1851 and 1861.

and others, whose employment is looked upon as a great advancement to boys, in the condition of those at this and similar schools'.[130] This pattern was not duplicated across all the country. When Sanderson analysed records from Lancaster Charity School from 1770 to 1816, he was able to show that Lancaster, as a thriving commercial town, required boys who were literate whereas those towns further south where factories were in existence, did not require boys who possessed a high degree of skill or literacy.[131]

Crossick highlighted the regularity of a clerk's income as they received a salary which was not seasonal and did not suffer from fluctuations.[132] However, much of the work undertaken by clerks such as copy writing did not demand much experience and hence the wages were often relatively low. Author Benjamin Orchard, former secretary of the Liverpool Clerks and Provident and Annuity Association, published *Clerks of Liverpool* in 1871. He identified two distinct classes of clerks based on education, prospects, and class. Those who lived in a 'genteel neighbourhood, wear good clothes, mix in respectable society, go sometimes to the opera, shrink from letting their wives do household work, and incur, as unavoidable, the numerous personal expenses connected with an endeavour to maintain this status' earned about £150 per year at 28 years of age whilst those who 'place little value on gloves, lunch in the office on bread and cheese, clean their own boots, and are not alarmed

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[130] '*Reports of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the State of Popular Education in England.* p.275.

[131] Sanderson, Literacy and Social Mobility in the Industrial Revolution in England' p.101.

[132] Geoffrey Crossick, 'The Emergence of the Lower Middle Class in Britain: A Discussion.', in *The Lower Middle Class in Britain* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1977), p.34.

by the prospect of doing without a servant when married' earned around £80.[133] To obtain a good position as a clerk, it was often considered essential to have contact with the employers through personal recommendation. The best employers disliked responding to the advertisements in the newspapers placed by those looking for employment as they mistrusted the testimonials and also found it time consuming.[134] The Blue Coat School pupils would have benefited considerably from the connections of their nominators who were all well respected citizens in the town.

Most working class children only obtained employment as clerks on the lower end of the middle class scale although there were exceptions. A manufacturer in Birmingham in the mid nineteenth century, who employed several clerks, paid them at least £100 per annum although he did remark that 'clerks often really have not the comfort of dogs'.[135] Richard Tangye from Redruth, left school at 14 and worked as a pupil-teacher for four years before applying for a job as a clerk in an engineering establishment in Birmingham. The wage was to be £80 per year but they reduced it to £50 as he was not experienced. The office was in a loft up a step ladder and the first words his new boss uttered were 'I am glad you have turned up, will you can copy these invoices?'[136]

For a married man with children to support, the lure of a trade which provided a better income would have taken priority over employment which paid less but was

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[133] B. Orchard, *The Clerks of Liverpool: Being Ten Chapters on Their Numbers ... Salaries, Grievances, Marriages, &c., &c. ... Partly Reprinted from the Liverpool Journal* (J. Collinson, 1871). p.63.

[134] Schofield. *Dimensions of Literacy*. p.12.

[135] J.S. Harrison, 'The Social Position and Claims of Book-Keepers and Clerks Considered' (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1852), p. 21. p.9.

[136] Tangye, *One and All*. p.53.

considered more genteel. A book printed in 1852 went so far as to say that a clerk should marry a woman who had money or else marry a woman from a humble background who was used to labour and could easily look after all the domestic duties.[137] However, in spite of the low salary, many clerks envisaged rising through the ranks to eventually obtain senior positions as clerks or an occupation recognised as professional and we find examples of this happening in the Blue Coat School dataset. Thomas Flint for example, was initially employed as an office boy by Mr Barnabas Chepshore, a surveyor. Thomas was still working as a clerk in 1861 and an architect's clerk in 1871. Finally by 1875 we find him working as an architect.[138] In 1881 Thomas was working as a land surveyor,[139] but in this period this profession was not well defined and there was considerable overlap between the different specialisations such as the surveyors and architects and it is quite possible that this was in fact still working as an architect.

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[137] Harrison. *The Social Position and Claims of Book-Keepers and Clerks Considered.* p.4.
[138]; 'B.C.S. Application Register' 4 December 1850. RG09, Piece 2183, Folio 84, Page 24; 'Census, 1861.'; RG10/Piece 3159/Folio 55/Page 5 'Census, 1871.' 'White & Co.'s Commercial & Trades Directory of Birmingham', 1875. p.1830.
[139] 'Census, 1881.' RG11, Piece 3047, Folio 72, Page 15.

The attorney/solicitors clerk

The attorney profession was not held in high regard by members of the public. In 1849, a practising attorney wrote a letter to the Legal Observer on the 'Status of Attorneys'. In his opinion, the profession was not well regarded as it employed a 'great number of scamps.' His definition of 'scamps' was those who had entered into the profession who originated from families with no means whatsoever and who had received no education other than those skills which were taught at charity schools such as reading and writing. These 'scamps' did not understand 'gentlemanly conduct and bearing' nor did they possess the refined ideas of the profession. He continued by saying that they were initially employed in the office just to 'run errands'.[140] His letter produced a flurry of responses; many agreed with his view although some objected to his comments. One of the objectors was a practicing attorney clerk of 20 years standing who had risen from a family with no means and who had received only a basic education. He entered the profession at the age of 14, working first as an office boy in an attorney's office before obtaining his clerkship.[141]

Whilst the attorney profession was seen as genteel and hence desirable that of an attorney's clerk was less so – The controversial pamphleteer and political writer William Cobbett who worked briefly in an attorney's office was said to have said 'oh

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[140] 'The Status of Attorneys', written by An Attorney. *The Legal Observer: Digest, and Journal of Jurisprudence*, 1849. 9th June, p.102.
[141] 'ibid' 23rd June, p.143.

save me from an attorney's office!'[142] The political economist John Stuart, writing in 1848 believed that one of the main reasons that clerks earned more than the bricklayer's labourer was the fact that the work was monotonous.[143] One notable attorney's clerk was the author Charles Dickens who worked as a junior office boy for several months. Dickens famously depicted the life of an attorney's clerk in an article he wrote in 1855 in his weekly publication *Household Words*. In describing his daily routine he said:

> 'We used to stand before the fire, warming ourselves behind, until we made ourselves faint; and we used to read the papers and, in hot weather, we used to make lemonade and drink it, We used to yawn good deal, and ring the bell good deal, and chat and lounge good deal, and go out good deal, and come back little. We used to compare notes as to the precious slavery it was, and as to the salary not being enough for bread and cheese, and as to the manner in which we were screwed by the public - and we used to take our revenge on the public by keeping it waiting and giving it short answers, whenever it came into our office'.[144]

A good attorney's clerk in London in 1845 could earn initially around a pound a week and he would have had opportunities to rise through the ranks to become an assistant in the law business[145] although the writer Nathaniel Whittock informs us that

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[142] Hudson. *The Parent's Hand-book*, p.201.
[143] J. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy with Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy*, 1848. p.477.
[144] C. Dickens, 'Cheap Patriotism', *Household Words*, 1855. Vol. XI, No. 272, 9 June, pp.433-434.
[145] *Guide to Employment in London or How to Arrive at Independence* (London: Mitchell, 1845), p.34.

an attorney's clerk earned less than many mechanics.[146] Perhaps that is the reason

John Willison from the Blue Coat School eventually became a book-binder although

he was initially apprenticed to a solicitor in 1846 to work as an office boy.[147]

The Law Stationer

Although the work of the attorney's clerk may have been seen as monotonous, a lot

of the work was given out to the law stationers who were paid at a set rate. This was

1s 0 ½ d per folio of ninety words in London in 1845 which amounted to around 50s

to 70s per week, though the profession suffered from fluctuations as it was

overstocked with law stationers.[148] Law stationers frequently had to sit up all night to

complete their assignment as they did not receive the work until after mid-day,

although they no doubt appreciated the additional wages they received for night

work.[149] If the law stationers were too busy, they would in turn give the work to

copying clerks who would work for them – often called 'Hackney Writers'. In a

governmental report into drunkenness written in 1834, law writers were said to be

'almost universally addicted to drinking, as every law-stationer can testify'.[150] A guide

to employment in London written in 1845 also remarked on the 'great many dissolute

and drunken characters' within the profession. In the light of all these comments,

such a profession could easily be seen as unappealing.

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[146] Whittock and others. *The Complete Book of Trades*. p.14.
[147] 'B.C.S. Application Register'., 8/10/1846 and 'Census, 1861.'RG09, Piece 2172, Folio 124, p. 17
[148] *Guide to Employment in London or How to Arrive at Independence*. p.29.
[149] 'The Plaint of the Law Writers', *The Law Times*, 1867, p. 219.
[150] *Report from the Select Committee on Inquiry into Drunkeness, with Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix*, 1834. p.418.

The Railway Clerk

By the 1850s, the railway had taken over from the mail and stage coach as a means of transport. Such a change generated new occupations and we see an increasing number of boys from the Blue Coat School working as railway clerks from 1851 onwards. Unlike those who worked for individual masters, railway clerks worked for large companies and not only were they guaranteed steady work and job security, but there were also more opportunities for promotion. According to the historian Frank McKenna, railway workers were seen as being better educated, more sophisticated and more confident with a status that 'gave them an air of superiority when they paraded for lunch, or met the uncomfortable oil-stained artisan across a shiny-topped desk'.[151] However, as this was a position of trust, many railway clerks had to provide good references and a guarantee to obtain such employment. In 1840, booking clerks were paying £50 to £100 as a guarantee whilst earning around £60 to 90 a year. By 1845 they were paying £100 to £500 for a salary which could range from £75 to over £100. By 1866 the guarantee was £300 for a salary of £70 to £150. They would need to either pay the deposit or use a guarantee society to obtain such positions.[152] As it is unlikely that the Blue Coat School would have paid such guarantees, presumably such employment may have been secured through connections with the school.

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[151] F. McKenna, *The Railway Workers 1840-1970* (Faber and Faber, 1980). p.105.
[152] P.W. Kingsford, *Victorian Railwaymen* (Routledge, 2013). p.31.

There were limited opportunities for females who sought employment. Whilst some did work in the trades (for example women may be found working in the brass and gun trades) they were mainly employed in occupations which were unskilled and low waged and which did not require much – if any – education.

Table 18: Principal trades for females over the age of 20 in Birmingham in 1841 and 1861

	Number in each trade (20 years and above)	
	1841 census	1861 census
Domestic Service	4415	6683
Millinery; dressmaking; seamstress and stays	1101	4867
Laundress	670	2302
Button manufacturing	697	1763
Warehouse woman	236	969
Steel pens manufacturing	125	836
Boot and Shoemaker	179	617
School mistress, governess, tutor, general teacher	384	800

Source: Census Returns of England and Wales, 1841 and 1861. Birmingham – Warwickshire

Domestic service was the principal occupation for women in 1841 and 1861 as seen in Table 18. Initially, it was seen as an occupation suitable for those from the lower

middle class and households were often reluctant to employ girls from poor

households as they did not think they would make good servants.[153] However, by the

mid nineteenth century domestic service was said to be losing its lower middle class

status.[154] The author of '*Domestic Servants, as they are & as they ought to be*' written

in 1859 deplored the loss of respectable servants, believing that before long they

would be left with 'only the dregs of the class.' The same author also informed the

reader that 'about sixty percent of the servants, in and out of place' would properly

belong to the criminal class if their antecedents as well as their present doings were

known'.[155] Although many girls were apprenticed out as servants, the majority did not

remain in domestic service. In 1851 in York, 87.8 percent of servants were below the

age of 35 and more than 53.3 percent of this latter group were aged 15 to 24 as the

majority left service in order to get married.[156] Although Maria Shaw did eventually

leave service to marry an oilman in London, she remained working in service until

she was 38 years old. She was an exception to the norm as she remained in service

for over ten years along with her sister. However, in this instance, the head of the

household was Mr Meredith, an attorney and president of the Birmingham Law

Society who was described as a 'Gentleman & Annuitant.' He owned several

properties and subscribed to the Blue Coat School. Perhaps living in such a

[153] Lane, '*Apprenticeship in Warwickshire 1700 - 1834*'. p.117.
[154] Jordan, E., *The Women's Movement and Women's Employment in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Routledge, 1999), p.65.
[155] By A Practical Mistress of a Household, *Domestic Servants, as They Are & as They Ought to Be* (W. Tweedie, 1859), p.9.
[156] A. Armstrong, *Stability and Change in an English County Town: A Social Study of York 1801–51* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.180.

respectable and wealthy household provided Maria and her sister with a degree of comfort and security above the norm which encouraged them to remain.[157]

Dressmaking was the second most common occupation for young women and it was the principal occupation for girls from the lower middle class.[158] However in 1843 the Children's Employment Commission singled out the milliners and dressmakers because of the demands made on their time, working all hours, often in cramped conditions. It was the 'excessive toil' not the actual work which the commissioner found so objectionable in the West of England.[159] Reference to the over long hours may be found in other areas of the country, particularly in London. In '*Unprotected; facts in Dressmaking Life'*, the author, a former dress maker, describes the 'terrible hours' in crowded conditions which she had to endure whilst she was working as an apprentice and assistant, although the Children's Employment Commissioners interviewed several dressmakers in Birmingham and found that hours were generally from 8am to 8pm. Miss Holmes, a millinery, mantle and dressmaker interviewed by the commissioners in Birmingham in 1864 said that her indoor apprentices sometimes worked until 10pm, but never later than 11pm. The outdoor apprentices, she stated, would not 'stay five minutes beyond the time for anything. They take a full hour for dinner and a full half hour for lunch. They are very independent and irregular'.[160]

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[157] 'Census, 1851.' HO107, Piece 2056, Folio 350, Page 20; ' . 'Census, 1861.' RG09, Piece 2152, Folio 106, Page 21; 'Census, 1871.'; RG10/Piece 419/Folio 14/Page 22'Census, 1881.' RG11, Piece 349, Folio 42, p 28.
[158] Jordan. *The Women's Movement* p.65.
[159] *Children's Employment Commission. Second Report of the Commissioners. Trades and Manufactures* 1843. p.612, D2.
[160] *Children's Employment Commission (1862). Second Report of the Commissioners. With Appendix*, Command Papers ; Reports of Commissioners, 1864. p.35.

Certain occupations were only deemed suitable for girls from respectable families. Indeed, some were suitable only for those within the middle class. Working as a governess for example was seen as an occupation strictly for those from the middle class, as qualifications included the need for 'lady-like manners, habits and appearance'[161] and there is no evidence that any of the girls from the Blue Coat School obtained such employment. However, some did become teachers. Ann Smith, a pupil in the Blue Coat School was taken on as an assistant teacher in 1832 although she did not receive a wage until October 1835 when the committee agreed to pay her £5. She was promoted in April 1836 to teacher status but did not receive a pay increase until May 1837 when it rose to £15 per annum. She resigned in March 1839 and we do not know what happened to her.[162]

Some manufactures preferred to employ women and children instead of men to operate the hand presses, stamps and lathes at reduced wages although only in a few industries were there a significant number of women and children. For example, the button trade and later, in the 1860s, the steel pen trade which employed more than 2,000 workers, of which eighty percent were women and girls.[163] Organisational innovation, breaking the tasks down into a number of processes and new technologies meant that in some trades, the men took on the skilled and often heavier work, whilst the women and children worked on lighter, unskilled tasks.

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[161] M. Atkinson, 'Qualifications of a Governess', in *Governess Life, by the Author of 'Memorials of Two Sisters'.*, 1849. p.70.
[162] B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. October 1835, April 1836, May 1837, March 1839 and 'B.C.S. Application Register'. 1832.
[163] C. Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.41.

Women traditionally received one third to one half the wage of men, although wages in the Midlands were relatively high. However employing more women and children was not only a desire on the part of the manufacturer for cheap labour; they were also employed because of their dexterity with certain tasks was preferred to that of the men. Advertisements in *Aris's Gazette* specifically requested girls to work as button piercers and other work within the Japanning Trades.

The button manufacturing industry in Birmingham was the third most common occupation in 1841 and fourth most common occupation in 1861 as seen in Table 16. However, manufacturer John Turner in 1866 referred to the workers 'low state of education and morals' and believed that the fact that they were employed at all demonstrated a 'lower criteria of character' as their husbands could not afford to keep them at home.[164] However, feminist and journalist Emily Faithful, who presented a paper at a meeting of the Society of Arts in 1871 on *Women's Work, with special reference to Industrial Employment* said 'there is no deeply-rooted dislike to their admission into industrial pursuits, although there is considerable difficulty in securing for them fair chance of rising to situations of responsibility and consequent importance'[165] and she signalled out the Birmingham Button manufactories as an example of an industry which employed women as overseers[166] Nonetheless, in general throughout this period, the button manufactory industry was not seen as an occupation suitable for respectable women and girls and this is reflected by the fact that none of the girls from the Blue Coat School were employed as button makers.

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[164] Timmins. *The Resources, Products and Industrial History of Birmingham* p.444.
[165] E. Faithfull, 'Woman's Work with Special Reference to Industrial Employment', in *Meeting of the Society of Arts* (London, 1871), p.5.
[166] 'ibid' p.6.

Summary

Throughout this section, we have considered the occupational value of some of the main economic sectors in Birmingham during this period. As the leading industrial centre within the West Midlands, it offered a range of employment prospects within the manufacturing sector. Wages were good for those who were skilled even if the work itself was not that stimulating. Those with little skill were able to take advantage of the growing demand for porters and errand boys. Women and girls were also able to acquire unskilled work within the manufactory sector although it was inevitably low paid work.

There was an increasing demand for warehousemen, factors and clerks who dealt with the commercial aspects of the economy, offering opportunities for those with some literacy skills. We also see a rise in the number working in sectors such as law for instance and the creation of new roles, such as railway clerks. These occupations offered better promotional prospects and greater job security. In contrast, throughout this period domestic service remained the primary occupation for working class women.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we followed the former Blue Coat School children through their adult working life following completion of their apprenticeship as outlined in Chapter 4.

We found that not all the boys remained in the same occupation they pursued as an apprentice; some changed direction and acquired a different occupation. We also found that the majority of boys did not follow the same occupation as their father and that many obtained non-manual situations. As there was an increase in the number of non-manual vacancies on offer in Birmingham during this period, there were more opportunities for the boys to acquire a non-manual role in comparison to their fathers' generation. In particular, there was an increase in the number of clerical and professional occupations on offer although there is no indication that a growing number of boys from Blue Coat School entered this sector over time.

Though there was an absolute increase in the number of non-manual occupations throughout Great Britain, entry into the professional and clerical sector was limited to those who had basic literacy skills although conversely, those who obtained a high status non-manual occupation do not seem to have excelled academically. Although the academic qualifications they gained whilst at the school may have been useful to them in securing a high status occupation, they were not fundamentally essential. Limited evidence suggests that the valuable connections they made through work and family were ultimately more important.

Although some of the boys obtained high status occupations, overall less than a quarter experienced any upwards class mobility throughout their working life. Those within the clerical sector were more likely to experience some upwards mobility whilst those within the manual skilled manual sector were least likely to experience any mobility, although it is probable that some did experience status mobility through career progression.

Employment opportunities for the girls, following their education at the Blue Coat School was generally limited to unskilled domestic labour. Rarely were working class girls encouraged to better themselves by obtaining a high status occupation as waged work was not seen as central to their lives. Many only worked until they were married or were forced to return to work if they were widowed. Once married they were expected to be a good wife and mother and as such, domestic service was seen as preparing them for their future married life. As domestic service was seen as a 'respectable' occupation, in effect the school did fulfil its duty as none of them obtained employed within an occupation deemed to be disreputable.

Regarding status and class mobility through marriage and educational achievements, the results were inconclusive due to the size of the data sample.

CONCLUSION

This case study, has sought to evaluate the impact of a charity school education on the social mobility of working class children in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century.

This was achieved by following a cohort of children from the Blue Coat School in Birmingham through their life course. We considered the children's parental background and investigated aspects of their education. Following their departure from the school, we explored occupational training and subsequent career progression during their adult working life. By examining changes within a defined hierarchical of positions using occupation as the prime indicator, it has been possible to measure the extent of their mobility and associate change with their education.

In order to examine the children through their life course, a unique data set was constructed. This was comprised of linked of material from a multitude of documents from the Blue Coat School archive together with a wide range of material from other sources such as parliamentary reports, newspaper extractions and contemporary literature.

The scope of the study covers a period of unprecedented economic and demographic change in the town of Birmingham as we saw in Chapter 1. Using new documentary evidence arising from this research, we found that many of the parents of children in the Blue Coat School were migrants from the surrounding areas,

particularly from towns in the north-west region of the West Midlands which supplied the manufacturers with coal and iron ore. There is limited research on migration into Birmingham during this period and little is known about the character of these migrants. They may have harboured ambitions to become upwardly mobile and sought new opportunities for themselves and their children who were born in Birmingham. However such a conclusion cannot be validated without further research. We do know that such families from the Blue Coat School were from the respectable working class, as they were recognised as being 'industrious and honest'. All the children were also all baptised in the established church, another symbol of respectability although this did not necessarily mean that they were religiously inclined.

However, although the families associated with the Blue Coat School may have been characterised as 'respectable', this do not necessarily mean that they were affluent as many lived in deprived neighbourhoods in Birmingham. We saw that the standard of living was generally low during this period and events such as the loss of the father (main wage earner) or a large number of children within the household impacted in the ability of even respectable families to spend money on items seen as luxurious such as education. In Chapter 2 we found that more than two thirds of the children who attended the Blue Coat School came from single parent households and many of the children were orphans. This is not a surprising finding as many of charity schools recruited from these same categories in this period. Children from such disadvantaged families, even if they were from a respectable household were financially particularly vulnerable. However, in the Blue Coat School they would have

been able to avail themselves of the free clothing, board and lodging, an asset which was not usually available in the majority of charity schools.

Although education is now seen as one of the key drivers for social mobility, in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century education was not mandatory. For those from the working class who could afford a degree of education for their children, there was limited quality schooling in Birmingham and there is some evidence that a number of families who were not especially disadvantaged secured places for their children in the Blue Coat School. In Chapter 3 we found that the Blue Coat School offered a superior education in comparison to similar institutions in terms of facilities and length of schooling. A key finding was that the majority of children received 4 to 5 years of education. The girls potentially could have received 5 or even 6 years of schooling. Only two other charity schools in Birmingham provided more than two years tuition in this period. As the children boarded at the school, this also ensured that attendance was high.

The school tried to ensure it recruited teachers of quality but conversely, it was reluctant to pay them a respectable salary. The school adopted the monitorial system in the early nineteenth century; a system which was later discredited by the school and described as 'injurious in itself' although it remained in use albeit with modifications. Nonetheless, despite these issues the boys in the upper classes were taught subjects which were not available in many of the charity schools such as geography and the history of England. Even the girls were taught to write and they studied a number of other subjects although for only half the time of the boys as their

education also included needlework and other domestic tasks. They were also required to assist with the housework within the school.

Following completion of schooling, the children's education continued as the school ensured the children received occupational training in preparation for their adult working life. Generally, parents valued apprenticeships but the premium fees acted as a barrier to the higher status occupations. A key component of education at the Blue Coat School was the provision of apprenticeships, at no cost to the family, often provided by donors to the school. The children were fortunate to live in a town with a strong diverse economy and as such, we found that the majority of apprenticeships were locally based and they did not need to go outside the locality for their training. This is in contrast to research from studies that focussed particularly on pauper apprenticeships as frequently such children are to be found apprenticed many miles from home.

In Chapter 4 we found that a large number of boys were able to obtain an apprenticeship within the growing clerical and professional sector and that the number apprenticed into this sector was higher than the norm in Birmingham for that age group. Those boys who excelled academically were more likely to obtain an apprenticeship within the non-manufacturing sector, although the numbers were too low to establish whether this was statistically significant and as such is an area for further research. In contrast, for the girls it is debatable as to whether their apprenticeship brought them any benefits as there were limited employment

opportunities and there is no evidence that their academic achievements influenced the outcome of their apprenticeship.

In Chapter 5, which followed the children (now young adults) as they left their apprenticeship, we found that a large number of boys did not pursue the trade or profession into which they were initially apprenticed although we do not know whether they cancelled their apprenticeship or transferred to another one. Regardless of the outcome, we found that nearly two thirds of those who did not complete their apprenticeship had moved to a lower status occupation at the start of their adult working life.

Intragenerational mobility is an under researched area and as such these findings are especially interesting as we followed the young adults through their adult working life. We found that the majority of former male pupils (61.8 percent) remained in the same occupation. However, more than a third (38.2 percent) of former pupils experienced career mobility in comparison to less than a quarter of the previous generation (20.7 percent) which suggests that career mobility increased over time. Of those who did change their occupation, just over a third experienced upwards status mobility (36.6 percent). When we looked at class mobility we found that the majority of boys (70.3 percent) also remained in the same class throughout their working lives. Furthermore, less than a quarter experienced any upwards mobility (19.3 percent). As this cohort was small, these findings would benefit from further research. Regarding the former female pupils, the numbers were too low to provide a

conclusive response however the results suggests that there was no career mobility and no significant status mobility.

The study also explored intergenerational mobility, and in contrast to other studies, found that occupational inheritance was largely absent. The data does not enable us to draw any conclusion from this significant finding but we can speculate that the diverse nature of the economy within Birmingham encouraged the boys to follow a different pathway. Such a hypothesis is supported by data from analysis of sector mobility when we found evidence of a shift from manual to non manual occupations although with a small sample size, any conclusions must remain tentative.

More than a third of the former male pupils (41 percent) experienced a degree of class mobility but whilst this appears to be highly significant, close examination reveals that the majority moved up into the lower social class groups, particularly Class 5 which represents the lower clerical and sales workforce. This finding concurs with previous research that suggests it was not easy to move between the boundaries which separated the working class from the middle class although it wasn't insurmountable. Regarding the former female pupils, the study correlated father's occupation against husband's occupation. Again, numbers were low but there is no indication that upwards class mobility took place.

Following analysis of the extent of upwards social mobility, this study examined the literacy attainment of the children within the Blue Coat School to ascertain whether there was any correlation between education and mobility. Those studies that have

explored this avenue have used evidence from signatures on marriage certificates to correlate literacy to status mobility in this early period. The value of literacy as the instigator of social mobility in the early nineteenth century is an under researched topic. This research has uniquely used the examination certificates to demonstrate evidence of academic achievement. Numbers are low and as such, any results may only be classed as tentative. However, evidence suggests that those who held a high status occupation in their adult working life did not necessarily excel academically. It appears that you did not necessarily need literacy skills to succeed and secure a degree of social mobility.

When we examined the results in more detail we found that at sector level, there was a positive relationship between literacy skills and the ability to obtain a non-manual occupation during the period under review. However, whilst you did need reading and writing skills to enable you to obtain a position within the clerical sector, within the manufacturing sector literacy was not a prerequisite. However, as Gray asserts, the ability to read and write projected an image of 'intelligence and self-discipline'[1] which suggests that for the boys, literacy was still a useful attribute. For the girls there was no correlation between literacy achievements and social mobility but there is some evidence that girls who were literate were seen as more 'respectable'.

The study also provides evidence of informal peer networks formed prior and during their time in the Blue Coat School, which may have been a factor in the success of the children. We found that through their relationship with influential patrons, the

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[1] Gray. *The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh* p.130

school was able to secure respectable apprenticeships for many of the children at no cost to the parents and undoubtedly, this was one of the main attractions of the school. Evidence from the 'high achievers' suggests that mobility depended on the opportunities which were available and that the peer networks were crucial for success.

As discussed in the introduction, studies which are macro in nature may miss localised variations which impact on the ability of an individual to be socially mobile, hence this micro study has enabled us to analyse the data in terms of the local economy. However, focussing just on one specific topic - in this case a school - does impact on the size of the dataset and some conclusions must remain tentative. Following the girls through their life course has also proven problematic and they remain largely 'invisible'.

Future research could include a comparative study with similar institutions to establish whether the Blue Coat School was in any way unique in its specific attainments. The influence of patrons is also another area which could be explored. For those with no connections and no finance access to these social networks would have been invaluable.

To conclude, some of the boys clearly profited from their time in the Blue Coat School to the extent that they gave something back to the school later in life as members of the *True Blue Society.* However, for the girls and the majority of boys there is little indication that they achieved a significantly higher status occupation or

social class through the acquisition of literacy skills. Nonetheless, the school did give all children a chance to become sociably mobile through utilising social networks which may not have been otherwise available to those in the working class. Therefore, whilst the literacy skills they gained may not have specifically promoted social mobility, the education they received at the Blue Coat School did enhance their lives.

APPENDICES

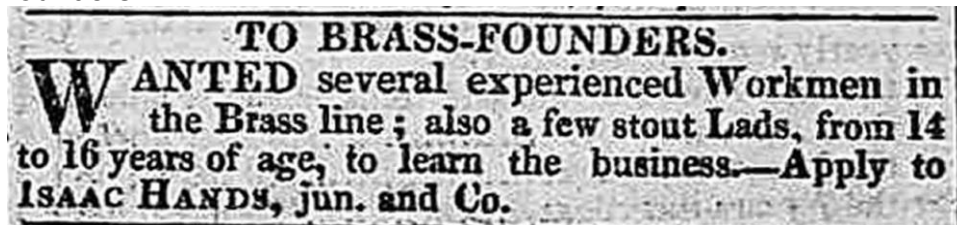## Appendix 1: Apprenticeship training providers

The apprenticeship providers no doubt had specific characteristics in mind when they applied to the school for an apprentice, assuming they were not just looking for cheap labour. The following descriptions highlight the specific qualities associated with each of the leading apprenticeship providers.

Occupations within the manufacturing section

Brass Founders

By 1800 there were there were 50 brass manufacturers in Birmingham and by 1830 there were 160.[2] It became quite a specialised trade, driven by the demand for a variety of goods. This advertisement in fig. 21 from *Aris's Gazette* newspaper in 1824 suggests that physical strength was the main requisite for those boys who wished to become brass founders.

Figure 21: Example of an advertisement for boys to work as apprentice brass founders

> **TO BRASS-FOUNDERS.**
> WANTED several experienced Workmen in the Brass line; also a few stout Lads, from 14 to 16 years of age, to learn the business.—Apply to ISAAC HANDS, jun. and Co.

Source: *Aris's Gazette*, 11 December 1824

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[2] Hopkins, *The Rise of the Manufacturing Town*. p.46

In the 1837 edition of Whittocks *Complete Book of Trades*, it was said that a boy who wanted to enter the business needed to be 'strong, robust and active' which also suggests that physical attributes were more important than any educational achievements. However, the author also believed that it would be 'advantageous for a youth apprenticed to this business to be taught drawing'[3] which suggests that the ability to draw would be attractive to an employer.

Buckle and Button Makers

Six boys from Blue Coat School were apprenticed to the buckle trade between 1784 and 1791. An apprenticeship within the buckle making industry would have been considered a good 'career choice' prior to the late eighteenth century when buckles were at the height of their popularity. A Buckle maker in the nineteenth century recalled that the 'wages were good' at the turn of the century and employment was such that a workman could chose when he wanted to work.[4] However the trade collapsed following the Napoleonic War and by 1829 there were just five buckle makers listed in Birmingham in *Pigot & Co's Directory of Warwickshire* and only one of those listed made buckles for clothes as the rest were bridle and steel buckle makers.[5] Unfortunately, it has not been possible to trace those six boys who were apprenticed to a buckle maker from Blue Coat School through the census to establish whether they managed to transfer their skills to the button industry or another trade.

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[3] N. Whittock and others, *The Complete Book of Trades* (London, 1837),. p.68

[4] 'Birmingham', in *The Victorian Working Class: Selections from Letters to the Morning Chronicle*, ed. by P.E. Razzell and R.W. Wainwright (London: Frank Cass, 1973), p. 307.

[5] *Pigot and Co.'s National Commercial Directory for 1828-9; Comprising... Cheshire, Cumberland, Derbyshire, Durham, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northumberland, Nottinghamshire, Rutlandshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Westmorelan.*

The majority of buttons in Great Britain in early nineteenth century were manufactured in Birmingham so it was a particularly lucrative business. Employers from *Messrs Turner and Sons* (one of the chief button manufacturers in Birmingham in the 1840s) valued educated workmen as they were more attentive and respectful but the ability to write or read does not appear to be a requirement in order for them to work in the industry.[6] Therefore it may be assumed that a good education was welcome but not necessary.

According to the author Campbell writing in 1757, women were employed in the trade because it didn't require any great strength but he believed they were 'generally gin drinkers and consequently bad wives'.[7] A century later in 1866, button manufacturer John Turner highlighted the large number of women employed in the button manufactures with 'low state of education and morals'. Nonetheless, he did go on to say the trade also employed a considerable number of 'respected and intelligent artisans' and the industry sought men who possessed artistic and other skills which required a degree of intellect.[8]

Gun Trade

The gun trade was also an important industry in Birmingham. Its development can be traced back to the late seventeenth century and successive wars ensured there was high demand. However, during the lean times, workmen would often turn to other

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[6] *Children's Employment Commission. Second Report of the Commissioners. Trades and Manufactures* 1843 F129-138, p.F172, 585

[7] R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (London, 1747) p.152

[8] John Turner, "The Birmingham Button Trade," in *The Resources, Products and Industrial History of Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District: A Series of Reports, collected by the Local Industries Committee of the British Association at Birmingham, in 1865*, ed. by Samuel Timmins (London: Hardwicke, 1866), p.444.

trades creating a skill shortage in times of need.[9] The work took place in small, specialised workshops and as each part of the gun product was sub-contracted out to craftsmen, this enabled the industry to adapt to requirements. The trade was not suitable for a 'dull, stupid boy,' but it did not require 'extraordinary strength nor education'.[10] Fourteen boys from Blue Coat School were formerly apprenticed to a master within the gun trade. Some were apprenticed to gun finishers, whilst others were apprenticed to gun lock filers. Others were apprenticed under the generic term 'gun makers'.[11]

Boot and Shoe Makers

The boot and shoemakers (also known as cordwainers), were rarely unemployed, especially in times of war when they were called upon to supply the army with boots. However, the shoe makers, like the tailors, were known to squander their wages and then apply for parish relief as soon as they were out of work.[12] The shoemakers were also known to be quite political in their outlook especially when work was slack. They were nearly always present in any disturbance or gathering.[13]

Thomas Cooper, who was born in 1805, first attended a Blue Coat School in Gainsborough in 1813 and then a day-school until the age of fifteen. His mother tried to find him work as a clerk or apprentice him to a painter but she was unable to afford the premiums. She was not very pleased when he decided to become a shoemaker's

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[9] Bailey De Witt and Douglas A. Nie, *English Gunmakers: The Birmingham and Provincial Gun Trade in the 18th and 19th Century* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1978). p.20

[10] Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914* (London: UCL Press, 1996). p.132

[11] 'B.C.S Apprenticeship Indentures'.

[12] *Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws.*, 1834. 1834, p.70A

[13] Lane, '*Apprenticeship in Warwickshire 1700 - 1834*'. p.114

apprentice, saying he would just be a 'lowly labourer with the awl' and that it would be a waste of his education.[14] In the *Book of Trades* it said that to be a successful shoemaker you needed a considerable amount of knowledge about the properties of leather[15] whilst in the *London tradesman* it said that a shoe-maker did not require 'much strength, nor a mechanic head; a moderate share of ingenuity goes to the compleating this tradesman'.[16]

Jewellery Trade

From the seventeenth century onwards Birmingham started to flourish as a centre for the manufacture of jewellery, but it was towards the middle of the nineteenth century that it really started to prosper, especially after it managed to discard its image for shoddy and pretentious manufactured items. Up until this period, any item in the country which appeared to be of doubtful quality or workmanship would usually be referred to as a 'Brummagem'. The quality of the jewellery improved following the establishment of the Birmingham School of Design in 1843. Although only a small number of employers appreciated the importance of the school, it was well attended by men from the working class. An analysis in 1858 of the occupations of former students included 158 jewellers or silversmiths, 268 japanners and 249 engravers.[17] By 1848, the *Art-Union* monthly journal was able to state that the Birmingham jewellers, in terms of quality, design and workmanship ranked as high as any in England, although items sold in Birmingham were still sold as 'London-made' to

[14] 'Minor Victorian Poets and Authors', *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, 1872 [Accessed 7 September 2014].

[15] *The Book of Trades or Library of the Useful Arts: Part II*, Third (London: Barnard and Sultzer, 1806). p.87

[16] R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (London, 1747). p.219

[17] Langford, *Modern Birmingham and Its Institutions*. p.230

ensure their sale.[18] According to Whittock in 1842, an apprentice jeweller 'ought to have some taste, much steadiness and application to business, and to keep aloof from the many insidious seductions by which he is sure to be surrounded'.[19]

A section within '*Household Words*' written by Charles Dickens in 1852 shows the value of acquiring an apprenticeship within the jewellery trade. Whilst admiring some of the work on show in a shop in Birmingham, Dickens commented on the fact that the masters only employed qualified workmen and that their 'journeymen must all have served an apprenticeship; not only because they are thus fitted for their business but because the value of apprenticeship is thus kept up'.[20]

Platers

Unlike many trades and professions, it was necessary to complete the full seven years of an apprenticeship to gain sufficient knowledge of all aspects of the plated ware trade. Therefore a typical apprentice would be required to work in each of the four departments – as a brazier, stamper, pierce-worker and candlestick maker.[21]

Saddlers

Saddlers made a good living and generally worked in places which were dry and clean. These were appealing attributes which no doubt accounted for the high apprenticeship premiums and the fact that they attracted apprentices from

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[18] Wallis. G., 'Recent Prgress in Design, As Applied to Manufacturers', *Journal of the Society of Arts*. 14th March 1856
[19] Whittock and others. *The Complete Book of Trades*. p.305
[20] C. Dickens, *Household Words*, 1852, XII. p.67
[21] Timmins. *The Resources, Products and Industrial History of Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District*, p.479.

prosperous backgrounds.[22] As the Complete *Book of Trades* notes, Saddlers did not require great strength nor superior skill'.[23]

<u>Non manufacturing sector</u>

The Attorneys Office

A solicitor was halfway between a barrister and attorney in terms of the definition of the role, but the actual work was similar to that of an attorney (gradually the 'attorney' and 'solicitor' professions became interchangeable and in fact, the term attorney had disappeared by 1875).

To qualify as a professional attorney, you were expected to serve a five year clerkship in an attorney's office bound to an attorney, performing menial tasks such as drafting wills, deeds and mortgages as well as 'running errands'. Only after five years would you be allowed to practice in your own right if the opportunity arose. Author Michael Miles, who examined those who entered the profession between 1710 and 1791, found that thirty four percent came from middle – lower middle class backgrounds as defined by high ranking merchants down to shop keepers and grocers. Only five percent of entrants came from a relatively poor background.[24] The high premium, which was on average £180 during the period 1799 to 1803, would have prevented the poor from entering the profession as apprentices in one form or

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[22] Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914*. p.121
[23] Whittock and others. The Complete Book of Trades. p.396.
[24] M. Miles, '"A Haven for the Privileged": Recuitment into the Profession of an Attorney in England, 1709-1792', *Social History*, 11.2 (1986), p.201.

another.[25] Even if they did have the option to serve a clerkship, many would have remained as clerks and would not have practiced as there was a glut of serving attorneys during this period.[26] In 1802 there were 113 attorneys in Warwickshire who were qualified to practice[27] and by 1829 in Birmingham alone there were 55 attorneys.[28]

In their indentures, those boys from the Blue Coat School who were apprenticed to work in an attorney's office were described as 'scriveners' and later in the absence of formal apprenticeships they were termed 'office boys.' The scrivener or 'law writer' did not need formal, legal training; he was employed as a copyist, preparing the cases and managing them as they progressed through the court. He had an important role replicating important legal documents but it was still dull work. However, there was an ongoing need for such clerks throughout this period. Charles Jones, writing in 1891 believed that demand for clerks in a solicitors office was 'in as great demand as ever'.[29] Whether a scrivener could then qualify as a professional attorney once he had worked in the office for a number of years is debatable. In *A treatise on the law of attornies, solicitors, and agents,* published in 1825, the stipulated qualifications were discussed at length interspersed with case studies to illustrate points of law. Two boys, who were apprenticed by attorneys to learn the 'art

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[25] Miles. *A Haven for the Privileged* p.203

[26] A.J Schmidt, "The Country Attorney in Late Eighteenth-Century England: Benjamin Smith of Horbling," *Law & History Review*, 8 (1990), p.240

[27] Philip Aylett, "A Profession in the Marketplace: The Distribution of Attorneys in England and Wales 1730-1800," *Law & History Review*, 5 (1987), p.15

[28] *Pigot and Co.'s National Commercial Directory for 1828-9; Comprising... Cheshire, Cumberland, Derbyshire, Durham, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northumberland, Nottinghamshire, Rutlandshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Westmorelan.* p.782

[29] C. Jones, *The Solicitor's Clerk: A Handy Book Upon The Ordinary Practical Work Of A Solicitor's Office. With Precise Instructions As To The Procedure In Conveyancing Matters And The Practice Of The Courts* (London, 1891), p.5 cited in G Spurr, "Those Who Are Obliged to Pretend That They Are Gentlefolk p.111.

and mystery of a scrivener' were later prohibited from being sworn in to practice as professional attorneys because they had not initially been apprenticed to serve a clerkship.[30]

Linen Drapers

If you worked as a linen draper, you were in a trade which was considered to be 'a very genteel, if not elegant business.' It was 'anticipated that an apprentice would have to have had enough education to be able to converse intellectually with his superior clients'.[31] However, Campbell in 1747 believed that it 'was more than madness to serve a seven year apprenticeship' unless a boy had a good chance of setting himself up in his own business',[32] although apprentices were still serving a seven year apprenticeship well into the nineteenth century as evidenced by surviving indentures.

Any boy who was apprenticed to a linen draper would be expected to have a thorough knowledge of the manufacturing process and all the fabrics being sold as well as the prices, market and demand for the goods. Furthermore, according to the *Trader's & Manufacturer's Compendium*, a youth needed to be a 'good writer and accountant, and polite in his manners'.[33] A woollen-draper, on the other hand, needed to be able to write well although it was said that a boy gained no advantage

[30] R. Maugham, *A Treatise on the Law of Attornies, Solicitors, and Agents*, 1825. p.48
[31] Whittock and others. *The Complete Book of Trades* p.310
[32] Campbell, *The London Tradesman* p.282
[33] J. Montefiore, *Trader's & Manufacturer's Compendium: Containing the Laws, Customs, & Regulations, Relative to Trade* (London, 1804), I & II. p.285.

serving an apprenticeship; knowledge of the commodity could be gained in a few months.[34]

The Grocery Trade

Those who worked in the grocery trade could often command large profits but it was said that the business did not require much skill. Campbell, writing in 1757 in *The London Tradesman* was scathing about the grocery apprenticeships. He said that an apprentice grocer had 'nothing to learn but the market price of goods and to be so cunning as not sell for less than they buy'.[35] The author Defoe, writing in the middle of the eighteenth century believed that a seven year apprenticeship was not really worthwhile as you could learn all you needed to know in a couple of months. However, he also remarked on the fact that you did need to write a good hand, understand common arithmetic and be able to weigh the goods.[36] Likewise, according to the 1803 *Traders and Manufacturer's Compendium*, 'the only advantage a youth in the grocery business can derive from serving an apprenticeship of seven years, is to obtain his freedom in the city; a journeyman must write a good hand and understand common arithmetic'.[37]

Factors

The factor generally, but not always, worked on a 2 – 2 ½ percentage commission, although the apprentices received a yearly wage. The profit of a business often depended on the knowledge and skills of the factor who had to have the ability to

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[34] Campbell. *The London Tradesman* p.196
[35] 'ibid', p.188
[36] Defoe, The Complete English Tradesman cited in J.A. Rees, *The Grocery Trade, Its History and Romance*, 1910, I. p.44
[37] Montefiore, *Trader's & Manufacturer's Compendium* I & II. p.366

gather market information on his customers as well as establish goodwill with them. As an apprentice, a boy would learn the value of keeping a careful watch over the credit-worthiness of his customers and also how to develop trading routes in order to accommodate new customers. A factor in 1839 was described as being typically a 'young and very shrewd individual, possessing great suavity of manner and a remarkable ability to suit himself to all the varied moods of his very varied customers'.[38] In '*Hints on commercial travelling by a veteran highwayman*' published in 1837, the author recommends that youths who wished to work as factors would benefit from being able to write with a 'plain hand with rapidity.' Regarding figure work, the author thought a youth could learn what was required on the road as long as he had some experience of working in a warehouse or counting-room. He added, 'of course the act of expressing his ideas without much mutilation of the mother tongue will also be found rather useful than otherwise' and that he 'should be well dressed, rather above than below the average standard.'[39] As with many trades, a factor needed to be trustworthy, sober and of 'good moral character.'

Merchants

The merchants commanded the highest premiums. In the *Traders & Manufacturer's Compendium*, it was said that a merchant needed to be 'a man of extensive genius, and his education liberal….he must understand his mother tongue perfectly, and write it grammatically and with judgement'.[40] Hence, the sons of wealthy merchants

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[38] Society of Commercial Travellers., *The System of Commercial Travelling in Europe and the United States,*. p.9
[39] Veteran Highwayman, *Hints on Commercial Travelling By a Veteran Highwayman* (Glasgow, 1837), p.16, 18.
[40] Montefiore, *Trader's & Manufacturer's Compendium,* p.507.

attended Grammar Schools before they were apprenticed in order to learn the classics.

For those who did not have a Grammar School education or suitable connections, it was possible to secure a footing in the door by accepting a lower position within a mercantile establishment although there was no guarantee that they would eventually become a merchant. In *Recollections of a blue-coat boy, or, A view of Christ's Hospital,* it was said that nearly all the boys who did not go to sea or to college wanted to 'be placed as clerks in merchants counting houses'.[41] Nine boys from Blue Coat School were apprenticed out to merchants, including one who was apprenticed to Matthew Boulton. Unfortunately, not much is known about the personal circumstances of these boys except for John Salter who was apprenticed to Francis Baker Cooper originally from South America. Both of his parents were jewellers who were living off parish relief in 1851. In 1817 he was punished for being part of a small group of misbehaving boys, one of whom ran away with a cheese.[42]

Law Stationers

Evidence provided by the Children's Employment Commission in 1862 suggests that by this date many law stationers no longer took on apprentices. However, for those who were apprenticed to the profession, hours were likely to be from 8.30am to around 9pm.[43] In *Bleak House*, Charles Dickens describes the law stationers office as a place where 'Deeds (are) engrossed and copied, law-writing executed in all its

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[41] Scargill, *Recollections of a Blue-Coat Boy,* p.149.
[42] 'B.C.S General Meeting Minute Book'. December 1817
[43] *Children's Employment Commission. Fifth Report of the Commissioners, with Appendix*, Command Series, 1862, XXIV. pp.38-39 (155).

branches, &c., &c., &c.'. The back room of the shop is described as a 'confined room, strong of parchment-grease, is warehouse, counting-house, and copying-office'.[44] This was the role of the law stationer; to make copies of legal documents. In the *Guide to Employment in London* published in 1845 it states that a law stationer required 'nothing more than a steady habit of application and the ability to write a fair and regular hand'.[45]

Tailors

The tailors in general, were seen as lazy and dishonest. In a report from 1834 concerning the operation of poor laws, Harrison Codd assistant commissioner, refers to claimants 'who have received and might still be in receipt of high wages, but who have wasted them, throwing themselves upon the parish for relief immediately that they are out of work'. He continues by saying 'This occurs very much with regard to tailors, as a class; and a more dissolute class does not, I believe, exist'.[46] In *The Tailor* published in 1801, the author felt the need to 'answer a charge so commonly made and so pertinaciously adhered to' in reference to their indolent habits.[47] Unlike the button burnishers who regulated their input of apprentices, the tailors would recruit boys at the expense of men who cost more to employ. The trade was regulated and wages fixed at 4s and 6d per day although the better class of tailors could make more. Furthermore, not only was the service sector expanding but in the 1806 *Book of Trades*, it said that even though the trade was overstocked with hands

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[44] C. Dickens, *Bleak House* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1853), p. 93.
[45] *Guide to Employment in London.* p.29.
[46] *Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws.* p.70A
[47] Anonymous. *The Tailor* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1801), p.15.

if a man was sober, industrious and skilful he was rarely out of work.[48] If you wished to become a master tailor, 'a quick eye' appeared to be the most important qualification.[49]

Surveyors

Until the mid-nineteenth century, the specialisms associated with the role of the architect, surveyor and civil engineer were not clearly defined. It was only when the roles started to become more professionalised that such divisions occurred. The lower class of surveyors were employed to measure, value and estimate a properly and this was laborious work. It was necessary to either obtain an apprenticeship through the provision of an expensive premium or obtain a position as a salaried assistant which provided a meagre allowance.[50]

Junior general clerks

With the rapid growth of service and commercial sectors in the country, particularly in Birmingham, there was a great need for clerks. By entering the clerical profession, a young working class man would have an opportunity to enter the realms of the lower middle class.

In 1852, J. Harrison published a pamphlet, reviewing the '*Social position and claims of book-keepers and clerks*'. Discussing qualifications he said they needed to be

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[48] *The Book of Trades or Library of the Useful Arts: Part II*, p.84
[49] 'ibid' p.85
[50] C. de Silva, 'Educating the Chartered Surveyor: Looking Back to Look Forward', *International Journal of Law in the Built Environment*, 6.3 (2014), p.255.

'men of respectability, education and address'.[51] There were of course, different classes of clerks and qualifications varied according to class, as summarised by a satirical article in *Punch* 1845. At the top was the government clerk who filled his day with light reading which relieved the 'dreadful monotony of doing nothing' and this was followed by the bank clerk. The railway clerk was the next in the hierarchy and he was seen as somebody who took fares and gave out tickets 'very slowly'. Articled clerks may be aligned with government clerks although it was thought that some people would not 'always put up with airs from anyone in an attorney's office'. Below the articled clerks were the copying clerks and right at the bottom were the barrister clerks.[52] Although written tongue-in-cheek, the article does depict the hierarchical nature of the profession.

Until he gained experience, the role of the junior clerk was primarily to run errands and copy letters. In 1846, in an article in the *Law Times,* one of the distinguishing features of a junior clerk in comparison to a chief clerk was the fact that the duties of the junior clerk were 'purely ministerial, and even mechanical, so much so indeed, that one of the witnesses stated they might be performed by a boy from Christ's Hospital after a very short introduction'.[53]

Even for those boys who obtained employment as trainee bank clerks, the initial work was very much that of an office boy. Anderson found that eighty-four percent of clerks in the North and South Wales Bank had served an apprenticeship and for the

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[51] Harrison, '*The Social Position and Claims of Book-Keepers and Clerks Considered*' p. 21. p.4.
[52] 'Punch's Guide to Servants', *Punch* (London, 1845), p.29.
[53] Whiting, 'Important Judgement Re the Suitors of the Court', *The Law Times and Journal of Property*, VII. May 29th 1846. p.174.

first twelve months, they spent their time carrying notes and papers, distributing

material and collecting invoices.[54]

References to junior office boys working as errand boys may be found as late as

1900. Bray, in his article the 'Apprenticeship Question, queried the term 'office boy' to

be found in the census returns. Instead, he said would have preferred to re-class

them as an 'errand boys' unless stated otherwise. He was dismissive of this class of

boys, saying 'it may be said that they are on duty for long hours, though frequently

left with nothing to do, are under inadequate supervision, learn nothing, and speedily

slough off the effects of their school training'.[55]

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[54] Anderson, *Victorian Clerks*, p. 14.
[55] R.A. Bray, "The Apprenticeship Question," *The Economic Journal*, 1909, p.410, p.412.

Appendix 2: The Registrar-General's Social Class system as adapted by *A Vision of Britain Through Time* (http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/)

1 Professional occupations

2 Managerial and technical occupations

3 Clerical and Skilled manual

4 Semi skilled manual

5 unskilled

Appendix 3: The HISCLASS Class system

HISCLASS uses the following 12 classes

1 Higher managers

2 Higher professionals

3 Lower managers

4 Lower professional and clerical, sales

5 Lower clerical and sales

6 Foremen

7 Skilled workers

8 Farmers

9 Lower skilled workers

10 Lower skilled farm workers

11 Unskilled workers

12 Unskilled farm workers

Appendix 4: The HISCO Coding system

HISCO Major Groups

1 Professional, technical and related workers

2 Administrative and managerial workers

3 Clerical and related workers

4 Sales workers

5 Service workers

6 Agricultural workers

7-8-9 Production and related workers, transport equipment operators and labourers

HISCO Additional codes created for Blue Coat Charity School

30000 County court agent

33100 Bankers

39390 Scrivenor

41000 Agent

58210 Guard of mail coach/stage coach

72400 Caster

72400 Lamp maker

72790 Brass tube maker

72900 Enameller

81230 Bone and ivory turner

83220 Die Sinker – analogous to a Tool Maker

83290 Fire iron maker

83990 Stirrup maker

83990 Wire fender maker

84240 Scale Beam maker

84240 Rule maker

84240 Mathematical instrument maker

90290 Tray maker

88090 Miniature frame maker

88090 Tortoise shell box maker

88090 Steel toy maker

88090 Toy Maker

81900 Axel Fitter

92625 Pocket book maker

95140 Stone grate maker

97150 Bottler

97150 Pin Stacker

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