

**Taking the Pledge:
A Study of Children's Societies for
the Prevention of Cruelty to Birds
and Animals in Britain, c.1870-1914**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the work of children's societies that aimed to instruct children to be kind to animals and birds, from c.1870 to 1914. Its aims are to account for the growth of these societies managed by animal protectionists and the press; to assess how contemporary modes of masculinity affected children's relationships with animals; to explain how children embarked upon progressive conservation; and contribute to the history of childhood and the press.

A widely held belief was that cruelty to animals led to interpersonal violence. By surveying the children's press, and the work of the Royal Society for the Protection of Animals, this thesis argues that moralists realised that the solution to this anxiety lay in teaching children to respect animals. The RSPCA's educational work was reorganised in 1870, and the first Band of Mercy children's society followed in 1875. The Dicky Bird Society, the first children's 'press club', was formed a year later by the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*. These associations obliged children to sign a pledge making a commitment to be kind towards animals. Literature and proactive activities then provided a means of reinforcing this undertaking and measuring progress. By creating 'tiny humanitarians' as active conservation workers, the societies inspired children to care about animals and also reform their peers. This was not without its tensions, most conspicuously the reticence of boys to join the societies because of their love of bird-nesting and received ideas about masculinity.

Existing surveys depict the nineteenth-century animal protection movement as one managed by privileged individuals concerned with enforcing legislation by

harassing a supposedly brutal working class, who had no time to care about animal welfare. On the contrary, this thesis suggests that children, especially those of the working classes, as active 'tiny humanitarians', played a positive role in pulling public opinion towards a more appreciative disposition towards wildlife.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Newspapers and Periodicals

<i>BOP</i>	<i>Boy's Own Paper</i>
<i>COP</i>	<i>Children's Own Paper</i>
<i>GOP</i>	<i>Girl's Own Paper</i>
<i>NWC</i>	<i>Newcastle Weekly Chronicle</i>

Societies

BOK	Band of Kindness
BOM	Band of Mercy
DBS	Dicky Bird Society
GFS	Girl's Friendly Society
KHB	Kind Hearted Brigade
ISDV	Incorporated Society for the Destruction of Vermin
LFHS	<i>Little Folks Humane Society</i>
MFDFA	Metropolitan Free Drinking Fountain Association (1859-1867)
MDFCTA	Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association (1867-1914)
NHS	Natural History Society of Northumbria
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals NB: The society did not receive its royal patronage until 1840. To avoid confusion, RSPCA will be used throughout this thesis.
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds NB: Granted a Royal Charter in 1904, but previously known as the Society for the Protection of Birds. The abbreviation RSPB is adopted throughout this thesis to avoid confusion.
RTS	Religious Tract Society
SNSU	School Nature Study Union

Other

HMI His/Her Majesty's Inspectorate of schools

PSC Parliamentary Select Committee

Archives

CCA Cheshire and Chester Archives

CRO Cumbria Record Office

LMA London Metropolitan Archives

NCL/LS Newcastle City Library, Local Studies Section

NLP Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society

NLS National Library of Scotland

NURL Newcastle University, Robinson Library

NRO Northumberland Record Office

TWAS Tyne and Wear Archives Services

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INTRODUCTION

In 1693 John Locke wrote:

One thing I have frequently observed in Children, that when they have got Possession of any poor Creature, they are apt to use it ill: They often *torment*, and treat very roughly young Birds, Butterflies and such other poor Animals... with a seeming kind of Pleasure. This I think should be watched in them... they who delight in the Suffering and Destruction of inferiour Creatures, will not be apt to be very compassionate or benign to those of their own kind... Children should from the beginning be bred up in an Abhorrence of *killing*, or tormenting any living Creature.¹

An article in the *Guardian* newspaper in 2005 claimed: 'Childhood cruelty to animals may signal violence in future'.² Despite being over three hundred years apart, the commentators share the same concern that cruelty to animals may be a precursor to later interpersonal violence. In the nineteenth century, the country's premier animal welfare association, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals [RSPCA], heightened this anxiety. The need to check 'wantonness in the child' was raised for fear it would 'deepen into cruelty, or, at any rate, indifference to it, in the youth and the man'.³ This concern is not without foundation. As recent psychological and clinical studies have indicated, there is compelling evidence suggesting a link between maltreatment of animals and later interpersonal violence.⁴

The abuse of animals by children is surprisingly common. A survey by Clifton Flynn, in 1997, indicated that half of his respondents had witnessed or perpetrated

¹ John Locke, 'Some Thoughts Concerning Education' in *The Educational Writings of John Locke*, ed. by James L. Axtell, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 13, 225-26.

² *Guardian*, 11 August 2005.

³ *Animal World*, II/20 (May 1871), p. 120.

⁴ Randall Lockwood and Frank R. Ascione, eds., *Cruelty to Animals and Interpersonal Violence: Readings in Research and Application*, (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1998); Frank R. Ascione, *Children and Animals: Exploring the Roots of Kindness and Cruelty*, (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2005).

some form of animal abuse in childhood.⁵ These findings suggest that animal cruelty is an inherent trait for large numbers of children. We have no such quantitative measurements of this phenomenon for past generations of individuals, but as most creatures were largely unprotected by legislation and there was widespread use of working animals, levels of cruelty are thought to have been much higher. Surveys of nineteenth-century children's play patterns underline a common theme. According to James Walvin, children 'seemed to prey on animals and birds as a regular part of their youthful pleasures' causing 'needless suffering to birds and animals', and for Eric Hopkins, 'chasing (and persecuting) small animals' was widespread.⁶ The content of a bird's nest held the strongest fascination. For much of the nineteenth century, searching for eggs was an uncontrolled pursuit. David Bruce described the exquisite pleasure of finding a rare dotterel's nest to *Macmillan's Magazine's* readers in 1881 asking, 'Where is the schoolboy who has not a strong love for bird-nesting? Or where is the "old boy" either, who, from amid the hustle and dust of a city life, does not look back on the same pursuit with feelings of the keenest pleasure?'⁷ Children's books repeatedly condemned such practices, and stressed the need to prevent animal cruelty.⁸ This problem taxed nineteenth-century RSPCA supporters who, like modern social scientists, reiterated the necessity for some form of proactive educational work. Supporters were certain that positive action by educationalists, parents, and others, who worked with children, could stem these violent tendencies.⁹

⁵ Clifton P. Flynn, 'Why Family Professionals Can No Longer Ignore Violence Toward Animals', *Family Relations*, 49/1 (2000), 87-95.

⁶ James Walvin, 'Children's Pleasures' in *Leisure in Britain 1780-1939*, ed. by John K. Walton and James Walvin, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 227-41 (p. 233); Eric Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed: Working-class Children in Nineteenth-Century England*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 292.

⁷ *Macmillan's Magazine*, 44 (May-October 1881), pp. 347-52.

⁸ Walvin, *Children's Pleasures*, p. 233.

⁹ RSPCA, *12th Annual Report 1838*, pp. 42-44; Alan R. Felthous and Stephen R. Kellert, 'Childhood Cruelty to Animals and Later Aggression Against People: A Review', *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 144/6 (1987), 710-17 (p.716).

These calls for intervention should be placed in the context of a heightened nineteenth-century public concern over the conduct of children, and especially working-class youth, which reached a 'crescendo' at the turn of the twentieth century. Eileen Yeo is careful to make the point that the public had long been sensitive over the behaviour of youths, noting that the phrase 'juvenile delinquent' came into use from 1816 to express anxiety about the spiralling levels of youth crime in London.¹⁰ Whilst young criminals had always taxed the authorities, a specific public fear of juvenile crime continued in cyclical periods throughout the nineteenth century as Peter King and others have portrayed.¹¹ Such public anxieties are now labelled 'moral panics'. Quite different factors triggered this supposed moral disintegration of children, including a breakdown in community identity, and the debasing influence of juvenile leisure activities, namely their entertainment and choice of reading.¹² This begs the question of whether there were other roots for these moral panics. For instance, just how widespread and accepted was the RSPCA's claim that the poor treatment of animals and the unruly behaviour of children were linked? If the RSPCA was so certain that animal cruelty fostered mimetic violence, what action did it take?

This thesis is in part a survey of the late nineteenth-century response in Britain to this call for intervention. It examines the many attempts to foster humanitarian behaviour, most notably through the enrolment of children into 'nature societies'.

¹⁰ Eileen Janes Yeo, 'The Boy is the Father of the Man': Moral Panic over Working-Class Youth, 1850 to the Present Day', *Labour History Review*, 69/2 (2004), 185-99.

¹¹ Peter King, 'The Rise of Juvenile Delinquency in England 1780-1840: Changing Patterns of Perception and Prosecution', *Past and Present*, 160 (1998), 116-66; John R. Gillis, 'The Evolution of Juvenile Delinquency in England 1890-1914', *Past and Present*, 67 (1975), 96-126 (p. 97); Margaret May, 'Innocence and Experience: The Evolution of the Concept of Juvenile Delinquency in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Victorian Studies*, XVII/1 (1973), 7-29; Heather Shore, 'The Idea of Juvenile Crime in 19th Century England', *History Today*, 50/6 (2000), 21-27.

¹² Irene Maver, 'Children and the Quest for Purity in the Nineteenth-Century Scottish City', *Paedagogica Historica*, XXXIII/3 (1997), 801-24; John Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta Rap 1830-1996*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998), pp. 1-10.

John Springhall has provided a useful definition of a youth movement, which will be used to categorise societies chosen for this study. He suggests such agencies willingly admitted ‘unlimited numbers of children, adolescents, and young adults, with the aim of propagating some sort of code of living’.¹³ As a ‘code of living’, nature society members took a pledge on enrolment agreeing to be kind towards animals and birds, and preferably undertook some form of conservation work.¹⁴

Two different initiatives emerged. The first was the Band of Mercy [BOM] that was organised under the auspices of the RSPCA from 1883.¹⁵ Founded on similar precepts to established youth movements, the BOM was largely organised by middle-class workers and drew heavily on the established milieu of church, temperance and Sunday school. With such respectable origins, the BOM appears to be an archetypal Victorian youth movement and epitomised the customary establishment response. A second type of children’s society, managed by periodicals and newspapers, pressed the case for animal welfare. The children’s magazine *Little Folks* began a Humane Society in 1882.¹⁶ Given that the newspaper press is primarily viewed as adult reading material, it is perhaps surprising that this medium also founded children’s societies. Beginning in 1876 with the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle’s* [NWC] Dicky Bird Society [DBS], a total of forty-three newspaper titles have been found to have hosted societies. The vast majority worked to promote the positive treatment of animals, and, like BOM members, children had to agree to a pledge promising to care for animals

¹³ John Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society: British Youth Movements, 1883-1940*, (London: Croom Helm, 1977), p.13.

¹⁴ N[ewcastle] C[ity] L[ibrary]/L[ocal] S[tudies], L042: W.E. Adams, *History of the Dicky Bird Society by Uncle Toby*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: 1887), p. 5.

¹⁵ Arthur W. Moss, *Valiant Crusade: The History of the RSPCA*, (London: Cassell, 1961), pp. 198-201.

¹⁶ Gretchen R. Galbraith, *Reading Lives: Reconstructing Childhood, Books, and Schools in Britain, 1870-1920*, (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1997), pp. 62-63.

and birds.¹⁷ These 'press societies' had very different arrangements from the BOM. Through columns in the newspapers or magazines, children voiced their concerns for animal welfare. Secondly, unlike the volunteer charitable workers that led existing youth movements, commercial entities managed these new societies. Ostensibly, they promoted similar moralistic values as the church-led movements, but as they were organised by publications where profit was an imperative, we must question the sole motive of such societies. Were there other factors at play, such as commercial rivalry, reader retention or political influence?

If such motives were present, they did not deter enrolment. By 1914, the various 'press' societies had attracted at least 1.3 million members.¹⁸ Such numbers suggest that animal welfare struck a chord with children, despite their predilection for animal cruelty. However, scholarly assessments of the RSPCA suggest that such societies should not have been broadly popular. The working classes were constantly berated and, at times, prosecuted for their supposed brutish behaviour. Although Brian Harrison acknowledges the existence of the RSPCA's youth work, he, like Harriet Ritvo and others, pinpoints the RSPCA's prosecuting work in order to convince us that this was a middle-class agency bent on reforming working-class behaviour, towards mainly domestic and working animals, through the courts.¹⁹ Such constant attacks meant there was a great deal of enmity and suspicion towards animal protectionists. Second, even if the working classes wanted to take an interest in

¹⁷ See *Appendix I*.

¹⁸ See *Appendix I*.

¹⁹ Brian Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 84; Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*, (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 133-57; F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain 1830-1900*, (London: Fontana Press, 1988), pp. 278-84; Keith Vivien Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800*, (London: Penguin, 1984), pp. 186-87.

animal welfare, the realities of everyday economic life intervened. For Keith Thomas, 'kindness to animals was a luxury which not everyone had learnt to afford' and 'most workers continued to regard animals in a functional light, untinged by sentiment'.²⁰ Third, a common theme of the appraisals of the environmental societies is that their management, membership, and campaigning work, which extended to the conservation of birds, protection of the countryside, and anti-vivisection, was organised by a close-knit circle of establishment society members and middle-class moralists. The working classes and children appear only as felons prosecuted for animal cruelty or supine receivers of lectures focusing on domestic animal welfare.²¹

This thesis too, is concerned with the working classes, and it explores this by examining the role played by the 'active citizen'. Moral reformers placed their faith in the concept of the active citizen, who could become engaged in charitable work, including pressing the animal welfare agenda, leading to the 'mobilization of civil society'. Penelope Law suggests that although stimulating public opinion was the ultimate goal of environmentalists, this active citizenship was the organisational power behind press campaigns, parliamentary pressure and demonstrations. Apart from a brief summary of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' [RSPB] education programme, which Law argues was only instigated after a failure to mobilise mass pressure, there is no discussion of how and if 'civil society' was engaged. Instead, as Harrison's discussion of the same concept demonstrates, the

²⁰ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp. 186-87.

²¹ Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, pp. 105-106, 117-18; R.J. Moore-Colyer, 'Feathered Women and Persecuted Birds: The Struggle against the Plumage Trade, c. 1860-1922', *Rural History*, 11/1 (2000), 57-73; John Ranlett, "'Checking Nature's Desecration": Late-Victorian Environmental Organisations', *Victorian Studies*, 26/2 (1983), 197-222.

active citizen belonged to a select band of middle and upper class reformers.²² This thesis tackles this issue by exploring how children were encouraged to become active workers and considers whether the interest in animal welfare extended to all social classes and broached the wider nature conservation issues of the day, such as the feathered millinery debate and egg-collecting. It argues that working with children was not the last resort of environmentalists, but rather was fundamental.

Schools were the obvious environment in which such issues could be raised and William Marsden has drawn attention to a theory proposed by a London schoolteacher in 1908. Alyce Sandford suggested that if children were encouraged to take an interest in the welfare of animals then they would develop into 'tiny humanitarians'. These new converts would then impart their beliefs to their parents and peers. Sandford believed that her young converts contributed to the decline of aviculture in the 'slum land' Blackfriars district of London.²³ Significantly, at least one contemporary individual thought children would be ideal active, if subliminal, conservationists.

The methods employed by animal protectionists suggest an apparent failure to work with the working classes. For Harrison, the 'nineteenth-century protection of animals was promoted in two broad ways: through progressively widening the scope of legislation, and through extending the number and geographical range of the

²² Penelope Jane Law, 'The Long-Run Development of Environmental Interest Groups in Britain: Two Case Studies', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 2000), pp. 86-88, 116-17; Brian Harrison, 'State Intervention and Moral Reform in Nineteenth-century England', in *Pressure from Without in early Victorian England*, ed. by Patricia Hollis, (London: Arnold, 1974), pp. 289-322.

²³ William E. Marsden, 'Environmental Education: Historical Roots, Comparative Perspectives, and Current Issues in Britain and the United States', *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 13/1 (1997), 6-29 (p. 9); Alyce L. Sandford, 'School Pets as a Help to Moral Training', in *Papers on Moral Education Communicated to the First International Moral Education Congress Held at the University of London*, ed. by Gustav Spiller, (London: Nutt, 1909), pp. 118-20.

agencies for enforcing it'.²⁴ This stark assessment depicts an association bent on using the law to reform behaviour and omits any reference to educational efforts. Harrison does not ignore education in his critiques of the RSPCA, but although stressing the RSPCA's realisation that education could be as mutually productive as prosecution, Harrison opens up little ground on this issue. Moreover, the two 'official histories' of the RSPCA offer a more detailed assessment, stressing the belief that humanitarian values instilled at an early age would have lasting effects. Given the remit and position of the authors of these 'approved' histories, these dated surveys naturally offer complimentary portrayals of the RSPCA, with little critical evaluation and a tendency to portray the Society as sweeping away ignorance and cruelty with decency and moral fortitude.²⁵

The first concern of the RSPCA was the welfare of working animals, but towards the last quarter of nineteenth century the gaze of conservationists became wider and focused on the welfare of wild birds.²⁶ This was supported by the RSPB. Although its work against the feather millinery trade has been appraised, we still lack a satisfactory account of its broader work.²⁷ Bird protection is one of the central themes of this thesis, which will examine the growing nineteenth-century movement for bird protection and in particular, how this was presented to children. As egg-collecting was particularly popular, any attempts to protect birds, as opposed to working animals, surely would have had an immediate impact.

²⁴ Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 84.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-122, 129; Edward G. Fairholme and Wellesley Pain, *A Century of Work for Animals: The History of the RSPCA 1824-1924*, (London: Murray, 1924), pp. 159-72; Moss, *Valiant Crusade*, pp. 196-208.

²⁶ James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain and Humanity in the Victorian Mind*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 125.

²⁷ Robin W. Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation: A Study in Nature Protection*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Alan Haynes, 'Murderous Millinery', *History Today*, 33/7 (1983), 26-30; T. Samstag, *For the Love of Birds: The Story of the RSPB*, (Sandy: RSPB, 1989). Samstag's account is basic at best.

Growing Concern for Animal Welfare

The emergence of children's nature societies in the late-nineteenth century was not accidental. Jose Harris has drawn attention to the years 1870 to 1914, arguing that a strong sense of 'modernity' emerged, as individuals sought to differentiate 'the way we live now' from previous generations. Admittedly, generations of individuals have viewed their 'own' eras as 'modern', but what made the late Victorians and Edwardians so conscious of their own 'modern' era were the visibly progressive events they were witnessing. This included scientific and industrial advances, the Europeanization of the world and the growth of the urban environment.²⁸ The period was particularly important with regard to attitudes towards children. It witnessed great strides in elementary education, a remarkable growth in their press, and the establishment of youth movements, all of which contributed to their development. Arguably, many of the values that still bind society today were forged in this period, including an increased appreciation of the natural world, illustrated by the sudden flurry of bird protection laws after 1869, and the establishment of nature conservation societies.²⁹ Whilst this new legislation ostensibly protected these creatures, it had to be publicised to have any effect on the wider public's behaviour. Even more important was the work in overturning long-standing attitudes towards wild creatures. This thesis will show how the children's societies worked to create an appreciative mindset, especially towards birds, by publicising the nature conservation debates and then engaging their members in proactive conservation work. The ambition was to

²⁸ Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914*, (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. 32-33.

²⁹ John Sheail, *Nature in Trust: The History of Nature Conservation in Britain*, (Glasgow: Blackie, 1976), pp. 22-48; David Evans, *A History of Nature Conservation in Britain*, (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 35-53; Brian Bonhomme, 'Nested Interests: Assessing Britain's Wild-Bird Protection Laws of 1869-1880', *Nineteenth Century Studies*, 19 (2005), 47-68.

create a new generation of individuals less inclined to abuse animals, and therefore unlikely to develop violent tendencies.³⁰

Scholarly interest in the relationship between man, his fellow creatures and the living environment has been given impetus by the advent of the discipline of environmental history, with its emphasis, according to Donald Worster, on the 'role and place of nature in human life'.³¹ J.R. McNeil claims that environmental history only became established in Europe in the 1990s, but as he has stressed, there were already a number of scholars who had assessed man's interactions with nature.³² Of particular importance are those works that consider the changing attitudes towards animals. These underline a common theme, namely the propensity of both children and adults to abuse animals. Although there are a number of scholars who have worked this field, beginning in 1928 with Dix Harwood, their focus is almost overwhelmingly on the behaviour of adults and how animals and birds were protected from abuse by the formation of conservation agencies that instigated legislation and prosecuted transgressors.³³ When the discussion turns to children, it is largely because their behaviour was heinous and mirrored that of adults. Educational children's movements are mentioned rarely.³⁴ However, overseas environmental scholars have

³⁰ See the article announcing the formation of the first Band of Mercy. *Animal World*, VII/78 (March 1876), p. 40.

³¹ Donald Worster, *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 48; I.G. Simmons, *An Environmental History of Great Britain: From 10,000 Years Ago to the Present*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), p. 2.

³² J.R. McNeill, 'Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History', *History and Theory*, 42 (2003), 5-43 (pp. 19-21).

³³ Dix Harwood, *Dix Harwood's Love for Animals and How it Developed in Great Britain (1928)*, ed by Rod Preece and David Fraser, (Ceredigion: Mellen, 2002); Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*; Hilda Kean, *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain since 1800*, (London: Reaktion, 1998); Ritvo, *Animal Estate*.

³⁴ E.S. Turner, *All Heaven in a Rage*, (Fontwell: Centaur Press, 1992), pp. 229-35.

undertaken surveys of children's educational programmes in Australia and North America, but these are still scant and focus upon twentieth-century movements.³⁵

Working-class Leisure

The formation of the nature societies in the late nineteenth century was not prompted by a sudden regard for animal welfare that emerged in this period. This had been a longer journey. Classical moralists and medieval scholars had denounced excessive cruelty and Puritan controls on selective blood-sports demonstrate growing humanitarian ideologies. However, it is in the eighteenth century, historians tend to agree, that we see the real acceleration of an appreciative attitude towards man's fellow creatures.³⁶ Willing to broadcast this revised message was a number of campaigners driven by 'a powerful combination of evangelical piety, romantic poetry, and rational humanitarianism'.³⁷ This campaign was set against a wider context of changing public behaviour that began a 'Moral Revolution', which oversaw a transformation of English society from one of the most brutal and rowdy nations to one renowned for its politeness and humanitarianism. Driving this revolution were the middle classes, and although Harold Perkin rejects the view that the evangelicals were wholly responsible for this shift in conduct, he concedes they played a vital role.³⁸ F.M.L. Thompson also believes in the theory of a moral revolution, but places more emphasis on the evangelicals and their call for 'public and political action in almost

³⁵ Libby Robin, *The Flight of the Emu*, (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2001), pp. 79-87; Kevin C. Armitage, 'Bird Day for Kids: Progressive Conservation in Theory and Practice', *Environmental History*, 12/3 (2007), 528-51.

³⁶ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp. 150-59; Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, pp. 5-6; Harwood, *Love for Animals*, p. 181.

³⁷ Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 85.

³⁸ Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 280-81.

every sphere'. James Obelkevich is more negative, viewing this revitalised Protestantism as a wave of 'tireless do-gooders' seeking their own moral salvation rather than the personal well-being of others, especially the poor.³⁹

Among the transformations within eighteenth-century culture, was a reassessment of traditional forms of leisure. Robert Malcolmson, and then Emma Griffin, have illustrated how blood-sports were openly condemned by moralists for their cruelty. This underlines a major theme that subsequently became dominant. A striking ambiguity develops with respect to animal welfare. Plebeian sports and leisure particularly taxed reformers.⁴⁰ These reforming attempts met opposition and we need to question how the working classes reacted to this constant hectoring. Surveys of the RSPCA rely heavily on official documents and paint a jaundiced picture of the working class responding with mere violence. Malcolmson offers a more tempered account, illustrating how the working class used their press to voice their opposition. However, any attempts to control upper-class field sports, which were rarely successful, met with vociferous opposition that was widely reported. Incongruously, the loudest protestations often came from animal protection lobbyists, including RSPCA supporters.⁴¹

The concern for animals was not just a reflection of the immediate middle-class anxiety of suppressing cruelty. It had a second and more pressing agenda, that of

³⁹ Thompson, *Rise of Respectable Society*, pp. 250-53; James Obelkevich, 'Religion' in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, 3 vols., ed. by F.M.L. Thompson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), III, pp. 311-56 (pp. 321-23).

⁴⁰ Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp.118-57; Emma Griffin, *England's Revelry: A History of Popular Sports and Pastimes 1660-1830*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 223-49.

⁴¹ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society*, pp. 126-29, 154-56; Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, pp. 147-48.

control of different elements of society. The concept of 'social control' was first advanced as a theory in the 1970s.⁴² The defining factor was the attempt by the middle classes to preserve their hegemony over the working classes who were then to be 'morally sanitised' by middle-class interventions.⁴³ Thompson sees social control achieved by the imposition of middle-class values upon a submissive working class, by creating 'desirable props of social stability', through education, temperance and the use of the press to influence opinion.⁴⁴ Whilst pressure groups controlled working-class leisure, this was not a one-way process. Sections of the working class supported these efforts, pushing their peers away from their fascination for brutal pastimes and into more acceptable pursuits.⁴⁵ This pattern is demonstrable if we consider the relationship between the Sunday schools and the working classes. Although now contested, Thomas Laqueur argued that these institutions were successful because they involved the working classes in their organisational affairs.⁴⁶ To this extent, the success of the nature societies in challenging public opinion needs to be measured against the degree to which they were able to engage with all classes. By analysing the class origins of their membership, it will be possible to determine the extent of working-class involvement and thus the extent to which they supported the essentially middle-class animal welfare campaign.

⁴² 'Conference Report. The Working Class and Leisure: Class Expression and/or Social Control', *Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin*, 32 (1976), 5-18; F.M.L. Thompson, 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', *The Economic History Review*, XXXIV/2 (1981), 189-208 (p. 190).

⁴³ Robert Storch, 'The Problem of Working-class Leisure. Some Roots of Middle-Class Moral Reform in the Industrial North: 1825-50', in *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain*, ed. by A.P. Donajgradzki, (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp. 138-62 (pp. 139-40).

⁴⁴ Thompson, 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', pp. 189-201.

⁴⁵ Neil Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain 1750-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 10.

⁴⁶ Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 238; K.D.M. Snell, 'The Sunday School Movement in England and Wales: Child Labour, Denominational Control and Working Class Culture', *Past and Present*, 164 (1999), 122-68. K. Snell offers an alternative view of the Sunday schools, suggesting that control of these institutions rested heavily with the clergy.

Simply introducing legislation that protected animals, prosecuting their abusers, and voicing condemnations in the press would not wholly address the problem of animal abuse. 'Expressions of regret' at the persecution of working-class behaviour were commonly voiced in the 1830s. This was in tandem with a growing realisation that substitute activities had to be provided to reform leisure.⁴⁷ There was a middle-class anxiety about leisure that equated it to idleness and possible criminality. The ingrained ethic of hard work, meant avoidance of indolence at all costs. The result was the desire by the middle classes in the late eighteenth century to seek 'rational recreation', which Hugh Cunningham has defined as 'time spent in some improvement of self and society'.⁴⁸ The middle classes sought refuge in their libraries, concerts and assembly rooms, but from the 1820s began to take a closer interest in what they perceived to be immoral working-class leisure. An obvious solution was to encourage the take up of 'rational recreation'. This was regarded as an elevating and diversionary substitute for immoral pursuits, including blood-sports.⁴⁹ Interventions included the creation of public parks, mechanics' institutes, museums, libraries and the rise of the temperance movement, many of which involved children to some degree.⁵⁰ Studies of rational recreation point to these highly visible enterprises, but have ignored the enjoyment gained from natural history that was quietly gaining popularity across all classes and age groups. It is left to historians of this field to signpost natural history as a rational recreation, stressing how it gave purpose to constitutional walks and the ideal Victorian response to their 'aversion to sloth'. More

⁴⁷ Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Context for Control, 1850-1885*, (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 47.

⁴⁸ Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), pp. 90-91; Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, pp. 47-67.

⁴⁹ J.M. Golby and A.W. Purdue, *The Civilisation of the Crowd: Popular Culture in England 1750-1900*, (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), p. 90-92.

⁵⁰ H. Cunningham, 'Leisure and Culture' in *Cambridge Social History*, (see Thompson, above), II pp. 279-339 (p. 327); Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, pp. 47-67.

importantly, as an 'innocent amusement' pursued by the working classes, natural history's advocates argued that it would also prevent animal cruelty.⁵¹ David Allen's study of the work of naturalists shows care is needed with such claims, and questions whether natural history really was positive recreation. Far from preventing cruelty, it led to a greater propensity for killing, albeit in the name of science rather than amusement. Vast collections of specimens abounded. The largest was that of Lord Rothschild, who possessed 200,000 birds' eggs housed in his private museum.⁵²

The leisure time of children was equally concerning. It was widely recognised that children were open to corruption.⁵³ Directing their leisure was therefore crucial. An obvious solution was to create an agency to watch over children, strictly control their activities and issue moral guidance. The Sunday school movement was especially adroit at this. Sunday schools, Laqueur claims, were the only institutions 'designed, even in part, for the pleasure of the young'.⁵⁴ Realising that the route to reforming wayward behaviour was not entirely through suppression and abolition, the Sunday schools encouraged new activities as counter-attractions.⁵⁵ This was the key principle behind many of the later youth movements, including the temperance Band of Hope.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Lynn Barber, *The Heyday of Natural History 1820-1870*, (London: Cape, 1980), pp. 16- 20, 34; David Lowenthal, 'Nature and Nation: Britain and America in the 19th Century', *History Today*, 53/12 (2003), 18-25 (p. 21).

⁵² David Elliston Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain: A Social History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 126-41; Barbara Mearns and Richard Mearns, *The Bird Collectors*, (San Diego: Academic Press, 1998), p. 297.

⁵³ John Heeley, 'Leisure and Moral Reform', *Leisure Studies*, 5/1 (1986), 57-67 (p. 57).

⁵⁴ Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability*, p. 177.

⁵⁵ Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 40-41; Alun Howkins, 'The Taming of Whitsun: the Changing Face of a Nineteenth-Century Rural Holiday', in *Popular Culture and Class Conflict, 1590-1914*, ed. by Eileen Yeo and Stephen Yeo, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), pp. 187-208 (p.204).

⁵⁶ Lilian Lewis Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink in Victorian England*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1988) p. 148; Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), pp. 192-95,

The existing interpretations of both of these institutions are problematical. Laqueur suggests that the Sunday schools were working alone in the field of children's leisure and ignores the Band of Hope, whilst Shiman suggests the latter was 'the first children's society', overlooking the profusion of juvenile missionary movements formed in the early nineteenth century.⁵⁷ These oversights contribute to our limited understanding of the history of childhood and are compounded by the lack of a modern overarching study of nineteenth-century youth movements.⁵⁸ Although Springhall has widely surveyed their development, there are flaws in his arguments.⁵⁹ For instance, he claims that the deep religiosity of the Band of Hope and Sunday schools limited their recruiting capabilities to churchgoers.⁶⁰ The Band of Hope claimed 3.5 million members in 1900 and the Sunday schools had 6 million pupils in 1911, suggesting that religious teaching was not such a deterrent.⁶¹ Perhaps a greater restriction, as Springhall later underlines, was that the Sunday schools primarily served younger children.⁶² It was not until the late-nineteenth century that this particular problem was addressed. The boy's clubs and Boys' Brigade were new types of youth movements that offered more exciting activities. The social role of the

⁵⁷ Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink*, p. 136; F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 76-85; Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability*, p. 177.

⁵⁸ Only two dated studies offer complete surveys of the growth of youth movements. Wilkinson's work deliberately focuses on the quasi-military movements, beginning with the Boys' Brigade in 1883. W. McG. Eagar, *Making Men: The History of Boy's Clubs and Related Movements in Great Britain*, (London: University of London Press, 1953); Alicia C. Percival, *Youth Will Be Led*, (London: Collins, 1951); Paul Wilkinson, 'English Youth Movements, 1908-1930', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 3/2 (1969), 3-23.

⁵⁹ Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society*; John Springhall, ed., *Sure and Steadfast: A History of the Boys' Brigade: 1883 to 1983*, (London: Boys' Brigade, 1991).

⁶⁰ J.O. Springhall, 'The Boy Scouts, Class and Militarism in Relation to British Youth Movements 1908-1930', *International Review of Social History*, XVI (1971), 125-58 (p. 128).

⁶¹ *The Times*, 13 November 1900; Snell, 'Sunday School Movement', p. 126.

⁶² Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society*, p. 24.

Church had begun to decline, and these associations were formed to specifically counteract the fear of working-class juvenile restlessness and crime.⁶³

These new 'uniformed' associations offered wholesome activities with the intention of stemming youth delinquency. Musical bands, camping expeditions and drill, were military-themed and offered to boys, whose behaviour most taxed the anxieties of the authorities.⁶⁴ Importantly, modern surveys suggest that boys have a tendency to be more aggressive, leading them to have a greater propensity to be cruel towards animals.⁶⁵ None of the studies of the later youth movements, which heavily emphasise the 'training' mission of these agencies, point to any activities that might have lessened this disorder and instilled any form of benevolence into their charges that would have countered cruelty. On the contrary, during the Edwardian period of popular military efficiency, the militarised ideals promoted by the Scouts and even relatively minor agencies, such as the Jewish Lads' Brigades, specifically aimed to harden sensibilities.⁶⁶

The environment in which these associations developed was characterised by two factors. Influenced by social Darwinism, since the 1870s there had been a growing belief, later much inflated by the high rejection level of Boer War volunteers, that Britain's urban working class was undergoing an alarming physical

⁶³ Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit*, p. 182; Harry Hendrick, *Images of Youth: Age, Class and the Male Youth Problem, 1880-1920*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 159; Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society*, p. 15; Barbara Weinberger, 'Policing Juveniles: Delinquency in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Manchester', *Criminal Justice History*, 14 (1993), 43-55.

⁶⁴ Wilkinson, 'English Youth Movements', pp. 4-5; Yeo, 'Moral Panic over Working-Class Youth', p. 185.

⁶⁵ Mark R. Dadds and others, 'Measurement of Cruelty in Children: The Cruelty to Animals Inventory', *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 32/3 (2004), 321-34 (p. 329); Flynn, 'Why Family Professionals Can No Longer Ignore Violence Toward Animals', pp. 88-89.

⁶⁶ Springhall, 'Boy Scouts, Class and Militarism', pp. 127-28; Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, p. 164; Richard A. Voeltz, 'A Good Jew and a Good Englishman': The Jewish Lads' Brigade, 1894-1922', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23/1 (1988), 119-27 (p. 119).

deterioration.⁶⁷ Secondly, and not unconnected, ‘manliness exercised a powerful hold over the Victorians’ and ‘was a guide to life’.⁶⁸ Set against this background, the uniformed youth movements endeavoured to promote public school-inspired sturdy manly behaviour in their charges to tackle the ‘crisis in masculinity’ that had emerged in the 1890s under the challenge of the ‘New Woman’ and the Oscar Wilde trial. Although the boys’ clubs and the Boys’ Brigades have been presented as attempting to instil manliness values into working-class youths, and John Tosh believes that manliness was ‘socially inclusive’, scholarly interpretations of this code of behaviour have been largely limited to middle-class institutions.⁶⁹ This concentration of studies has led to calls for surveys to uncover the relationship between manliness and the working classes.⁷⁰ Given that manliness was such a domineering precept, as Rob Boddice has recently shown, its ideologies also permeated into the emerging humanitarian debate, in this case the contested morality of certain field sports.⁷¹ With this in mind, it must also have influenced the children’s societies. However, their objectives of benevolence and humanitarianism appear contradictory to the manly codes promoted by other youth movements. By examining the publications and members’ correspondence of the nature societies, a related objective of this thesis will

⁶⁷ Richard Soloway, ‘Counting the Degenerates: The Statistics of Race Deterioration in Edwardian England’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17/1 (1982), 137-64; Bill Luckin, ‘Revisiting the Idea of Degeneration in Urban Britain, 1830-1900’, *Urban History*, 33/2 (2006), 234-52.

⁶⁸ John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, (Harlow: Pearson, 2005), p. 87.

⁶⁹ Weinberger, ‘Policing Juveniles’, p. 46; John Springhall, ‘Building Character in the British Boy: the Attempt to Extend Christian Manliness to Working-class Adolescents, 1880-1914’, in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class Masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940*, ed. by J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp.52-74 (pp. 52-61); Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 87; Robert H. MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), pp. 16-17.

⁷⁰ Martin Francis, ‘The Domestication of the Male? Recent Research on Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century British Masculinity’, *Historical Journal*, 45/3 (2002), 637-52 (p. 649); Stephen Heathorn, ‘How Stiff were their Upper Lips? Research on Late Victorian and Edwardian Masculinity’, *History Compass*, 4 (2004), 1-7.

⁷¹ Rob Boddice, ‘Manliness and the “Morality of Field Sports”: E.A. Freeman and Anthony Trollope, 1869-71’, *The Historian*, 70/1 (2008), 1-29.

be to analyse whether the value of manliness affected these societies and if so, how it equated with their mission of benevolence.

Scholarly analysis has tended to fix on those agencies catering for boys, with an especially intense assessment of the Scouts. Partly this is because of its extraordinary growth. Founded in 1908, in only two years, Scouting's nationwide membership was already in the region of 100,000 boys.⁷² In the same year, by contrast, one press society, the Children's Guild of the *Auckland Chronicle* had 79,000 members, recruited mainly from Durham colliery villages.⁷³ Admittedly, this was the cumulative number of members enrolled since 1904 and the Guild was a unisex society, but it strongly suggests that in certain localities, at least, the press societies played a highly visible role, offering a ready alternative association. This was important. Springhall sees the working classes resisting the uniformed youth movements because they insisted on regular church attendance and had the potentiality for army recruitment, a fear realised by the transformation of the Church Lads' Brigades into militarised cadets.⁷⁴ This opposition was particularly acute in northeast England, where the radical coal mining communities 'hated the spirit of militarism'.⁷⁵

With regard to associations catering expressly for the needs of girls, by contrast, there is a relative poverty of historiography. With the exception of a micro-study of the Girls' Friendly Society, the impression is that there were few societies

⁷² For example: Frank Dawes, *A Cry from the Streets*, (Hove: Wayland, 1975); Allen Warren, 'Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout Movement and Citizen Training in Great Britain, 1900-1920', *English Historical Review*, 101 (1986), 377-98; MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire*; Victor Bailey, 'Scouting for Empire', *History Today*, 32/7 (1982), 5-9.

⁷³ *Auckland Chronicle*, 29 December 1910.

⁷⁴ Springhall, 'Boy Scouts, Class and Militarism', pp. 140-47.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

willing to offer girls' leisure activities.⁷⁶ They had to be content with the Sunday schools, temperance societies, and missionary groups until the formation of the Guides in 1910.⁷⁷ By contrast, the nature societies, with their humanitarian objectives, benevolent activities (providing bird food and charity collections) and often-feminine names (for example, the League of Love), suggest these were associations that could specifically attract girls and engage them in practical work.

Children's Print Culture

The literature of the nature societies was unisex, and this too helped address a gender inequality. Girls were equally ill served by publishers. Just ten percent of periodicals produced between 1870 and 1910 were aimed specifically at girls, as publishers believed this was an unprofitable commercial market.⁷⁸ Moral profit, by contrast, was another matter. The provision of didactic reading matter was another method employed to reform children. As literacy rates rose and production costs fell, coupled with the desire by publishing authorities, such as the Religious Tract Society [RTS], to produce wholesome reading for young readers, the children's press became a vibrant medium. Children's literature and its ability to shape its readers' beliefs are central to this thesis, which will demonstrate how this medium projected the subject of humanitarianism.

Studies of different facets of children's literature are numerous, with particularly strong interest in the boys' story papers, largely because of the

⁷⁶ Brian Harrison, 'For Church, Queen and Family: The Girls' Friendly Society 1874-1920', *Past and Present*, 61 (1973), 107-38.

⁷⁷ Springhall, *Youth Empire and Society*, pp. 131-32.

⁷⁸ Diana Dixon, 'Children and the Press, 1866-1914' in *The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. by Michael Harris and Alan Lee, (London: Associated University Presses, 1986), pp. 135-48 (p. 138).

contemporary accusation that some titles damaged the moral character of readers, and in some cases, encouraged them to commit crime.⁷⁹ The power of the press to positively enlighten and model its reader's opinions has attracted comment. Significantly, Diana Dixon and Richard Noakes have discussed how periodicals attempted to interest their readers in science. Noakes argues that science was included because it was viewed as learned recreation, but importantly he draws attention to the conflict within some magazines as to whether it was legitimate to kill specimens for study.⁸⁰ This moral quandary is not explored, and it is only through studies of the book press, notably by Christine Kenyon-Jones and Moira Ferguson, that we are aware of authors deliberately writing works for children that endeavoured to draw attention to the offence of cruelty whilst attempting to foster humanitarian beliefs in their readers.⁸¹

Linking this attempt to shape behaviour were the specific journals produced by youth organisations, such as the Band of Hope and Boys' Brigade, which attempted to instil 'discipline and character in the young'.⁸² A publication supporting a nature society and pushing humanitarian objectives would not have been out of place in this field. Critical reaction to this improving literature was largely positive, as Patrick Dunae has shown, whilst Dixon's reliance on readers' reminiscences similarly

⁷⁹ J.S. Bratton, *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction*, (London: Croom Helm, 1981); F.J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Kirsten Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines, 1751-1945*, (Yale: Yale University, 1988); P.A. Dunae, 'Penny Dreadfuls: Late Nineteenth Century Boys' Literature and Crime', *Victorian Studies*, 22/2 (1979), 133-50; John Springhall, 'Pernicious Reading? 'The Penny Dreadful' as Scapegoat for Late-Victorian Crime', *Victorian Periodical Review*, 27/4 (1994), 326-49.

⁸⁰ Diana Dixon, 'Children's Magazines and Science in the Nineteenth Century', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 34/3 (2001), 228-38; Richard Noakes, 'The *Boy's Own Paper* and the late-Victorian Juvenile Magazine', in *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical: Reading the Magazine of Nature*, ed. by Geoffrey Cantor and others, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 151-71.

⁸¹ Christine Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes: Animals in Romantic-Period Writing*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); Moira Ferguson, *Animal Advocacy and Englishwomen, 1780-1900: Patriots, Nation, and Empire*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1998).

⁸² Dixon, 'Children and the Press', p. 143.

suggests approval.⁸³ However, despite the increasing scholarly interest in children's literature, and with the exception of Gretchen Galbraith's brief assessment of 'reader participation', there has been little analysis of the immediate responses by young readers.⁸⁴ Furthermore, we lack appraisals of feedback from children to campaigns that were designed to effect moral improvement. Clearly if the children's nature societies, and especially those managed by commercial entities, intended to promote animal welfare, it would have been vital to gauge whether this was a popular subject and if such campaigns were making headway.

One branch of media highly attuned to its readers' opinions, and offering an opportunity for such commentary, was the newspaper press. Historians of children's literature have ignored this source, probably because its primary target audience was adults. For them, the nineteenth-century newspaper certainly performed a vital public duty and it became 'the context within which people lived and worked and thought'.⁸⁵ This opinion-forming role has led newspapers to be the subject of intense analysis. Most surveys tread familiar territory by examining the various processes by which the press grew, followed by analyses of newspaper ownership and political machinations.⁸⁶ Mark Hampton, who points to the tendency of scholars to utilise the press in order to construct biographies or the histories of specific journals, has highlighted the modest use of newspapers.⁸⁷ Graham Law has also voiced his concern,

⁸³ Patrick Dunae, 'Boy's Own Paper: Origins and Editorial Policies', *Private Library*, 9/4 (1976), 122-58; Dixon, 'Children and the Press', p. 137.

⁸⁴ Galbraith, *Reading Lives*, pp. 56-59.

⁸⁵ Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff, 'Introduction', in *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, ed. by Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), pp. xiv-xix.

⁸⁶ For example, Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press 1855-1914*, (London: Croom Helm, 1980); Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Aled Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth Century England*, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996).

⁸⁷ Mark Hampton, 'Newspapers in Victorian Britain', *History Compass*, 2 (2004), 1-8

observing that ‘the weekly news-miscellanies, whether provincial or metropolitan, have generally been treated as derivative, trivial or ephemeral by mainstream newspaper history where political coverage in the daily has generally been given priority’.⁸⁸

A survey of weekly newspapers is vital for this thesis. Owen Ashton’s biography of William Edwin Adams (1832-1906) charts the life of a radical campaigning editor, whose newspaper, the *NWC*, hosted a children’s society devoted to protecting birds. This association created an impetus for the foundation of a host of similar societies. Scholars have not overlooked the creation of a newspaper children’s column or society, but except for studies of the *NWC* and its personnel there has been scant analysis of this feature.⁸⁹ The survey by P.D. Mohr of the Band of Kindness [BOK] is a notable exception. Originally, this was a humanitarian society that grew out of the *Stockport Advertiser*, but later turned its attention to charitable childcare work.⁹⁰ It demonstrates that significant press societies existed elsewhere in the country and the *NWC*’s effort was far from unique.

This concern by newspapers for the welfare of animals was not limited to their children’s pages. Malcolmson has underlined the importance of the press for its reportage of animal abuse cases in an attempt to influence public opinion.⁹¹ As Law’s

⁸⁸ Graham Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp. xiv-xv.

⁸⁹ Owen Ashton, *W.E. Adams: Chartist, radical and journalist (1832-1906)*, (Whitley Bay: Bewick Press, 1991), passim; Joan Allen, *Joseph Cowen and Popular Radicalism on Tyneside, 1829-1900*, (Monmouth: Merlin Press, 2007), p. 147; Susan Joyce Plouman, ‘Developments in the Newspaper Press of Northumberland and Durham, 1906 to 1939’, (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1980), p. 121.

⁹⁰ P.D. Mohr, ‘Philanthropy and the Crippled Child: the Band of Kindness and the Crippled Children’s Help Society in Manchester and Salford 1882-1948’, (unpublished master’s thesis, Manchester, 1991); Peter D. Mohr, ‘Gilbert Kirlew and the Development of Crippled Children’s Societies in Victorian Manchester and Salford’, *Manchester Regional History Review*, 6 (1992), 42-48.

⁹¹ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp.118-56.

survey of serialised fiction in the weekly press illustrates, such studies are being widened to uncover the role this medium played in their reader's lives.⁹² Hampton's recent broad assessment falls into this category. He has attempted to show how the newspaper press initially regarded itself as an educator, but then gradually evolved into a mere communicator of news to the public by the end of the nineteenth century.⁹³ Hampton claims that the 'educational ideal of the press' was waning as it began focussing on digested news and inverted its role of influencing readers or public opinion by simply attempting to reflect reader's interests.⁹⁴ However, as Michael Dawson and Paul Gliddon have shown, with respect to party politics and the provincial press in the early twentieth century, there remained a strong will to shape opinion through the press.⁹⁵ Clearly then, Hampton's theory raises problematic issues. Focusing on the children's columns, their interaction with schools and their willingness to print schoolchildren's letters, this thesis will challenge Hampton's arguments, suggesting instead that the newspaper, or at least the weekly press, continued to function as both an educator and shaper of public opinion.

Conservationists had an array of legislative measures that protected animals and birds. These statutes were regularly employed by the RSPCA, but although prosecution secured convictions, it did nothing to prevent animal cruelty emerging. In such an antagonistic atmosphere, much more sophisticated techniques were needed to foster an appreciative public opinion towards wild creatures. This was a process not lost on one contemporary observer. In 1902, J.E.G. De Montgomery pointed out;

⁹² Law, *Serializing Fiction*.

⁹³ Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950*, (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2004).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 76-88.

⁹⁵ Michael Dawson, 'Party Politics and the Provincial Press in Early Twentieth Century England: The Case of the South West', *Twentieth Century British History*, 9/2 (1998), 201-18; Paul Gliddon, 'The Political Importance of Provincial Newspapers, 1903-1945: The Rowntrees and the Liberal Party', *Twentieth Century British History*, 14/1 (2003), 24-42.

The weak point in all legislation for the protection of animals is the inadequate means provided for the enforcement of the law. Acts for the protection of wild birds, for instance, are for the most part pious opinions. But pious opinions have at least one value: they create public opinion and a public conscience - a thing more powerful than any statute.⁹⁶

This thesis emphasises how conservationists realised that legislation in itself was not enough. Instead, as Locke pointed out, centuries before any animal protection legislation, to attack the root causes of animal cruelty children had to be inspired from a very young age to care for animals and birds. Children's literature had long carried this theme, but the thesis will argue that merely reiterating this narrative was not enough. The increased interest in children's welfare had seen the creation of youth movements, and such organisations, with their proactive work for children, offered an ideal model for animal protectionists to implement Locke's call for interventionist action.

The thesis suggests that the availability of the nature societies via several levels and formats allowed the broadcasting of the nature conservation debate to the widest strata of society. This public sphere was therefore able to have its opinion challenged and altered. Focussing on these clubs, which brought together children to discuss animal welfare issues, provides the opportunity to explore how children negotiated campaigns that attempted to model their behaviour. The resulting analysis will determine whether all classes took an interest in nature conservation in its widest sense, and if it was therefore possible to create a more sympathetic public mindset leading to the negation of fears of interpersonal violence.

⁹⁶ J.E.G. De Montgomery, 'State Protection of Animals at Home and Abroad', *Law Quarterly Review*, 18 (1902), 31-48 (p. 40).

Methodology and Sources

To consider the growth and role of these children's nature societies, a wide range of sources are drawn upon. The societies had their own bespoke journals or were hosted by the popular press, therefore periodicals and newspapers feature predominately throughout this thesis. The range of publications produced by the nineteenth-century press is vast, as the ten volumes of the *Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals* attest. Although this work has begun to chart this vast source, as Laurel Brake and Diana Dixon acknowledge, we are still coming to terms with dealing with the gargantuan array of sources. Indeed, Dixon believes that although the *Waterloo Directory* lists 25,000 titles, this is just a fifth of the project's target of 125,000.⁹⁷ Clearly then this a daunting field for any researcher, especially for one tackling the hitherto under-researched study of newspaper children's columns.

The starting point for this thesis was a full review of the DBS column in the *NWC* from 1876 to 1940. This newspaper regularly announced the formation of facsimile societies as proof of its influence, for example, the Sunbeam Society of the *People's Journal*. This helpfully opened avenues for further research.⁹⁸ Weekly newspapers hosted the majority of these societies; however, we lack indexes detailing the content of these often-minor publications. Therefore, additional associations were revealed by examining *Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory* or trawling the weekly press of major urban centres over five year intervals from 1870 to 1910.⁹⁹ This latter strategy was particularly fruitful, for instance, searching six weekly papers serving

⁹⁷ John S. North, *The Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals, 1800-1900*, (Waterloo: North Waterloo Academic Press, 2003), I-X; Laurel Brake, 'On Print Culture: the State We're In', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 6/1 (2001), 125-36; Diana Dixon, 'Navigating the Maze: Sources for Press Historians', *Media History*, 9/1 (2003), 79-89.

⁹⁸ *NWC*, 9 October 1886.

⁹⁹ *The Newspaper Press Directory and Advertiser's Guide. Containing Full Particulars Relative to Each Journal Published in the United Kingdom and the British Isles*, (London: Mitchell), 1870-1914.

south Wales yielded two clubs, the Round Table and the Welsh Dicky Bird Society. The majority of newspapers were accessed at the British Library at Colindale, with provincial repositories providing additional material. Children's magazines were consulted in order to discover how this genre handled the subject of nature and animal welfare. These publications were much easier to distil, given the interest in periodicals. This enabled significant titles to be identified, for example the *Boy's Own Paper*, which had such a large and influential remit.¹⁰⁰ *Band of Mercy* and *Little Folks* were particularly important as both supported animal welfare.

The result of these surveys was daunting; therefore, some judicious sampling was required. Some newspapers printed only children's columns. Some of these, such as the *West Cumberland Times*, positively encouraged animal welfare and printed children's contributions. So that a more comparable data set could be worked, only newspapers hosting children's societies were analysed. Sampling in two or five year intervals accumulated evidence, although it is recognised that inevitably some data would have been overlooked when appraising such a large corpus of material. When specific evidence came to light, such as the attempts by the *Northern Weekly Leader* to use its children's club to undermine its rival, the *NWC*, this was pursued in depth. Specific questions were asked of the societies, including: To what extent did they support animal welfare? Who managed the society and how did editorials direct its work? What were the political affiliations of the newspaper? Were members encouraged to carry out conservation activities? How was the issue of manliness raised?

¹⁰⁰ For instance, Sheila A. Egoff, *Children's Periodicals of the Nineteenth Century: A Survey and Bibliography*. Library Association Pamphlet No. 8, (London: Library Association, 1951); Drotner, *English Children and their Magazines*.

Letters published in newspapers and periodicals gave an insight into children's attitudes, and their willingness to engage with their society. The societies' membership data provided the most important resource. It gauged a society's strength, and provided an assessment of the gender, age and class of members. By matching members' surnames with the 1881 Census and then correlating this with the head of household's occupation, an analysis of social status was partially compiled for three societies. It was impossible to tally all the members with the census and only when ages, family members and unambiguous names matched was the data used. When several society members occupied the same address, only one was chosen as a representative for the household.¹⁰¹ As Chapters Four and Six show, this provided a revealing insight into the social composition of the nature societies.

Searching the selective periodicals produced for animal welfare groups, field sports enthusiasts, and agriculturalists, provided evidence of the overarching debates in nature conservation. Recent developments in digitisation have provided access to searchable databases. For this thesis, *The Times* Digital Archive, the British Library 19th Century Newspaper and the 19th Century UK Periodicals projects proved invaluable and were used extensively. Specific research questions here included conflict between conservationists and their opponents, and commentaries on the worth of legislation and the nature societies.

The second major primary sources for this thesis were the administrative documents of the RSPB and RSPCA at their respective headquarters at Sandy and Southwater. This material included the annual reports of both societies, and the

¹⁰¹ For a discussion on class divisions assessed by occupation, see John Hall and D. Cardog Jones, 'Social Grading of Occupations', *British Journal of Sociology*, 1/1 (1950), 31-49.

minute books of the main management and subsidiary committees, such as the Ladies' Education Committee of the RSPCA. *Bird Notes and News*, and *Animal World*, the periodicals of the respective societies, supplemented these sources. Whilst the overarching conservation debates in these sources were important, special attention was paid to references to children's education work. Other resources included parliamentary papers, in particular education codes and reports, census results, *Hansard* and statutes. School logbooks from schools in London and northeast England were consulted to consider the extent of the nature societies' work with schools.

As Anna Davin has shown, autobiographies of childhood experiences provide immediacy to surveys of childhood.¹⁰² Memoirs are used here to convey attitudes towards animals and leisure activities. Tracing the development of the animal protection movement involved consulting Eighteenth-Century Collections Online to unearth church sermons and advice books. Such a database is unavailable for nineteenth century material. Therefore, extensive searches of contemporary printed sources, especially publications that deal with animal welfare, field sports, agriculture, and natural history, and a trawl through secondary source footnotes and library catalogues was required. It revealed widely different attitudes towards nature conservation.

¹⁰² Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School, and Street in London 1870-1914*, (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996).

Structure

This thesis is divided into three broad sections. The first begins by examining the relationship between children and animals, and assesses the reality of the mimetic violence anxiety. To understand how the abuse of animals by children might be tackled, we must consider how children encountered animals and what the wider patterns of cruelty were. The first chapter explores how the emerging concern for animals was reflected in legislation and addressed by the RSPCA. This engendered problems, most notably the contentious issue of defining of cruelty. Chapter Two considers the work of the BOM, and stresses how class defined both the leadership and membership of this movement, demonstrating that a children's society drew supporters for many reasons other than animal welfare.

The central part of the thesis explores the impact of children's literature, beginning with books and periodicals. Chapter Three considers how this literature was particularly preoccupied with birds, whether for their exploitation or protection. It argues that, although children's behaviour was to some degree shaped by their literature, this in turn was guided by new legislation. Chapter Four begins by stressing how debate on animal welfare was available to all classes via their newspapers. With the DBS at its centre as the original and largest press society, supplemented by additional titles and societies, the chapter illustrates how children were an integral part of this readership as they were targeted with the offer of columns and societies.

The final section demonstrates how the societies pressed the issue of bird protection through persuasive narratives and then proactive conservation work and engaging with schools. Chapter Five looks at how contemporary conservation

debates, such as attempts to curtail some field sports and prohibit plumaged millinery, were brought to the attention of children. It considers the significant obstacles faced by the societies and their leaders, most notably the contemporaneous notions of manliness, the desire by naturalists to collect and the protests of aviculturalists. The relationship between the societies and schools is dealt with by Chapter Six, which argues that mandatory writing exercises, under the supervision of teachers, forced the animal welfare message onto a broad audience. Conservationists also agitated for curriculum reform, and the chapter considers their efforts to install nature study and humanitarian teaching within the school curriculum. By assessing this school work, which was prompted, supported, and then reported by the newspaper societies, the chapter will demonstrate that the 'educational ideal' of the press was certainly not on the wane.

CHAPTER ONE

*Beware of the practice of cruelty:*¹ The Foundations of the Children's Nature Societies

“Shame on you Robert! You grieve me exceedingly by throwing stones at the poor little birds; and then to do it on the *Sabbath-day!* It is very sad”. Mrs Wilson turned towards her husband, after having addressed these words to her little son, and with a sigh which evinced a mother's deep concern, she said, “I fear that something *sad* will happen to Robert some day on account of his cruelty”.²

Mr Wilson failed to chastise his son, and Robert's cruelty increased, leading to the untimely death of his parents who died ‘broken-hearted’, and Robert's eventual disablement, predictably ‘injured by a stone’.³ This prophetic moral tale of 1880 in the *Band of Mercy* magazine was one of many, used by the BOM and other agencies, to effect a reformation of manners. It underlines several narratives that came to the forefront during the nineteenth century and laid the groundwork for the formation of the nature societies. The founding of the DBS in 1876, Norman McCord argues, was a result of the changing attitudes towards children that were building momentum in the late nineteenth century.⁴ The nature societies were not founded solely on this tenet, and although a ‘Victorian sentimentalism of childhood’ had now developed, this story of stone-throwing heightens another anxiety, that of the mimetic repercussions of animal abuse.⁵ This chapter begins by assessing how this disquiet was relayed and argues that this concern was not just restricted to middle-class animal welfare groups. Instead, it was given wide currency both before and during the nineteenth century.

¹ *Lady's Newspaper*, 838 (17 January 1863), p. 196.

² *Band of Mercy*, 18 (June 1880), p. 45.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁴ Norman McCord, *British History 1815-1906: The Short Oxford History of the Modern World*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 455.

⁵ Anthony Fletcher, *Growing up in England: The Experience of Childhood 1600-1914*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), p. xvi.

This was a difficult issue to address. As this fictional account demonstrates, children extracted gratification from maiming small creatures. This was not just for childish guilty pleasure. Children encountered animals on a daily basis. This gave them many opportunities to harm them, some of which were actively encouraged.

The alarm expressed over the fate of 'poor little birds' also indicates a pointed concern for animal welfare. How had this come about and what were its effects? Robert's stoning of birds, to modern sensibilities, demonstrates abject cruelty. However, this was not always the case, and if we are to address the subject of 'animal cruelty', we must define it. There was also a willingness by individuals to intercede to prevent cruelty. This chapter explores the reasons for the foundation of the RSPCA, and emphasises how the education of children was ostensibly at the forefront of their objectives to tackle the barbed issue of cruelty producing aggressiveness towards humans. This process was not without its tensions.

Children, Animals and Cruelty

The consequence of animal abuse was an issue that was frequently aired with increasing intensity into the nineteenth century, but Locke was not the first to call attention to this relationship. Thomas Aquinas observed that, 'through being cruel to animals one becomes cruel to human beings'. Furthermore, the philosopher Michel de Montaigne, writing in the 1500s, suggested that, 'men of bloodthirsty nature where

animals are concerned display a natural propensity toward cruelty'.⁶ A real acceleration of these sentiments then occurs in the eighteenth century. This was not accidental. It was at this time that a more child-orientated society was realised, with the child viewed as a *tabula rasa*, or blank slate that could be shaped by parents and educators. Matching this emergence of more tolerant attitudes were calls for more positive treatment of animals linked to positive parenting.⁷ At opposite ends of the eighteenth century came periodicals and essays aimed at the educated classes, which fretted over the effects of animal cruelty. Writing in the *Guardian*, Alexander Pope cited Montaigne and expressed concern that parents freely allowed their children to enjoy the spectacle of cruelty.⁸ Thomas Young offered a more frank assessment, warning parents that children began by targeting the weakest animals. As the appetite for abuse grew, larger creatures would be sought out before 'he falls upon his own species'. Young was aware this was controversial, observing that his arguments would be considered 'whimsical and mean' to many.⁹ He was correct, as the sermon delivered by Rev. James Granger in 1772 to his Oxfordshire parishioners encouraging the benefits of animal welfare, demonstrated. Granger was concerned that an uncorrected child might become a 'monster of cruelty'. The postscript to this work records that his listeners were unimpressed. They believed Granger had caused the

⁶ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 151; Michael Robin and Robert ten Benschel, 'Pets and Socialization of Children' in *Pets and the Family*, ed. by M. Sussman, (Binghampton: Haworth Press, 1985), pp. 63-78 (rept. in Lockwood and Ascone, eds., *Cruelty to Animals*, pp. 105-20 (p. 114)).

⁷ Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500*, (Harlow: Pearson, 1995), pp. 62-64; J. H. Plumb, 'The New World of Children in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, 67 (1975), 64-95.

⁸ *The Guardian*, 61 (21 May 1713), p. 269.

⁹ Thomas Young, *An Essay on Humanity to Animals*, (London: Cadell, 1798), pp. 1, 40-42, [<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>, accessed 12/5/2005].

‘prostitution of the dignity of the pulpit, and [they] considered [it] as a proof of the Author’s growing insanity’.¹⁰

Granger’s sermon was intended for those caring for ‘Horses and other useful Beasts’, and dedicated to ‘Tom Drayman’. Such manual workers probably included individuals unable to read; therefore, this orally delivered address was reaching a quite different audience from that reading the thoughts of Pope and Young. Yet Granger was not the first to attempt to broadcast the anxiety of the animal-child relationship to non-readers. His notes referenced William Hogarth, whose print series representing wanton cruelty and its attendant effects, the *Four Stages of Cruelty*, appeared in 1751. By allowing his work to be reproduced as woodcuts, Hogarth wanted his message to be viewed by a wider public, although in the event, only the last two scenes appeared in this format.¹¹ The *Four Stages* depicts the life cycle of the charity boy Tom Nero and illustrates Locke’s prophetic warning perfectly [figs. 1.1 to 1.4]. The *First Stage* depicts the young Nero having thrust an arrow into a dog’s anus, whilst other children variously torment dogs and cats, organise a cock-fight and cauterise the eyes of a bird. Hogarth depicts Nero in almshouse clothing, in contrast to the well-dressed youth who offers a pastry in an attempt to rescue the dog. An implication, surely, that the feckless poor were more culpable of animal abuse, whilst the better off took on the role of animal saviours. By the *Second Stage*, against a street scene of further animal abuse, Nero is now a coachman and beats his fallen horse. *Cruelty in Perfection* illustrates Nero’s descent into crime as a highwayman. His

¹⁰ James Granger, *An Apology for the Brute Creation, or Abuse of Animals Censured; In a Sermon on Proverbs xii.10. Preached in the Parish Church of Shiplake, in Oxfordshire, October 18, 1772, by James Granger*, (London: Davies, 1772), p. 18, postscript.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. frontispiece, dedication, 18; David Bindman, ‘Hogarth, William (1697–1764)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13464>, accessed 26/4/2008].

callousness is complete as he murders his pregnant mistress. As befits this crime, the *Reward of Cruelty* depicts surgeons dissecting the protagonist's cut-down corpse.¹² Immanuel Kant thought Hogarth's work to be an 'impressive lesson to children' and believed that by studying the parental duties of animals a greater appreciation would be gained which would negate cruelty and create a better disposition amongst mankind.¹³

Thus far, the emphasis was on the duty of parents to check their child's behaviour, and parenting itself underwent a further change in style as the Evangelical Revival of the late eighteenth century took hold. The need to impose moral welfare and training emerged, and this had a severe controlling effect for 'much that was harmless was forbidden, and much that was pleasant, frowned upon'.¹⁴ Such beliefs would therefore have had an impact on children's behaviour towards wild creatures, forbidding pastimes that had been regarded previously as acceptable. It is noteworthy that John Joshua Kirby, the father of the devout evangelical, Sarah Trimmer, was an acquaintance of Hogarth. The young Sarah would have been well aware of the message within the *Four Stages of Cruelty*. Later, the rhetoric of her children's book, *Fabulous Histories*, heavily stressed this Hogarthian warning of the future conduct of the child.¹⁵ Lawrence Stone has questioned whether these changes in parenting ideology affected the working classes, remarking that 'in a society which was generally horribly cruel to animals, children tended to be treated in a similar

¹² Derek Jarrett, *England in the Age of Hogarth*, (London: Granada, 1974), pp. 175-79.

¹³ Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. by Louis Infield, (London: Methuen, 1930), pp. 239-40.

¹⁴ Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society*, pp. 70-73; Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, *Children in English Society*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), II, p. 351.

¹⁵ P. Heath, 'The Works of Mrs Trimmer 1741-1810', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1996), p. 330, Mrs Trimmer, *Fabulous Histories: Designed for the Instruction of Children Respecting their Treatment of Animals*, (Dublin: Watson, Wogan, Porter & Moore, 1786), *passim*.

manner'.¹⁶ However, King has repudiated this notion, noting that after 1830 the better working classes, at least, had begun to recognise that children deserved special treatment. What is certain is that by the last quarter of the nineteenth century a child-centred ideology dominated again.¹⁷ Any of the working classes not subscribing to this were to find that the state had now 'began to take a markedly more prominent role in the regulation of family life and in which a definition of childhood as properly a period of dependence became dominant'.¹⁸ It was education, beginning with the Act of 1870, scholars contend, which sealed an official recognition of childhood. It both lengthened the years of infancy whilst underpinning '*proper* childhood, namely ignorance, innocence and dependence'.¹⁹ However, education was not the only indicator or driver, the fields of child psychology and child protection left their mark.

¹⁶ Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 295.

¹⁷ King, *Juvenile Delinquency in England*, p. 158; Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, p. 2.

¹⁸ Hugh Cunningham, 'Histories of Childhood', *The American Historical Review*, 103/4 (1998), 1195-208 (p. 1201).

¹⁹ Nigel Middleton, 'The Education Act of 1870 as the Start of the Modern Concept of the Child', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, XVIII/2 (1970), 166-79; Harry Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society 1880-1990*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 64.

FIRST STAGE OF CRUELTY.



While various kinds of sportive War
The Industrious employ,
And several Victims bleeding o'er
The Front in the Day,
[signed by W. Hogarth]

Behold a Youth of gentle Heart,
It opens the Cruel's eyes,
O take, he cries—take all my Part,
But Death and Fate are vain.

Learn from this fair Example—You
Whom savage Sports delight,
How Cruelty degrades the soul,
While Pity cleanses the sight.

Figure 1.1: First Stage of Cruelty, William Hogarth, *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, 1751.²⁰

²⁰ www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/hogarth/modernmorals/fourstagesofcruelty.shtm.
[accessed 13/7/2007].

SECOND STAGE OF CRUELTY.



*The generous Steed in heavy Age
Subdued by Labour's bar,
And moaning a cruel Master's rage,
Wish Nithers Strength decay.*

*The tender Lamb in down and dust,
Awaiting evening Doom,
Plucks forth its innocent complaint
And lies beneath the Plow.*

*Behuman Wretch! my shame prevent
This cruel Cruelty!
What Evil brings thee hither dead?
What Joy thou Slavest?*

Designed by W. Reynolds. Engraved according to the Original by J. G. Peltier.

Figure 1.2: Second Stage of Cruelty

CRUELTY IN PERFECTION.



*To hang'd Love when once betrayed,
 soon turns to cruel enmity
 At length he said to Thigh there stand
 He has the gentle blade.*

Published according to the Parliament Act.

*Let every ending Man see right,
 With all the subtle Crowd
 Can answer the gentle Dead Man right:
 For all the world's about.*

*The gaping Wounds and blood-stained Bed,
 You shall see breaking steel,
 But all what stays the Death-bed set,
 When Death his Death shall tell.*

Designed by W. Wood.

Figure 1.3: Cruelty in Perfection

THE REWARD OF CRUELTY.



Behold the Victim's dire disgrace!
Yet Death itself can end
No finds no powerful Fearful Place,
The Deathly Curse, no friend.

Down from the floor, that wretched Tongue,
Which daily swears and curses!
Those Fireballs from their sockets wrong,
That glow'd with hateful Light!

No Heart, disposed to paying Sport,
Is fair for no Glance,
But, dreadful! from his former shell rise,
No Remembrance of Shame.

Figure 1.4: The Reward of Cruelty.

Psychological studies of child development came to the forefront in the 1890s, with the Child Study movement, but enquiries had been ongoing throughout the nineteenth century.²¹ In 1806, the founder of modern psychiatry, Phillipe Pinel, identified the characteristic of 'mania without delirium'. Referencing Locke, he suggested that this was the result of an 'ill directed education' leading to the onset of violent tendencies in youths, including the killing of animals. This unchecked behaviour led to one individual, notably the son of a 'weak and indulgent mother', repeatedly being involved in 'pugilistic' encounters before throwing a woman into a well.²² Frances Power Cobbe offered further counsel in 1880. She believed that humans had an inherent capacity to seek pleasure in the pain of others, and coined the neologism 'heteropathy' to describe this condition, which she believed was heightened especially in slaughterhouses and particular blood sports.²³ Cobbe's theory was given currency by the young ladies' magazine, *Atalanta*. This mental condition, argued Maud Vernon, justified the creation of Bands of Mercy to correct the 'hereditary instinct of cruelty' that lay in a child's mind.²⁴ There is little evidence of further endorsements of Cobbe's definition. Instead, as the field of psychiatry expanded, experts versed in psychoanalysis offered their thoughts and identified further repercussions related to animal cruelty. In 1905, Sigmund Freud expressed the belief that children were especially uninhibited about cruelty as their capacity for sympathy developed comparatively late. Cruelty, according to Freud, also led to

²¹ Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 33.

²² P.H. Pinel, *A treatise on insanity, in which are contained the principles of a new and more practical nosology of maniacal disorders than has yet been offered to the public, exemplified by numerous and accurate historical relations of cases from the author's public and private practice: with plates illustrative of the craniology of maniacs and ideots*, trans by D.D. Davis (Sheffield: Todd, 1806), pp. 150-52.

²³ Frances Power Cobbe, *The Hopes of the Human Race, Hereafter and Here: Essays on the Life after Death*, (London: Williams and Norgate, 1880), pp. 57, 171-221.

²⁴ *Atalanta*, IX (1895-96), pp. 721-24.

premature sexual activity.²⁵ Serious enquiries of this nature suggest a firm acceptance by professionals that there was a discernable link between cruelty and human behaviour and the issue was not simply the province of moralising animal protectionists.

The capacity of children to abuse animals is now labelled as 'conduct disorder'. This emphasises a strong relationship between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence.²⁶ However, this link has been questioned. Heather Piper believes that modern scholars have far too readily related instances of serial killing with childhood animal cruelty, and such findings, fed upon by the media, create a moral panic.²⁷ The nineteenth-century media similarly propagated fear. The popular press was especially adroit at focusing upon youth culture and its violent tendencies. This heightened public anxieties and focused on the need to 'socialise children into the norms of adult middle-class society'.²⁸ The *Examiner* believed that childish 'larks' of any sort required instant checking, lest the child developed a predilection for pranks leading to more dangerous conduct. With respect to animal cruelty, this anxiety was particularly pronounced when newspapers believed that sentences were unreasonably light. A fine of 40s and two cautions for three lads who set fire to a dog led *Punch* to warn that this 'dog-roasting' had Hogarthian portents.²⁹ RSPCA

²⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, (Washington: Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing, 1930), pp. 52-53.

²⁶ Linda Merz-Perez, Kathleen M. Heide and Ira J. Silverman, 'Childhood Cruelty to Animals and Subsequent Violence Against Humans', *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 45 (2001), 556-73.

²⁷ Heather Piper, 'The Linkage of Animal Abuse with Interpersonal Violence: A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing?', *Journal of Social Work*, 3/2 (2003), 161-77.

²⁸ Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics*, pp. 4-9.

²⁹ *Examiner*, 5 January 1834; *Punch*, 74 (2 March 1878), p. 96.

speeches, reported by the press, similarly alluded to the demoralisation animal cruelty would engender, as did the press reports of regular prosecutions for animal abuse.³⁰

Although a persuasive argument was offered, which gave publicity to the inherent dangers of animal abuse, the dominant discourse was forewarning the potentiality of future behaviour. There is no evidence in these reports of actual cases of cruelty begetting crime. As H.S. Salt observed in 1891, Hogarth's sketches 'savour too much of that invective school of morality, which in defiance of real facts inculcates the pious theory that "Don't care comes to a bad end"'.³¹ Were there any real incidences of animal cruelty provoking crime? Pinel's research recorded an unnamed murderer, but two genuine related prosecutions in 1856 suggest a link. William Palmer, the 'Rudgeley Poisoner', was guilty of poisoning a betting man, John Parsons Cook. Echoing the tale of Tom Nero, Palmer had carried out cruel experiments on animals as a boy, was strongly suspected of killing his wife, and was hanged for murder. William Dove, a Yorkshire farm manager, was influenced by the Palmer case, and he too was found guilty of poisoning just weeks after the Palmer verdict. He also tortured animals in childhood, but as he was of 'defective intellect', he was spared the gallows. Was animal abuse a contributing factor? For Dove, his mistreatment of animals was part of his wider irrational behaviour, apparent in his youth. It would be wrong to assume animal abuse solely provoked Dove to murder, but it is noteworthy that his past conduct was reported as a contributory factor.³²

³⁰ *Liverpool Mercury*, 6 July 1869; *The Times*, 21 August 1882

³¹ As cited in Turner, *All Heaven in a Rage*, p. 51.

³² Pinel, *Treatise on Insanity*, p. 150; Richard Davenport-Hines, 'Palmer, William [the Rugeley Poisoner] (1824–1856),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004), [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21222> accessed December 19, 2008]. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 151; *The Times*, 15 to 28 May 1856; *Leeds Mercury*, 27 July 1856.

Nineteenth-century belief in animal abuse contributing to interpersonal violence was almost unshakable, although only tenuous evidence suggests this danger was real. Modern research also proposes a further, and actual, relationship between animal cruelty perpetrated by adults and family violence, including domestic and child abuse.³³ It is worth stressing here that Hogarth had also raised this in his depiction of the murder of Nero's pregnant mistress and the unborn child. The case of child cruelty was also raised by the nineteenth-century press, especially the perplexing state of affairs that led to a Royal society prosecuting offenders for animal abuse, with no comparable legislation or association protecting abused children. *John Bull* supported the RSPCA's work, but it spoke for many when it declared;

Year after year we have protested against the indifference of our rulers and countrymen towards the many instances of barbarity towards children which too often disgrace our newspaper reports, but which attract so little notice... Yet how better can children be taught a lesson in cruelty, than by feeling themselves the victims of it in the first instance? If none will defend them how can it be expected but that they, in their turn, will revenge themselves upon kittens or puppies, frogs or flies?³⁴

There are firm links between animal welfare and the first child protection measures. The Liverpool Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was born out of an amended RSPCA resolution for a dog's home in 1883. Following pressure by the newspaper press and Angela Burdett-Coutts (chair of the Ladies' Education Committee of the RSPCA), the 1889 Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act was passed and then consolidated by the 1908 Children's Act.³⁵ This wide-ranging piece of legislation had broad implications, some of which are relevant to this current discussion. With regard to child protection, the Act widened the definitions under

³³ Lorna Bell, 'Abusing Children - Abusing Animals', *Journal of Social Work*, 1/2 (2001), 223-34.

³⁴ *John Bull*, 2872 (24 December 1875), p. 881.

³⁵ Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 50-56; Moss, *Valiant Crusade*, p. 199.

which prosecutions could be brought for 'child cruelty'. Second, for children under sixteen years old, the Act criminalised smoking. Ostensibly, this was on health grounds, but smoking was linked to drinking and hooliganism, therefore official recognition was given to the theory that children's illicit behaviour had secondary and more serious repercussions. The Act also established juvenile courts for offenders under the age of sixteen. It was in these magistrate's courts that young persons accused of animal abuse were now summoned. In Colchester, in 1912, a lad of fifteen pleaded guilty before the 'children's court' of cruelty to a horse.³⁶

Encountering Animals through Work and Play

In the first half of the nineteenth century these more enlightened approaches to child welfare were still a long way off for the early supporters of the RSPCA whose attention focused firmly on the welfare of animals. Speaking in 1838, Thomas Butts observed, 'that children, tender and plastic as they are, can delight in torturing and tormenting the dumb and defenceless animal'.³⁷ Solving this problem was not simple as children had daily contact with animals. Pet keeping had become increasingly fashionable in the early modern period and by the mid-nineteenth century the 'Victorian cult of pets' had become established.³⁸ Children kept a variety of animals and often showed great affection to them. Dogs and rabbits proved popular, but Henry Mayhew's investigations of street trades also revealed a buoyant market for wild animals and birds as pets. The wealthy bought squirrels for their children, whilst street sellers hawked leverets. These were particularly popular with young girls owing to the

³⁶ Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 121-26; *An Act to Consolidate and Amend the Law relating to the Protection of Children and Young persons, Reformatory and Industrial Schools, and Juvenile Offenders, and otherwise to amend the Law with respect to Children and Young Persons*, 8 Edw. 7, C. 67, (21 December 1908); *Animal World*, VII/79 (July 1912), p. ii.

³⁷ RSPCA, *12th Annual Report 1838*, p. 44.

³⁸ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp. 117-120; Ritvo, *Animal Estate*, pp. 85-86.

'softness and gentleness of the leveret's look'. However, the life expectancy of such creatures was short. Nine out of ten young hares died quickly, the victims of inappropriate care and fear of cats and dogs.³⁹

Larger animals were always visible, as beasts were driven to livestock markets. These parades were open to abuse. One observer noted that 'charity boys', assisting drovers, took 'savagely delight' from hitting animals.⁴⁰ At least these animals were afforded some protection from youths. Regulations in 1839 ensured the licensing of all drovers and none could be under sixteen years of age.⁴¹ Long after the introduction of steam power, horses remained indispensable. By 1901, there were 3.2 million of them in Britain, employed predominantly in trade, agriculture or public transport. Such widespread use meant that horses were commonly stabled in close proximity to humans, even in town centres.⁴² Opportunities for abuse were numerous. Prosecutions of boys supposedly caring for these animals suggest that maltreatment by young workers was commonplace.⁴³ One particular industry brought horses and young people into close proximity. There were 31,000 male coalminers under the age of fifteen in 1891, who shared their work with tens of thousands of pit ponies.⁴⁴ The RSPCA was particularly concerned for the plight of these animals, noting in 1904 that it had no jurisdiction underground. The 1911 Coal Mines Act, which provided for

³⁹ Fletcher, *Growing up in England*, passim; Henry 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 Co., 1861), II, p. 77.

⁴⁰ Diana Donald, 'Beastly Sights': The Treatment of Animals as a Moral Theme in Representations of London c. 1820-1850', in *The Metropolis and its Image*, ed. by Dana Arnold, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 48-78; RSPCA, *9th Annual Report 1835*, p. 18.

⁴¹ RSPCA, *14th Annual Report 1840*, p. 103.

⁴² F.M.L. Thompson, 'Nineteenth-Century Horse Sense', *Economic History Review*, 29/1 (1976), 60-81; Nigel Morgan, 'Infant Mortality, Flies and Horses in Later-nineteenth-century Towns: A Case Study of Preston', *Continuity and Change*, 17/1 (2002), 97-132.

⁴³ RSPCA, *25th Annual Report 1851*, p. 96.

⁴⁴ *Census of England and Wales: 1891. Ages, Conditions as to Marriage, Occupations, Birth-Places and Infirmities*, (HMSO, 1893), III, p. xxii.

special inspectors to oversee animal welfare, afforded ponies some protection.⁴⁵ The gaoling of a 'youth' for cruelty to a pony in 1917 demonstrates that horses continued to suffer, although the law was effective. Yet, the strike by twelve lads in protest at this conviction, suggests that not all were sympathetic to animal welfare.⁴⁶

'Rustics', the *Standard* submitted, tended to be more insensitive to animal welfare. In 1851, a third of males, aged ten to fourteen were employed in agriculture.⁴⁷ Agricultural work invariably included contact with animals or birds. For farm labourers this included reliance on draught animals and a constant round of feeding or caring for stock, which, in contrast to the *Standard's* opinion, led to some boys developing devotional care for their charges, including stealing extra rations of feed. Younger children worked as bird-scarers, and some developed sympathy for birds. However, they were likely to have been in the minority as farmers threatened young workers with beatings if they slacked. Some bird-scarers therefore resorted to shooting birds, ensuring that antipathy towards birds was the overriding emotion.⁴⁸

Specific species suffered more than most. Flora Thompson recalled that 'spadgering' or the taking of sparrows and their eggs for food or fun, was a common ritual for the boys in her 1880s Oxfordshire village.⁴⁹ Killing this small bird had a long history. Henrician and Elizabethan legislation defined a wide range of creatures as vermin as they directly competed for often-scarce food resources. The parish paid

⁴⁵ *Animal World*, XXXV/420 (September 1904), p. 138; *An Act to consolidate and amend the Law relating to Coal Mines and certain other mines*, 1 & 2 Geo. 5, C. 50, (16 December 1911).

⁴⁶ *The Times*, 15 October 1917.

⁴⁷ *Standard*, 15 October 1883; Peter Kirby, *Child Labour in Britain, 1750-1870*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 55-60.

⁴⁸ Pamela Horn, *Labouring Life in the Victorian Countryside*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1976), pp. 60-69; Pamela Horn, *The Victorian Country Child*, (Kington: Roundwood Press, 1974), pp. 73-74, 214.

⁴⁹ Flora Thompson, *Lark-Rise to Candleford*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), pp. 153-54.

head money for kills of a wide range of species, but the sparrow was the most demonised. Targeted because of its granivorous diet, in excess of 100 million sparrows and their eggs were taken between c.1700 and c.1930.⁵⁰ To aid farmers, children were encouraged to take part in this slaughter. A 1750 husbandman's handbook instructed that 'Sparrows Nests are best destroyed by Boys because it is pleasant Sport for them to climb and take them out of their Holes'.⁵¹ By the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the number of creatures regarded as vermin was supplemented with new species blamed for interfering with carefully managed game stocks reared for the burgeoning sport of game-shooting that relied upon intensive game preservation for its large bags. A new round of killing commenced, focusing specifically on birds of prey. Writing in 1894, Ralph Payne-Galloway urged the 'young shooter' to destroy kestrels as they preyed on young pheasants.⁵² We should not regard these commands to kill 'vermin' as products of an era of ignorance. During World War I, Agricultural Committees encouraged schoolchildren to destroy sparrows to protect vital crops. This drew widespread condemnation from MPs and conservationists, concerned that this culling would lead to the Hogarthian demoralisation of children and a 'tribe of young Huns'.⁵³

Instances of cruelty abounded, but this was not always prompted by malicious spite. As one miner recalled, with reference to the treatment of pit ponies, 'the kids

⁵⁰ Mary Fissell, 'Imagining Vermin in Early Modern England', *History Workshop Journal*, 47 (1999), 1-29; Roger Lovegrove, *Silent Fields*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 171-79.

⁵¹ William Ellis, *The Modern Husbandman, Complete in Eight Volumes*, (London: Browne, 1750), III, pp. 128-30.

⁵² Lovegrove, *Silent Fields*, pp. 65-71; Pamela Horn, *Pleasures and Pastimes in Victorian Britain*, (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999), pp. 96-117; Emma Griffin, *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain Since 1066*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 118-23, 154-62; Ralph Payne-Galloway, *Letters to Young Shooters: The Production, Preservation and Killing of Game*, (London: Green, 1894), p. 70;

⁵³ *Animal's Friend*, XXII (1915-16), pp. 127-28; *Hansard*, 5/XCII, c. 2383-84 (25 April 1917).

used to get frustrated and lose their temper with them. They used to clout them and bray them... the poor devils used to suffer hell'. Conditions underground meant that 'you got frightened and frustrated and you had to take it out on somebody'.⁵⁴ The need to extract extra effort from animals in order to complete work led many workers to abuse their charges. Even one RSPCA supporter acknowledged, the poor were 'driven to make greater exertions to earn a subsistence'.⁵⁵

Children accustomed to kill vermin did not flinch at regularly exacting pain for pleasure from small animals.⁵⁶ Thomas offers a vivid assessment of children's play, observing that children,

robbed birds' nests, hunted squirrels... caught birds and put their eyes out, tied bottles or tin cans to the tails of dogs, killed toads by putting them on one end of a lever and hurling them into the air by striking the other end, dropped cats from great heights to see whether they would land on their feet, cut off pigs' tails as trophies and inflated the bodies of live frogs by blowing into them with a straw.⁵⁷

Children's games involved tormenting the smallest of creatures. A common amusement was spinning chafers, whereby skewered insects were twirled over the head to create a loud buzzing noise.⁵⁸ Callous indifference towards animal suffering had no regard for status. At Eton the custom 'prevailed of tormenting some live bird' on Shrove Tuesday. Attached to a door, a crow served as a target for hurled sticks. Other creatures also suffered. 'Hunting the ram' involved boys on horseback chasing the unfortunate creature down. This was abolished in 1747 at a time when grammar

⁵⁴ Christopher Storm-Clark, 'The Miners, 1870-1970: A Test-Case for Oral History', *Victorian Studies*, XV/1 (1971), 49-74 (p. 72).

⁵⁵ RSPCA, *10th Annual Report 1836*, pp. 40-41.

⁵⁶ James Walvin, *A Child's World: A Social History of English Childhood 1800-1914*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p. 92.

⁵⁷ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 147.

⁵⁸ Joseph Strutt, *Sport and Pastimes of the People of England*, (London: Tegg, 1850), pp. 388-89.

schools were introducing rules forbidding animal maltreatment.⁵⁹ Despite these changes, school blood-sports remained popular in the nineteenth century. One Old-Etonian recalled that foxes were deliberately maimed to provide easier sport for pupils. The less informal recreations also retained popularity. At Marlborough College, in 1843, pupils taking part in a frog hunt beat the creatures to death and 'piled the bodies high'. Notably, pupils were mainly clergymen's sons.⁶⁰

For urban children, and especially those in London, the opportunity to explore the countryside was limited, but seemingly, their penchant for exacting some sort of pleasure out of a small creature was not. Mayhew recorded that children bought sparrows from street dealers as 'playthings' to be 'wilfully or ignorantly... tortured'. He observed that 'strings are tied to their legs and so they have a certain degree of freedom, but when they offer to fly away they are checked, and kept fluttering in the air as a child will flutter a kite'.⁶¹ Animals in towns also presented a seemingly boundless form of entertainment. The sight of a fallen horse struggling to get to its feet on slippery cobbles or the opportunity to watch the slaughtering of a pig held a morbid attraction for crowds of curious children.⁶² Such base entertainment horrified some. The boys of the Newcastle Royal Jubilee School were warned from enjoying such spectacles, out of fear it would affect their future character.⁶³

⁵⁹ H. C. Maxwell Lyte, *A History of Eton College 1440-1910*, (London: Macmillan, 1911), pp.147, 276-77, 298; Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 178.

⁶⁰ James Richards, *Seven Years at Eton, 1857-1864*, (London: Bentley, 1883), p. 63; John Springhall, *Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain 1860-1960*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1986), p. 116.

⁶¹ Mayhew, *London Labour*, II, p. 62.

⁶² Eileen Baillie, *The Shabby Paradise*, (London: Hutchinson, 1958), p. 213; Thomas Okey, *A Basketful of Memories*, (London: Dent, 1930), p. 9.

⁶³ Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society, Tracts 042/4 v.288: no.1: 'Address: Delivered to the Scholars in the Royal Jubilee School for Boys, Newcastle upon Tyne, at the close of the Annual Examination and Distribution of Prizes, June 4, 1821' in *11th Annual Report of the Royal Jubilee School, Newcastle upon Tyne. Read to the General Annual Meeting of the Subscribers, 4th June 1821*, pp. 11-12.

Slaughtering attracted hangers-on, keen to ensure they got their hands on the pig's bladder, which became an instant football.⁶⁴ The adaptability of this internal organ illustrates one of the reasons why children readily picked on all manner of creatures. Rarely afforded real toys, the working-class child played with what ever came to hand. Homemade toys, street games and pranks remained inexorably popular. For some children, the very word 'plaything' had no meaning and when denied the pleasure of 'balls, ninepins, marbles, tops and wooden horses' they simply 'set traps for birds' instead.⁶⁵ A further reason lies in the spaces available for play. Rural children could venture into the woods and hedges, however for urban children the street was their playground. This lack of urban recreational space, Malcolmson suggests, was a reason why some of the more traditional blood-sports, declined.⁶⁶ The Public Health Act of 1848 allowed for the building of public parks. However, many were not within travelling distance for children and were highly regulated by attendants. Therefore, the street continued to be the unregulated play space of choice.⁶⁷ This may have actually increased animal cruelty and led to the attraction of the street-sellers described by Mayhew.

RSPCA speakers tended to regard all children as having a propensity to torture animals, but this is simply not true, and plenty later regretted or recoiled in horror at childish games. The engraver, Thomas Bewick, recalled that as a child he regularly threw stones at birds. His killing of a bullfinch evoked remorse, 'I felt great hurt at

⁶⁴ Walvin, *Children's Pleasures*, p. 232.

⁶⁵ Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, pp. 63-68; Michael Pickering, 'Mischievous, Pranks and Spare Time: Aspects of the Leisure of Edwardian Village Youth', *Cake and Cockhouse*, 9/4 (1983), 98-111; John Aikin, *Evenings at Home; or, The Juvenile Budget Opened*, (London: Johnson, 1793), III, pp.146-47.

⁶⁶ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 107-19.

⁶⁷ Frank Clark, 'Nineteenth-Century Public Parks from 1830', *Garden History*, 1/3 (1973), 31-41; Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, pp. 67-68.

what I had done... this was the last bird I killed'. Similarly, Eileen Baillie, a child in nineteenth-century London, recollected her upset at individuals harassing fallen horses.⁶⁸ Were children displaying this callous behaviour entirely to blame? Children learn cruel behaviour from adults, an anxiety that taxed the Rev. W. Noel in 1841. He reported that adults derived 'a fiendish exultation in inflicting pain' from animals.⁶⁹ Much of this behaviour stemmed from the mixed bag of traditional sports and pastimes, many of which involved the manipulation of animals. Traditional country games brought out the worst excesses of behaviour. To 'mumble a sparrow' involved a player attempting to catch a live bird, using only his mouth, whilst the sparrow was tethered to his coat.⁷⁰

Children witnessed these sports and attended the popular bouts of baiting and animal fights. Bewick, for example, recalled his visit to a cock-fight as a boy. The presence of young supporters provoked deep consternation from newspaper correspondents who believed that it would encourage gambling and drinking.⁷¹ The cock-fights, in general, attracted condemnation. The French traveller Cesar de Saussure expressed disgust at what he believed was a peculiar propensity of the English to derive 'cruelty and even ferocity' from their pastimes, although he admitted that he found cock-fighting 'diverting'.⁷² This indicates why blood-sports were popular; they were after all, undeniably thrilling. By the Victorian era, many of these more brutal sports had run their course or were suppressed by a rising tide of

⁶⁸ Thomas Bewick, *A Memoir of Thomas Bewick, Written By Himself*, (London: Longman Green, Longman and Roberts, 1862), pp. 21-23; Baillie, *Shabby Paradise*, p. 213.

⁶⁹ Bell, 'Abusing Children - Abusing Adults', p. 226; *Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education, 1840-41*, (HMSO, 1841), p. 74.

⁷⁰ Francis Grose, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, (London: Harper, 1788).

⁷¹ Bewick, *Memoir of Thomas Bewick*, pp. 22-23; Springhall, *Coming of Age*, p. 110.

⁷² Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 34-51; Cesar de Saussure, *A Foreign View of England in 1725-1729: The Letters of Monsieur Cesar De Saussure to his Family*, trans. and ed. by Madame Van Muyden (London: Caliban Books, 1995), pp. 175, 183.

middle-class indignation and growing urbanisation. The RSPCA's praise of the police for breaking up a cock-fight in 1913 demonstrates this alarm, but also the doggedness of individuals to continue supporting illicit sports.⁷³ Although the number of opportunities open to young people to witness blood-sports was dwindling, there were still plenty of legal field sports that children avidly attended, and where they could see some form of killing. At Ford School in Northumberland in the 1880s, the logbook records how children eagerly followed the hunts or were employed as beaters for estate shoots.⁷⁴

Rational Recreation for Children

The majority of children were left to their own devices as regards play. However, as notions of child rearing were developing in the eighteenth century, the middle classes, under the influence of Lockean theories recommending didactic play, began to insist that recreation was both profitable and productive.⁷⁵ This judicious use of time for a purpose and the avoidance of degenerative pastimes was a constituent of the larger drive for 'rational recreation', which was emphasised by childrearing handbooks. Mrs Richard Trench warned parents that 'still less should a single child be abandoned to himself in the hours of relaxation. His disposition is in danger of being deteriorated by his own musings'.⁷⁶ This moralising reached downwards. The *Children's Friend* suggested to readers who worked in 'close rooms and factories' that they should take a walk in the country. This would not only aid their health, but was also the perfect

⁷³ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 158-71; *Animal World*, VIII/91 (July 1913), p. iii.

⁷⁴ Ford School Archives, Northumberland: Ford School logbook (1877-1889), 1 October 1881, 29 November 1884.

⁷⁵ John Brewer, 'The Genesis of the Modern Toy', *History Today*, 30/12 (1980), 32-39.

⁷⁶ Mrs Richard Trench, *Thoughts of a Parent on Education*, (London: Parker, 1837), pp. 75-76.

alternative to sports that did not 'answer their proper end' such as cock-fighting.⁷⁷ The possibility that children would be more likely to encounter such sports in the countryside was clearly not considered.

'Technical employments promote calmness' enthused Trench. This drive for personal improvement led to the encouragement of middle-class children to visit museums or take up hobbies. This included the study of natural history, which was regarded as perfect for children as it taught close observation and classification.⁷⁸ An interest in natural history had been growing steadily, stimulated by the 'discovery of the Picturesque' and the eighteenth century appreciation of landscape.⁷⁹ There was an accelerated interest in the second half of the eighteenth century driven by a combination of nature articles in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the growing mania for collecting following the Linnaean system of classification and the production of popular books, most importantly Rev. Gilbert White's *Birds of Selborne* in 1788.⁸⁰

The tools engendering this growth in natural history were very much limited to the wealthy, but children had long taken an interest in nature. Bird-nesting was a universal pastime that crossed class divides. Amongst scenes of bird netting, a 1760s illustration of the activity [fig. 1.5] shows high-class boys pulling out nests for the admiration of lady-friends. Much lower down the social scale, rural lads stringed eggs together for display and Sunday school outings offered urban children the opportunity

⁷⁷ *The Children's Friend*, XIV/III (February 1825), pp. 30-31.

⁷⁸ Trench, *Thoughts of a Parent*, p. 79; Lyn L. Merrill, *The Romance of Victorian Natural History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 38-41.

⁷⁹ Allen, *Naturalist in Britain*, p. 46.

⁸⁰ David Elliston Allen, 'Natural History in Britain in the Eighteenth Century', *Archives of Natural History*, 20 (1993), 333-47.

to raid birds' nests.⁸¹ A minority used the pretence of serious natural history study; the majority pursued it for mere thrills. However, when attitudes towards animals began to change, it was bird-nesting that drew particular condemnation. Hannah More regarded the pastime as a means of trifling away a day, which could otherwise have been spent working or learning.⁸²

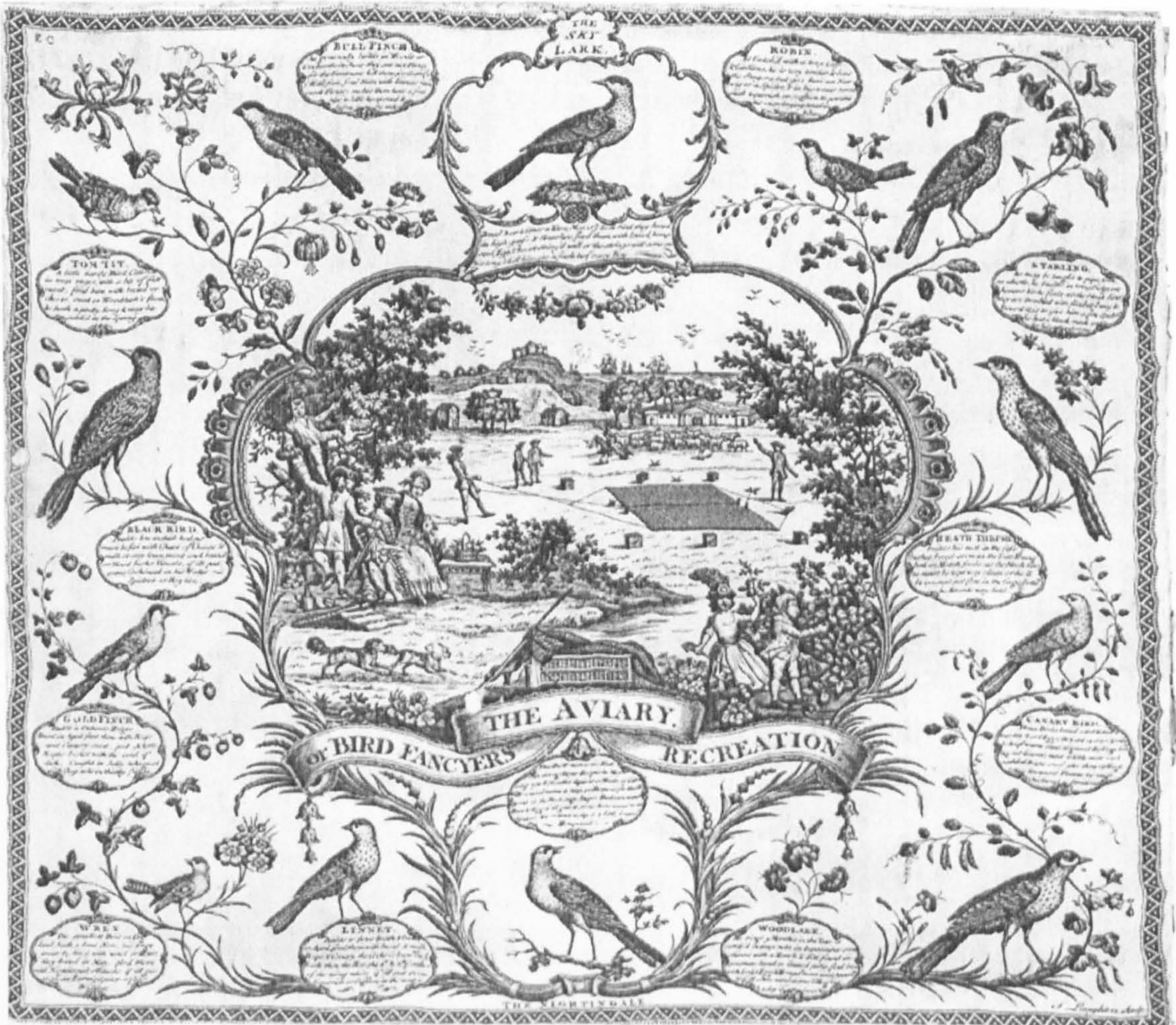


Figure 1.5: *The Aviary: A Bird Fancier's Recreation.*⁸³

⁸¹ Samstag, *For the Love of Birds*, p. 6; Thompson, *Lark-Rise*, p. 152; Basil Peacock, *A Newcastle Boyhood: 1898-1914*, (Sutton: Sutton Libraries, 1986), p. 86.

⁸² Keith Thomas, 'Children in Early Modern England', in *Children and their Books: A Celebration of the Work of Iona and Peter Opie*, ed. by Gillian Avery and Julia Briggs, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 61; Hannah More, *The Two Shoemakers in Five Parts*, (London: Cheap Repository, c.1795), p.3, [<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>, accessed 12/5/2005].

⁸³ Samstag, *For the Love of Birds*, p. 6.

As bird-nesting demonstrates, the study of nature did not always require complex equipment, previous knowledge or training. According to Bewick it was ideal for children, when such 'foundations' could be easily laid.⁸⁴ Its didactic qualities also heightened its appeal. In 1798, the educationalists Maria and Richard Edgeworth, urged parents of 'active and industrious' children not to suppress their interests in natural history but to positively encourage them to form collections, as it would let them discover a 'taste for order'.⁸⁵ Teachers were convinced of these benefits. Reflecting on the study of geology by his Belfast Academy pupils, R.J. Bryce was pleased to observe that his charges were 'more animated and intelligent... a rational pursuit in their hours of amusement has done more than keep them out of mischief'.⁸⁶ The study was certainly not gender specific. An advice book for girls in 1861 advised its readers to take an interest in nature. This would allow them to share their brothers' interests, ensure they did not make 'stupid blunders' when conversing and a well-kept 'Diary of Nature' would bolster self-improvement. There was no need for such instruction as girls recorded extracting as much enjoyment from impromptu bird-nesting as their brothers.⁸⁷

Natural history also offered further benefits. The nineteenth century was an earnestly religious era. Many scientists were Christians, and there was a long tradition of churchmen taking an interest in natural history. White's *Natural History of*

⁸⁴ Thomas Bewick, *A History of British Birds*, (London: Longman, 1847), II, preface; pp. iv-v.

⁸⁵ Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, (London: Johnson, 1798), pp. 20-30.

⁸⁶ James L. Drummond, *Letters to a Young Naturalist on the Study of Nature and Natural Theology*, (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1831), p. 315.

⁸⁷ Mrs Child, *The Girl's Own Book*, (London: Tegg, 1865), pp. 419, 428; Fletcher, *Growing up in England*, pp. 255, 309.

Selbourne sparked a long line of bird studies authored by clergymen.⁸⁸ A profound reason why this study was considered such a positive force was that it claimed to offer a closer knowledge of God. By admiring His creations, whether it was stones, trees or animals, the design of the Creator could be examined and marvelled at first hand, leading to the growing interest in natural theology. This became no longer just a leisure activity, but also a 'pious duty' which children were encouraged to take up.⁸⁹ James Drummond's *Letters to a Young Naturalist* claimed that the close study of nature tended to 'elevate our conscience of the omnipotence and the unerring wisdom of the Almighty'.⁹⁰ The consequence of this pious study was a supposed increase in the well-being of the student. Studying the 'hand of Providence', Bewick claimed, could only lead to inner peace and happiness. Surely, Bewick concluded, 'a good naturalist cannot be a bad man'.⁹¹

This growing interest led to the establishment of natural history societies and field clubs, although membership was almost exclusively restricted to wealthy adult males. One such society was the Natural History Society of Northumbria [NHS], formed in 1829, which quickly established a museum for members' collections.⁹² These private institutions offered the ideal cultural rational recreation, eventually recognised by the 1845 Museums Act. This permitted local authorities to fund such establishments from public rates.⁹³ Some foresight is visible in the decision by the NHS in 1835 to open its collections, housed in the Newcastle Literary and

⁸⁸ Obelkevich, 'Religion', pp. 328-48; K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation 1846-1886*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 427-71; Mearns and Mearns, *Bird Collectors*, pp. 233-36.

⁸⁹ Barber, *Heyday of Natural History*, p. 23.

⁹⁰ Drummond, *Letters to a Young Naturalist*, p. 1.

⁹¹ Bewick, *History of British Birds*, p. v.

⁹² T. Russell Goddard, *History of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne 1829-1929*, (Newcastle: Reid, 1929), pp. 27-28

⁹³ Golby and Purdue, *Civilisation of the Crowd*, pp. 91, 107.

Philosophical Society's building, for the 'attendance of the working classes and their families upon holidays'. The NHS hoped that this would develop a taste for natural science and gratify their 'rational curiosity', although it harboured deep suspicions of these visitors and was relieved to note with 'pride and pleasure' that they were unaware of 'injury or abstraction' of their specimens. The public responded enthusiastically and 44,000 people visited in 1848.⁹⁴ Specific attempts encouraged charity schoolchildren and their teachers, who were welcomed in 1835. When admission charges were levied, the NHS allowed children under twelve to be admitted for half price. A special winter's 'entertainment for a juvenile audience' was organised in 1868, which was 'attended with much success' and denotes real efforts by the NHS to engage with children.⁹⁵ Its success was not always emulated elsewhere. The 'open days' held by Norfolk naturalists attracted little interest, and they blamed a lack of quality nature books for failing to inspire an interest in nature among children.⁹⁶

A popular view was that the study of nature would lead to its admiration rather than its abuse. Reflecting on what he believed was widespread cruelty to animals, in 1713 Pope advanced the possibility that some 'good use might be made of the Fancy which Children have for Birds and Insects' in order for children to respect wild creatures.⁹⁷ This was a belief that still held firm in 1846. The Bishop of Norwich

⁹⁴ Goddard, *History of the Natural History Society*, pp. 44-46, 62.

⁹⁵ Natural History Society of Northumbria: 'Report of the Natural History Society...Year Ending August 11, 1836' in *Reports of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne 1830-1865*, p. 21; 'Report of the Natural History Society... for Years 1862-63', in *Reports of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne 1830-1865*, p.5; 'Report of the Committee', *Natural History Society Transactions*, III (1868-70), p. 198.

⁹⁶ *Transactions of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society*, I (1869-70 to 1873-74), pp. 6-7.

⁹⁷ *The Guardian*, No. 61 (21 May 1713), p. 269.

claimed that if children could be encouraged to develop a passion for natural history then this would impart 'feelings of tenderness and sympathy for living beings'.⁹⁸

However, such expectations should be set against the methods of naturalists and the attractions of museums displaying mounted specimens in dense rows of glass cases, which reflected the urge to 'collect, identify and classify' as many species as possible.⁹⁹ This interest led collectors to zealously comb the countryside, bent on retrieving the scarcest specimens, whether this was shells, ferns or eggs, for display. Such furious hoarding led to the complete extinction of the great auk in 1844 and several British breeding birds, including avocets by 1893.¹⁰⁰ Natural history was still in its infancy. The production of a specimen was required to 'prove' a record, as 'what's hit is history, what's missed is mystery'.¹⁰¹ The species accounts in nineteenth-century avifaunas are strewn with the words 'killed' or 'shot'. The account by the Northumberland naturalist John Hancock in 1853 is typical. Even though he already had specimens in his collection, Hancock described how he shot the first recorded breeding wood sandpipers in England and took their nest 'so as to leave no room for doubt'.¹⁰² This was typical of the hoarding habits of the day that led the *Graphic* in 1869 to declare the period as 'a collecting age'.¹⁰³ Museums left in their visitors a desire to emulate what they had just seen. Following the visit of the Belfast Academy's pupils to the local museum in 1828, the Academy formed its own

⁹⁸ RSPCA, *20th Annual Report 1846*, pp. 44-47.

⁹⁹ Lowenthal, 'Nature and Nation', p. 19.

¹⁰⁰ David Allen, 'Tastes and Crazes', in *Cultures of Natural History*, ed by N. Jardine, J.A. Secord and E.C. Sperry, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 394-407; Mearns and Mearns, *Bird Collectors*, p. 17; Simon Holloway, *The Historical Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*, (London: Poyser, 1996), p. 166.

¹⁰¹ Stephen Moss, *A Bird in the Bush: A Social History of Birdwatching*, (London: Aurum Press, 2004), p. 48.

¹⁰² John Hancock, *A Catalogue of the Birds of Northumberland and Durham*, (London: Williams & Northgate, 1874), p. xvi.

¹⁰³ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Things*, (London: Batsford, 1988), p. 47.

collection of shot specimens.¹⁰⁴ As in the cases of animal cruelty, children aped their superiors and looked to kill creatures with the excuse that this was sanctioned as a serious study. The optimism that studying nature would lead to respect for animals appeared crushed. The veterinary surgeon William Youatt was encouraged by children taking an interest in natural history, but he regretted that the study had unleashed, 'a youth, as soon as the season opens, beating every bush entrapping hundreds of insects in his muslin net...practices like this will gradually form the *collector*, but not the *philosopher*...not the *student*'.¹⁰⁵ Whilst elements of the middle classes encouraged children to collect nature, another strand had busily begun to condemn what it regarded as the unregulated cruelty meted out to all manner of creatures.

Changing Attitudes, Legislation, and Animal Protection

This change in sensibilities was not a singular venture. Instead, the eighteenth century witnessed a softening of manners, as civility and 'politeness' became markers of respectability amongst the middle classes, eventually leading to the flowering of moral reformation movements. With regard to animal welfare, there was a growing realisation, influenced by scientific thought and the new Linnaean categorisation of nature, that there was a scarcely visible line that separated man from beasts.¹⁰⁶ This linkage was given powerful affirmation by Charles Darwin in 1853 and more forcibly by his *Descent of Man* in 1871. Darwin argued that the mental difference between

¹⁰⁴ Drummond, *Letters to a Young Naturalist*, p. 310.

¹⁰⁵ W. Youatt, *The Obligation and Extent of Humanity to Brutes*, (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1839), pp. 208-209.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Langford, 'The Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), 311-31; Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, pp. 7-8.

man and animal was only one of degrees, a concept with which individuals had long wrestled. In 1733, Pope observed that 'From Nature's Chain, what ever link you strike, Tenth or ten thousandth, break's the chain alike'.¹⁰⁷ An especially contentious issue was whether animals had the same consciousness as humans and felt pain. In 1731, William Wollaston was certain that 'the sufferings of brutes are not like the sufferings of men'.¹⁰⁸ It was becoming recognised that animals felt pain, but the obstacle that was gradually overcome was that it was '*feelings* of the suffering object which mattered, not its intelligence or moral capacity'.¹⁰⁹

The vehicles for these changing attitudes were the circulating tracts and flourishing periodicals. These may have influenced the attitudes of some of the urban middling sorts, but as a correspondent to the *World* lamented in 1756, the 'writings of an Addison are seldom read by cooks and butchers'. To this excluded audience, we can confidently add children. The *World's* correspondent cautioned would-be reformers. When intervening to put 'butcher's boys in mind' for beating sheep he brought himself into 'imminent peril' as this merely spurred on the boys.¹¹⁰

This strong resistance by the working classes was partly motivated by deeply rooted religious beliefs. They had long been indoctrinated with the Christian belief

¹⁰⁷ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or, The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, (London: Murray, 1859); Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, (London: Murray, 1871); Alexander Pope, 'An Essay on Man or the First Book of Ethic Epistles to H. St. John L. Bolingbroke', (published 1733) in *The Poems of Alexander Pope, Volume III/I An Essay on Man*, ed. by Maynard Mack, (London: Methuen, 1970), Epistle 1, lines 245-246 (p. 45).

¹⁰⁸ William Wollaston, *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, (London: Knapton, 1731), pp. 34-35.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp. 173-76.

¹¹⁰ Adam Fitz-Adam, *The World, for the Year*, (London: 1753-c1757), IV, (No. 190) pp. 1140-44, [<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>, accessed 12/05/2005].

that man should not be bound by moral consideration in his dealings with animals.¹¹¹ Yet the clergy were working to undermine this belief. In 1776, Rev. Dr Humphry Primatt produced his *Dissertation on the Duty of Mercy and Sin of Cruelty to Brute Animals*. This inverted the long-held belief that God sanctioned animal cruelty, instancing the Covenant between God and Moses that specifically established a responsibility for man to protect 'every living creature'. Turner suggests evangelicalism played a role in creating these new sensibilities, but Primatt attacked their belief in an inherently sinful child, asserting that parents had a tendency to blame the 'perverse disposition of children' for wayward behaviour.¹¹² Primatt's thesis added to the growing profusion of sermons and tracts targeting different audiences. Thomas Herring delivered a sermon to the Lord Mayor of London in 1739 on the benefits of 'Humanity to the Brute Creation'.¹¹³ A very different and rural audience heard Rev. Granger warn against 'barbarism' and blame the 'most stupid, ignorant, and uncivilised part of our countrymen' that engaged in 'baiting and worrying animals'.¹¹⁴

Various attempts had been made during the eighteenth century to legislate against certain blood-sports. In 1701, the Grand Jury of Middlesex recommended the closing of the bear-garden at Hockley thought to corrupt the young. Early legislation tended to focus on banning blood-sports, not for their cruelty, but because of the disturbance caused. Similarly, prosecutions for animal abuse were dealt with as

¹¹¹ John Passmore, 'The Treatment of Animals', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36/2, (1975), 195-218 (p. 200).

¹¹² Humphry Primatt, *The Duty of Mercy and the Sin of Cruelty to Brute Animals*, ed. by Richard D. Ryder, (Edinburgh: Constable, 1834; repr, Fontwell: Centaur Press, 1992), pp. 109-11, 121; Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, p. 12.

¹¹³ Thomas Herring, *Seven Sermons on Public Occasions By the Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Herring*, (Dublin: Faulkener, 1763), Sermon II.

¹¹⁴ Granger, *Apology for the Brute Creation*, pp. 11-12.

damage or trespass to property rather than cruelty.¹¹⁵ A bill to outlaw bull-baiting was introduced in 1800, but this was narrowly defeated, as were further attempts in 1802 and 1809. The parliamentary debates surrounding these bills are instructive. They provide an insight into the changing economics of the country, instigating clashes between supporters of the old-style yeoman culture and the new time-dictated industries.¹¹⁶ Moreover, they also offer a prophetic insight into the consequences of subsequent legislation.

Lord Erskine, a proponent of all three bills, admitted that the 1800 bill had become bogged down in its attempts to ‘put an end to sports that led away the servants and labourers of manufacture and husbandry from the service of their masters’.¹¹⁷ The MP William Windham strongly opposed all attempts to pass this ‘petty legislation’, observing that magistrates were too often implementing ‘vexatious control over the lower classes... like those persons who were always preventing children from enjoying recreations and amusements, thought that every kind of control was useful for the poor’.¹¹⁸ Whether Windham had in his sights the newly formed Sunday schools is open to speculation, but it does offer evidence of resistance to the virtuous reformers. Windham was convinced that should legislation be enacted he foresaw the day when newspapers reported the punishment of workers for cruelty, alongside ‘Sporting Intelligence’ accounts of a ‘glorious day’s [field] sports’. Any bill

¹¹⁵ Harwood, *Love for Animals*, pp. 332-40.

¹¹⁶ Turner, *All Heaven in a Rage*, p. 115; Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, pp. 16, 27.

¹¹⁷ N[ewcastle] U[niversity] R[obinson] L[ibrary], Grey Tracts V. 93: *Cruelty to Animals, The Speech of Lord Erskine, in the House of Peers, on the Second Reading of the Bill for Preventing Malicious and wanton Cruelty to Animals*, (London: Philips, 1809), p. 10.

¹¹⁸ *The Times*, 19 April 1800.

that prevented cruelty, Windham believed, should be re-titled to read 'A Bill for harassing and oppressing certain classes among the lower orders'.¹¹⁹

The issue slumbered until 1821 when the MP Richard Martin took up the cause and introduced a new bill to outlaw the cruel treatment of cattle. Despite some opposition from MPs who thought the subject not a fit one for legislation, it passed in 1822. However, a technicality, which ruled that bulls were not 'cattle', meant that baiting remained legal.¹²⁰ MPs rejected an attempt to correct this in 1823. Their debate is noteworthy. William Smith believed baiting fostered a 'brutal ferocity' in individuals, an observation shared by Thomas Fowell-Buxton, who offered the case of a boy attending a dog-fight who became 'perverted in character'. Sir Matthew Ridley rejected these Hogarthian notions, remarking that 'in his younger days he had witnessed some of these exhibitions; and as they had not made him ferocious, he thought they would not have a different effect on the people in general'. Moreover, Henry Broughton had sympathy with the working classes, observing that outlawing baiting would only draw a line between sports of the lower orders and those of the wealthy, which remained untouched.¹²¹ This later became the case, but Broughton's concern may have also had roots in the belief that once baiting was banned, campaigners would turn on upper-class field sports.

Broughton's concern over these demarcations raised the problem of defining what constituted 'cruelty'. The 1822 Act was ambiguous, simply stating that it was to

¹¹⁹ NURL, Grey Tracts V. 93: *Speech of the Right Hon. W. Windham, in the House of Commons, June 13, 1809, on Lord Erskine's Bill for the more Effectual Prevention of Cruelty towards Animals*, (London: Budd, 1810), pp. 18-19, 26-27.

¹²⁰ Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, pp. 39-41; *Hansard*, V, c.1099 (1 June 1821); *An Act to Prevent the Cruel and Improper Treatment of Cattle*, 3 George IV, C. 71, (22 July 1822).

¹²¹ *Hansard*, IX, c.433-35 (21 May 1823).

‘prevent the cruel and improper Treatment’ of animals. MPs, debating this legislation, had already drawn attention to the problem. Mr Scarlett observed, ‘the offences proposed to be punished by this bill were of too vague and indefinite a nature. Indeed, if the principles were adopted he could not see where the line was to be drawn’. Mr Holford, a magistrate, added that he ‘should not know how to act, if a postboy were brought before him, under the present bill, for riding his horse too hard’.¹²² This was never resolved, although as legislation widened, the scope of offences became more comprehensive. An 1849 Act prohibited any person from being able to ‘cruelly beat, ill-treat, overdrive, abuse, or torture, or cause or procure to be cruelly beaten, ill-treated, over-driven, abused, or tortured, any Animal’.¹²³ However, this still did not address the issue of measuring the degree with which hitting an animal merely to control it, became cruelty. As W. Stanley Jevons stressed in 1876 ‘the sentiments of the public in respect of cruelty are simply in a chaotic state. There is no approximation whatever to the utilitarian standard’.¹²⁴ Particularly taxing were the inconsistencies and values attached to vermin control and field sports, both of which had the potential to leave their quarry dying in agony. For Jevons, qualifying animal cruelty was a thorny issue, but he believed that, ‘to inflict pain for the pleasure of inflicting it, is unquestionable and malignant cruelty’.¹²⁵ Scholars have similarly found defining cruelty difficult, observing that cultural, class, religious and political values, can affect its categorisation. Notably it was nineteenth-century working-class

¹²² *Hansard*, VII, c.874 (10 June 1822).

¹²³ *Act to Prevent the Cruel and Improper Treatment of Cattle*, 1822; *An Act for the more effectual Prevention of Cruelty to Animals*, 12 & 13 Victoria, C.92, (1 August 1849).

¹²⁴ W. Stanley Jevons, ‘Cruelty to Animals – A Study in Sociology’, *Fortnightly Review*, 25 (1876), 671-84 (pp. 672-73).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 674-80.

sports, such as dog-fighting, that were considered cruel, whereas foxhunting, the sport of gentlemen, was certainly not.¹²⁶

Similar questions circulate around children's play. 'Does cruelty include pulling the legs off spiders, or only those of vertebrate animals?' asks Piper.¹²⁷ Some were in no doubt about the torture of insects. In 1793, William Bell attempted to persuade Sunday school scholars that their common game of pinning insects was not only cruel, but would lead to a 'bad disposition'.¹²⁸ The study of natural history only muddies this debate further. In 1872, Thomas Bold reported to the NHS that a pied flycatcher had been killed by a 'lad' and called for better protection of our 'rare and harmless visitants' from 'idle boys'. Just three years earlier, Lord Ravensworth told the same society that the 'gentleman' William Cochun had shot a 'somewhat bewildered and lost' roller, a much rarer migrant than the flycatcher. Unsurprisingly, there was no condemnation of this incident.¹²⁹ Social scientists have long struggled with the categorisation of animal-child abuse and this was still problematic in the nineteenth century.¹³⁰ The key phrase here is 'socially unacceptable', which as the nineteenth-century rhetoric of animal protectionists demonstrates, was repeatedly dependent upon social status.

Despite the vagueness of the 1822 Act, its definition had an immediate impact on young workers. An apprentice to a driver was fined 20s for ill-treating a sheep,

¹²⁶ Bell, 'Abusing Children – Abusing Adults', p. 227, Boddice, 'Morality of Field Sports', p. 8.

¹²⁷ Piper, 'Linkage of Animal Abuse', p. 164.

¹²⁸ William Brooke, *Short Addresses to the Children of Sunday Schools, on Particular Texts of Scripture*, (London: Rivington, 1793), pp. 35-37.

¹²⁹ *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne*, IV/XXI/2, (1872), p. 512; *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne*, III/VIII/1 (1869), pp. 173-74.

¹³⁰ Ascione, *Cruelty and Animals*, pp. 26-28.

leading to Martin receiving an anonymous letter from a drover protesting that 'poor honest lads' be allowed to continue their work unhindered. Martin was threatened with a 'dog's death' if he continued to 'disturb Smithfield by sending honest boys to prison'.¹³¹ Martin was unperturbed and continued to file cases, although he was vocal in his opposition to prosecutions being the sole mission of the RSPCA when he attended its formative meeting in 1824. Fowell-Buxton chaired the meeting and suggested that although 'interference' was at times necessary a much more preferable course was to follow the lead taken by the newly formed British and Foreign School Society in affecting a change in the moral feeling of the 'lower orders' in order to 'compel them to think and act like those of a superior class'. A six-point plan was drawn up for the new Society, including the 'circulation of suitable tracts' and the introduction of schoolbooks 'calculated to impress on the youth the duty of humanity to inferior animals'.¹³²

Despite Martin's concerns and the subsequent denials by the RSPCA that 'ours is not a prosecuting society', court actions dominated the Society's early years. The appointment of a force of inspectors from 1832 and the extension of legislation in 1835 to criminalize any person found baiting or fighting animals strengthened the RSPCA's mission.¹³³ Cock-fighting was now banned, but this was unpopular and often ignored. When attempting to break-up cock-fighting in Newcastle, which was, according to the Society, the addiction of the 'lower classes, particularly pitmen', the

¹³¹ *The Times*, 3 August 1822; 14 September 1822.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 18 August 1823; 17 June 1824; RSPCA, *Annual Report 1864*, p. 6; Fairholme and Pain, *Century of Work for Animals*, pp. 52-55.

¹³³ RSPCA, *12th Annual Report 1838*, p. 31; Moss, *Valiant Crusade*, pp. 59-61; *An Act to consolidate and amend the several Laws relating to the cruel and improper Treatment of Animals, and the Mischiefs arising from the driving of Cattle, and to make other Provisions in regard thereto*, 5 & 6 William IV, C. 59, (9 September 1835).

RSPCA heard they had 'no interest in the welfare of the inhabitants of this town' and cared little 'whether this sport has a demoralising effect or not'.¹³⁴ This harassing image commonly characterised the Society's work. The triumphalist procession of prosecutions of almost wholly working-class individuals suggests zealous prosecutions of workers regardless of any mitigating excuses that they were pursuing their work.¹³⁵ Further caveats to these convictions filled the pages of the Society's *Annual Reports*. Describing offenders as 'brutal looking fellows', Harrison maintains, was a deliberate ploy to create an impression that the working classes specialised in brutality.¹³⁶ The newspaper press subsequently reported these cases giving further currency to the notion of a sadistic working-class. This stereotyping was a common trait of the nineteenth-century press that characterised the working classes as 'unintelligent oafs' and, more importantly, in need of the 'direction of others'. Indeed, even before the RSPCA's actions, in 1803 the *Morning Chronicle* condemned 'those savages called Drovers'.¹³⁷

Similar rhetoric framed the prosecutions of children. A 'notorious' boy received hard labour for throwing a dog off the top floor of a house and a 'morose-looking boy' convicted for torturing and killing a horse was sentenced to two years hard labour. These were for wanton cruelty, but child workers also fell foul of the law. Given the concern for parental responsibility, and the propensity with which working-class parents supposedly schooled their offspring in the art of cruelty, it was apposite that 'a youth of 14 and his father' engaged in coal barging were convicted for

¹³⁴ RSPCA, *Annual Report 1850*, pp. 114-21.

¹³⁵ Thompson, *Rise of Respectable Society*, p. 280; RSPCA, *10th Annual Report 1836*, pp. 40-41.

¹³⁶ Ritvo, *Animal Estate*, p. 143; Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 147. Some of these emotive descriptions appear in RSPCA, *Annual Report 1858*, Appendix, pp. 36-40.

¹³⁷ *Morning Chronicle*, 13 March 1857; Middleton, 'Education Act of 1870', p. 168; *Morning Chronicle*, 1 January 1803.

‘torturing two donkeys’.¹³⁸ Obviously not all children were cruel and some aided the Society by providing damning evidence. Here the rhetoric changes to emphasise the positive qualities of the witness. The conviction of Joseph Mitchell, charged with maiming an ass was only secured because of the evidence given by ‘an intelligent lad’.¹³⁹ Punishment of offenders was a key RSPCA strategy that appeared to supersede the original intention to educate. Prosecutions soared [fig. 1.6] although notably after 1867, the Society merely summarised these figures in its annual reports rather than printing selected cases. Salacious press reports, however, continued unabated.¹⁴⁰

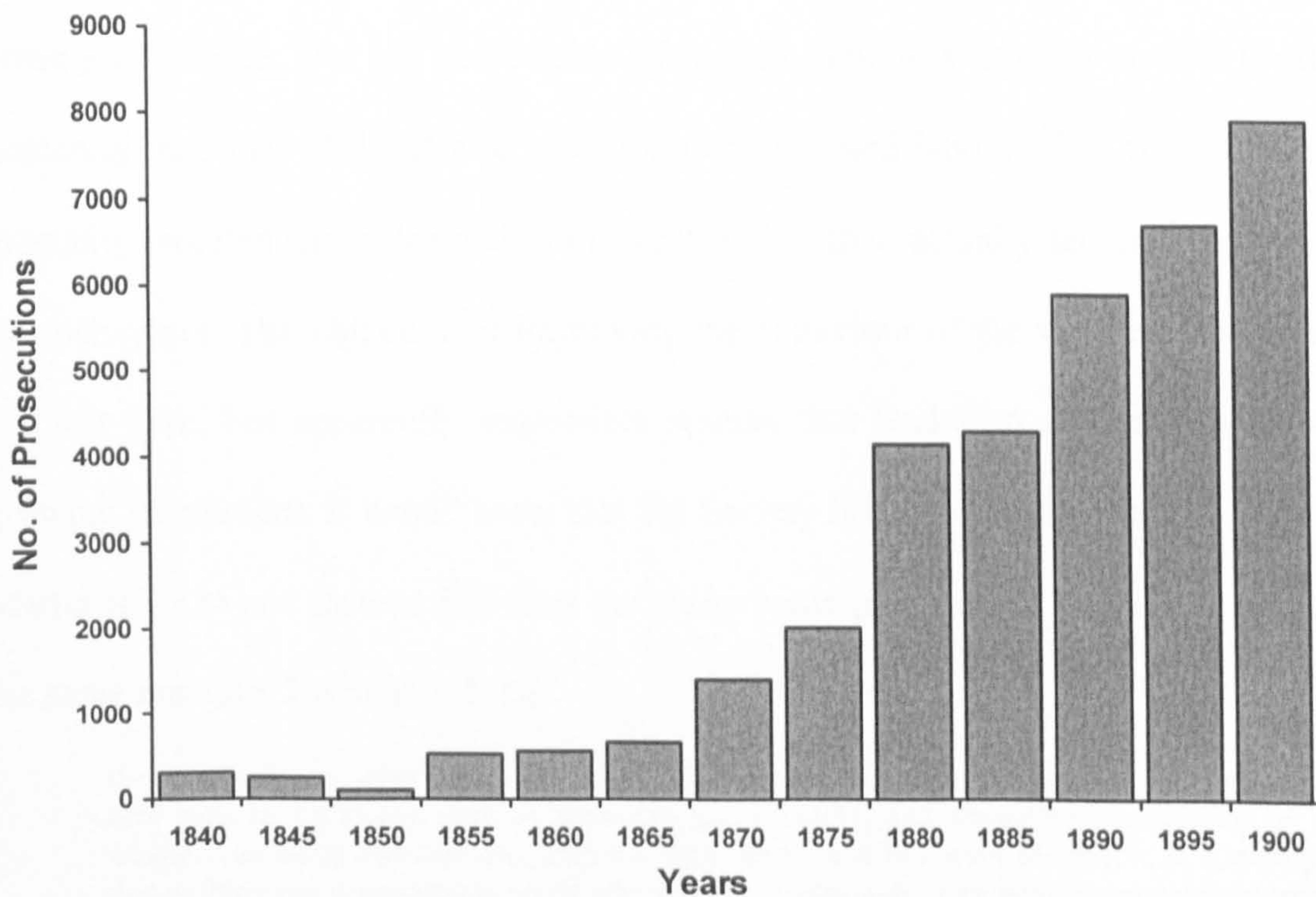


Figure 1.6: RSPCA Convictions 1840-1900.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ RSPCA, *Annual Report 1851*, pp. 96-97; *Annual Report 1866*, p. 124; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 February 1870.

¹³⁹ RSPCA, *19th Annual Report 1845*, p. 73.

¹⁴⁰ Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 131; For example, *Liverpool Mercury*, 24 January 1896.

¹⁴¹ RSPCA, *87th Annual Report 1910*.

The drop-off in convictions for 1850 is unexplainable, whereas the increases from that date are attributable to widened legislation, allied to an increasing network of RSPCA branches and inspectors.¹⁴²

The number of cases involving children is unknown, but it is probable that they totalled a very low number. As one RSPCA inspector observed, it was 'not usual for the Society to take up cases against children under fourteen years of age'. However, when instances of wanton cruelty emerged, the Society acted. Henry Radford was sentenced to a month's hard labour for cruelty to a cat. *Punch* lamented, 'Of course it is necessary that boys under fourteen should be taught that it is wrong to break a cat's back. But any respectable, if ragged, school is fitter to instruct them in humanity than that of the House of Correction and hard labour'.¹⁴³ This prosecuting mentality targeted those deemed to be cruel, rather than actually tackling the root of this behaviour. The objective of improving the behaviour of the working classes was not just hard, but apparently impossible against this backdrop of punishments and growing resentment. It would seem that the Society had ignored the counsel given by Martin in 1824 and instead followed the easier route propounded by T.G. Meymot at the same meeting. He believed that

the class of men, with whom efforts of the meeting would probably come in contact, were now sunk in the lowest state of ignorance and brutality, and altogether unassailable by such weapons as tracts and sermons, because they never read nor went to church. It was palpable that nothing but prosecutions could affect drovers, although more gentle means might have an influence upon others who acted with rigour towards the brute creation.¹⁴⁴

This 'gentle means' has largely been brushed over by assessments of the RSPCA which present the Society as a middle-class vehicle intent on harassing the working

¹⁴² Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, pp. 89, 92, 101.

¹⁴³ *Punch*, 47 (15 October 1864), p. 154.

¹⁴⁴ *The Times*, 17 June 1824.

classes.¹⁴⁵ The volume of prosecutions has hidden the educational work of the Society that was building momentum.

Education and Animal Welfare

Education had been at the very heart of RSPCA objectives from the outset, and the anxiety that children's cruelty towards animals would engender further despicable deeds was a constant theme of AGM speakers. They placed great emphasis upon the responsibilities of mothers, who were warned that they had to 'watch and crush' the first signs of cruelty, as a failure to do so would inevitably lead to a manifestation of this characteristic.¹⁴⁶ By shifting accountability to parents, the Society was simply reiterating the belief in parental responsibility advocated by childrearing guidebooks. Trench warned mothers to guard against their own behaviour. Even seemingly inconsequential actions, such as killing a spider, could be interpreted by children as sanctioning animal abuse.¹⁴⁷ In contrast to the supposed urgency of this educational task, the Society adopted a laissez-faire approach, placing emphasis on its own supporters to carry out this work. This delegation is perhaps understandable as the Society's early years were dogged by acute funding problems and schism that probably stalled its plans in 1832 to introduce books into schools.¹⁴⁸

By 1837, finances were healthier. This permitted the establishment of a school fund and sub-committee, with the express objective of handling all educational

¹⁴⁵ For example, Thompson, *Rise of Respectable Society*, pp. 278-83.

¹⁴⁶ RSPCA, *7th Annual Report 1833*, pp. 32-33.

¹⁴⁷ Trench, *Thoughts of a Parent*, pp. 45-46.

¹⁴⁸ RSPCA, *6th Annual Report 1832*, pp. 58-60; Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, pp. 39-45.

initiatives. Notably the onus for funding this educational work was still with subscribers, and the Society, whilst it acknowledged that education was amongst its founding principles, resolved to keep this expenditure separate from its main fund. A promise was made to start supplying schools with suitable literature.¹⁴⁹ This was achieved in 1838. The Society's *Annual Report* lists thirty-two tracts, handbills, pamphlets and books for sale. The majority of publications were directed at workmen, but several children's titles were also available.¹⁵⁰ The number of such titles grew slowly. By 1861, the *Annual Report* included forty-five educational pamphlets and books, of which at least six were specifically aimed at children.¹⁵¹

This was at least a small step in the right direction, but the Society's readiness to prosecute overrode its willingness to educate. It could easily have done much more in this field. Money should no longer have been an issue. In 1846, £3,000 was held in stock and at the bank. Lewis Gompertz, a former RSPCA secretary, attacked this financial glut, believing this surplus could have funded educational work, such as school visitors, and was appalled that in 1846 the RSPCA had spent nothing on education.¹⁵² The educational work of some individual supporters of the Society was very limited. The Rev. Burgess informed the 1844 AGM that he had papered his nursery with the newly published 'lessons of humanity' books and forced his children to read this 'moral kind of upholstery'.¹⁵³ Of more value were school essay competitions that began in 1838 after a 'lady' offered the headmaster of Charterhouse

¹⁴⁹ RSPCA, *11th Annual Report 1837*, pp. 90-92; RSPCA, 'Minute Book no.2', 5 June 1837, pp. 160-61.

¹⁵⁰ RSPCA, *12th Annual Report 1838*, pp. 140-41.

¹⁵¹ RSPCA, *Annual Report 1861*, pp. 157-159.

¹⁵² Lewis Gompertz, *Fragments in the Defence of Animals, and Essays on Morals, Soul and Future State*, (London: Horsell, 1852), pp. 273-76; RSPCA, *20th Annual Report 1846*.

¹⁵³ RSPCA, *18th Annual Report 1844*, p. 20.

school prizes of £5 and £2 for discussion essays on the 'Moral Obligation of Man to the Brute Creation'.¹⁵⁴ Given what we know of the 'sporting' activities of some pupils, it is not surprising that RSPCA supporters should have raised deep concern about the public schools. Rev. Frank Hewson lamented that although he heard 'beautiful recitations in Greek, Latin, and English' at Harrow, there were no 'recitations against Cruelty to Animals'.¹⁵⁵

By 1843, the essay project was still small scale. Just six compositions were received from pupils of Christ's Hospital. The scope of this scheme was gradually widened, and by 1846, it encompassed the National Schools, although entries were restricted to those training or trained at the Battersea Training College, with the intention of publishing the prize-winning essays for distribution amongst the wider school population.¹⁵⁶ Although the Society supplied the National Schools with educational tracts, given the concern for the working classes, it is difficult to understand why no attempts were made to engage with the Sunday schools.

This limited action was controversial. 'F.P.', writing in 1856, queried why those who promoted the 'Society' in 1832 had not perceived education as the foundation for preventing cruelty. If this had been realised then 'it would have tended to civilise those since grown up'.¹⁵⁷ At RSPCA meetings frustration was aired and there was a call for the rolling out of the essay programme. At issue was not the size or quality of essays, but instead the requirement that children were addressing the

¹⁵⁴ RSPCA, *12th Annual Report 1838*, pp. 13-14.

¹⁵⁵ RSPCA, *16th Annual Report 1842*, p. 35.

¹⁵⁶ RSPCA, *17th Annual Report 1843*, pp. 7-12; *20th Annual Report 1846*, pp. 9-10.

¹⁵⁷ F.P., *Our Duty to Animals not yet Understood or a Voice for the Dumb*, (London: Calder, 1856), p. 77.

'evils of cruelty'.¹⁵⁸ On the Society's objective of providing school material, John Curling remarked sardonically 'I suppose *that* is done'.¹⁵⁹ National Schools were reportedly teaching the principles of humanitarianism, but it would appear that this was their own initiative and the RSPCA admitted it had been lethargic. W. Adams Smith confessed the Society had been rather 'backward' in promoting education. Smith reckoned this was because 'Punishment *was* the fashion, *now* it is education through Reformatories'. Therefore, Smith announced that the Society had appointed government school-inspectors to become committee members to give advice. However, their impact was limited as they attended only one committee meeting.¹⁶⁰ By the 1860s, the RSPCA's schoolwork was at last gathering momentum. The spur for this was the appointment of John Colam as secretary in 1861, which had the effect of the 'waving of a Magician's wand' on the Society's work. A series of lectures and school visits was carried out by 1868 and another sub-committee formed to revise educative literature.¹⁶¹

This was positive work, but entirely absent from these efforts was any attempt to offer 'rational recreation' or other diversionary activities to either children or working-class adults as compensation for the amusements, such as cock-fighting, that the RSPCA worked to outlaw. Instead, there was an unappealing diet of essays and largely didactic texts. The 'lucky' children who won essay competitions were invited to annual meetings. However, having to listen to various speakers denounce their failings was hardly a pleasurable treat, and certainly not one that would inspire greater

¹⁵⁸ RSPCA, *Annual Report 1851*, pp. 47-49.

¹⁵⁹ RSPCA, *32nd Annual Report 1855*, p. 32.

¹⁶⁰ RSPCA, *Annual Report 1852*, p. 36; *32nd Annual Report 1858*, pp. 28-29; Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, pp. 100; 110.

¹⁶¹ RSPCA, 'Minute Book No. 15', 19 July 1886, p. 374; RSPCA, *Annual Report 1868*, p. 44-45; Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 100.

efforts.¹⁶² The halting educational work, demonstrated by the formation of another committee, combined with the lack of a distinct children's wing, must be seen as a reason why the Society failed to make progress.

The Sunday schools, by contrast, made greater efforts to organise children's leisure and were certainly aware of the problems of animal abuse. The newspaperman, Robert Raikes, has been largely recognised as the founder of the movement in 1781, but their exact roots are somewhat uncertain and they may have been in existence as early as 1625.¹⁶³ Raikes was inspired to set up his school after a Sunday visit to Gloucester, when children roamed the streets 'birds-nesting, robbing orchards [and] rioting in the streets'. Struck by this lawless behaviour, Raikes organised Sunday classes to teach the children to read.¹⁶⁴ Scholars offer alternative views of the Sunday schools. Laqueur considers them working-class institutions which aimed to widen literacy.¹⁶⁵ But given the intention of Raikes it is clear that this new school system offered a means of regulating working-class behaviour, an argument shared by both Malcolm Dick and E.P. Thompson.¹⁶⁶ An 1818 Sunday School Union report from Carlisle is illustrative of this controlling desire. By attending Sunday school, children could avoid both 'wanton mischief in the field' and a Sunday home-life that revolved around a 'scene of domestic broils... and crimination'.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² RSPCA, *21st Annual Report 1847*, pp. 35-36.

¹⁶³ Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability*, pp. 21-33.

¹⁶⁴ W. Walters, *The History of the Newcastle on Tyne Sunday School Union*, (London: Sunday School Union, 1869), pp. 12-13.

¹⁶⁵ Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability*, pp. 187-89.

¹⁶⁶ Malcolm Dick, 'The Myth of the Working-class Sunday School', *History of Education*, 9/1 (1980), 27-41; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (London: Penguin, 1980), p. 412.

¹⁶⁷ NURL, Friends 28(8): C.C. Wawn, *The Benefits of Sunday Schools and the Advantages of "Unions" Remarkd upon in the Speech of Mr C.C. Wawn, at the First Anniversary of the Cumberland and Carlisle Sunday School Union*, (Newcastle: Newcastle Sunday School Union, 1818), pp. 2-3.

THE CRUEL CHILD.

"My love, what are you doing to the poor dog?" (who was crying very loudly,) said Mr.



H— to his little boy Charles; "I am sure you have been treating him very cruelly." Charles was silent. "What has your brother been doing, John?" continued the gentleman; "I wish you to tell me." "Why he has been pinching Carlo's ears to make him cry out, and has been kicking him."

Figure 1.7: The Cruel Child

From the outset, Sunday schools were involved in the campaign against animal cruelty. A 1789 regulation insisted that teachers should warn against 'wanton Cruelty towards Animals'.¹⁶⁸ Teachers were urged to impart regular anti-cruelty messages via a number of means, including literacy lessons. The *Salisbury Spelling Book* advised children, 'Rob not the bird of the nest... nor take her eggs, nor her

¹⁶⁸ William Morton Pitt, *A Plan for the Extension and Regulation of Sunday Schools*, (London: Sunday School Society, 1789), p. 17 [<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>, accessed 12/05/2005].

young ones.... Pierce not the smallest insect for thy sport, for they are all the work of the Lord... The Lord perceives thy cruel pastimes and will turn his ear from thee in thy distress'.¹⁶⁹ Such forbidding lessons needed encouragement to attend and books and periodicals were given away as a reward for good attendance. These too carried a warning against cruelty. The story of 'The Cruel Child' in the *Child's Companion or Sunday Scholar's Reward* was unmistakably Hogarthian [fig. 1.7]. After beating his dog the boy grew up full of 'violence and wrath'.¹⁷⁰

Despite these sermons against immorality, Sunday school organisers believed their efforts had been futile. There was recognition that attacking popular culture was not enough. Instead success lay, not in suppression, but rather counter-attractions, albeit with didactical undertones. A template had been provided by the 1840s 'excursion movement' that offered attractive outings to challenge debasing culture. An example of these diversionary activities was the institution by the Newcastle Sunday School Union of a series of illustrated 'Popular Lectures' in 1844 on 'the wonders of nature'. These were 'well attended by scholars and teachers'.¹⁷¹ Through their organised feasts, processions and outings to the countryside, the Sunday schools provided an annual treat. A picnic in the country for many urban children offered a rare opportunity to experience nature at first hand.¹⁷² These outings were obviously didactic and had to be worked for, but more importantly, here was an organisation attuned to the realisation that such activities had to have a fun element to engage the attention of young people.

¹⁶⁹ *Sunday School Teachers' Magazine and Journal of Education*, (December 1848), pp. 551-52; *Salisbury Spelling Book Or True Reading Made Easy*, (Dublin: Perrin, 1814), p. 32.

¹⁷⁰ *The Child's Companion or Sunday Scholar's Reward*, 6/59 (November 1828), pp 344-46.

¹⁷¹ Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 40-41; Walters, *History of the Newcastle on Tyne Sunday School Union*, pp. 314, 322.

¹⁷² Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability*, p. 177.

Conclusion

Locke's 1693 call for positive animal welfare teaching and warning against cruelty was not a lone voice, nor was it confined to animal protectionists. Although the conception of childhood had undergone a transformation, there is much to suggest that this belief in the consequences of cruelty by children towards animals remained unshaken. What is more apparent is that this very real concern for child and animal welfare became more urgent and wider despite the ebbs and flows of the ideology of childhood. This shifting conception of childhood is audible in the understanding of RSPCA supporters towards the relationship between animals and children. In 1833, Rev. Rowsell believed cruelty was derived from the manifestly 'evil nature' of a child. By 1856, a more enlightened idea was broadcast. The Society's chairman, Sir James Burrell, observed that 'there is a little inclination to cruelty in young boys' which was not intentional, but derived from 'mere thoughtlessness or wantonness'.¹⁷³

Despite this apparent shift, the Society remained wedded to prosecutions, which although essential, stifled its educative work and did nothing to reduce animal cruelty, as measured by the rapid rise in prosecutions. Children seemed equally unfazed by this threat, as the 1891 prosecution of ten-year-old Henry Fryer for killing a dog demonstrates.¹⁷⁴ The trickle of educational work fell well short, and although the RSPCA blustered about the need to address children's behaviour, little progress was made to get to the heart of this issue by the nation's premier animal welfare society. According to the MP John Bright, in 1878 it was imperative to begin with

¹⁷³ RSPCA, *7th Annual Report 1833*, p. 36; RSPCA, *30th Annual Report 1856*, p. 21.

¹⁷⁴ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 28 November 1891.

children as young as six to shape their future characters.¹⁷⁵ The limited efforts of the RSPCA had been directed at those much older than this, such as the privileged boys of Charterhouse, suggesting that class as well as age defined the parameters of their activities.

The effort to interest children in natural history sometimes inadvertently encouraged cruelty. Therefore, rational recreation had to be carefully planned. Grasping this notion were the Sunday schools, with their carrot and stick approach of engaging with children. Although these institutions preached a humanitarian message, this was not their primary objective, which remained religious instruction. The RSPCA had recognised education was vital, but placed emphasis on positive parenting, rather than paying its officials to work with other people's children. Only in 1870, with the involvement of women, who had also been excluded from proactive work by the Society, was this policy reversed.

¹⁷⁵ *The Times*, 20 April 1878.

CHAPTER TWO

A most important adjunct to our Society: The Band of Mercy, 1870-1914

In Romsey, in 1874, a children's group was formed by Florence Suckling to discuss 'Humanity Lessons'. One year later, RSPCA supporters led by Catharine Smithies, established the Wood Green Band of Mercy for Promoting Kindness to Animals. These initiatives were originally independent of the RSPCA, but by 1883, both the Romsey and Wood Green groups had come under its control. Finally, after years of inaction, it would seem that the RSPCA had its long sought-after youth wing; the Wood Green venture was recognised as the 'first regular society of youths and children' to promote its principles.¹ In light of the RSPCA's earlier inactivity, this chapter looks at the reasons why the Band of Mercy [BOM] was formed in the 1870s.

The BOM, in contrast to the majority of the press societies, had active groups. These were essential for its success. This chapter considers the organisational basis of the BOM branches: its committees, funding, enrolment of members, and most importantly, the activities designed to promote the RSPCA's objectives to its BOM members and the public at large. The Wood Green group was also the first to use the BOM title, appropriated from the much larger temperance movement, the Band of Hope, which Shiman suggests provided 'respectable recreation' for children and a means of reforming working-class behaviour.² This chapter will consider whether this argument of social control can be applied to this humanitarian group, and assesses

¹ RSPCA, 'Minute Book 13', 14 December 1875, *Animal World*, VII/78 (March 1876), p. 40; Moss, *Valiant Crusade*, pp. 198, 201.

² Lilian Lewis Shiman, 'The Band of Hope Movement: Respectable Recreation for Working Class Children', *Victorian Studies*, 17/1 (1973), 49-74 (p. 49).

how the BOM attempted to appeal to the working classes in order to reform their supposed brutal behaviour towards animals.

Origins of the Band of Mercy and the Role of Women

The BOM was certainly not the first children's group formed to attempt to enrol children into a society supporting a 'cause'. The ideologies of the temperance movement arrived from America in 1829 and activists set about forming societies. With its close links to the Sunday schools, it was inevitable that the temperance movement should also establish a children's wing. In 1847, the term 'Band of Hope' was first applied to a temperance gathering of the Leeds Sunday School Union. Growth was rapid. By 1870, this had become a nationwide society with thousands of young members.³ One of the reasons behind the formation of the Band of Hope was the realisation by temperance workers that they could never reclaim large numbers of adult drinkers. Convincing children to abstain was more effective. The RSPCA's ponderous approach to children's work was in stark contrast to this rapid readjustment of educational tactics, but by the late nineteenth century, animal protectionists also grasped this concept. George Angell, president of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, pointed out, 'how can you better reach the father or mother, who never enters a church or uses the name of the Supreme Being except in blasphemy, than through his or her child when under humane training in our public schools?'⁴

The RSPCA's sluggishness could certainly not be blamed on a lack of well-placed and capable youth workers. Thomas Smithies, a committee member, had also

³ Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, pp. 101-103, 192-94.

⁴ Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink*, p. 134; Florence Horatia Nelson Suckling, *The Humane Educator and Reciter*, (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1891), p. 495.

been a Sunday school teacher and Band of Hope organiser.⁵ In addition, the well-publicised mass meetings of the Band of Hope should have offered a glaringly obvious template.⁶ One explanation for this is that these two associations were organised on a very different basis. A 'ladies committee' of the Leeds Temperance Society had been integral to the success of the Band of Hope. In contrast, the RSPCA excluded women from its prosecution and committee work. John Meymott, the Society's solicitor in 1835, justified their omission on the grounds of their 'station in society'. Instead, Meymott suggested they might train their children 'in the practice of humanity... [and] enforce it in the various charity schools and Sunday schools'.⁷ This was obviously a peripheral responsibility. By 1842, RSPCA supporters were well aware of the success female temperance workers were having and suggested similar work. Women took their own initiative. By the 1850s, there were a number of groups enrolling children and teaching them humanitarian principles. There is only scant evidence, but one group, the Juvenile Animal Society formed by Mrs Frances Patrick at Notting Hill, made children agree to a pledge to protect 'dumb animals', had a badge identifying affiliation and expected members to recite poetry meditating upon kindness to animals.⁸

The catalyst for the eventual formal involvement of female RSPCA supporters was the visit by George Angell to the RSPCA vice-patron, Angela Burdett-Coutts, in 1869. Following his educative work in Massachusetts, Angell pressed Burdett-Coutts to form a separate 'Ladies' Humane Society', to introduce humanitarian teaching into schools. Burdett-Coutts wrote to *The Times* appealing for educationalists to

⁵ G. Stringer Rowe, *T.B. Smithies: A Memoir*, (London: Partridge, 1884), pp. 34-35.

⁶ *Illustrated London News*, 21 February 1852.

⁷ Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 192; RSPCA, *10th Annual Report*, 1835, pp. 17-18.

⁸ RSPCA, *16th Annual Report*, 1842, p. 36; F.P., *Our Duty to Animals*, pp. 77-79; *Animal World*, VII/97 (December 1913), p. 224; Moss, *Valiant Crusade*, p. 199.

implement this teaching. John Colam replied and requested public help to form a ladies' society to distribute the Society's publications.⁹ Fifty women volunteered. Instead of forming a separate society, the decision was made to form a 'Ladies' Humane Education Committee', chaired by Burdett-Coutts, but notably auxiliary to the RSPCA's General Committee.¹⁰ After denying women a formal role for so long, the RSPCA relented, but it was keen to stress that they should continue to be protected from prosecution work. This would merely 'alarm...perplex and annoy them'.¹¹

The decision to give women a role was justified by drawing on contemporaneous concepts of gender divisions, especially the notion of the caring female. Men were not suited to educational work, the Society argued, as their business or political roles meant that they had little remaining time. On the other hand, women were 'happily... exempt' from commerce and politics, and were far more effective at being able to 'awaken minds and soften hearts'. The Society concluded that such work would fulfil women's needs to have their time occupied and match their abilities.¹² Female philanthropic work was especially justified on the grounds of a moral duty to assist the poor. The Newcastle RSPCA branch vindicated the formation of a ladies committee by insisting this would get 'into the highways and bye-ways' to broadcast its principles 'amongst the lower strata of society'.¹³ However, we also need to consider the broader reasons why women were engaged in philanthropic work. Such work amongst the poor was popular with female charity workers who often

⁹ *The Times*, 14-16 September 1869; Moss, *Valiant Crusade*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁰ *Animal World*, I/10 (July 1870), p. 168; Fairholme and Pain, *Century of Work for Animals*, p. 164.

¹¹ *Animal World*, I/11 (August 1870), p. 200.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 200; June Hannam, 'Women and Politics', in *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945*, ed. by June Purvis, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 217-45 (p. 221).

¹³ Hannam, 'Women and Politics', p. 221; NCL/LS, L179.3: RSPCA, *7th Annual Report of the Newcastle Branch 1879*, pp.13-14.

seized such opportunities as it provided them excitement, otherwise unobtainable in their dull lives. This offered inactive middle-class women a non-controversial endeavour and a means of extending social networks. For evangelicals, it gave an opportunity to dispense religious teachings and satisfied their need to undertake charitable duties by spreading notions of rational recreation for both themselves and the working classes. A combination of these factors inspired Smithies and Suckling to found their groups.¹⁴

Women went on to play a vital role in the new BOM. The role of secretary offered an opportunity for keen female RSPCA supporters, who formed sixty-nine percent of its subscribers in 1900. This was a greater majority than the other seventeen societies surveyed by Frank Prochaska in the same decade and he concluded that women overwhelmingly supported associations benefiting children, women and servants.¹⁵ Animal welfare overrode all of these preferences, especially when we consider that women were also the leading protagonists of the RSPB. The RSPCA sustained its belief that education was women's work as the 1884 BOM magazine referred to secretaries with the pronoun 'she' and an analysis of the BOM leadership in 1910 confirms that it was overwhelmingly women (sixty-eight percent) who filled such positions.¹⁶

¹⁴ Catriona Parratt, 'Making Leisure Work: Women's Rational Recreation in Late-Victorian and Edwardian England', *Journal of Sport History*, 26/3 (1999), 471-87; Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, pp. 1-17, 231-41; Chien-hui Li, 'A Union of Christianity, Humanity and Philanthropy: The Christian Tradition and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Nineteenth-Century England', *Society and Animals*, 8/3 (2000), 265-85 (p. 275).

¹⁵ Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, pp. 30-31, 233.

¹⁶ Samstag, *For the Love of Birds*, pp. 11-34; *Band of Mercy*, 72 (December 1884), p. 90; RSPCA, *87th Annual Report 1910*, pp. 220-26.

In 1870, the new Ladies' Committee set about reforming the Society's educational work. It criticised the lack of funding given to previous attempts at education, observing that prosecutions were given priority. Notably, the formation of a children's society was not part of their original remit.¹⁷ This idea was mooted by a committee member, Catharine Smithies (the mother of Thomas), but for reasons unknown she decided to form the group on her own volition.¹⁸ This was popular. The first meeting in 1875 attracted 300 adults and children. Importantly, one of the attendees was John Colam, who prophesied 'Mrs Smithies has begun a good work which will extend far beyond what even she has at present any conception of'. The Wood Green Band targeted school leaving boys, as it was certain that 'cruelty may be learnt' once a lad had left home and school. Meetings were intended to be a haven for working boys who had 'no club, no society, to foster and support his principles of kindness'. These virtues were to be kindled by the use of a circulatory library, 'discussions, conversations, and papers'.¹⁹ Catharine Smithies died in 1877. Thomas Smithies and his sister, 'Miss Smithies', subsequently managed the BOM. Its early history is rather sketchy, but by exhorting Band of Hope workers to broaden their work to include animal welfare, other individuals quickly copied the Wood Green project and the movement expanded.²⁰

¹⁷ RSPCA, 'Ladies Committee Minute Book', 8 August 1870.

¹⁸ *Animal World*, XIV/162 (March 1883), p. 43. The relevant sections of the Minutes of the Ladies' Education Committee are missing.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, VII/78 (March 1876), p.40.

²⁰ *Band of Mercy Advocate*, 12 (December 1879), p. 95; 37 (January 1882), p. 6; Fairholme and Pain, p. 167.

Band of Mercy Magazine

This new movement initially lacked a bespoke periodical, which was becoming a common denominator for nineteenth-century youth groups.²¹ Thomas Smithies was a shrewd publisher with a proven track record. Among the host of publications he edited was the temperance *Band of Hope Review*, which began in 1851. By 1855, the *Review* claimed to have the largest circulation of any children's periodical. This was built on Smithies' sound business acumen, a strictly defined potential readership and the distribution of free copies. Smithies did not ignore adults, and started the *British Workman* in 1854 as a monthly 'improving' newspaper. Both periodicals combined religiosity with temperance. They also articulated his beliefs about the positive treatment of animals allied to Hogarthian reminders for those who failed to guide their children. The *Review* stressed that 'a bird-nesting, bird-tormenting boy seldom grows into a humorous or good man'.²²

Thomas then founded *Animal World* in 1869 as the RSPCA's main periodical, replacing the role previously undertaken by the laborious *Annual Report*.²³ Being full of verbatim AGM speeches and prosecution case studies, this would hardly have inspired children. They had to be content with didactical tracts that were scarcely tempting reads. *Easy Lessons for Youth* laboured the wickedness of blood sports and instilled a fear of Satan for any animal abuser. The Society hoped *Animal World* would address cruelty by training-up 'our young readers to a love of animals by interesting stories and anecdotes, which will be a staple commodity of these

²¹ Dixon, 'Children and the Press', p. 141.

²² Peter Roger Mountjoy, 'Thomas Bywater Smithies: Editor of the *British Workman*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, XVIII/2 (1985), 46-56; *British Workman*, 22/257 (1876), p. 67; *Band of Hope Review*, 52 (April 1855), p. 111.

²³ RSPCA, 'Minute Book 11', 16 February 1869.

columns'.²⁴ The content was a vast improvement on previous literature, but was principally adult-orientated.

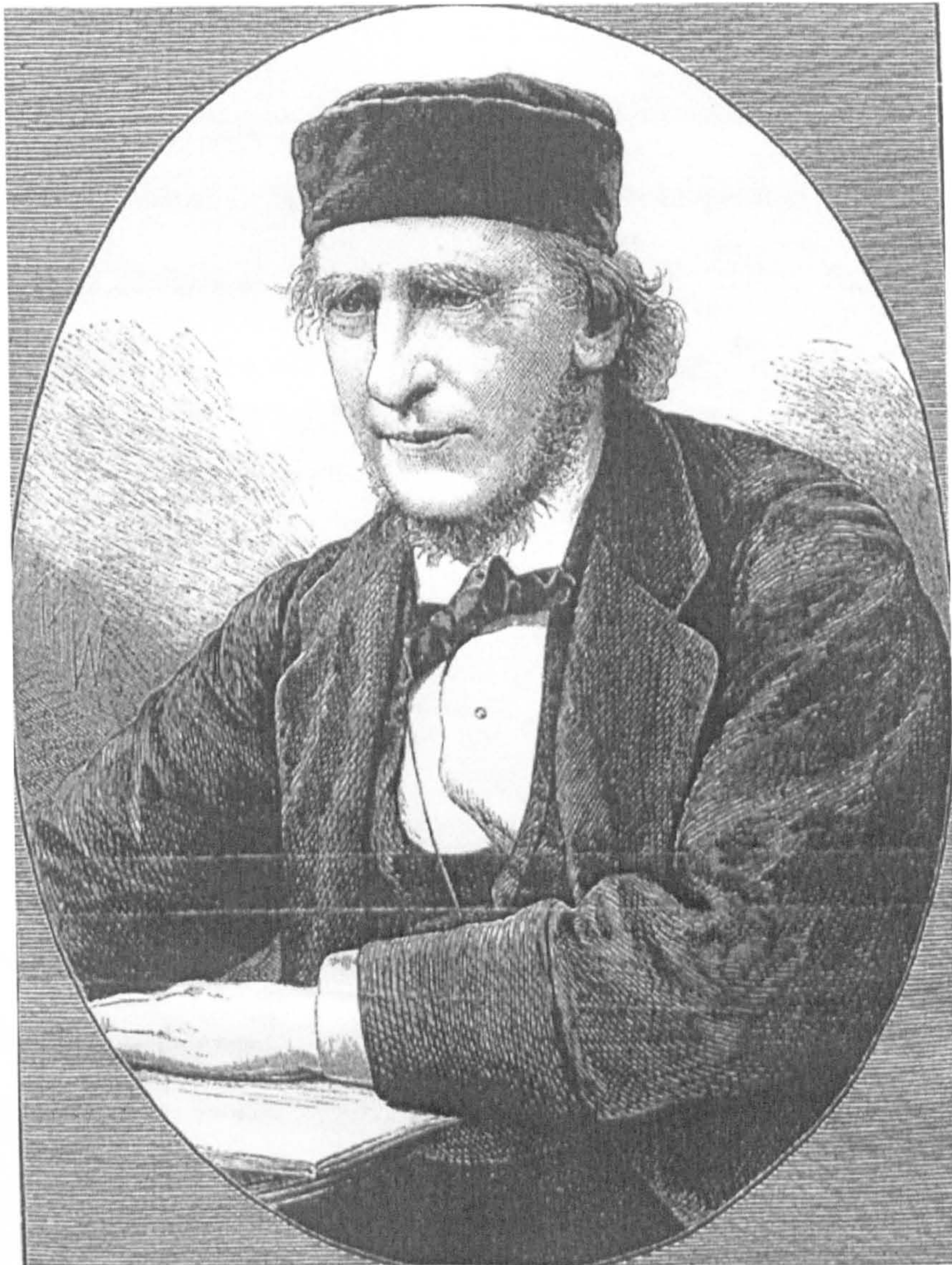


Figure 2.1: Thomas Bywater Smithies, 1817-1883.²⁵

As a measure of the growth of the Bands, Smithies launched the eight-paged monthly *Band of Mercy Advocate* in 1879, to promote 'kindness to animals by means of lectures, addresses, suitable literature, the offering of prizes and all other

²⁴ Abraham Smith, *Easy Lessons for Youth. Designed to Inspire the Minds of the Rising Generation*, (London: SPCA, 1838); *Animal World*, I/1 (October 1869), p. 8

²⁵ *Animal World*, XIV/68 (September 1883), p. 137.

appropriate ways as may from time to time be found desirable'.²⁶ Smithies used his existing publications to advertise the new magazine, which was also freely circulated at BOM meetings.²⁷ Produced by the same publishing house of S.W. Partridge, the *Advocate* was visually similar in its format to the *Band of Hope Review*, and its virtuous stories mirrored contemporary religious magazines.²⁸ Not all Bands appreciated this, complaining that the *Advocate* was 'rather feeble... the older members require something more suitable for their reading'.²⁹

Changes were imposed on the magazine by the failing health of Smithies. He approached the Ladies' Committee in 1882 to take control of the Bands. They agreed, considering the BOM 'entirely in harmony with the operations' of the RSPCA.³⁰ Once John Colam became editor in 1883, there was noticeable change in the magazine. It was renamed *Band of Mercy, the Journal of the Band of Mercy Societies* and immediately became lighter in style. The Paddington BOM appreciated this, noting 'the Journal is now more suitable for our work than it has ever been'.³¹ A typical issue cost ½d and was well illustrated with engravings, and latterly, photographs, of animals and birds, as well as sketches accompanying moralistic stories and poems that focused on positive animal welfare. This instruction was supplemented with timely reminders to feed the birds and to desist from bird-nesting. The inclusion of songs and sheet music indicates a publication for Band meetings. 'Willie's Robin' exhorted bird feeding, 'Comrades, Sing in Joyful Measure' and 'The

²⁶ *Band of Mercy Advocate*, 1 (January 1879), p. 7. Although the periodical was just eight pages long, monthly editions were consecutively paginated for collation into yearly annuals.

²⁷ *The British Workman*, 26/302 (1880), p. 4; *Band of Mercy Advocate*, 27 (March 1881), p. 23.

²⁸ *Band of Mercy Advocate*, 7 (July 1879), pp. 50-51.

²⁹ *Animal World*, XIV/162 (March 1883), p. 43.

³⁰ RSPCA, 'Minute Book 14', 27 November 1882; Fairholme and Pain, *Century of Work for Animals*, p. 167. Thomas Smithies died in July 1883. Mountjoy, 'Thomas Bywater Smithies', p. 53.

³¹ *Band of Mercy*, 49 (January 1883), p. 2; 52 (April 1883), p. 31; 320 (August 1905), p. 68.

Coming Victory' trumpeted the work of the BOM in overcoming cruelty, and 'Easter Dawn' offered an account of the resurrection of Christ, evidence that religious teaching had not been entirely stripped out. Reminders to treat working animals with kindness indicate that the periodical circulated amongst working boys and men. Coordination between Bands had been previously lacking. 'Our News Column' allowed for the dissemination of best-practice ideas and communication between groups. More importantly, it served to bind the organisation and keep it under the RSPCA's watchful eye.³² Although the periodical had regular contributions from Band supporters, only when children had carried out extraordinary acts of kindness or saved animals in distress were they mentioned by name.³³

Band of Mercy Leadership

In January 1883, at the behest of the RSPCA, a conference was organised 'to consider the best means of promoting the objects of such Societies and to form a union among the several Bands for the purpose of imparting strength to the movement'.³⁴ Forty-one Bands were represented and they agreed that a central body was needed to direct work, assist with lectures, and provide suitable educational aides. The RSPCA was appointed as the governing body, with Bands retaining autonomy to administer their own proceedings.³⁵ This network was vital. Setting up a temperance Band involved little more than inviting children to a house to read the Bible, sing songs and hear readings castigating the miseries of drink. Admittedly, this was in the earlier years of the Band of Hope, when apparently anyone could start up a group.³⁶ The authoritarian nature of the RSPCA was in marked contrast to this informal guidance, as Bands were

³² For example, *Band of Mercy*, XIX (1897).

³³ *Band of Mercy*, 245 (May 1899), p. 39.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 50 (February 1883), p. 10.

³⁵ *Animal World*, XIV/162 (March 1883), pp. 41-44.

³⁶ Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink*, p. 135.

required to affiliate to the parent society. Forming a Band was not to be undertaken lightly, lectured an RSPCA directive, 'unless there is a prospect of permanency. Spasmodic and dilettante effort in this direction do little to further the course and it is difficult to make a fresh beginning'.³⁷ Ephemeral groups would obviously serve no purpose in educating children, but it is obvious that the RSPCA was also concerned for its own image.

Praiseworthy articles in the middle-class young ladies' *Girl's Own Paper* [GOP] and *Atalanta* magazine, describing the Bands of Mercy and the relative ease with which they could be organised, must have inspired some individuals to form groups.³⁸ Officially, the Society advised that the best method was to draw together a group of friends 'interested in the protection of animals'.³⁹ In Knutsford, such a meeting took place. A committee of nine ladies was organised with the Rev. G. Payne as secretary. A president was chosen and five clergymen were appointed as vice-presidents.⁴⁰ The appointment of so many officers was explained away as a means of sharing out work and enabling them to take the chair when the president was unavailable.⁴¹ Similar multiple officers forming 'ornamental' boards were also a particular feature of the London Band of Hope Union as a deliberate attempt by the middle classes to retain control of the groups.⁴² Committee records indicate that the 'ornamental' board was the preferred method of BOM administration; although joint committees of church workers also oversaw BOM, temperance and bible study

³⁷ RSPCA, *87th Annual Report 1910*, p. 219; *69th Annual Report 1893*, p. 169.

³⁸ *Girl's Own Paper*, 858 (6 June 1896), pp. 565-66; *Atalanta*, IX (1895-96), pp. 721-24.

³⁹ RSPCA *69th Annual Report 1893*, p. 168.

⁴⁰ C[heshire] and C[hester] A[rchives], D5749: 'Knutsford Band of Mercy Minute Book', 11 November 1896; 20 October 1898.

⁴¹ *Atalanta*, IX (1895-1896), p. 723.

⁴² Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink*, pp. 137-38.

societies.⁴³ Because the RSPCA had ample aristocratic backing which funded it generously, it had no need to 'mobilize its full potential lower down' the social scale, according to Harrison.⁴⁴ However, the continuing links with Sunday schools and their heavy working-class participation, and the appointment of schoolteachers as BOM leaders, some of whom may have been promoted pupil-teachers who were often drawn from the working classes, casts some doubt as to whether there was a complete middle-class cartel of Band leaders.⁴⁵

RSPCA annual meetings were well attended because they gave attendees the opportunity to 'hob-nob with aristocrats and royalty'.⁴⁶ Aristocratic presidents and chairmen dominated RSPCA groups. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that individuals, wishing to fraternise with their social superiors and not actually undertaking animal welfare work, used the Bands as stepping-stones. Ilfracombe Band, for instance, complained that very few members of its Ladies' Committee could be persuaded to address its members. Being seen at the right event was critical, especially one which was philanthropic, and also essential for middle-class men wishing to join the social elite of their town and gain respectability.⁴⁷ Obviously not all individuals were guilty of such self-serving interests, and there were many with a passionate and genuine interest in charity and animal welfare. In Northumberland,

⁴³ Dorset History Centre, NP.7/SO/3/1/1: 'Wareham Congregational Church Temperance and Band of Mercy Minute Book', 19 October 1905.

⁴⁴ Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 138.

⁴⁵ RSPCA, *87th Annual Report 1910*, pp. 222-26; David A. Coppock, 'Respectability as a prerequisite of moral character: the social and occupational mobility of pupils teachers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries', *History of Education*, 26/2 (1997), 165-86.

⁴⁶ Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 137.

⁴⁷ RSPCA, *87th Annual Report 1910*; *Band of Mercy*, 53 (May 1883), p. 39; Mike Huggins, 'More Sinful Pleasures? Leisure, Respectability and the Male Middle Classes in Victorian England', *Journal of Social History*, 33/3 (2000), 585-600 (p. 589).

William Coulson was an enthusiastic Band leader. He was also the secretary to a number of other children's charities and an active Humanitarian League worker.⁴⁸

A potential problem for committee members serving charities was the upkeep of expected values. Sobriety was especially difficult for would-be respectable middle-class men, who often preached more than they practised.⁴⁹ The BOM offered an alternative for individuals unable to remain teetotal. Even then, being a BOM officer could be awkward. The RSPCA's Windsor and Eton branch faced protests from the Humanitarian League in 1902 because Edmond Warre, the headmaster of Eton, sat on its committee, but sanctioned hunting with hounds at his school. The League thought it hypocritical that Warre should also be engaged with forming a Band for 'educating the rising generation'.⁵⁰

The RSPCA's recommendation that a person, who had 'sufficient leisure' to administer a Band, filled the post of secretary, gives further credence to the argument of middle-class management.⁵¹ This time commitment, rarely available to the working classes, was severely tested as some BOM officers took their responsibilities seriously. The secretary was central to the running of the Band, acting as named contact, organiser and appeared, in some cases, to be the only committee member who actually did any work. The Knutsford secretary, Rev. Payne, had a heavy workload, encountering innumerable obstacles. These included securing speakers for meetings and shouldering for three years the problems of construction, water supply, transportation, incorrect invoices and the obtuseness of planning officials that befell

⁴⁸ *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 1 June 1911.

⁴⁹ Huggins, 'More Sinful Pleasures', p. 590.

⁵⁰ *The Humanitarian*, 1/4 (June 1902), pp. 25-27.

⁵¹ RSPCA, *64th Annual Report 1888*, p. 86

his Band's drinking trough project. Clearly overworked, he tendered his resignation in favour of someone 'who had more time and greater interest'.⁵²

Membership of the Bands

An overriding problem for the RSPCA was that its constant prosecutions of workingmen had cast it as an organisation hostile to the working class.⁵³ The Society was keen that such accusations should not be levelled at its children's branches. To gain maximum advantage it had to attract the working classes. How did it do this? In the children's press, complimentary articles painted the Bands as welcoming associations that offered children medals and must have broadened their appeal. However, these essays tended to appear in the middle-class devotional periodicals, and there was still a tendency to depict the working classes as inherently brutal. 'After all it is men who are cruel – carters and drovers', the *Monthly Packet* told its readers, and the only way such individuals could be saved in the future was to join a Band at eight years old.⁵⁴ Such indictments of the working classes were hardly likely to encourage them, but some individuals took a more enlightened approach. In rural Northumberland, Lady Waterford solicited the pupils of Ford School to join her Band of Hope and Mercy.⁵⁵ Combined BOM and Band of Hope groups were common, and this gave access to the working classes. The RSPCA continually viewed temperance groups as fertile recruiting grounds, but stressed that temperance work should not overshadow BOM activities.⁵⁶

⁵² CCA, D5749: 'Knutsford Band of Mercy Minute Book', 4 December 1900; 'Letter from Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association', 7 May 1902; 'Letter from Knutsford Urban District Council', 8 May 1901; 13 June 1902.

⁵³ *Animal World*, XXXII/385 (October 1901), p. 147.

⁵⁴ *Young England*, 100 (1890), pp. 40-41; *Monthly Packet*, 29 (1 May 1883), pp. 482-85.

⁵⁵ Ford School logbook, 13 February 1886.

⁵⁶ C[umbria] R[ecord] O[ffice]: PR/102/43. 'Hayton Band of Hope 1902-1913 Minute Book', 5 May 1902; RSPCA, 87th *Annual Report 1910*, p. 219.

Evidence of claims of successful working class recruitment is not hard to find, as groups took satisfaction in reporting that their meetings crossed class divisions. Cloudesley Band pointedly reported that although it had a small membership, this was at least, 'drawn from all classes, both rich and poor'.⁵⁷ Not all groups were so diverse and there were specific 'drawing room Bands of Mercy that included adults as well as children of the gentry'.⁵⁸ This deliberate division reflected the structures of other youth groups. Within the Band of Hope, there were visible class distinctions as a means of maintaining the 'rough/respectable gradations'.⁵⁹ Despite these clear splits, the RSPCA wanted its Bands to be open to all. It issued the following edict on class equality in 1910;

Humanity appeals to all classes. The children of the rich need educating equally with the children of the poor. It is desirable therefore that the Band should attract members of various social grades who should benefit by its teaching without distinction.⁶⁰

It is difficult to paint a full picture of the class composition of groups, owing to a lack of detailed membership data. However, photographs of Bands that depict obviously working-class children [figs. 2.2 and 2.3], and reports of members as 'Little mites with boots tied with string, blue fingered and scantily clad', strongly suggest working class membership of the Bands. Furthermore, as the larger Band of Hope mainly recruited from the 'operative' classes and joint groups were commonplace, we can confidently say that BOM membership drew from a similar pool.⁶¹ With regard to the lower working classes, much was made of the efforts to recruit 'neglected' children, but there was a major problem for poor members. The RSPCA insisted on a

⁵⁷ *Band of Mercy*, XVIII/208 (April 1896) p. 31.

⁵⁸ Suckling, *Humane Educator*, Preface.

⁵⁹ Ellen Ross, ' "Not the Sort that Would Sit on the Doorstep": Respectability in Pre-World I London Neighbourhoods', *International Labour and Working Class History*, 27 (1985), 39-59 (p. 43).

⁶⁰ RSPCA, *87th Annual Report 1910*, p. 220.

⁶¹ *Band of Mercy*, 235 (July 1898), p. 55; Shiman, 'Band of Hope Movement', p. 66.

BOM subscription of 1d per quarter.⁶² As one account attests, this was difficult for some. *Animal World* related the formation of a Band and the associated problem of one 'little girl, pale and thinly clad' who fretted that although she was desperate to join the group, "I never has a penny. Mother's so poor, so I can't belong and I did so want to". Her Band leader overcame this financial hardship by offering to pay the girl's subscription, for which much thanks was received.⁶³ Subscriptions provided essential income for groups lacking central financial support, contributing half of the income to New Malden Band's 'General Fund'.⁶⁴ Similar fees imposed by the temperance movement have led to suggestions that it deterred the neediest from attending, leading to exclusivity.⁶⁵ Indeed, Walter Southgate recalled that those children who attended Band of Hope meetings were already regular church attendees.⁶⁶ A similar air of elitism is apparent in the BOM. The anti-vivisection campaigner, Frances Power Cobbe, protested that the Bands were not prioritising their efforts amongst the poor. For Cobbe,

the inculcation of humanity to animals in pretty little tracts and illustrated magazines, and the formation of Bands of Mercy is simply a farce while the street boys and roughs of London are receiving such practical and lively lessons in cruelty.⁶⁷

This would seem to suggest that the RSPCA still had to make considerable inroads into attracting the lower working classes.

⁶² *Band of Mercy*, 92 (August 1886), p. 63; RSPCA, *69th Annual Report 1893*, p. 168.

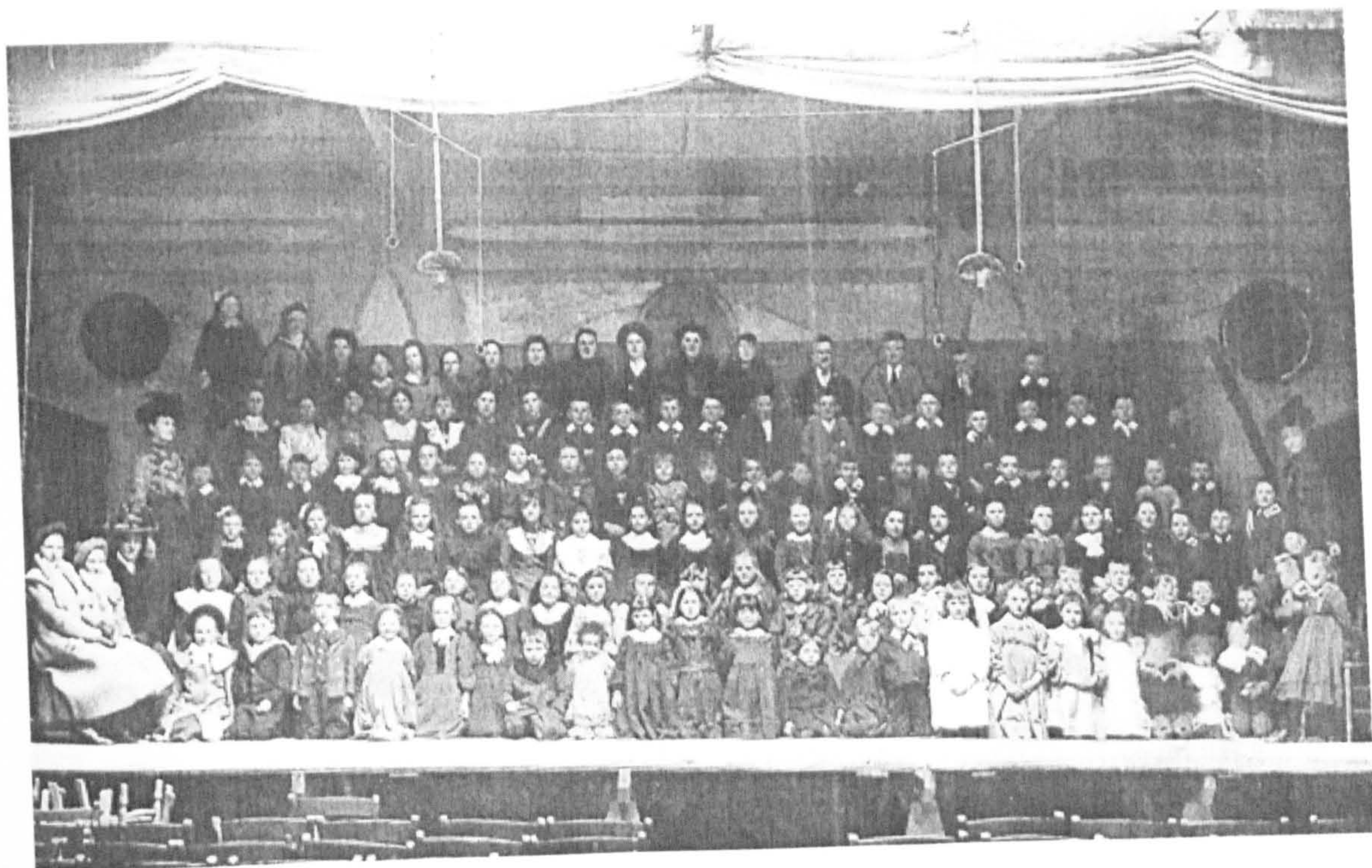
⁶³ *Animal World*, XXIII/273 (June 1892), pp. 91-92. It is debatable how dependable this rather anecdotal account is, given the heavy middle-class readership of *Animal World* who would have eagerly consumed such a pathetic instance of need and resultant generosity.

⁶⁴ Kingston Museum, KT149/1/4: 'Report of the New Malden Band of Mercy', p. 14.

⁶⁵ Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, pp. 194-95.

⁶⁶ Walter Southgate, *That's the Way it Was: A Working Class Autobiography 1890-1950*, (Oxford: New Clarion, 1982), p. 59.

⁶⁷ *The Times*, 18 October 1886.



*Figure 2.2: Redcar Band, 1903.*⁶⁸



*Figure 2.3: Delamere Band, 1906.*⁶⁹
Note the boys' cloth-caps signifying working-class status.

⁶⁸ *Band of Mercy*, 303 (March 1904), p. 24.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 331 (July 1906), p. 55.

Despite being ostensibly children's associations, Bands also made considerable efforts to attract workingmen who worked with animals, notably stablemen, cart-men and drovers. This was also a rare attempt to educate rather than prosecute the working classes by the RSPCA, although rather condescendingly done through its children's wing. One Edinburgh group pointedly noted that it took care not to patronise its adult members. It is not surprising, given the Society's reputation for prosecuting, that bribes were offered as tempters. A meal was the reward for listening to speeches and lantern lectures emphasising good animal husbandry.⁷⁰ These attempts to recruit adults sometimes paid off. Of the 520 members of the Tufnell Park group, 80 were adults, including stablemen drawn from the tram and omnibus yards.⁷¹ This was the only entry method into the RSPCA, or at least its subsidiary, for the majority of adults. It suggests that this was a deliberate attempt by the RSPCA to keep the working classes apart from its main society. Whether this was to avoid them mixing with its more affluent membership or to continue the distinction between the 'caring' but working-class BOM and 'prosecuting' RSPCA, it is difficult to say. By enrolling workers, groups reported their efforts had positive effects. Topsham Band testified that the behaviour of members who worked with animals had markedly improved.⁷² However, before assuming that workingmen willingly converted or attended meetings to hear animal protection sermons, it is worth remembering that many would have attended merely to take advantage of free benefits otherwise unobtainable elsewhere.⁷³ Furthermore, the sermonising was not always popular. The

⁷⁰ *The Woman's Signal*, 254 (10 November 1898), pp. 801-802; *Band of Mercy*, 231 (March 1898), p. 28

⁷¹ *Animal World*, XIV/162 (March 1883), p. 43.

⁷² *Band of Mercy*, 53 (May 1883), p. 39.

⁷³ Peter Bailey, "Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up?" Towards a Role Analysis of Mid-Victorian Working-Class Respectability', *Journal of Social History*, 12/3 (1979), 336-53 (p. 343).

drovers at the Ipswich BOM annual tea were in 'uproar' and hurled 'vulgar remarks' at the speaker for his insinuation that animal cruelty arose from 'thoughtlessness'.⁷⁴

Geographical Spread and Membership

The BOM ideal was not restricted to Britain and overseas Bands had been quickly formed, starting in 1881 in Tasmania. By 1889, a report suggested there were 540 Bands across the Empire with 113,000 members. North American growth was even quicker. Thomas Angell formed the first Bands in Boston in 1882. Just seven years later it was claimed that there were 600,000 members attached to 7,300 Bands.⁷⁵ Progress in Britain was a little more sedate, but by 1910, the RSPCA claimed there were 527 Bands [fig. 2.4]. Whether they were all active is debatable, as *Band of Mercy* details the work of only twenty-eight groups for that year. In contrast, the Temperance Movement was claiming 31,000 youth groups with a membership of 3.6 million.⁷⁶ There were deep schisms in this particular association, leading to an array of different agencies and publications. The BOM, by contrast, although it was a much smaller association, remained unified and its magazine was the sole periodical. This supports Harrison's argument, that a nationwide publication was a key factor in preventing squabbles within a pressure group. The tight control exercised by the RSPCA is particularly evident in its refusal to support the efforts of the Rev. Thomas Timmins to found new Bands in 1885.⁷⁷ Clearly, the RSPCA was inhibiting growth in order to ensure it maintained control.

⁷⁴ *Ipswich Journal*, 21 January 1888.

⁷⁵ *Tasmanian News*, 8 August 1887; *NWC*, 6 July 1889; Thomas Timmins, *The History of the Founding, Aims and Growth, of the American Bands of Mercy*, (Boston: M.S.P.C.A., 1883, p. 55.

⁷⁶ RSPCA, *87th Annual Report 1910*, pp. 222-26; *Band of Mercy*, XXXII, (January-December 1910); *The Times*, 27 September 1910.

⁷⁷ RSPCA, *87th Annual Report 1910*, p. 219; Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 141; Brian Harrison, 'Press and Pressure Group in Modern Britain', in *Victorian Periodical Press* (see Shattock and Wolff, above), pp. 261-95 (p. 285); RSPCA, 'Minute Book 15', p. 254.

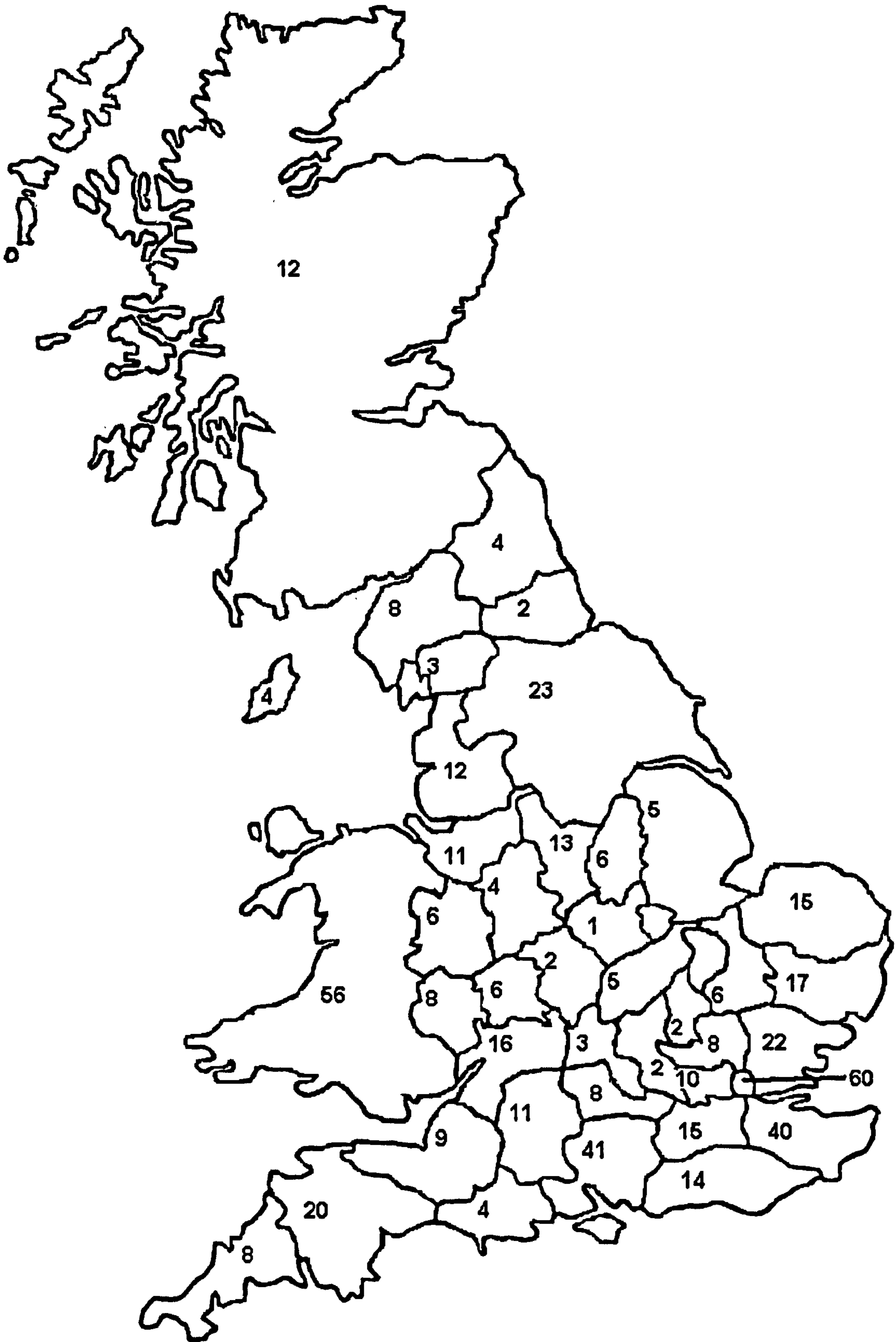


Figure 2.4: Geographical Distribution of Bands of Mercy, 1910.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ RSPCA, 87th Annual Report 1910, pp. 222-26.

There were strong pockets of temperance support in London, Yorkshire and Lancashire.⁷⁹ Although the BOM leant heavily on this movement, there was no correlation between the geographical distributions of the two associations. Instead, there was a wide distribution of Bands of Mercy across Britain, although there was a heavy weighting towards southern England. This is not surprising. Until the 1860s, the RSPCA had been an entirely London-centric organisation. The development of a branch network slowly addressed this situation, but by 1900 nearly two-thirds of its English branches were south of a Gloucester-Boston line. For the BOM, approximately three-quarters of English branches fell below the same dividing line [fig.2.4]. There was also a clustering of Bands in Wales, although this followed an unusual pattern. In 1910, there were fifty-eight Welsh Bands, but none in Swansea or Cardiff. Instead, the majority of Bands were in the northwest of the Principality, including twenty-one on Anglesey, the majority linked to a school. This is probably due to the particular exertions of the Sunday school movement in north Wales.⁸⁰

There was heavy competition for members by the various youth movements, including the press societies, as the complaint of a Band of Kindness recruiter illustrates. S. Freakes complained that he was 'trying to get some new members, but my playmates have nearly all joined a Band of Mercy'.⁸¹ The press societies, in contrast to the BOM, cost nothing to join. There was no reason why children could not join both groups, and it is not unreasonable to suggest that claiming to be a BOM member was just an excuse. On the other hand, it is arguable that this competition by these 'free' press societies affected the geographical distribution of Bands of Mercy,

⁷⁹ Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink*, pp. 143-47.

⁸⁰ RSPCA, *87th Annual Report 1910*, pp. 222-26; Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 130; Snell, 'Sunday-School Movement', pp. 128-29 (fn. 32).

⁸¹ *COP*, XV/417 (26 July 1890), p. 544.

as their activity was thin in northeast England, where there were four large newspaper societies. Indeed, the Newcastle RSPCA left its schoolwork to the DBS in 1878, and although a BOM operated in Newcastle in the 1880s, there was no Band in 1910.⁸² In rare cases, the newspaper societies were extensions of a Band, ensuring wider publicity of their cause. From 1883 to 1892 the *Hexham Herald's* 'Sister Mercy' children's society and 'Band of Mercy' column continually pressed the case for animal welfare by reporting the work of BOM branches in Hexham and Haltwhistle, and sold BOM literature through the newspaper's offices.⁸³ By contrast, in counties that had strong BOM representations, such as Kent, the opposite was true. Folkestone supported seven groups, but there is no evidence of a children's society in this town's newspapers in 1905 or 1910.⁸⁴ The success of Bands depended very much on the vigour of their leaders and although urban groups generally had larger memberships, there was no obvious urban/rural divide regarding the Bands. As an example, Haltwhistle Band in rural Northumberland was described as 'flourishing' with 535 members in 1885, while Doncaster had 1,037 members on its roll in 1894.⁸⁵

Band membership totals reflected current subscribers as they paid a fee. South Lambeth Band bragged that it had enrolled 3,385 members in the course of its twenty-five year existence, although its current membership in 1908 was 350.⁸⁶ Few Bands bothered to report membership totals in such detail in *Band of Mercy*. This lack of data makes assessing cumulative membership difficult. We cannot rely on the claimed circulation rates (100,000 according to the *Band of Mercy* editor in 1888) for

⁸² NCL/LS, L179.3: RSPCA, *6th Annual Report of the Newcastle Branch 1878*, p. 5; *Band of Mercy*, 110 (February 1888), p. 15; RSPCA, *87th Annual Report*, p. 225.

⁸³ *Hexham Herald*, 28 March 1885; 2 January 1886; 19 September 1891,

⁸⁴ RSPCA, *87th Annual Report 1910*, p. 224. Newspapers consulted: *Folkestone Express*, *Folkestone Chronicle* (1905), *Folkestone Herald* and *Southern Weekly News*.

⁸⁵ *Band of Mercy*, 73 (March 1885), p. 23; 187 (July 1894), p. 55.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 350 (February 1908), p. 16.

periodicals as an indication of support owing to their free distribution. Instead, an estimate based on the branch reports of membership numbers must be calculated. Using such figures it would not be unrealistic to claim that between 75,000 and 145,000 children might have been involved with the movement in the early 1900s and therefore that at least several hundred thousand individuals, the majority of whom were children, had been BOM members at some stage.⁸⁷

Work of the Band of Mercy

For members joining a Band, their first duty was taking a pledge. They promised 'to do all in our power to protect animals from cruel usage and to promote as far as we can their humane treatment'. This was repeated at every meeting and the solemnity of the act was emphasised.⁸⁸ Band leaders were advised to frame these pledges for members to keep as constant reminders, which when displayed at home would also have an influence on parents.⁸⁹ Aside from some published letters, which naturally praised the movement and how it had done a 'great deal of good', there is little evidence of how children reacted to the pledge. We must rely upon recollections of those taking temperance pledges. Many were largely indifferent to it, sometimes being too young to comprehend what intoxication meant, although some children were pleased that the evils of drink were raised so early.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 119 (November 1888), p. 82; XXVII (January-December 1905); *Animal World*, XIV/162 (March 1883), pp. 42-43; RSPCA, 87th *Annual Report 1910*, pp. 222-26. Membership estimates are calculated using the following methodology:

1. The 1883 figures of 8,840 members from 32 groups suggest a mean membership of 276 per group.
2. In 1905, 10 Bands had 1445 members, giving a mean of 145 per Band.
3. There were 527 Bands in 1910. The figures from the 1910 BOM magazines cannot be used as just 3 Bands reported membership numbers.

⁸⁸ *Band of Mercy Advocate*, 1 (January 1879), p. 7.

⁸⁹ *GOP*, 858 (6 June 1896), p. 566.

⁹⁰ *Animal World*, XXV/293 (February 1894), p. 31; Thompson, *Lark Rise*, p. 308; Southgate, *That's the Way it Was*, pp. 26-27.

BOM members might have shared the indifference of Band of Hope pledge takers to some extent, although temperance pledges were more about affecting future conduct, as compared to the BOM pledge that attempted to control current behaviour. It must have had a more forceful impact given what we know about children's behaviour towards animals. Even if most children were not intentionally cruel to animals or as Flora Thompson pointed out, any cruelty was 'due to an utter lack of imagination, not-bad-heartedness', they probably knew someone who was cruel.⁹¹ Recurrent *Band of Mercy* articles castigating cruelty made children aware that maltreating animals was inherently wrong; some at least of those boys who bird-nested or girls who wore plumed hats, even though both activities were sanctioned by respectable periodicals, must have been made uncomfortable by the pledge and constant denouncements by BOM leaders. For workingmen and boys the pledge would have had greater resonance, and some wavering amongst members is apparent by the reminder in the BOM magazine that 'once a BOM boy, always one'. This supports Bailey's argument that those who joined such an association had 'limited attachment' as it did not necessarily mean keeping promises and regular attendance.⁹² BOM groups regularly encountered such problems. When the register of 423 Knutsford members was called, just 114 'answered their names'.⁹³

A vital element of the BOM, which differentiated this movement from the majority of the press societies, was its regular meetings. Like many of its innovations, the Band of Hope provided a ready template. For the BOM, the often-monthly gatherings of little more than an hour opened with a register being taken, then pledge taking and prayer, followed by stories, songs and moralistic addresses meditating on

⁹¹ Thompson, *Lark Rise*, p. 153.

⁹² *Band of Mercy*, 192 (January 1895), p. 7; Bailey, 'Will the Real Bill Banks' p. 343.

⁹³ 'Knutsford Band of Mercy Minute Book', 16 November 1899.

animal kindness.⁹⁴ Despite such structured and didactic entertainment, children flocked to the meetings, sometimes in hundreds. There were several reasons for this. In respect of the similar Sunday school meetings, many children were forced by their parents to attend to ensure an overcrowded household was free of noisy children for a few hours in the week. Attendance also ensured a token of respectability.⁹⁵ This particular ethic was the 'great Victorian shibboleth and criterion' that dominated working-class culture, ensuring not so much the division of middle and working class, but of 'rough' and 'respectable'. Typical markers denoting the latter included church or chapel attendance, cleanliness of house and person, temperance, public conduct and membership of principled associations.⁹⁶ It is easy to visualise the BOM, with its clergymen officers, meeting in private houses or village halls, offering the perfect haven for children whose mothers worked hard to keep them off the street. Seeking respectability was not limited to adults. Children were well aware that it was a 'family enterprise' and soon learnt respectability's parameters and tokens. Taking a pledge that gave entry to a middle-class improving association was one such measure.⁹⁷

The BOM membership fee also would have acted as a gatekeeper against the undesirables. For respectable working-class parents this was a further insulating measure to keep their children from the roughs. If such 'street boys' were admitted, then the BOM could not lay claim to being a 'respectable' haven for the decent working classes who did not want their offspring mixing with disruptive and often

⁹⁴ Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 193; *Atalanta*, IX (1895-1896), p. 723.

⁹⁵ Lionel Rose, *The Erosion of Childhood: Child Oppression in Britain, 1860-1914*, (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 202.

⁹⁶ Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-1875*, (London: Fontana, 1979), pp. 282-86; Caroline Reid, 'Middle Class Values and Working Class Culture in Nineteenth Century Sheffield: The Pursuit of Respectability', in *Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire*, ed. by Sidney Pollard and Colin Holmes, (Sheffield: South Yorkshire County Council, 1976), pp. 275-295; Ross, 'Respectability in Pre-World I London Neighbourhoods', 39-59.

⁹⁷ Bailey, 'Will the Real Bill Banks', p. 343; Davin, *Growing up Poor*, pp. 71-72.

filthy children.⁹⁸ Obviously, the BOM was keen to advocate itself as respectable. Reports of meetings suggest almost nothing else, as members were praised for being 'orderly and attentive'. However, occasionally evidence suggests otherwise. One Band secretary admitted that she resorted to employing fifteen lads to act as her assistants to 'enforce discipline' and maintain order.⁹⁹ BOM secretaries recognised the anxieties of respectable mothers. One secretary touted her Band as a safe retreat for children, and reported that parents willingly paid for these facilities. Children were then provided with additional recreation. Sometimes games such as musical chairs were on offer, in other cases rational recreation was emphasised in the form of group lending libraries and for the Great Missenden Band, club facilities included a 'lad's reading room and recreation room' with games and musical instruments.¹⁰⁰

There is an element of the working classes selectively extracting these benefits, but regardless of any respectability claims, with enjoyable games on offer it is easy to see why the Bands were so popular with children. Regular treats led to even greater attendance. Excursions to the countryside, accompanied by free food, were always popular Sunday school activities offering the chance to legitimately escape school. These were major social events for children who recalled their gratitude for such outings.¹⁰¹ Magic lantern shows were popular amongst educators, who believed that such displays were ideal for transmitting scriptural and temperance messages amongst the 'unreading classes'. These shows, combined with a tea, were regular BOM offerings, although the RSPCA stressed that they should not be regarded as

⁹⁸ Ethel Mannin, *Confessions and Impressions*, (London: Hutchinson, 1936), p. 36.

⁹⁹ *Band of Mercy*, 242 (February 1899), p. 15; 367 (July 1909), p. 55.

¹⁰⁰ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6367 (11 August 1885), p. 6; *Band of Mercy Advocate*, 33 (September 1881), p. 71; *Band of Mercy*, 224 (August 1897), p. 71.

¹⁰¹ Southgate, *That's the Way it Was*, p. 26; TWAS, E/NC8/1/2: Bath Lane School logbook, 26 July 1912. Sunday school trips emptied classrooms.

bribes for membership, but instead, reward for good attendance. Such indulgences greatly affected attendance, indicative that, like the workingmen attracted to teas, children joined simply to take advantage of the generosity. One BOM organiser blamed the absence of 'a tea and the customary magic lantern' on the low turnout of just six boys at a meeting.¹⁰² Clearly, this was problematic. As one guidance book warned members, 'when you joined this Band it was not, I hope, for the sake of getting anything, but because you felt there was something which it was in your power to give'.¹⁰³

Those who attended temperance and church meetings thought the constant preaching worth enduring, as they gained cheap entertainment, a sense of worthiness to those who were appointed officers within their society, and the rare opportunity for teenage members to fraternise with the opposite sex.¹⁰⁴ It is most likely that a similar attitude prevailed at BOM meetings. Obviously, leaders reported that members 'seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves' at their gatherings.¹⁰⁵ This was true for one particular meeting, as a rare recollection from a BOM member illustrates. George Bernard Shaw spoke to members of the Grayshott Band. Much to the consternation of teachers, he urged the children to be disobedient, answer back and insisted they were better than their parents. A BOM member thought that 'we children had, for once, a glorious but brief triumph.... we cheered him heartily'.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² *Review of Reviews*, II/12 (December 1890), pp. 561-67; *Band of Mercy*, 280 (April 1902), p. 31; *RSPCA, 87th Annual Report 1910*, p. 222.

¹⁰³ C.E. Symonds, *Outline Lessons for Bands of Mercy*, (London: Skeffington, 1907), p. 18.

¹⁰⁴ Peacock, *Newcastle Boyhood*, pp. 54-56; Southgate, *That's the Way it Was*, p. 26. The preponderance of recollections describing temperance societies underlines this movement as clearly the dominant 'cause' association.

¹⁰⁵ *Band of Mercy*, 242 (February 1899), p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ Cited in J.H. Smith, *Grayshott: The Story of a Hampshire Village*, (Hedley Down: Smith, 2002), pp. 57-58.

Given that Shaw was supposed to be speaking about 'Animals', the press reports noting he was 'somewhat discursive' reflected alarm that he encouraged children to challenge authority. Civility and social order were indispensable respectability values.¹⁰⁷ Such a radical discourse challenged the basic mission of the RSPCA to 'civilize manners' through preaching kindness to animals.¹⁰⁸ This civilising duty can also be applied to the BOM, which was concerned with much more than just promoting humanitarian values. Bands keenly impressed on their charges the importance of good manners and articles implored children to avoid insidious literature, not to take up smoking, and to display courtesy and good manners at every opportunity.¹⁰⁹ Did this actually work? Some commentators certainly believed so, observing that BOM graduates were upstanding citizens and 'our criminal classes are not likely to be recruited from among the ranks of these Bands'.¹¹⁰

It would be incorrect to view BOM meetings as entirely sermonising sessions that limited their teachings to just their members. Some leaders worked hard to provide assorted activities for their charges. These included the performance of plays, usually at Christmas. These attempted to convey a message of animal benevolence within the storyline. One recital recalled the change in character of two men convicted of animal cruelty to demonstrate how it was possible to reform ingrained behaviour. Such performances had multiple benefits. The *Animal's Friend* magazine believed a play cascaded the objectives of the BOM onto the watching audience, and more

¹⁰⁷ Farnham, *Haslemere and Hindhead Herald*, 3 June 1899; Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain*, p. 286.

¹⁰⁸ Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 127.

¹⁰⁹ *Band of Mercy*, 133 (January 1890), p. 2; 137 (May 1890), p. 34.

¹¹⁰ *Atalanta*, IX (1895-1896), pp. 721-24.

importantly, a member's immediate family, who would be 'unconsciously imbibing humane ideas' from their child's performance.¹¹¹

Practical Animal Welfare Work

The majority of the work of the Bands revolved around the regular meetings, but some groups also engaged in practical work by installing animal drinking troughs in towns.¹¹² This not only alleviated animal suffering but also provided a vital facility for costermongers, cabmen and drovers. The provision of these amenities had its origins in the quest to provide safe public drinking water. The first public drinking fountains were put up in Liverpool in 1854. Their success led to other cities in the North and Midlands following suit. Interestingly, their foundation in London has been credited to the indomitable Thomas Smithies, following vigorous campaigning in his periodicals. In 1859, the Metropolitan Free Drinking Fountain Association [MFDFA] was founded to begin the task of installing public drinking fountains. These were ostensibly built to provide pure drinking water to combat waterborne pathogens, and to overcome the inefficiency of the various private companies that fitfully supplied London's water. The support of Smithies indicates that drinking fountains were much more than a concern for public health. Temperance led to the MFDFA installing fountains within sight of hostelryes, hoping this would dissuade workers from slaking their thirst in public houses.¹¹³

¹¹¹ *Band of Mercy*, 374 (February 1910), p. 15; *Animal's Friend*, VI (February 1900), pp. 69-71.

¹¹² *Band of Mercy*, 79 (July 1885), p. 55.

¹¹³ L[ondon] M[etropolitan] A[rchives], ACC3168/19: MFDFA, 8th *Annual Report 1866-67*, p. 8; Howard Malchow, 'Free Water: the Public Drinking Fountain Movement and Victorian London', *London Journal*, 4/2 (1978), 181-203 (pp. 181-85); Philip Davies, *Troughs and Drinking Fountains*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1989), pp. 13-19; Vanessa Taylor, 'Brewers, Temperance and the Nineteenth-Century Drinking Fountain Movement', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Birbeck College, University of London, 2006), pp. 29, 124-33.



*Figure 2.5: Opening Ceremony of the Camberwell Drinking Trough, 1910.*¹¹⁴

Whilst this scheme was building momentum, another contemporary concern was the ill treatment of domestic animals driven from all parts of the country to London's Smithfield Market. By the mid-1840s, over 210,000 cattle and 1.5 million sheep were annually sold at Smithfield.¹¹⁵ To alleviate some of this suffering the RSPCA installed a drinking trough at Maida Vale, but according to the MFDFA, they found their resources overstretched in carrying out this work. A solution was to hand over this work to the MFDFA, which was re-titled as the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association [MDFCTA] in 1867.¹¹⁶ By 1892, the MDFCTA had provided over 1,400 public drinking amenities for both animals and humans in London. Clearly, these were valuable amenities serving upwards of

¹¹⁴ *Band of Mercy*, 375 (March 1910), p. 23.

¹¹⁵ Donald, 'Treatment of Animals as a Moral Theme', pp. 48-78.

¹¹⁶ MDFCTA, *8th Annual Report*, pp 21-22; Kean, *Animal Rights*, pp. 54-58; Davies, *Troughs and Drinking Fountains*, pp. 18-19.

300,000 people daily, whilst it was calculated that 1,900 horses used a single trough in a twenty-four hour period.¹¹⁷ The work of the MDFCTA was not just restricted to London. A range of individuals and associations, including the Band of Hope, supported their work in constructing fountains and drinking troughs in the provinces.¹¹⁸

In 1879, the BOM magazine carried 'A Petition Which Ought To Be Answered' from 'All Horses, Donkeys and Dogs' and called for water troughs to be erected. The first BOM drinking trough was installed in Ipswich, in 1885, and funded by a subscription appeal.¹¹⁹ Private donors contributed funds and members were mobilised to collect donations. Although these projects were carried out under the auspices of the BOM, the contributions of children were slight. The appeal by New Malden Band gathered in £110, including £2 10s raised directly by children bringing in their 'farthings'. It is true they could hardly be expected to deal with the intricacies of such a complicated project or contribute vast sums, but it is noticeable that although the BOM was ostensibly a children's movement, the activities of adults took centre stage as they laboured to install drinking fountains. Children were sidelined to collecting or, in the case of a trough installed in Knutsford, maintaining it. This marginalisation is even more apparent at the unveiling of the New Malden trough in 1894. A cast of local clergymen and dignitaries vied for attention giving congratulatory speeches. Although this was supposed to be a BOM event, the children were relegated to a supporting cast to sing hymns and listen to the obligatory sermon

¹¹⁷ Charles Dickens, ed., *Dickens' Dictionary of London 1892-93*, (London: Dickens and Evans, 1892-93), p. 86.

¹¹⁸ For a Band of Hope fountain see *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 13 September 1894; Davies, *Troughs and Drinking Fountains*, pp. 39-114; Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink*; Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, pp. 299-300. Given the large numbers of fountains installed by the temperance movement, it is surprising that Shiman ignores them and Harrison comments only briefly.

¹¹⁹ *Band of Mercy Advocate*, 6 (June 1879), p. 43; *Band of Mercy*, 79 (July 1885), p. 55.

admonishing them of the dangers of cruelty to animals.¹²⁰ This is not to say that the BOM completely stripped children of any responsibility regarding improving the care of working animals. One trade was wholly reliant on children and *Band of Mercy* urged children to boycott donkey-rides at the seaside if it was apparent that animals were visibly mistreated [fig.2.6].¹²¹

Most animal troughs were utilitarian granite constructions [fig. 2.5], but some were ostentatious and expensive structures. For the cost of £125, the New Malden Band had a dual trough and drinking fountain ‘composed of a fluted column with a Corinthian capital, bearing the rose, shamrock and thistle, surmounted by a large lamp’. The funds raised by this appeal could have paid for three basic troughs as installed by the Knutsford Band.¹²² Even more lavish constructions decorated London, although few were sponsored by the BOM. Donated by Angela Burdett-Coutts, a fifty-eight foot fountain was put up in Victoria Park in 1862 at a cost of £6,000. This would have paid for 200 standard fountains.¹²³ Such displays of opulence have led to arguments that the motives for these constructions were much more than concerns for animal welfare and temperance. They served a much higher purpose as an enduring monument of remembrance and left a ‘visible and permanent reminder in public streets of examples of practical humanity’.¹²⁴ Fittingly, such installations commemorated very able BOM workers, including Catharine Smithies and William Coulson.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ ‘Report of the New Malden Band of Mercy’, pp. 8-12; CCA, D5749: ‘Letter from George Payne to Subscribers’, 18 May 1903.

¹²¹ *Band of Mercy*, 296 (August 1903), p. 60.

¹²² ‘Report of the New Malden Band of Mercy’, p. 9; CCA, D5749: ‘Knutsford Band of Mercy. Subscribers to Trough’.

¹²³ Malchow, ‘Free Water’, pp.199-200.

¹²⁴ Kean, *Animal Rights*, pp. 54-58.

¹²⁵ *Band of Mercy Advocate*, 37 (January 1882), p. 7; *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 27 May 1914.

BAND OF MERCY.



Figure 2.6: 'We always selected the best-cared-for donkeys',¹²⁶
Compare the well-dressed 'customers' with the flat-capped donkey owner.

These troughs and fountains had further ramifications. Notions of local civic pride and town planning were gathering pace during the second half of the nineteenth

¹²⁶ *Band of Mercy*, 260 (August 1900), front cover.

century.¹²⁷ The construction of a drinking fountain gave a town an element of civic respectability, and townspeople, such as the 'Grumblers' in Ipswich, expected ornamental fountains for their donations. The Ipswich BOM responded, 'our object in the erection of these structures is not so much the selection of something to beautify the streets, as to afford tired, thirsty cattle the chance of obtaining water.'¹²⁸ In contrast, New Malden's expensive fountain was installed at a time when the town's market place was undergoing improvement and the Local Board thought the fountain was a 'great embellishment to the village'.¹²⁹ Certain towns also had an unfortunate reputation for blatantly disregarding the welfare of domestic animals. Newcastle was criticised for the cruelty meted out towards stock animals at its market in 1886.¹³⁰ The installation of a drinking trough and fountain, obviously in a prime location, at least gave a town a veneer of humanitarianism and temperance.

Although there were multiple reasons why fountains were put up, this vital work indicates that conservationists had not wholly forgotten domestic animals during an era when campaigners prioritised the needs of birds.¹³¹ It also supports the argument that a proactive approach was forming amongst humanitarians who were considering other solutions than legal sanctions. Despite the fanfare surrounding these fountains from *Band of Mercy*, which regularly celebrated this display of philanthropy with glowing accounts of drinking trough unveilings and their obvious animal welfare benefits, the RSPCA's work in this field was very limited.¹³² Although a host of

¹²⁷ R.J Morris, 'Structure, Culture and Society in British Towns', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 3 vols. ed. by Martin Daunt, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), III, pp. 395-426 (pp. 412-13).

¹²⁸ *Ipswich Journal*, 13 June 1885.

¹²⁹ *Surrey Comet*, 9 June 1894; 16 June 1894.

¹³⁰ *Hexham Herald*, 3 April 1886.

¹³¹ Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 87.

¹³² *Band of Mercy*, 79 (July 1885), p. 55.

wealthy individuals supported the Society, the RSPCA donated just nineteen troughs and fountains. BOM records, by no means complete, suggest that this movement, until 1914, was responsible for at least fifteen installations. Whether these were included in the cumulative RSPCA total is unknown. However, such numbers are miniscule by comparison to the 1,664 fountains and troughs constructed by the MDFCTA, even by 1904.¹³³ A reason for this poor effort by the RSPCA may lie in the funding methods for these schemes. The Knutsford fountain was paid for entirely from public donations and a grant from the MDFCTA, with no contributions from central RSPCA funds, despite an appeal shortfall leading to desperate pleas for more money.¹³⁴ The provision of watering facilities was the responsibility of volunteers from local groups, who lacked RSPCA support even when carrying out visible animal protection work.

Conclusion

The BOM successfully worked to attract working-class children through the games and entertainment on offer. However, it was more than just a society for children. Although they did not always agree with the RSPCA's teachings, workingmen were persuaded to go along to BOM meetings, even if it was just for the rewards on offer. RSPCA supporters enthusiastically created and managed Bands, allowing them to contribute personally to the RSPCA's cause. Denied political and economic opportunities, by volunteering, women could use the Bands to meet their own needs. Likewise, the building of drinking troughs had purposes other than just ameliorating animal suffering. The committee structures of the Bands portray a heavily controlled

¹³³ Malchow, 'Free Water', p. 202; Taylor, 'Nineteenth-Century Drinking Fountain Movement', p. 196; See *Appendix V*.

¹³⁴ CCA, D5749: 'Knutsford Band of Mercy: Subscribers to Trough'; *Knutsford Guardian*, 17 May 1902.

association, and the thousands of members who attended meetings imply that many parents regarded this agency as a positive venture. Shiman categorised the Band of Hope as 'respectable recreation'. We can confidently add this marker to the BOM.¹³⁵

Nevertheless, the prime objective of the BOM was to prevent children, and at times adults, from causing suffering to animals. Bands were obviously keen to stress that they were making progress. New Malden Band boasted that they had noticed a 'lessening of cruelty in the village', although it admitted that cruelty had not altogether been banished and had referred cases to the RSPCA inspector.¹³⁶ Obviously then in some instances cruelty was being reduced, but these were select coteries, and not all benefited. Subscriptions effectively barred the lower working class, meetings were attended for many reasons other than an interest in humanitarianism, and an uneven geographical reach left many children, particularly in the north of England, untouched by this agency.

Furthermore, the BOM remained largely unchanged from the time the RSPCA took control in 1883. Its 1914 magazine was almost a facsimile of the first editions. Although the *Animals Friend* magazine congratulated the Bands for their work, it censured the RSPCA for gradually falling 'into a groove' that 'ceased to be progressive' and 'ceased to lead'. Most stinging of all was its criticism that the Society's literature was getting 'both antique in style and matter'.¹³⁷ Even respected BOM workers, such as Suckling, were faulted. The Humanitarian League attacked her *Humane Educator*, regarding it as an 'appalling concentration of good intentions, bad poetry and worse thought' that created images of animals as 'dumb and senseless'

¹³⁵ Shiman, 'Band of Hope Movement', p. 49.

¹³⁶ 'Report of the New Malden Band of Mercy', p. 7.

¹³⁷ *The Animal's Friend*, XI (1905), pp. 113-14.

leading to the danger that they would be treated as such.¹³⁸ It was not before time that the RSPCA recognised the need to modernise its youth wing. Established in 1923, the Animal Defenders Corps catered for adolescents, and the BOM was renamed as the RSPCA Junior Division in 1935.¹³⁹

This failure to progress is evident elsewhere. The Band of Hope had always been a more proactive enterprise. In 1897, it knocked at 1½ million doors on just one day to recruit further members.¹⁴⁰ Given that BOM groups worked with the Band of Hope, the BOM would have probably profited, but this busy recruiting marked the difference between the two movements. The RSPCA's reticence to finance educational work went as far as emphasising that Bands should be self-funding.¹⁴¹ This exasperated local officials. In 1902, Harold Barrows, secretary of the Walsall RSPCA branch was moved to write to *The Times*. He complained that although his group had done everything asked of it, including managing a BOM, erecting a water trough and organising an essay competition, the RSPCA had withdrawn the services of a branch inspector on the pretence that the branch raised insufficient funding. Barrows believed that the Society had reserve funds in excess of £100,000, and questioned whether the RSPCA's mission was to hoard money rather than ameliorate animal suffering.¹⁴² The RSPCA did spend money on the BOM, but this amounted to just less than two percent of its annual expenditure in 1910. In comparison, prosecution costs absorbed sixty-nine percent of spend. Despite moves to provide educational work and some very willing volunteers, the RSPCA's priorities had not

¹³⁸ As cited in Turner, *All Heaven in a Rage*, pp. 235-36.

¹³⁹ Moss, *Valiant Crusade*, p. 200; Fairholme and Pain, *Century of Work for Animals*, p. 172; *Animal Ways*, 1/2 (February 1935), p. 13.

¹⁴⁰ Robert Taylor, *The Hope of the Race*, (London: Hope Press, 1946), pp. 53-54.

¹⁴¹ *Band of Mercy*, 51 (March 1883), p. 23.

¹⁴² *The Times*, 7 April 1902.

shifted. Its assessment of the BOM as 'a most important *adjunct* to our Society' was correct, in that the task of preventing animal cruelty was an *additional* role left to self-funding volunteers, *not* its main objective.¹⁴³

The BOM was the first permanent children's society to promote kindness towards animals, but progress was slow. Even the appearance of a suitable RSPCA children's periodical was belated and merely joined a market already flooded with thousands of children's texts, some of which specifically meditated upon the importance of kindness towards animals and birds.

¹⁴³ RSPCA, *60th Annual Report 1884*, p. 85; RSPCA, *87th Annual Report 1910*. 'Expenditure on Literature and Humane Education' formed 13% of the Society's 1910 expenses, but this category also included expenses for its periodicals (including *Band of Mercy*) which were partially recouped in sales, as well as essay competitions and other educational projects.

CHAPTER THREE

*Inspire Youth with Humanity towards the
Brute Creation:*

Reading Matter for Children and Bird Conservation

The great N Play.



BIRDS-NESTING.

HERE two naughty Boys,
Hard-hearted in Jest,
Deprive a poor Bird
Of her young and her Nest.

MORAL.

'Thus Men, out of Joke,
(Be't spoke to their Shame)
Too often make free
With others good Name.

*Figure 3.1: Condemnation of Bird-nesting.*¹

A preoccupation of the RSPCA for much of the nineteenth century had been the production of children's literature that aimed to promote respect for animals and birds. Long before the BOM was founded and the first animal protection acts had

¹ *A Little Pretty Pocket-book, Intended for the Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy, and pretty Miss Polly*, (London: Newbery, 1760), [<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>, accessed 10/6/2005].

been passed, writers had been at work creating publications specifically aimed at children. These works commonly carried an anti-cruelty message. Within a 1760 edition of a *Little Pretty Pocket-book*, was the illustration and quatrain depicted in *fig. 3.1*.

This work, by the publisher John Newbery, endorsed Locke's instructions on child rearing and Newbery was at great pains to point out to parents the importance of nurturing and guiding a good child's behaviour. As evidence of the shifting conceptions of childhood, Newbery insisted that admonishments be made by 'reasoning and mild discipline' instead of 'chiding, whipping and severe discipline'.² More significantly, even within this first text, there is a humanitarian philosophy denouncing the common pastime of bird-nesting. The convictions by the RSPCA illustrate that some children were undoubtedly spiteful towards animals, and, according to Thomas, parents moulded a child's behaviour.³ This is no doubt true, but as this chapter will demonstrate, children's literature also played a role in shaping their readers' attitudes towards nature, particularly birds and their eggs. It is necessary to assess this process in order to contextualise the work of the animal welfare movement and highlight the scale of the issues they attempted to reform. Bird conservation came to the forefront of the conservation agenda in the 1860s, and this chapter considers how this shaped the narratives of one particular periodical.

Nineteenth-century children's literature was a shifting genre. The chapter explores the impact of the increasing sophistication and commercialisation of the children's periodical press from the 1850s onwards as publishers sought to meet

² *Ibid.*, pp. 6-12.

³ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 148.

readers' needs, rather than merely providing what they thought children ought to read. Books, by their very nature, do not allow readers' responses to be recorded. By concentrating on the periodical press, which from the 1850s increasingly solicited a direct relationship with its readers, it is possible to measure children's attitudes towards wildlife and more importantly, their reactions to humanitarian editorials. This focus on the periodical press is even more significant given the ability of this media to reach huge numbers of children and adolescents on a weekly basis. For example, just one periodical, *Boys of England*, was seen by at least one in five of all ten to nineteen year old males in 1881.⁴

If children's literature sought to influence readers, we also need to be aware of its impact on adults. According to Alan Rauch, adults also engage with children's literature on a number of levels. Its simplistic style leads some actively to seek it out, because it is easier to comprehend. This factor is particularly apposite during this period when literacy skills were sometimes basic. The temperance *Band of Hope Review* was shipped to the Crimea where it was thought to be specifically ideal for slow-reading soldiers.⁵ Secondly, children have a tendency to turn to adults to explain a text. Finally, there is the practice of co-reading with a child. At each stage, adults become actively engaged with the material.⁶ The advertisements in some children's periodicals confirm this mature readership. It is unlikely that the advertisements extolling the virtues of 'Coleman's Starch' and 'Jackson's Benzine Rect' (a stain

⁴ John Springhall, 'Disseminating Impure Literature': The 'Penny Dreadful' Publishing Business Since 1860', *Economic History Review*, XLVII/3 (1994), 567-84 (p. 575).

⁵ Alan Rauch, 'Parable and Parodies: Margaret Gatty's Audiences in the *Parables from Nature*', *Children's Literature*, 25 (1997), 137-52 (p. 139); Mountjoy, 'Thomas Bywater Smithies', p. 47.

⁶ Rauch, 'Parable and Parodies', p. 139.

remover) were aimed at children.⁷ Patently then, any animal or bird issues raised by children's publications would also have been viewed by adults.

The Growth of Children's Literature.

From the mid-seventeenth century, literature had been produced specifically for children, but Locke was concerned that as much of this material was not enjoyable reading, it was affecting children's willingness to read. This changed in 1744, with the production of Newbery's *Little Pretty Pocket Book*, which is not only widely credited with beginning the children's book industry, but also was profitable and amusing. Newbery was also responsible for the foundation of the short-lived *Lilliputian Magazine* (c.1750), which was acknowledged as the forerunner of children's magazines.⁸ Progress after the *Lilliputian* was at first slow. By 1824, there were five magazine titles that strongly meditated on pious religious messages and were designed for Sunday school circulation. The periodical press gradually burgeoned and 160 titles were in publication by 1900.⁹

Chapbooks, peddled by street-hawkers, augmented this range of literature.¹⁰ These were aimed at both the working classes and children, but received an adverse reaction. To root out what they regarded as the 'feculent *dregs*' of the chapbook market, the RTS was formed in 1799 and began producing short pamphlets, then

⁷ *Kind Words for Boys and Girls*, 48 (29 November 1866); *Chatterbox*, 1 (1 December 1868).

⁸ Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as a Social Practice, 1780-1832*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 109-12; Locke, 'Some Thoughts Concerning Education', p. 260; William Noblett, 'John Newbery: Publisher Extraordinary', *History Today*, XXII/4, (1972), 265-71; Jill E. Grey, 'The *Lilliputian Magazine*: A Pioneering Periodical?', *Journal of Librarianship*, 2/2 (1970), 107-15.

⁹ Diana Dixon, 'From Instruction to Amusement: Attitudes of Authority in Children's Periodicals Before 1914', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, XIX/2 (1986), 63-67 (p. 63).

¹⁰ Darton, *Children's Books in England*, pp. 68-82.

books and periodicals for children. Specifically targeting the working-class Sunday schools and undercutting the price of the chapbooks, the RTS pursued a successful course and by 1850, it had issued 450 million copies of tracts (not all aimed at children) that reached millions of readers.¹¹

The mid-nineteenth century saw interlinked developments that facilitated the expansion of the press. Technological advances served the development of rotary presses leading to speedier production and falling costs, as paper rolls replaced the single sheet production method.¹² The development of a comprehensive railway distribution network also fuelled the establishment of W.H. Smith's chain of shops. These were just one element of the nineteenth-century retail revolution that also saw an expansion in corner shops and tobacconists, to which, 'adolescents swarmed on their way from school or work' in search of their favourite titles.¹³ Secondly, the 'taxes on knowledge', that inflated the price of both newspapers and periodicals as a deliberate government tactic to ostensibly keep them out of reach of the working classes and as a means of suppressing the 'pauper press', had been eradicated. This began with the abolition of advertisement duty in 1853. Then, following a long campaign that focused on the legitimacy of a 'free press', stamp duty was repealed in 1855 and paper duty abolished in 1861. The effects of these measures were dramatic, and an impetus was created for a cheaper press, allowing publishers to exploit a wider class of reader and more sophisticated production methods.¹⁴

¹¹ As cited in Bratton, *Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction*, p. 33; Aileen Fyfe, *Science and Salvation: Evangelical Popular Science Publishing in Victorian Britain*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 25-35.

¹² Brown, *Victorian News*, pp. 7-15.

¹³ Richard Davenport-Hines, 'Smith, William Henry (1825-1891)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25938> 14/9/2008]; Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines*, p. 124.

¹⁴ Lee, *Origins of the Popular Press*, pp. 42-49.

The repeal of stamp duty coincided with the founding of the *Boys' Own Magazine*. This interrupted the stream of largely moralistic periodicals and prioritised profit margins over pious messages. Readers were assured of 'stronger meat than the *Goody Two Shoes* style of composition' and Drotner believes this marked a shift from 'religious didacticism or secular rationalism towards moral entertainment'.¹⁵ Priced at 6d, with its stories of 'Eton Boys' the new magazine targeted the well-heeled schoolboy.¹⁶ The following decade was then a watershed for children's publications. There were three significant events. In 1861, the first children's section of a public library opened in Manchester, albeit eleven years after the Public Library Act.¹⁷ Then, with the arrival of the *Water Babies*, a new type of reading was now in production. Escapism became the narrative children wanted and enjoyed.¹⁸ The magazine market was not left behind. In 1866, with the launch of *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, *Boys of England*, and *Chatterbox*, magazines arrived that intended to amuse as well as instruct. The remainder of the nineteenth century saw a further upsurge of all genres of books and magazines, as publishers viewed child readers of all abilities and backgrounds as a source of profit.¹⁹

Despite the move to provide entertaining reading, the notion of utilising the press to proselytize remained, and a feature of the periodical press was regular educational articles, including those that dealt with natural history. Although

¹⁵ *Boy's Own Magazine*, 1/1 (January 1855), preface; Drotner, *English Children and their Magazines*, pp. 66-67.

¹⁶ *Boy's Own Magazine*, 6/1 (June 1855), pp. 508-13.

¹⁷ This new facility in Manchester was limited to boys and for reference purposes only. Provision for children in libraries was still poor; by 1871, Birmingham's collection of just 456 children's books was meant to serve 69,000 potential readers. Debbie Denham, 'Public Library Services for Children' in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, 3 vols. ed. by Alistair Black and Peter Hoare, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), III pp. 92-109 (pp. 92-94).

¹⁸ Humphrey Carpenter, *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature*, (London: Unwin, 1987), pp. 1-19.

¹⁹ Dixon, 'Children and the Press', pp. 133, 142-43.

periodicals were becoming increasingly commercialised and sophisticated in their delivery of didacticism, long established publications, such as the ultra pious *Child's Companion*, remained impervious to these reforms and continued to lecture children with a dreary religious rhetoric, largely unchanged since the 1820s.²⁰

How much of this growth was linked to the provision of education? Nineteenth-century education and literacy levels have been widely discussed, especially the consequences of the 1870 Education Act.²¹ Whilst this was undoubtedly a milestone in addressing deficiencies in elementary education, its effect on the relationship between children's learning and the provision of literature is debatable. Middle and upper class children had been well served by their own schools and were little affected, whilst working-class children were already receiving basic education from the gamut of Sunday, dame, factory, and charity schools. Indeed, by 1851 fifty-six percent of children aged five to fifteen were attending Sunday school and eighty-nine percent of children in the voluntary schools were learning reading. Therefore, Drotner suggests the 1870 Act created 'no sudden increase of juvenile readers', rather it was compulsory schooling from 1880 that had a more marked effect.²²

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-43; Noakes, 'Boy's Own Paper and the Late-Victorian Juvenile Magazines', p. 155; *Child's Companion and Juvenile Instructor*, XI (1 November 1870), pp. 162-64.

²¹ W.H.G. Armytage, 'The 1870 Education Act', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, XVIII/2 (June 1970), pp. 121-33; W.B. Stephens, *Education, Literacy and Society, 1830-1870: The Geography of Diversity in Provincial England*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987); Gordon Baker, 'The Romantic and Radical Nature of the 1870 Education Act', *History of Education*, 30/3 (2001), 211-32; Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 146-62.

²² Michael Sanderson, *Education, Economic Change and Society in England 1780-1870*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) pp. 1-19, 30-38; Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability*, p. 44; Stephens, *Education, Literacy and Society*, p. 25; Drotner, *English Children and their Magazines*, p. 96.

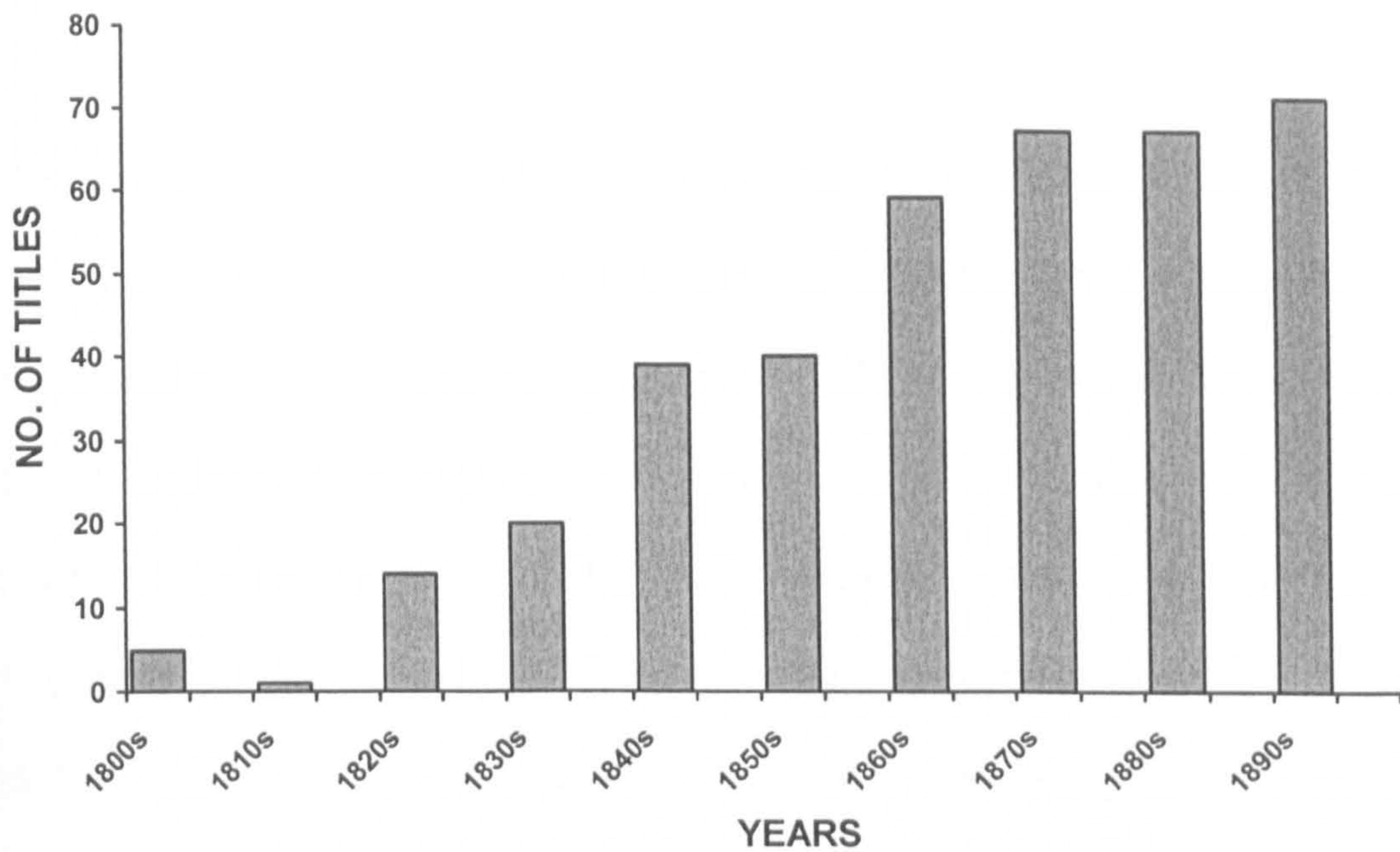


Figure 3.2: Growth of Children's Periodicals by Date of Foundation, 1800 to 1890.

However, according to Dunae, the 1870 Act prompted ‘an unprecedented growth’ in juvenile’s periodicals.²³ An analysis of Sheila Egoff’s bibliographical data [fig. 3.2] suggests otherwise. Although there was a sustained and higher output of new magazine titles from the 1870s onwards, this was not as marked as Dunae suggests. Instead, the real expansion is in the 1860s, particularly in 1866 when an unprecedented fourteen new titles were founded. Possible reasons for this have already been discussed.²⁴ Furthermore, the popularity of chapbooks, and the revelation in the 1830s that the vast majority of working-class homes stocked some form of reading material, ensured that illiteracy was not a barrier to the publication of the early religious periodicals.²⁵

²³ Dunae, ‘Penny Dreadfuls’, p. 136.

²⁴ Egoff, *Children's Periodicals of the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 28-43.

²⁵ Drotner, *English Children and their Magazines*, p. 31.

Natural History, Conservation, and Children's Literature: 1730-1850

Locke believed that when a child began to learn 'as many Pictures of Animals should be got him, as can be found' to 'afford him Matter of Enquiry and Knowledge'.²⁶ Animals and birds were popular subjects for children's books. In 1730, Thomas Boreman produced *A Description of Three Hundred Animals*. This gave individual accounts of different species, including a warning not to interfere with the nests of certain birds, as they would readily abandon their breeding attempts.²⁷ Boreman's work has been credited as the first animal book to be specifically aimed at children. Before 1800, only fifty such works had been written, but by 1837, a further 250 titles had been produced, reflecting the wider appetite for natural history works.²⁸

The style of presentation also became more sophisticated than the simple anthology of Boreman's descriptions of animals. Richard Johnson's *Juvenile Rambles* of 1786 described the 'rambles' of 'Master Billy' and 'dear Charlotte' through the countryside. Notably after Billy espies a bird's nest, the opportunity is taken to caution that 'it is cruel to rob these pretty creatures of their nests and eggs'.²⁹ Clearly then, zoological books had a dual purpose in not only describing the natural world but also promoting respect for it as well. In the preface to his natural history book, George Riley expressed his intention to 'inspire Youth with Humanity towards the Brute

²⁶ Locke, 'Some Thoughts Concerning Education', pp. 259-60.

²⁷ Thomas Boreman, *Just publish'd, A description of three hundred animals; viz. birds, beasts, fishes, serpents, and insects. With A Particular Account of the Whale Fishery. Extracted out of the Best Authors, and adapted to the Use of all Capacities: especially to allure Children to Read*, (London: Rich. Ware, 1730), p. 115.

²⁸ R.B. Freeman, 'Children's Natural History Books before Queen Victoria', *History of Education Society Bulletin*, 17 (Spring 1976), 7-21; Harriet Ritvo, 'Learning from Animals: Natural History for Children in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Children's Literature*, 13 (1985), 72-93.

²⁹ R. Johnson, *Juvenile Rambles through the Paths of Nature; in which many Parts of the Wonderful Works of the Creation are Brought Forward, and Made Familiar to the Capacity of Every Little Miss and Master, who Wishes to Become Wise and Good*, (London: Newbery 1786), p. 99.

Creation'.³⁰ Scholars have drawn attention to this humanitarian philosophy. Harriet Ritvo observes that 'moralists were almost obsessively concerned with children's propensity to torture insects, birds, and small domestic animals, as much because it was a prognostication of adult behaviour to fellow humans as on account of the animal suffering it caused'.³¹

One of the most influential works was that produced by Sarah Trimmer. Her *Fabulous Histories*, first produced in 1786, tells the story of a family of robins inhabiting the garden of the wealthy Benson family. The work alternates between narrations from the birds and the daily activities of the human family. Trimmer designed her work to induce in children 'moral instruction to themselves at the same time that they excite compassion and tenderness for those interesting and delightful creatures on which such wanton cruelties are frequently inflicted'.³² *Fabulous Histories* has been interpreted as a multi-layered contextual work that acts as a bulwark against Jacobinism and atheism, stresses the hierarchy of primogeniture, gender, and class, whilst reinforcing xenophobic British nationalism.³³ This thesis does not intend to challenge these interpretations, but instead to draw attention to four topics raised by Trimmer that continually surfaced thereafter in children's literature and the wider nineteenth-century conservation debates. In the first place, Mrs Benson encourages her children to feed the birds. Secondly, nesting is constantly discouraged. The children attempt to spread these sentiments to their peers, notably the egg-collecting Edward Jenkins, who fails to heed their advice and meets Hogarthian justice when he is killed after beating his horse. Thirdly, Trimmer's work also

³⁰ George Riley, *The Beauties of the Creation: or, a New Moral System of Natural History*, (London: Riley, 1793), I, frontispiece.

³¹ Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes*, pp. 51-78; Ritvo, 'Learning from Animals', pp. 77-78.

³² Trimmer, *Fabulous Histories*, p. x.

³³ Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes*, pp. 53-58; Ferguson, *Animal Advocacy and Englishwomen*, pp. 7-26.

underlines a controversial issue that repeatedly dogged conservationists. She reiterates the opinion expressed by agriculturalists that sparrows were vermin and castigates the species for teaching other birds to 'steal corn and other things'. Despite her humane beliefs, she sanctioned their destruction, as they were 'such devourers' of corn. Finally, we should examine Trimmer's broader objectives. Teaching children to be kind to birds, it was hoped, would benefit society overall.³⁴

Trimmer's work underscores the obsessive concern of children's authors for the plight of birds. This message had limited influence, however, as the cost of literature was prohibitive. This was very much the case for most books well into the first half of the Victorian period. Costing upwards of 6s, new children's books were well beyond the means of the poorer classes.³⁵ Therefore, distributors similar to the RTS took it upon themselves to ensure that wholesome literature was available to the poor. For example, in Ireland, the Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor of Ireland distributed Trimmer's work.³⁶ Publishers also did not entirely ignore the working classes, but titles were scarce. When such rarities did emerge, they similarly emphasised this need for kindness towards wild creatures. *The Poor Child's Friend* cajoled readers to feed birds and warned against nest robbing, comparing the raiding of a bird's nest to the stealing of a child and its siblings from their parents.³⁷

³⁴ Trimmer, *Fabulous Histories*, passim.

³⁵ Alec Ellis, 'Influences on the Availability of Recreational Reading for Victorian Working-Class Children', *Journal of Librarianship*, 8/3 (1976), 185-95 (p. 186).

³⁶ *First Report of the Commissioners on Education in Ireland, 30 May 1825*, 400 (House of Commons, 1825), p. 559. Trimmer's book was also titled *The History of the Robins*.

³⁷ Margaret Nancy Cutt, *Ministering Angels. A Study of Nineteenth Century Evangelical Writing for Children*, (Wormley Broxbourne: Five Owls Press, 1979), p. 9; *The Poor Child's Friend: or, Familiar Lessons Adapted to all Ranks of Children*, (York: Peacock, 1790), pp. 48-52.

The nascent children's magazines also pushed a humanitarian theme. They loaded such advice with constant sermonising articles that stressed that man had been given the responsibility by God to look after lower creatures. Even more important was the message that because God created these creatures and taught them to build their nests, whilst constantly watching over them, it was sinful to interfere with this process. Readers of the *Child's Companion* were advised that:

Animals, my love, were created by our heavenly Father for the convenience and pleasure of man: he has placed them under the power and care of man: he watches over them, as, says our Saviour, "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without my Father"... and he is much displeased when any hurt or torment them.³⁸

By the 1830s, nearly half of the children enrolling into Sunday schools were working class and by 1851, this had increased to seventy-five percent.³⁹ This suggests that humanitarian messages in these periodicals were reaching a different audience from that catered for by books. There was little competition among the early periodicals and therefore 'they had no need to court their reader's approval', leading to an authoritarian content throughout.⁴⁰ It is not surprising then to find no readers' contributions and this makes it difficult to assess how calls for humanitarian behaviour by the early children's press were received.

Thus far, the children's press has been considered as a positive force in modelling humanitarian behaviour. However, we should also bear in mind that it had the power to convey exactly the opposite message. Priscilla Wakefield's *Mental Improvement* ostensibly sermonised against bird cruelty, but her narrative, if misread, could easily be held to support an entirely different perspective. Wakefield raises the

³⁸ *Child's Companion or Sunday Scholar's Reward*, 25/4 (January 1826), pp. 5-6; 59/6 (November 1828), p. 343; 90/9 (June 1831), pp. 189-91.

³⁹ Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability*, p. 44.

⁴⁰ Dixon, 'From Instruction to Amusement', p. 63.

practice of bird trapping. If this was for food, as in the case of seabirds harvested by Orkney Islanders, then this was thought acceptable. By contrast, trapping singing birds for the London bird trade was 'cruel'. Tellingly the class origins of these trappers are highlighted. The birdcatchers are 'weavers and other mechanics' that live in 'close confinements of garrets'. The mention of trapping stirs excitement in one of Wakefield's characters, Henry Harcourt. He relates that he 'dreamed of nothing but decoys and setting of traps' and demands that his father relay the trapping methods.⁴¹

Mr Harcourt gives Henry a curt Lockean warning that,

your tenderness and humanity will never permit you to avail yourself... to entrap or destroy a harmless bird wantonly... the boy who is capable of inflicting pain... is already hardened to a degree... for the perpetration of cruelty towards his fellow men, when arrived at manhood.⁴²

Despite this condemnation, the various contrivances used for bird trapping are then outlined in some detail.⁴³ These descriptions could easily have led children to construct their own traps, perhaps buoyed by the excitement of Henry and eager to catch their own cage birds. This thrill is captured by the newer children's literature that increasingly sought to cultivate the interests of their readers. *The Boy's Own Book* of 1831 included detailed accounts of various bird traps and nets that focused on the exquisite pleasure gained from such pastimes, observing that,

every bird that flies affords such delight and amusement to youth, as youth alone can feel. There are few men who do not remember with pleasure the day when they first made the house sparrow prisoner in the common brick trap.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Priscilla Wakefield, *Mental Improvement or the Beauties and Wonders of Nature and Art in a Series of Instructive Conversations*, (Dublin: Wogan, 1800), pp. 227-34.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 227-28.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 229-31.

⁴⁴ William Clarke, *The Boy's Own Book: A Complete Encyclopedia of all the Diversions, Athletic, Scientific and Recreative of Boyhood and Youth*, (London: Vizetelly, Branston, 1831), pp. 151-57.

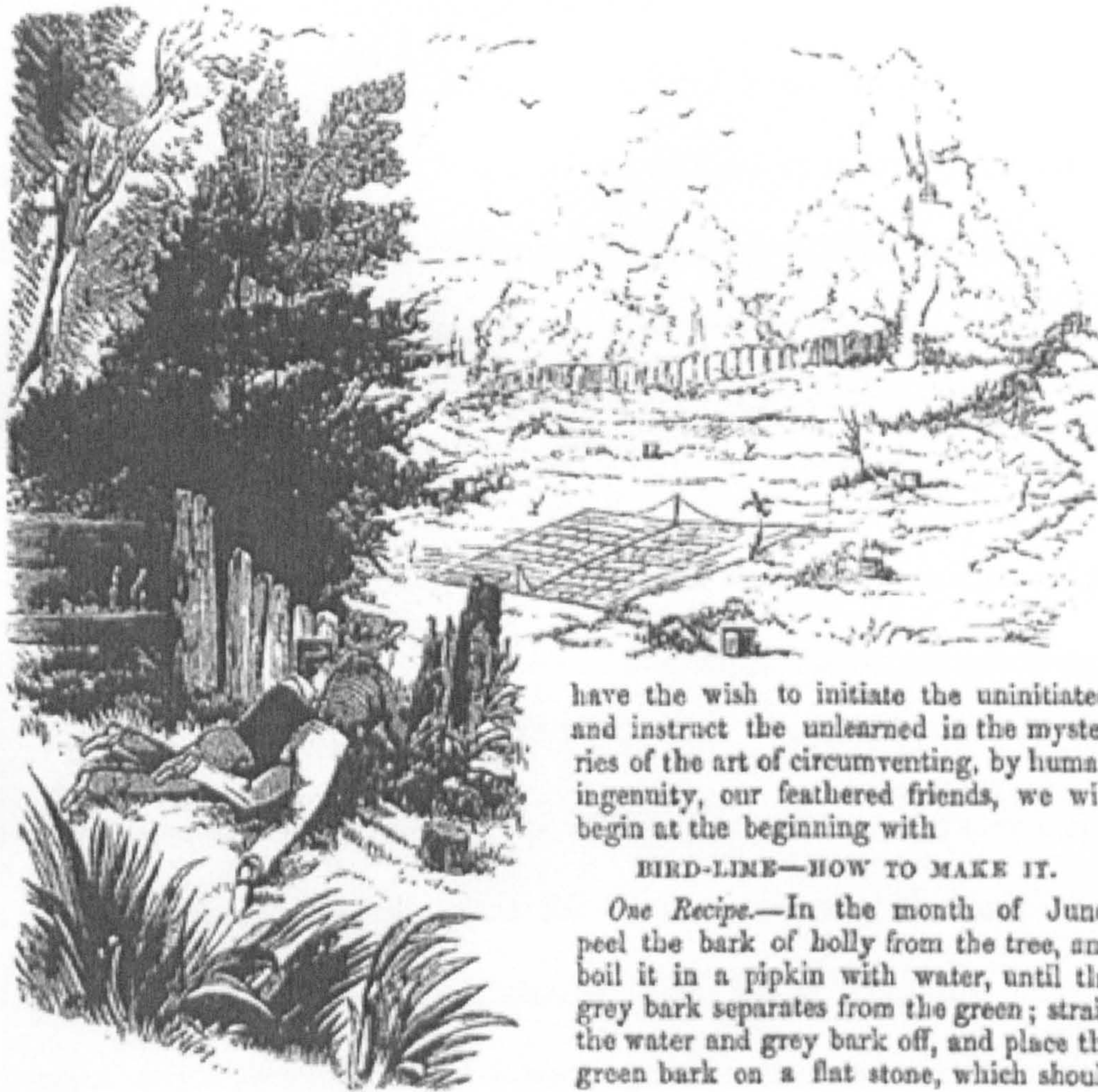


Figure 3.3: Trapping Advice in the *Boy's Own Magazine*.⁴⁵

The trapping advice outlined by the *Boy's Own Book* reflected the surge in natural history collecting. This made its way into the new genre of children's magazines from the 1850s onwards, as publishers began to see children as a profitable market to be carefully courted. Notably these periodicals carried a different conception of the natural world from that espoused by the older magazines. Articles gave precise trapping advice [fig. 3.3], and like the *Children's Companion*, these new magazines also used biblical quotations, but their purpose was quite different. In justifying bird-trapping the *Boy's Own Magazine* concluded, 'Let them have dominion over... the

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, V/5 (May 1858), p. 152.

fowl of the air...over the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth'.⁴⁶ Similarly, bird-nesting was now legitimatised and actively encouraged by the respectable naturalist Rev. John Wood, who offered prizes for the best exhibits of eggs. This was not presented as a branch of natural theology or wrapped in religiosity. Rather, it was offered as healthy rational recreation, for bird-nesting provided 'great relaxation' for those who had been 'hard at work all morning' as there was 'nothing more dull, dreary, or stupid than a mere walk'.⁴⁷

Such advice was aimed at a select band of readers, whose class origins are discernable from the content of their own essays, which keenly passed on collecting tips to their fellows. One advised that a respectable assortment of eggs could be gained by telling 'some village boys that if they bring all the eggs they can to you, you will give them a penny apiece for all that you take'.⁴⁸ The profusion of advertisements from egg-dealers quoting their prices confirms this wealthy readership. *Boy's Journal* readers could buy, 'A collection of British birds eggs comprising 68 varieties. Price £1 10s'.⁴⁹ Such content denotes a definite enthusiasm for egg-collecting amongst wealthy schoolboys at least, an interest that publishers were keen to exploit. A logical step was the creation of a specialist field club for readers to join in which they could share their interest with others. These institutions became indispensable for nineteenth-century naturalists of all social classes. They served to arrange field meetings, held a consultative library, displayed specimens, and most importantly, acted as a social club.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Boy's Own Magazine*, V/5 (May 1858), pp. 152-59.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, II/8 (1863); I/6 (1863); pp. 526-32.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4/22 (1864).

⁴⁹ *Boy's Journal*, 17 (May 1864), p. xxvi.

⁵⁰ David Allen, 'The Natural History Society in Britain through the Years', *Archives of Natural History*, 14 (1987), 243-59 (pp. 247-51).

Launched in 1880, the *Union Jack* encouraged readers to join its Field Club and then form individual branches to discuss collected specimens and publish their own journals. The club wished to encourage the 'collection of objects of every branch of natural history'. There were occasional remonstrations regarding over-collecting, but little to suggest any conservationist activity. Several provincial branches were formed, some of which organised their own committees and produced their own journals. The club attracted 5,000 members, but correspondence suggests its activities remained within the domain of privileged schoolboys.⁵¹ This obsession to provide children with naturalist articles was then taken to its obvious conclusion with the creation of a specialist magazine, which focussed almost entirely on collecting. In 1879, the *Young Naturalist* magazine intended to 'cultivate a taste for natural history among the young' and also for those 'a little lower in the social scale' in order to divert them from lounging in the streets.⁵²

From the magazines discussed so far, one would assume that nineteenth-century periodicals reflected a wholly learned content. This was far from true. From the 1860s a new sort of children's serial story paper arrived, specialising, according to Patricia Barnett, in 'lurid crime and violence'.⁵³ These narratives were originally produced with an adult audience in mind, but due to stiff competition from the popular Sunday papers, publishers switched their sights to the young urban working classes. These new papers, with their stories of 'low-life crime' were dubbed 'penny dreadfuls'.⁵⁴ Great concern was voiced about this new children's literature, which was

⁵¹ *Union Jack*, I/27 (1 July 1880), pp. 430-431; II/78 (23 June 1881), p. 607; I/41 (10 July 1883), p. 656.

⁵² *The Young Naturalist*, 1/1 (1 November 1879), p. 1; 7/1 (13 December 1879), p. 49.

⁵³ As cited in John Springhall, "'A Life Story for the People?'" Edwin J. Brett and the London "Low-Life" Penny-Dreadfuls of the 1860s', *Victorian Studies*, 33 (1990), 223-46 (p. 231).

⁵⁴ Springhall, 'Penny Dreadful Publishing Business', pp. 568-70.

thought to pollute young minds and loosen morals, although there was a fine line between a real 'penny dreadful' and a shrewd publisher spotting the commercial possibilities offered by sensational stories. Edwin Brett's *Boys of England* was particularly successful and claimed to counter the penny dreadful threat, yet it continually attracted adverse comment because of its 'wild and wonderful' stories of pirates and highwaymen, leading to labelling as a 'dreadful'. Brett's previous publishing output had been firmly in the 'dreadful' genre, and this must have stained the reputation of his new magazine.⁵⁵ More reputable publishers met this perceived threat with a twofold response. On the one hand, they posted stiff warnings for readers to keep clear of insidious literature. *Band of Mercy* cautioned,

do not let your curiosity tempt you to taste forbidden fruit – forbidden books and papers; there is poison for the mind as well as the body. If you have been naughty enough to read a bad book, do not add to your naughtiness by passing it on to some other boy or girl.⁵⁶

A second, and more forceful strategy, was to launch an alternative magazine.

Begun in 1879 by the RTS, the *Boy's Own Paper* [*BOP*] took up this task. Excessive moralising, its editor George Hutchinson believed, would have the opposite effect. Instead, he specifically engineered its contents to meet the needs of his readers, adopting for the *BOP* the motto 'What ever boys do is the subject of our little book'.⁵⁷ It would be assumed that the *BOP*, with its heavy emphasis on natural history, mirroring the now defunct *Boy's Own Magazine*, would hold similar pro-collection opinions. However, with regard to bird-nesting, Hutchinson seemingly misread his reader's interests. Early issues of the *BOP* roundly condemned the practice as cruel [fig. 3.4], echoing the continued belief broadcast by its fellow RTS publication, the

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 570-75; E. S. Turner, *Boys will be Boys*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 75; Dunae, 'Penny Dreadfuls', pp. 133-50

⁵⁶ *Band of Mercy*, 133 (January 1890), p. 2.

⁵⁷ Dunae, 'Boy's Own Paper: Origins and Editorial Policies', pp. 126-33.

Child's Companion.⁵⁸ Perhaps realising the mistake, nine months later, the magazine polled its readers to seek their opinion as to the legitimacy of collecting. Respondents wholeheartedly denounced indiscriminate collecting, but whilst some condemned it 'under all conceivable circumstances' the *BOP* reported that 'many' sanctioned 'the egg-collector who proceeds in a systematic and scientific manner'.⁵⁹ With this approving mandate from their readership, the magazine inverted its previous anti-collecting stance. A series of articles was then begun, authored mainly by Rev. Wood, which assured readers that egg-collecting was perfectly acceptable provided it was carried out judiciously.⁶⁰

Collecting of all things feathered was undoubtedly popular amongst the readership. Repeated reader's requests for instructions for making birdlime to capture specimens deluged the magazine, forcing it to stem demand by announcing that the subject must 'stand over for a time'.⁶¹ Although the magazine seemed content to provide recipes that would have caused countless numbers of birds untold suffering, it took a strong line against boys whom it believed had caused unnecessary bird deaths. 'Anxious' of Luton was severely chided for his request for advice for rearing young skylarks as he had already 'killed many broods' in his failed attempts.⁶²

⁵⁸ *BOP*, I/6 (22 February 1879), p. 88; *Child's Companion and Juvenile Instructor*, XI (1 November 1870), pp. 162-64.

⁵⁹ *BOP*, I/36 (20 September 1879), p. 587.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, II/67 (24 April 1880), p. 478.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, VIII/351 (3 October 1885), p. 16; Turner, *All Heaven in a Rage*, p. 301. 'Birdlime' is a viscid substance smeared on branches to catch birds by their feet. It was outlawed in Britain in 1925.

⁶² *BOP*, II/72 (29 May 1880).

THE LAST BIRD'S-NEST I ROBBED

BY W. J. COOPER.



Figure 3.4: The Anti-Bird-Nesting Stance of the *BOP*, 1879.⁶³

The objective of the *BOP* was to counter the dreadfuls, but it certainly did not offer 'milk and water' in its contents, and its gruesomely illustrated serial stories offered their fair share of 'blood and thunder'. Taxidermy advice was even more graphic.⁶⁴ One article described how a bird's head should be prepared, advising boys to:

cut the throat lengthways to remove the head. It is immaterial whether the eyes are taken out before the head is skinned down or after. The gouge should go well to the back of the eye and separate the ligament which holds it to the socket... Some people crush the skull slightly to make it come out of the skin easily, but this I do not advise. Remove the brains by taking out a piece of the skull at the back as you cut off the neck. Pull the eyes out of their cavity and fill up their place with wool soaked in arsenical soap.⁶⁵

⁶³ *BOP*, I/6 (22 February 1879), p. 88.

⁶⁴ Turner, *Boys will be Boys*, pp. 98-99.

⁶⁵ *BOP*, X/464 (3 December 1887), p. 155.

This vivid advice was accompanied with instructions for shooting birds with guns and homemade weapons, which were found in other boys' magazines that primarily served wealthy schoolboys. These articles were successful in encouraging boys to prepare specimens, as the *BOP* correspondence columns demonstrate. More importantly, given the concern from some quarters of the effects of exposure to cruelty on young minds, we should also consider whether such graphic instruction, allied to detailed and stirring killing advice, desensitised boys from both appreciating nature and causing pain to animals. It is noticeable that these magazines were at pains to point out that boys should endeavour to kill with 'clean workmanlike' shots to avoid causing needless suffering.⁶⁶ The estimation that for every ten gamebirds killed outright there was also one left wounded, suggests that despite the plea for accurate shooting, many birds would have died a lingering death at the hands of inexperienced and over-eager young marksmen.⁶⁷

The ability of the periodical press, especially some of the less upmarket magazines, to shape the behaviour of young readers caused high anxiety. For instance, reading sensational fiction in 'penny dreadfuls' was thought to engender criminal activity.⁶⁸ Yet, it is noteworthy that despite its critics, *Boys of England* did not indulge its readers with any explicit dissecting advice. Similarly, although it carried natural history articles, these essays rarely reflected the fascination for collecting that absorbed *BOP* writers.⁶⁹ It is difficult to pinpoint why these natural history offerings were so different. It is true that the main appeal of the *Boys of England* lay in its thrilling fiction offered primarily to lower-middle class and working-class

⁶⁶ *Union Jack*, I/32 (5 August 1880), pp. 510-12; *BOP*, III/114, (19 March 1881), p. 408.

⁶⁷ Jevons, 'Cruelty to Animals', p. 675.

⁶⁸ Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics*, pp. 84-92.

⁶⁹ *Boys of England*, II/32 (29 June 1867), p. 92.

adolescents, a lower social target audience than the *BOP*'s mainly middle-class readership.⁷⁰ This is not to say that readers of the *Boys of England* did not take a keen interest in collecting. Their 'Exchange' column of the magazine indicates many readers who were willing to swap their egg-collections for other treasures, including a steady demand for pistols.⁷¹ Nevertheless, with respect to encouraging boys to kill birds, the much-maligned *Boys of England* was relatively innocent and any cruelty found here was general played out as fictional narratives in its stories. Its critics, who similarly disregarded the repeated collecting articles in the highly lauded *BOP*, which by contrast, encouraged actual killing, overlooked this anomaly.

A further difference in rhetoric is apparent in another shared topic. A frequent narrative in children's books was the glorification of hunting, which glamorised the killing of wild animals. This was viewed as both a manly activity and ideal training for war, especially when questions about the physical degeneracy of children were beginning to arise.⁷² As might be expected, magazines primarily aimed at boys also revelled in hunting stories. Readers of the *Boy's Own Magazine* were indulged with stories describing the joy 'European sportsmen' experienced when shooting swans in North America and a similar rhetoric transferred to stories of boar hunting in India to thrill *BOP* readers. The *Boys of England* handed hunting differently, at least in one particular tale. A gorilla-hunting story focused heavily on the poignancy of the kill and the sorrowful regret of the sportsman for killing the beast.⁷³

⁷⁰ Drotner, *English Children and their Magazines*, pp. 75, 123.

⁷¹ *Boys of England*, 67 (29 February 1868), p. 236.

⁷² John M. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 46.

⁷³ *Boy's Own Magazine*, 8/47 (1866), pp. 325-30; *BOP*, I/21 (7 June 1879), pp. 332-34; *Boys of England*, II/50 (2 November 1867), p. 382.

Given the evident popularity for hunting narratives, it also accounts for the preponderance of such articles in the unisex magazines. However, their presence in *Aunt Judy's* magazine appears inconsistent with its purpose to 'instruct in virtue' a readership from the 'vicarage and the university lodge'.⁷⁴ A reason for this was that the editor, Margaret Gatty, was a zealous collector and her convictions surfaced regularly in the magazine. These lacked the exoticism of foreign hunting trips and focussed on securing mundane British specimens. With some relish, *Aunt Judy's* described how the sight of a startled blackbird should set the 'pumps going' and then how shooting fieldfares would bring about 'satisfaction'.⁷⁵ Notably this instruction was intended to train young sportsmen, for 'unless you have been through what I now intend to describe, you are not likely ever to make much of a tiger hunter'.⁷⁶ Such rhetoric was obviously available to girls, and it crossed into the explicitly female press. The *GOP*, for instance, thought otter hunting was 'very exciting sport'.⁷⁷

Generally, collecting advice in girl's magazines was rare and this medium preferred to see nature as something to be studied with admiration by its genteel readership.⁷⁸ For those girls wanting collecting advice there were always their brothers' magazines. Edward Salmon's 1888 survey of children's reading habits, pointed to the *BOP* being the second favourite magazine for girls.⁷⁹ The unisex publications, such as *Chatterbox*, also indulged young collectors. Articles were less concerned with the educative benefits collecting engendered and instead focused upon

⁷⁴ Drotner, *English Children and their Magazines*, p. 70.

⁷⁵ *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, X/LXIX (1872), pp. 160-168; X/LXXVII, (1872), pp. 672-73; Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, 'Amateurs and Professionals in One Country: Biology and Natural History in Late Victorian Yorkshire', *Journal of the History of Biology*, 34 (2001), 115-47 (p. 121); Rauch, 'Parable and Parodies', pp. 137-52.

⁷⁶ *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, X/LXIX (1872), p. 160.

⁷⁷ *GOP*, XI/526 (25 January 1890), p. 271.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, XII/596 (30 May 1891), p. 549.

⁷⁹ Edward Salmon, *Juvenile Literature As It Is*, (London: Drane, 1888), p. 23.

having a well-arranged collection that would provide 'pleasures of memory' as 'every time you open a drawer of eggs or look over it, sunny memories will come upon you'.⁸⁰ There is nothing here that hints at any of the educational benefits that collecting was supposed to stimulate. Instead, the emphasis is solely on the pleasure gained from possessing and admiring an object, a trait shared by collectors of other entities, such as shells or butterflies. This hoarding mentality left collectors open to criticism.

Challenging the Collectors

Despite the seemingly positive articles that extolled the delights of hunting and collecting, it is noticeable, with regard to egg-collecting at least, that articles commonly carried a caveat justifying the pastime, indicating that it was not without its responsibilities. Allegations that it was cruel constantly dogged naturalists. Some at least admitted this. 'Egg-hunting', Captain Drayson of the *Boy's Own Magazine* conceded was a 'comparatively cruel sport'. Attempting to shift the focus of moralists away from collecting, Drayson argued that it could not possibly be equated to the more heinous habits of youths, such as their 'foul, dirty pipes'.⁸¹ Other magazines carried a more cautious qualification for bird-nesting and attempted to reinforce it as a wholesome pastime. According to *Chatterbox*, collecting certainly was not cruel as 'some of the kindest and most genial men have been fond of the sport - George Stephenson for one'.⁸² Yet there were clear internal dissensions in magazines, especially in the unisex periodicals, that must have caused confusion amongst

⁸⁰ *Chatterbox*, 11 (9 February 1871), pp. 87-88.

⁸¹ *Boy's Own Magazine*, 1/6 (1863), p. 32.

⁸² *Chatterbox*, 11 (9 February 1871), pp. 87-88.

children as to the legitimacy of collecting. In March 1874, in an article specifically aimed at boys, *Kind Words* condemned those who interfered with bird's nests, yet a month later, boys were given precise advice for mounting a collection of eggs and accusations that it was cruel were dismissed.⁸³ At least readers of the boy's magazines were not fed such duplicitous advice and were safe in the knowledge that their collecting activities were positively encouraged.

However, tensions were evident even in the boy's magazines. Rev. Wood acknowledged that he been showered by 'heart-rending' letters worried that bird-nesting was cruel. He refuted these claims to *BOP* readers and declared that as birds were not 'arithmeticians' he saw no reason why eggs could not be safely harvested when the parent bird was laying, as she would soon replenish her clutch. Wood enthused that as many as 'seven or eight eggs from a single nest' could be taken to supply the cabinet or for exchange, and his article was accompanied with a sumptuous illustration of eggs that must have enthused readers [*fig. 3.5*].⁸⁴ Collecting advice in other magazines was more tempered, and authors tended to ensure that they also gave a warning not to collect indiscriminately. The golden rule, according to *Kind Words*, was to take only one or two eggs at most as the parent bird would not miss them.⁸⁵

⁸³ *Kind Words*, 4 (March 1874), pp. 71-73; 4 (April 1874), pp. 114-15.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 478.

⁸⁵ *Kind Words*, 4 (April 1874), p. 115.

This keenness to position collecting as a respectable pursuit also led to condemnations of those boys who plundered all the eggs from nests. The rhetoric of the *Young Naturalist* suggests that it did not number such individuals amongst its upstanding readership, and there is definite inference that the robbers were working-class.⁸⁷ These supposedly considerate collecting methods were not without their challengers. A widely circulated poem, 'Birds Cannot Count' appeared in several of the more reverent magazines, including, incongruously, *Kind Words* in 1871. Boys were asked to ponder the net result from a single nest continually raided by different individuals taking just one egg.⁸⁸ Fed on a diet of pro-collecting advice, boys were not supine in the face of criticism and vigorously defended their hobby. The *Union Jack* praised one of its Field Club members for responding to a *Bradford Observer* correspondent who called for the birching of egg-collecting boys. Citing the Rev. Wood in his defence, the boy argued that only eggs for the collector's cabinet were taken, and reiterated the arithmetical argument.⁸⁹

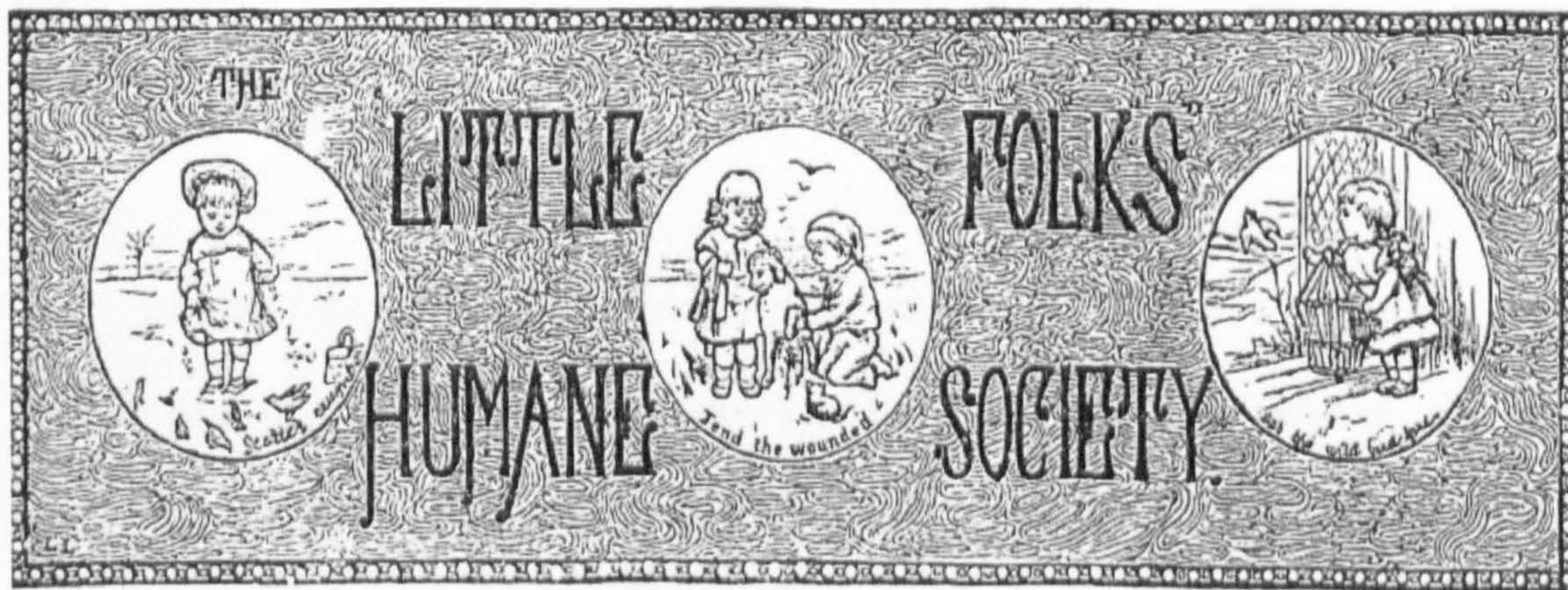


Figure 3.6: Masthead of the LFHS.⁹⁰
 Bird-feeding, care of pets and releasing caged birds are emphasised.

⁸⁷ *Young Naturalist*, I/29 (15 May 1880), pp. 225-26.

⁸⁸ *Kind Words*, (1 July 1872), p. 219; *Child's Own Magazine*, (1882), p. 129.

⁸⁹ *Union Jack*, II/78 (23 June 1881), pp. 607-608.

⁹⁰ *Little Folks*, 15 (1882), p. 118.

The *Union Jack* was not the only magazine to host a club with an active membership. In contrast to its pro-collecting agenda, the position of the unisex *Little Folks* had been wholly humanitarian from its launch in 1871.⁹¹ Reasoning that it had always tried to project 'kindness and thoughtfulness' among its readers, *Little Folks* decided to extend these qualities so that 'kindly consideration of the claim of all living creatures that are useful to man' might be engendered within boys and girls. In 1882, readers were offered the opportunity to agree to a pledge and join the *Little Folks* Humane Society [LFHS]. Gaining the support of the Earl of Shaftsbury, within two years over 44,000 members enrolled. The correspondence of members printed in the magazine indicates that boys who egg-collected were considered 'heartless', although the readership of *Little Folks* was generally drawn from a younger and more female milieu than the boys' story papers. Unlike the BOM, the LFHS did not hold meetings, although this is not to say that its members were inactive. In one instance, they sent protest letters and began collections in an effort, albeit in vain, to save Jumbo the elephant from being sold by the London Zoological Gardens to the American showman P.T. Barnum.⁹²

In 1884, the decision was made to discontinue printing the membership lists, and mention of the society was restricted to its membership pledge that continued until 1909. Galbraith has argued that the creation of the LFHS was part of the continuous attempt by *Little Folks* to engage proactively with its readership via philanthropy, observing that the formation of the society came about just when its 'Cot Fund' appeal closed.⁹³ However, when the LFHS was downscaled in 1884, it

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 14, p. 223.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 15 (1882), pp.49-51, 302-305; 16 (1882), p. 258; 18 (1884), p.247; *Our Happy Family: Being the Little Folks Annual for 1883*, (London: Cassell, 1883), p. 47; Galbraith, *Reading Lives*, p. 53.

⁹³ *Little Folks*, 20 (1884), pp.55, 121-23; 69 (1909), p. 160; Galbraith, *Reading Lives*, pp. 62-63.

was not immediately followed by a new philanthropic campaign, although new charity appeals were made in the 1890s. Certainly, the continuation of the LFHS pledge long after the magazine ceased giving its society page space suggests *Little Folks* intended to continue promoting humanitarian values. Given that it was still recruiting in 1884, the LFHS appeared to be very popular with readers, but its voluminous membership lists extended to over five pages, taking up valuable space in a magazine that continually repackaged its contents in order to retain its appeal.⁹⁴

Little Folks differed from the moralising tone adopted by some of the more pious magazines by offering a more palatable content and was definitely a magazine 'for children, not a volley at them'.⁹⁵ This was evidently appreciated, as this magazine was the third favourite of girls.⁹⁶ There was also another obvious difference between this new publication and the older magazines. A 'captive audience' read the 'church-affiliated' publications. Much the same could be said about *Band of Mercy* magazine, which was also run at a financial loss. *Little Folks*, by contrast, was a commercial magazine published by Cassell, and therefore had to attract readers in order to be financially viable.⁹⁷ Its efforts indicate that anti-cruelty agendas were not the reserve of the pious press, and such a subject could be commercially feasible, demonstrating that the magazine might also have taken advantage of changing public perceptions towards animals and birds. Its popularity also illustrates that plenty of children did not necessarily subscribe to collecting. Instead, they happily read a magazine that consistently pursued a conservationist strategy.

⁹⁴ *Little Folks*, 20 (1 January 1885); Galbraith, *Reading Lives*, pp. 63-64.

⁹⁵ Darton, *Children's Books in England*, p. 271.

⁹⁶ Salmon, *Juvenile Literature As It Is*, pp. 15-23.

⁹⁷ Galbraith, *Reading Lives*, p. 53; RSPCA, 87th Annual Report 1910.

Despite the various agendas of the magazines, proactive conservation measures, such as feeding birds during the winter, appeared to receive universal support, regardless of the values of editors and writers. The *Boy's Journal* also offered instructions for building nestboxes, purely for the pleasure of attracting birds to the garden. It is surprising, given the obsession with collecting, that no comment was added about how these boxes could be used to farm a ready supply of eggs.⁹⁸ Similarly, there were limits to the kind of hunting that was deemed acceptable. If foreigners carried it out, then it was criticised. *Kind Words* regarded Italians as 'savages' for killing and eating 'thousands of dear little singing birds'.⁹⁹ Conveniently, it ignored the dozens of recipes provided by Mrs Beeton of 'singing birds' for preparation for the British table. Larks especially were popular dishes, and were on the menu at a dinner hosted by the Mayor of Liverpool in honour of the Prince of Wales in 1886.¹⁰⁰ Criticism was also levelled at those sports that offended notions of sporting etiquette, especially if they were carried out by urbanites and 'Cockney sportsmen'. These included the shooting of seabirds to supply the millinery trade or for mere fun that drew increasing numbers of day-trippers to the coast. Complaints came from all quarters, including *Aunt Judy's*, which keenly drew a distinction between those shooting for specimen collection and those reprobates who shot for amusement.¹⁰¹ These seabird articles were notable because the magazines chose to underline a topical contemporary concern, that of the overkills of seabirds that had led to letters to *The Times* similarly condemning 'cockney shooters'.¹⁰² By contrast, the early condemnation of bird-nesting by the pious religious magazines of

⁹⁸ *Boy's Journal*, 8/3 (1867), p. 174.

⁹⁹ *Kind Words*, XXVIII/120 (April 1868), p. 123.

¹⁰⁰ See the various recipes for skylark, thrush, and blackbird. Isabella Beeton, *Mrs Beeton's Household Management: A Complete Cookery Book*, (London: Ward Lock, 1937); *NWC*, 20 February 1886.

¹⁰¹ *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, XXXVIII (1 June 1869), pp. 103-10.

¹⁰² *The Times*, 24 August 1868.

the 1820s, had relied upon obviously anecdotal accounts of boys bird-nesting, albeit taking the eggs of birds nesting on cliffs, to produce a moralistic lesson for their readers.¹⁰³

The Movement for Bird Conservation.

A fascination for birds, whether for their exploitation or protection, dominated the children's press. To modern eyes, encouraging children to collect and trap might seem reprehensible, but it must be remembered that limits on egg-collecting were not enacted until 1894.¹⁰⁴ This restriction was synonymous with changes in ornithology during the late nineteenth century. Optical instrument improvement, the growth in the popularity of nature books and the development of photography were pushing ornithology from its 'collection' phase into a serious field study, where observation was becoming more important than specimen collecting.¹⁰⁵

In the first half of the nineteenth century, legislation did not replicate the repeated exhortations by children's literature to protect birds. The welfare of domestic animals had taken precedence. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, the concern of animal protectionists had widened and conservationists, according to Turner, set out to 'crusade for birds'.¹⁰⁶ There were multiple reasons for this new sympathy. These included repulsion against the huge bags of game shot on sporting estates, the influence of natural history and artistic studies celebrating beautiful plumage, and a realisation that the great auk, which had been widely hunted and collected, was now

¹⁰³ *Children's Friend*, XIV/II (1824), pp. 6-11.

¹⁰⁴ Sheail, *Nature in Trust*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁵ Allen, *Naturalist in Britain*, p. 208.

¹⁰⁶ Bonhomme, 'Nested Interests', pp. 48-51; Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 87; Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, p. 125.

actually extinct and a similar fate might befall other seabirds. There was also belief that birds offered more than just aesthetic qualities, and increasingly it was understood that they performed a vital role in controlling insect pests.¹⁰⁷ The zoologist Alfred Newton publicly fuelled this in 1868, observing that 'each [bird] has its proper and useful function' and predicting that should 'the present state of things' continue, eventual extinction of wild birds was inevitable.¹⁰⁸

The Times and its correspondents propagated the concern that overkills of insectivores might have economic repercussions and stressed the sheer brutality of shooting breeding birds. Legislation rapidly followed. In 1869, the *Seabirds Protection Act* created a close season from 1 April to 1 August for thirty-three seabird species. This was in response to the anxieties that relentless shooting had decimated seagulls, which would normally have followed the plough and picked out insect pests. More legislation followed in 1872. This extended the close season and gave security to an additional seventy-nine bird species.¹⁰⁹ Finally, the Wild Birds Protection Act provided all wild birds a close season from 1 March to 1 August, in 1880.¹¹⁰ There was now a legal framework theoretically protecting birds for part of the year, but this was flawed. The 1880 Act permitted individuals to access land, with the permission of the landowner, to kill or catch birds, whatever the season. Secondly, although the Act made it an offence for birds taken after 15 March to be traded, proving when a bird had been originally procured was impossible. The biggest omission was that it did not protect birds' eggs, leaving collectors a free hand. Closing these loopholes would

¹⁰⁷ Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, pp. 124-28; Bonhomme, 'Nested Interests', pp. 48-54.

¹⁰⁸ RSPB, *Annual Report 1893, Appendix*, pp. 24-31.

¹⁰⁹ *The Times*, 9 October 1865; 3 April 1867; Bonhomme, 'Nested Interests', pp. 55; *An Act for the Preservation of Sea Birds*, 32 & 33 Victoria, C. 17, (24 June 1869); *An Act for the Protection of certain Wild Birds during the Breeding Season*, 35 & 36 Victoria, C. 78, (10 August 1872).

¹¹⁰ *An Act to amend the Laws relating to the Protection of Wild Birds*, 43 & 44 Victoria, C. 35, (7 September 1880).

have stifled egg-collecting, but this would have harmed respectable naturalists who fought to keep collecting free of control. Furthermore, the Close Time Committee for the Bird Protection Acts complained that agriculturalists and game interests regularly flouted the law. If there was such wide scale disregard for the law by respected individuals, how could children, who carried out the 'wanton and indiscriminate destruction of birds' nests', be controlled?¹¹¹

This was a complex field for any conservationist to address, but their work was done for them as the greed of collectors saw collecting become more commercialised. Auction sales of great auk eggs reflected this. In 1853, single eggs traded for £53, rising to £225 in 1888, and then £315 in 1894.¹¹² Such exorbitant prices were way beyond children, but they too could embellish their collections with special exhibits, including imported exotics from Egypt and Palestine offered for sale in their magazines.¹¹³ *The Times* highlighted this insatiable demand in 1891. It reported that the Naturalists' Publishing Company was advocating an oology trip to the Shetland Islands with the intention of harvesting 20,000 eggs. To fund the trip, shares were offered for purchase, with dividends being paid in eggs. *The Times* thought it a scandal that 'pecuniary profit' was made from collecting.¹¹⁴

In the face of such evidence, the naturalist's defence of selective collecting for scientific study, crumbled. Parliamentary action was swift. A bill to amend the bird

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*; Sheail, *Nature in Trust*, p. 45; *Report from the Select Committee on Wild Birds Protection; Together With the Proceedings of the Committee Minutes of Evidence*, 338, (23 July 1873), pp. 107, 185.

¹¹² *The Times*, 23 February 1894.

¹¹³ *Boy's Own Magazine*, 4/23 (1864).

¹¹⁴ *The Times*, 16-18 February 1891; Bruce Campbell and Elizabeth Lack, eds., *A Dictionary of Birds*, (Waterhouses: Poyser, 1985), pp. 408-409. 'Oology', defined as the 'scientific' study of the eggs of birds'. Tellingly, following *The Times* protest, the proposed Shetland trip was abandoned.

protection laws to address this concern was quickly introduced, but it failed. The 'Egg Bill' returned in 1893 and was enacted in 1894. It delegated the power to county councils to provide protection for eggs and nests at specific sites or of named bird species.¹¹⁵ Although there was a certain amount of sympathy for egg-collecting boys, the evidence of press reports continuing to condemn the commercialised 'Collector Nuisance' in 1899 suggests the effectiveness of this legislation was limited. As John Sheail has underlined, only seventeen areas were nominated for protection by 1910, the lists of bird species between counties varied, and prosecutions were rare.¹¹⁶ Yet this legislation did have greater consequences, which should not be overlooked.

The Reformation of the *Boy's Own Paper*

This discussion indicates that the magazine press was polarised in its opinions towards egg-collecting in particular. Encouraged by their readers, the boy's papers pursued an unmitigated course of endorsing collecting, whilst at the opposite ends of the spectrum, magazines such as *Little Folks*, railed against all form of cruelty. Holding the middle ground were *Chatterbox* and *Kind Words*. From the 1890s, these defining lines became increasingly blurred as the new bird protection legislation took effect. Using the *BOP* as an example, this trend will be explored further.

The content of the *BOP* began to reflect the shift in ornithological studies. Already by 1891 an article blamed the 'cockney sportsmen and collectors, professional and private', for the falling populations of seabirds. It urged the 'youthful

¹¹⁵ *Hansard*, 3/CCCL, c. 836-37 (17 February 1891); 4/XI, c. 1410-1 (27 April 1893); *An Act to amend the Wild Birds Protection Act, 1880*, 57 & 58 Victoria, C. 24, (20 July 1894).

¹¹⁶ *Country Life*, 128 (17 June 1899), pp. 738-39; Sheail, *Nature in Trust*, pp. 28, 42.

ornithologist' to use a field guide and opera glasses to gain pleasure from birds by simply watching, rather than shooting them. Similar to the earlier confusion in *Kind Words*, conflicting messages were now appearing criticising egg-collecting and even some *BOP* readers. The columnist Gordon Stables renounced the 'grim joke' of the current bird protection acts and called for new legislation to protect the eggs of all wild birds from the 'wholesale destruction of birds' eggs by wantonly cruel, or at least thoughtless boys'. As for the regular *BOP* correspondent who requested birdlime recipes, Stables called for him to be banished to the 'Cannibal Islands of the South Pacific'.¹¹⁷

By 1893, the difference in opinions by *BOP* writers was becoming acute. Rev. Wood died in 1889, but his philosophy regarding collecting continued to be defended by his son, Theodore. He reiterated the judicious collecting argument. The *BOP*'s sub-editor, W.J. Gordon, mirrored this interest in bird-nesting and produced a series of articles on 'Birds Nests and How to Identify Them', but as befitting his office, he pointed out that legislation now protected birds during the breeding season and forbade 'birdnesting in the old sense'.¹¹⁸ Wood was clearly no fan of the new egg protection laws, grumbling that it was a 'sad blow for oologists', and insisting that if collecting had been sensible, then legislation would have been unnecessary. Nevertheless, a publication of the *BOP*'s stature could not sanction law breaking and after 1894, the magazine took care to warn readers against collecting the eggs of protected species. Occasional advice for making collecting paraphernalia slipped through, but by the twentieth century, the *BOP* was avowedly on the conservationist's

¹¹⁷ *BOP*, XIII/647 (6 June 1891), pp. 568-70; XIII/640 (18 February 1891), p. 642.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, XV/734 (4 February 1893), pp. 301-302; XV/737 (25 February 1893), pp. 351-52; Jack Cox, *Take a Cold Tub Sir! The Story of the Boy's Own Paper*, (Guildford: Lutterworth Press, 1982), p. 26.

side, even applauding the RSPB's work.¹¹⁹ As confirmation of the *BOP*'s reformation one only needs to examine its weekly correspondence column, where readers sought advice. For the prime collecting months of April to June 1880, there were nine letters associated with egg-collecting. By contrast, over the same period in 1900 there were none.¹²⁰ As these columns would have been heavily edited, such evidence cannot in its entirety be proof of a definite sea-change in the habits of male readers or signal a sudden cessation in collecting. Moreover, the changes in the *BOP*'s content were not symptomatic of the children's press as a whole. Some magazine columnists still encouraged their readers to collect long after controlling legislation had been in force, such as the *Captain's* Edward Step in 1909. Notably, the *Captain* targeted upper middle class public-school boys, a higher social class than even the *BOP*.¹²¹ Evidently, there was still demand for such advice and much work for conservationists still to do.

Conclusion

As this analysis of children's literature illustrates, concern for the welfare of birds and animals was not reserved for institutional movements such as the RSPCA. These themes in children's literature followed a discernable pattern. The first moralistic books regularly promoted anti-cruelty messages to their largely middle to upper-class readership. This might have had some influence, as the MPs debating the bird protection laws in the 1870s would have been familiar with Trimmer's narrative.¹²²

Magazines carrying similar messages followed, and were, because of Sunday school

¹¹⁹ *BOP*, XVII/841 (23 February 1895), p. 335; XXIV/1192 (16 November 1901), p. 112; XXV/1256 (7 February 1903), pp. 302-303.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, II/64-76 (1880); XXII/1108-20 (1900).

¹²¹ *The Captain*, XXXI (1909), p. 66; Robert H. MacDonald, 'Reproducing the Middle-Class Boy: From Purity to Patriotism in the Boys' Magazines, 1892-1914', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 24/3 (1989), 519-39 (p. 524).

¹²² Bonhomme, 'Nested Interests', p. 49.

distribution, available to a wider readership, including working-class children. This sympathy culminated in the creation of the LFHS. Although the main thrust of this campaign was short-lived, its large membership demonstrates popularity among children for positive animal welfare.

Influenced by the vogue for natural history and commercial considerations, other publications strayed from this compassionate mindset and encouraged a collecting mentality to meet readers' needs. However, the *Union Jack* was forced to close down its Field Club in 1882, observing that the 'majority of fellow subscribers' wanted something more 'generally interesting to them'.¹²³ Children bought magazines not for their instruction, but entertainment. It is questionable whether they would have wanted their informal hobby of bird-nesting commodified into such a rigid educational format. Nevertheless, the boy's magazines had a strong impact on their reader's conduct, and collecting articles were popular, as the deluge of letters to the *BOP* demonstrates. If such a worthy RTS magazine sanctioned killing and collecting birds, then evidently we can see why this behaviour was difficult to counteract. It was only with the introduction of protection laws that such 'collecting' articles in the *BOP* were reined in, leading to articles supporting conservationists. Although letters requesting collecting advice were no longer published, it is difficult to assess whether real changes were occurring in boys' conduct towards birds.

The *BOP*'s large circulation, allied to its role as a defensive weapon against the dreadfuls, has been claimed as a measure of its success and the reason why it has

¹²³ *Union Jack*, III/144 (28 September 1882), p. 832.

been subject to such intense study.¹²⁴ Greater forces than children's magazines moved public opinion. The scope for newspapers was much larger. For instance, the *Irish Tribune* claimed a prospective readership of 4,000,000 in 1887.¹²⁵ Allied to this potential reach, newspapers were also keenly aware of the continuing Hogarthian concern for the welfare of animals and children. 'John Peel's' article in the *West Cumberland Times* in 1878 was typical. He insisted that the;

wanton destruction of our feathered friends... gives sure inclination of the existence of an uncompassionate heart and unreflecting mind... the way to develop these feelings (tender feelings), the way to promote the growth of affectionate sympathies, is to cultivate in the young mind a loving interest in the little birds.¹²⁶

Peel's inspiration for this entreaty was the formation by the *NWC* of its children's column and club that he judged ideal for 'interesting the young in the preservation of singing birds'.¹²⁷ If children's periodicals had not always been up to this task, would newspapers and their children's columns fare any better?

¹²⁴ Noakes, 'Boy's Own Paper and Late-Victorian Juvenile Magazines', p. 151.

¹²⁵ Joan Allen, 'Keeping the Faith': the Catholic Press and the Preservation of Celtic Identity in Britain in the Late Nineteenth Century', in *Exile and Homecoming: Papers from the Fifth Australian Conference of Celtic Studies, University of Sydney, July 2004*, ed. by Pamela O'Neil, (Sydney: University of Sydney, 2005), pp. 78-91 (p. 90).

¹²⁶ *West Cumberland Times*, 18 May 1878.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 18 May 1878.

CHAPTER FOUR

an ordinary newspaper would form an excellent medium for reaching the young: **Newspapers, Nature and Children**

In 1881, the *Aberdeen Journal* announced:

Hitherto Newspapers, while addressing themselves to the Family Circle, have contained little of real interest and pleasure for Girls and Boys, who, although called upon to read the paper for the benefit of others, seldom find anything in it to suit their own tastes and feelings. As regards the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, this will no longer be the case. Arrangements have been made for publishing every week a column or more of particular interest to young people, dealing with all kinds of subjects, which they are sure to think about, and like to read about.¹

This assertion was not wholly true. Instead, the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal's* 'Children's Hour' joined a growing number of children's columns in newspapers that had begun with the 'Corner for Children' printed by the *Belfast News-Letter* on 26 August 1873. There are strong grounds to suggest that this was the first attempt, albeit short-lived, by a British newspaper to cater directly for young readers. Notably, this short column, a natural history article describing the life of coral culled from the *Child's Paper*, reflected the already expansive children's periodical press and its interest in nature.² This was a one-off feature, but the next attempt to serve children was a much more substantial and permanent affair not reliant on periodicals. The *NWC's* 'Children's Corner' first appeared on 7 October 1876. This also marked the launch of its Dicky Bird Society [DBS] as the first children's club in a British newspaper.³

¹ *Aberdeen Journal*, 2 August 1881.

² *Belfast News-Letter*, 26 August 1873. An extensive search of newspapers in the period 1870-1914 has found no other children's column to pre-date the Belfast paper.

³ *NWC*, 7 October 1876.

Our conception of nineteenth-century newspapers has been coloured by the view that in general they were rather joyless reads of *ad-verbatim* political reporting with little thought given to articles that might hold a reader's interest. Even after the 1870 Education Act, Lucy Brown sees newspapers making little attempt to adjust their presentation of the news by simplifying the text or inserting illustrations to aid people of limited education.⁴ This was certainly true of *The Times*, but provincial newspapers had long carried features that they thought would hold their reader's attention. This chapter begins by showing how newspapers documented the natural world. Then, to demonstrate the increasing public concern for animal welfare, the discussion assesses how newspapers increasingly took issue with animal cruelty. This was broadened by one particular paper, the *NWC*, which established its children's society to tackle this issue.

Nineteenth-century newspaper production was an economically ruthless business. Towns were only able to sustain a critical level of newsprint and consequently many failed publications were left by the wayside, as Maurice Milne has demonstrated with regard to numerous defunct Sunderland newspapers. He concludes that for a newspaper to succeed, editors were required to balance innovation with the need to appeal to a broad readership.⁵ Any innovatory feature that attracted new readers was soon copied, as newspapers feared losing ground to their rivals. Some of the reasons for the development of the children's columns and societies that followed in the *NWC*'s wake and their engagement with the animal protection cause will be discussed below. An analysis of the membership of these societies will seek to show the potential constituency of these humanitarian campaigns.

⁴ Brown, *Victorian Newspapers*, pp. 29-30.

⁵ Maurice Milne, 'Survival of the Fittest? Sunderland Newspapers in the Nineteenth Century' in *Victorian Periodical Press*, (see Shattock and Wolff above), pp. 193-223.

Newspapers, Natural History and Animal Protection

Natural history was not limited to learned gentlemen's journals or expensive specialist books. It also formed part of the wide content of newspapers. Allen credits Alfred Harmsworth with creating 'naturalist notes' style columns in the late nineteenth century.⁶ Long before the advent of Harmsworth journalism, eighteenth-century provincial newspapers included natural history articles. In 1739, the *Newcastle Journal* attempted an ambitious 'Geography and Natural History of the World' feature. This urged readers to undertake 'a true discovery of this wonderful chain of things'.⁷ The emerging press of the early nineteenth century then encouraged the popularisation of natural history. The *Blackburn Mail* and *Manchester Guardian* pressed their readers to escape the city and explore the countryside in the 1820s. Other newspapers encouraged field outings of a more learned nature. The *Sunderland and County Durham Herald* advertised the coastal Marsden Rock as a place for local geologists to study and to cheer 'the moody and depressed spirit'.⁸ These features were not limited to middle-class audiences. Aimed at the working classes, *Reynolds's* newspaper carried a rich variety of scientific articles.⁹ These were by no means passive essays. Some 'nature columns' offered a degree of reader interactivity by publishing their sightings and discussing unusual specimens sent in for expert analysis. By the early twentieth century, a 'nature feature' had become a firm fixture, as both an informative article for readers and a tool in the continuing battle for

⁶ Allen, *Naturalist in Britain*, pp. 183-85.

⁷ *Newcastle Journal*, 7 April 1739.

⁸ Harvey Taylor, *A Claim on the Countryside: A History of the British Outdoor Movement*, (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997), pp. 72-74, 97.

⁹ Erin McLaughlin-Jenkins, 'Common Knowledge: Science and the Late-Victorian Working-Class Press', *History of Science*, XXXIX (2001), 445-65 (p. 453).

commercial ascendancy. The *Manchester Guardian's* 'Country Diary' began in 1904 and continues as a feature to this day.¹⁰

Newspapers also frequently debated the question of animal protection. At first opinions differed. The 1802 attempt to ban baiting met with hesitancy from *The Times*. Although the newspaper regarded baiting as barbarous and was concerned that bouts tended to engender riotous behaviour, it thought that controlling legislation was beneath the 'dignity of Parliament'.¹¹ The *Ipswich Journal* thought otherwise, believing 'the common sense, the dignity, the decorum, and the piety of the House' would see baiting banned.¹² The provincial press kept up its campaign to outlaw baiting and the *Liverpool Mercury* received the enactment of Martin's bill in 1822 with acclaim, although it expressed regret that legislators had overlooked cock-fighting.¹³ This newspaper took a heightened interest in animal welfare. After praising the fledgling RSPCA, it vigorously campaigned for the Liverpool clergy to promote its work and agitated for the formation of a similar society in Liverpool. To its disappointment, the Church rebuffed the newspaper. However, it was able to report the formation of the Liverpool Auxiliary Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1840. Given what we know about the relationship between women and the RSPCA, it is noteworthy that this Liverpool group was formed 'chiefly under the auspices of ladies'. The group intended to circulate tracts to the 'lower classes', although there is no evidence of any plans to work with children.¹⁴

¹⁰ *NWC*, 9 April 1898; Martin Wainwright, ed., *A Gleaming Landscape: 100 Years of the Guardian's Country Diary*, (London: Aurum Press, 2006), pp. 6-11

¹¹ *The Times*, 28 May 1802.

¹² *Ipswich Journal*, 29 May 1802.

¹³ *Liverpool Mercury*, 26 July 1822.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2 February 1827; 12 February 1841; 2 April 1841.

These animal welfare campaigns by newspapers were not always well received. Debate sometimes reached ferocious levels. This is particularly evident in the market town of Stamford where the traditional bull-running event was vehemently opposed by the *Stamford Mercury*, but supported by the *Stamford News*. Eventually, in 1840 with the support of the RSPCA and the town's ratepayers, the campaign of the *Stamford Mercury* was vindicated when the inhabitants of Stamford pledged to suppress the sport.¹⁵ This very public battle ensured exposure to the formative animal protection legislation that helped counteract ignorance of the laws. The RSPCA fulsomely praised leading newspapers for their reportage of prosecutions. In 1849, it singled out *The Times*, which by now supported cruelty legislation, for taking 'every opportunity of bringing before the public those cruelly aggravated cases which too frequently occur'.¹⁶ However, 'working men rarely read *The Times*'.¹⁷ Lee sees price as a determinant factor, but a comparison with the cover prices of leading provincial papers [Appendix III] demonstrates it is only from the 1840s onwards that this becomes an issue. Instead, it was content that swayed choice. Offering business and society news, *The Times* held little interest for the workingman. The provincial weeklies, by contrast, better served a 'community readership' and were read by 'squire and labourer alike'.¹⁸ The provincial press therefore had a vital role. The RSPCA later observed that reporting 'the operations of the Society by the leading Metropolitan and Provincial Newspapers has led to a better knowledge of its objects, a more extended appreciation of its claims, and a more general call for its assistance when humanity has been outraged'.¹⁹ Prosecutions, emphasising hideous animal

¹⁵ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 118-57.

¹⁶ RSPCA, *23rd Annual Report 1849*, p. 38.

¹⁷ Harold Perkin, *The Structured Crowd: Essays in English Social History*, (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1981), p. 52.

¹⁸ See Appendix III; Lee, *Origins of the Popular Press*, pp. 38, 45.

¹⁹ RSPCA, *29th Annual Report 1855*, pp. 8-9.

cruelty sometimes carried out by the most unlikely of individuals, obviously made good press for editors seeking sensation. However, the example of the *Liverpool Mercury* suggests there was genuine support from newspapers for the animal protectionists, who were given further exposure by the dutiful reportage of RSPCA meetings.²⁰

Contemporary newspapermen did not generally recognise the reading ability of the working classes, at least until the 1870 Education Act. In 1892, W.T. Stead believed this provided a 'new reading public, for which the morning daily, as we have it, makes next to no provision'.²¹ Commentators also helped propagate an image that the years before 1870 were a 'dark age' for working-class readers. Evidence has since undermined this opinion. This reveals a partially literate working class with a keen taste for newspapers. The sheer quantity of newspapers and street literature produced, Robert Webb and others argue, is proof enough of literacy levels being much higher than contemporaries supposed.²² Therefore, those individuals who worked with animals might have been widely aware of the RSPCA convictions in their newspapers, and taken more care for fear of the penalties.

Children Reading Newspapers

It was not only adult males reading newspapers and learning from their content. Even before the introduction of children's columns, young readers had been well

²⁰ See for example, 'Clergyman Convicted of Cruelty to Horses', *Ipswich Journal*, 10 April 1869; *Preston Guardian*, 10 November 1877.

²¹ As cited in Lee, *Origins of the Popular Press*, p. 29.

²² R.K. Webb, 'Working Class Readers in Early-Victorian England', *English Historical Review*, LXV (1950), 333-51; Perkin, *Structured Crowd*, pp. 47-56; Stephen Coltham, 'English Working-Class Newspapers in 1867', *Victorian Studies*, XIII/2 (1969), 159-80; Virginia Berridge, 'Popular Sunday Papers and Mid-Victorian Society', in *Newspaper History: From the 17th Century to the Present Day*, ed. by George Boyce, James Curran and Pauline Wingate, (London: Constable, 1978), pp. 247-64.

acquainted with this media. Autobiographies and newspapers reveal how children were expected to read newspapers 'for the benefit of others'.²³ Children also sought newspapers for self-improvement. George Elson, a London climbing boy born in 1833, recalled how as a child he 'longed for a means of learning' and regularly trawled public houses looking for newspapers in order to improve his reading skills.²⁴ Further evidence comes from Salmon's 1888 published survey on children's reading habits, that underlines very well children's, or boys' at least, taste for newspapers. Although magazines were the ephemeral literature of choice, ten percent of Salmon's 'young gentlemen' proffered nine newspaper titles as their favourite literature. After the enormously well liked *BOP*, *Tit-Bits* and the *Standard* were ranked second and third respectively, ahead of magazines such as *Union Jack* and *Young England*. Notably, the sombre *Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Morning Post* were also more popular than *Boys of England*. Interestingly, after just eight girls selected the *Graphic*, Salmon observed girls 'do not affect newspapers much'. Although this seemingly points to newspapers being read by boys, Salmon's data is questionable, as although he claimed that responses were received from 'the ordinary Board schoolboys to the young collegian', his use of 'young gentlemen' suggests adolescent boys drawn from the wealthy classes. Indeed, the response of one sixteen year old that, 'I like the *Morning Post* because its opinions are genuinely Conservative. Should prefer the *Times* if it did not shift', confirms this. Furthermore, as the survey was conducted by schools, we can assume that it lacks some impartiality as masters may have attempted to present their pupils wholly reading upstanding literature.²⁵

²³ George Accord, *One of a Multitude*, (London: Heinemann, 1911), p. 10; *Aberdeen Journal*, 2 August 1881.

²⁴ George Elson, *The Last of the Climbing Boys*, (London: Long, 1900), pp. 16, 117-18.

²⁵ Salmon, *Juvenile Literature*, pp. 9-23.

However, the reason why so many scholars in Salmon's survey had selected newspapers may be related to the fact that reading newspapers had been mandatory for many children. The Bible had been the principal reading book in schools. HMIs voiced concern that this caused difficulties because of its grammatical style, and heavy usage led to Bibles becoming tattered, leading to loss of reverence for the scriptures. Another problem was identified. In 1860, an Inspector of Schools, Rev. J.P. Norris, reported to the Committee of Council on Education that a child, when presented with a book and tested for its reading competencies, ostensibly appeared to have an adequate grasp of reading. However, when given a newspaper, the results were judged most 'unsatisfactory'. Norris concluded that children had been 'primed' specifically for the inspector's visit and this produced artificially high results. He recommended measuring reading by being able to 'read intelligibly and fluently six lines of a newspaper'. His logic was that newspapers had the distinction of being a text both widely available and constantly changing. This negated any chance of children being prepared and would allow the Bible, a key reading text, to return to its position of purely being the sacred book.²⁶

It would appear that Norris's recommendations were accepted. The 1862 *Revised Code of Education* included the proviso that the reading ability of a child aged eleven and upwards be measured by their competence in reading a 'short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, or other modern narrative'.²⁷ The Code has been widely debated, especially its intention to cut costs, yet although John Hurt has proposed that it provided 'a crash course in literacy', little analysis has been carried

²⁶ Trevor May, *The Victorian Schoolroom*, (Riseborough: Shire, 1994), p. 25; *Report of the Committee of Council on Education, 1860-61* (HMSO, 1861), pp. 102-104.

²⁷ *Minute by the Right Honourable the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education Establishing a Revised Code of Regulations*, (HMSO, 1862), p.9.

out on its testing tools. Instead, Hurt points to this intensive learning being done by individual examinations of children, rather than new reading aides.²⁸

In this cost-cutting environment, the books that were available were often expensive and criticised by teachers. One complained that they found 'a single set of reading books a great drawback towards acquiring fluent and intelligent reading'.²⁹ In contrast, newspapers offered an alternative inexpensive resource. Teachers also thought they provided a first-class source of fluent every-day English and commented positively that pupils found newspapers easier to read and that 'diction' had markedly improved.³⁰ The entries in logbooks demonstrate widespread use of newspapers for teaching. In 1863, the master of All Saints School in London simply recorded that pupils were 'reading a newspaper'.³¹ What exactly were they reading? At St Nicholas National School in Newcastle, Standard VI pupils were given 'a piece of dictation out of a speech in the *Newcastle Daily Express*'.³² An examination of the *Express* shows it relied heavily on political *ad-verbatim* reporting. The pupils might have read the 'Speech of Emperor Napoleon', browsed 'Where the Poor Live in Newcastle' and the foxhunting reports, whilst the more curious examined the Natural History Society's account of skulls and bones found in a cave.³³ With the exception of the *Illustrated*

²⁸ John Hurt, *Education in Evolution: Church, State, Society and Popular Education 1800-1870*, (London: Granada, 1971), pp. 206-21; A.J. Marcham, 'Recent Interpretations of the Revised Code of Education, 1862', *History of Education*, 8/2 (1979), 121-33; David P. Ellis, 'The Effects of the Revised Code of Education in the West Riding of Yorkshire', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 19/1 (1987), 1-18; W.B. Stephens, *Education in Britain, 1750-1914*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), *passim*.

²⁹ Alec, Ellis, *A History of Children's Reading and Literature*, (Oxford: Pergamon, 1968), pp. 54-59; N[orthumberland] R[ecord] O[ffice], CES90/2/1: Capheaton School logbook, 30 April 1875.

³⁰ Capheaton School logbook, 21 May 1875; Geo. H. Haswell, "*The Maister*": *A Century of Tyneside Life*, (London: Scott, 1895), p. 176.

³¹ LMA, EO/DIV8/ALL/LB/1: All Saints School logbook, 23 April 1863.

³² T[yne] and W[ear] A[rchives] S[ervices], 53/71: St. Nicholas National School for Boys logbook, 23 March 1866. The '*Newcastle Daily Express*' did not exist. It is assumed this was the *Northern Daily Express*.

³³ *Northern Daily Express*, 23 March 1866; 24 March 1866.

London News (read by Ford School pupils in 1863), the dense reams of text found in the majority of mid-Victorian newspapers offered little to schoolchildren.³⁴

However, newspapers, and especially the weeklies, were gradually undergoing radical changes in order to attract new readers. New features, including serialised stories, sport and women's columns were introduced, as this genre rapidly resembled 'more closely the magazine, in response to the demand for papers to be entertaining as well as informative'.³⁵ These significant changes in format were a constituent of the wider overhaul of the content and design of newspapers, termed 'new journalism', a label accredited to the commentator Matthew Arnold.³⁶ Prompted by W.T. Stead's 'Maiden Tribute' exposé in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 1885, Arnold aimed his critique at this 'energetic man'. He observed that these changes had brought about a style that was 'full of ability, novelty, variety, sensation, sympathy [and] generous instincts'.³⁷ This was the essence of 'new journalism', which prompted a move away from the unattractive dreariness characterising mid-Victorian papers. Instead, innovative editors installed crossheads, illustrations and shorter paragraphs, different typefaces were employed, writing styles became brighter, and features enhanced. In short, this resulted in a more readable publication that attempted to provide what readers apparently wanted.³⁸

³⁴ Ford School logbook, 13 November 1863.

³⁵ Lee, *Origins of the Popular Press*, pp. 128-29.

³⁶ J.O Baylen, 'The 'New Journalism' of Late Victorian Britain', *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, XVIII/3 (1972), 367-85 (p. 367).

³⁷ Matthew Arnold, 'Up to Easter', *Nineteenth Century*, CXXIII (May 1887), pp. 638-39; Kate Campbell, 'W.E. Gladstone, W.T. Stead, Matthew Arnold and a New Journalism: Cultural Politics in the 1880s', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 36/1 (2003), 20-40 (p. 20).

³⁸ Kate Jackson, *George Newnes and the New Journalism in Britain, 1880-1910: Culture and Profit*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p. 44; Lee, *Origins of the Popular Press*, p. 120; Mark Hampton, 'Liberalism, the Press and the Construction of the Public Sphere: Theories of the Press in Britain, 1830-1914', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 87/1 (2004), 72-92 (p. 73).

The years 1880 to 1914, in particular, marked rapid improvements in newspaper formatting and content. It would be wrong to suggest that there was a sudden 'schismatic' revolution in newspaper design or that any one individual was entirely responsible for this.³⁹ Rather, it was evolution and mechanical innovation, as newspapers, slowly at first, included different features for their readers to enjoy. Surveys of the appearance of serialised fiction in Scottish weekly newspapers as early as 1855, underline this.⁴⁰ What it is important to highlight is that newspapers made concerted attempts to cater for a wider audience, including children. Joel Wiener's comment, that young readers were enticed by 'children's features', needs more explanation.⁴¹

The 'Children's Corner' and Newspaper Society

From a survey of one hundred and eighty newspapers, eighty-six titles in the period 1873 to 1914 were found to host features for children.⁴² The majority of these were in the weekly press produced on Fridays or Saturdays, or in the Saturday edition of a daily. Before the mid-nineteenth century expansion in newspaper production, provincial newspapers had mostly been produced on Fridays and Saturdays. By the late 1880s, with the achievement of shortened working hours and the increase in sporting activities, the Saturday half-day had become a reality for even the unskilled working classes.⁴³ The weekend reader was already well served by the established Sunday press. The *News of the World* and *Lloyd's* ignored children, but the *Weekly*

³⁹ Joel H. Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?' in *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain 1850-1914*, ed. by Joel H. Wiener, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 48-71; Jackson, *George Newnes and the New Journalism*, p. 43.

⁴⁰ William Donaldson, *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland*, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986), p. 77.

⁴¹ Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?', p. 55.

⁴² See *Appendix I* and *II* for details.

⁴³ See *Appendix III*; Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain*, p. 35.

Times began catering for young readers in 1885.⁴⁴ Newer publications reflected this increase in leisure time more clearly. From the 1870s, a new breed of syndicated weeklies arrived that specialised in fictional literature.⁴⁵ Published also on a Friday or Saturday, they too were intended for leisurely weekend reading *en famille*. These titles contained a 'miscellany of feature material'.⁴⁶ For some, this included a children's column.

Enlarged Saturday editions were also becoming customary for daily papers. These sometimes offered separate 'supplements', which included children's columns, literary reviews, serialised stories, gardening columns and women's pages. On launching its supplement, replete with a children's column, the *Leeds Mercury* claimed to 'provide for the reading public of Yorkshire a first class family and general newspaper... We shall pay particular attention to the interests of families of the working classes'.⁴⁷

By engaging the family reader, these children's columns were a subtle attempt to broaden the appeal of a newspaper. Ashton highlights the *NWC*'s attempt to become a 'family newspaper and magazine in one'.⁴⁸ This argument has validity, as several newspapers carried family-orientated pages, titled as the 'Magazine Page', hosting their children's columns. Other titles amended their format from the traditional broadsheet to become magazine-sized publications. The *Leeds Saturday Journal* is one example, with the intention of making 'this paper of general interests

⁴⁴ Berridge, 'Popular Sunday Papers', p. 249; *Weekly Times and Echo*, 4 October 1885.

⁴⁵ Law, *Serializing Fiction*, p. 33

⁴⁶ Graham Law, 'Before Tillotsons: Novels in British Provincial Newspapers, 1855-1873', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 32/1 (1999), 43-79 (p. 43).

⁴⁷ *Leeds Mercury*, 4 January 1879.

⁴⁸ Ashton, *W.E. Adams*, pp. 127-28.

and its contents as varied as possible, so as to please the many classes of readers who honour us with their support'.⁴⁹ Capturing family readers by introducing children's columns seemed to be an imaginative move, but it now appears to be tardy, as there had long been recognition that children were a potential means of extending circulation. Publishers of women's magazines from the 1840s had hosted specific features for children.⁵⁰ Significantly, these columns also reflected the concern for the welfare of birds, combined with the familiar moralistic warning. *Sharpe's Magazine* described how 'thoughtless acts of disobedience' caused children to harass a bullfinch to death.⁵¹

Newspaper children's columns took up varying amounts of space ranging from quarter columns to whole pages. Their format differed considerably and there was little originality at times, with a continued tendency, especially by the shorter columns, to republish magazine articles. For instance, the *Paddington Chronicle* relied heavily on the *Christian Globe* and *Christian Register* for its 'Readings for the Young' column and made no effort to interact with its readers.⁵² The *NWC*'s 'Children's Corner' was very different. This two-columned feature provided stories, puzzles and articles that mirrored the content of some of the more wholesome magazines. However, the remit of the *NWC* was much more ambitious. Instead of preaching *at* children, as much of the magazines tended to do, the editor of the *NWC*, William Adams, wanted to enter into a dialogue *with* his young readers.

⁴⁹ *Newmarket Journal*, 7 January 1905; *Leeds Saturday Journal*, 6 April 1895.

⁵⁰ Barbara Onslow, *Women of the Press in Nineteenth Century Britain*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 135-36.

⁵¹ *Sharpe's Magazine*, 23 (4 April 1846), p. 367.

⁵² *Paddington Chronicle*, 3 February 1900; 7 July 1900.

To achieve this, Adams created the DBS. His aim was to foster a more appreciative mindset towards animals and especially birds. Under the guise of 'Uncle Toby', Adams repeatedly encouraged his young charges to provide bird food and desist from bird-nesting. Members had to commit themselves to keep the following pledge:

I promise to be kind to all living things, to protect to the utmost of my power, to feed the birds in the winter time, and never to take or destroy a nest. I also promise to get as many boys and girls as possible to join the Dicky Bird Society.⁵³

Uncle Toby called for his young readers to write to him with their letters and drawings for publication. This was immediately popular. Membership applications poured in and in just five years, 50,000 children had enrolled.⁵⁴

Adams explained to his young readers that the DBS was to combat cruelty towards birds. Although the instigation of the 'Children's Corner' was, to some extent, a continuation of Adams's overhaul of the *NWC*'s content and the engagement with readers, a classic new journalism technique, it is unclear why he chose 1876 to act. It was perhaps not coincidental that earlier that year *Animal World* praised the foundation of the first BOM and underlined the need for societies to educate children on kindness towards animals.⁵⁵ The Newcastle RSPCA repeatedly praised Adams for his humanitarian work, but there is no evidence to confirm he had any formal connections with this Society in the 1870s.⁵⁶ Instead, we must assume that his motivation was his deep personal conviction regarding animal cruelty. These had been

⁵³ Adams, *History of the Dicky Bird Society*, p. 5.

⁵⁴ *NWC*, 11 August 1877; 9 April 1881.

⁵⁵ Adams, *History of the Dicky Bird Society*, pp. 1-2; *Animal World*, VII/78 (March 1876), p. 40.

⁵⁶ NCL/LS, L179.3: *Annual Reports of the Newcastle Branch of the Royal Society for the Protection of Animals 1873-1883*.

crystallised when, as a child, he protested to his friends when he witnessed them tearing apart fledgling birds.⁵⁷

Adams' single-mindedness in pursuing his personal ideologies should not be underestimated. As a young republican idealist with high-minded Chartist views, he had tramped from Coniston to Cheltenham, to distribute republican tracts, but also to fulfil his desire to admire natural beauty. From 1864, as editor of the *NWC*, he advanced his causes of radicalism, trade unions, co-operatives, and internationalism. The DBS was also not Adams's only foray into education or environmentalism. He was a leading advocate for Newcastle's public library, the city's Leazes Park and was the founder of the Newcastle Tree Planting Society, a remarkably foresighted scheme to plant tree avenues along the city's roadsides.⁵⁸ The creation of the DBS was therefore an opportunity to combine personal beliefs and continue his social campaigns. Reflecting on the educational work of the DBS, Adams recalled, 'when I first commenced the "Corner", I did so under the impression that an ordinary newspaper would form an excellent medium for reaching the young'. By widening the audience for his paper, Adams was sure this would lead to 'the making of wise heads, and generous and kind hearts'.⁵⁹

The DBS initiative received widespread praise, but despite this, other newspapers were slow to copy it, as only the *Leigh Chronicle*, which established a

⁵⁷ W.E. Adams, *Memoirs of a Social Atom*, (London: Hutchinson, 1903; repr. New York: Kelly, 1968), p. 107.

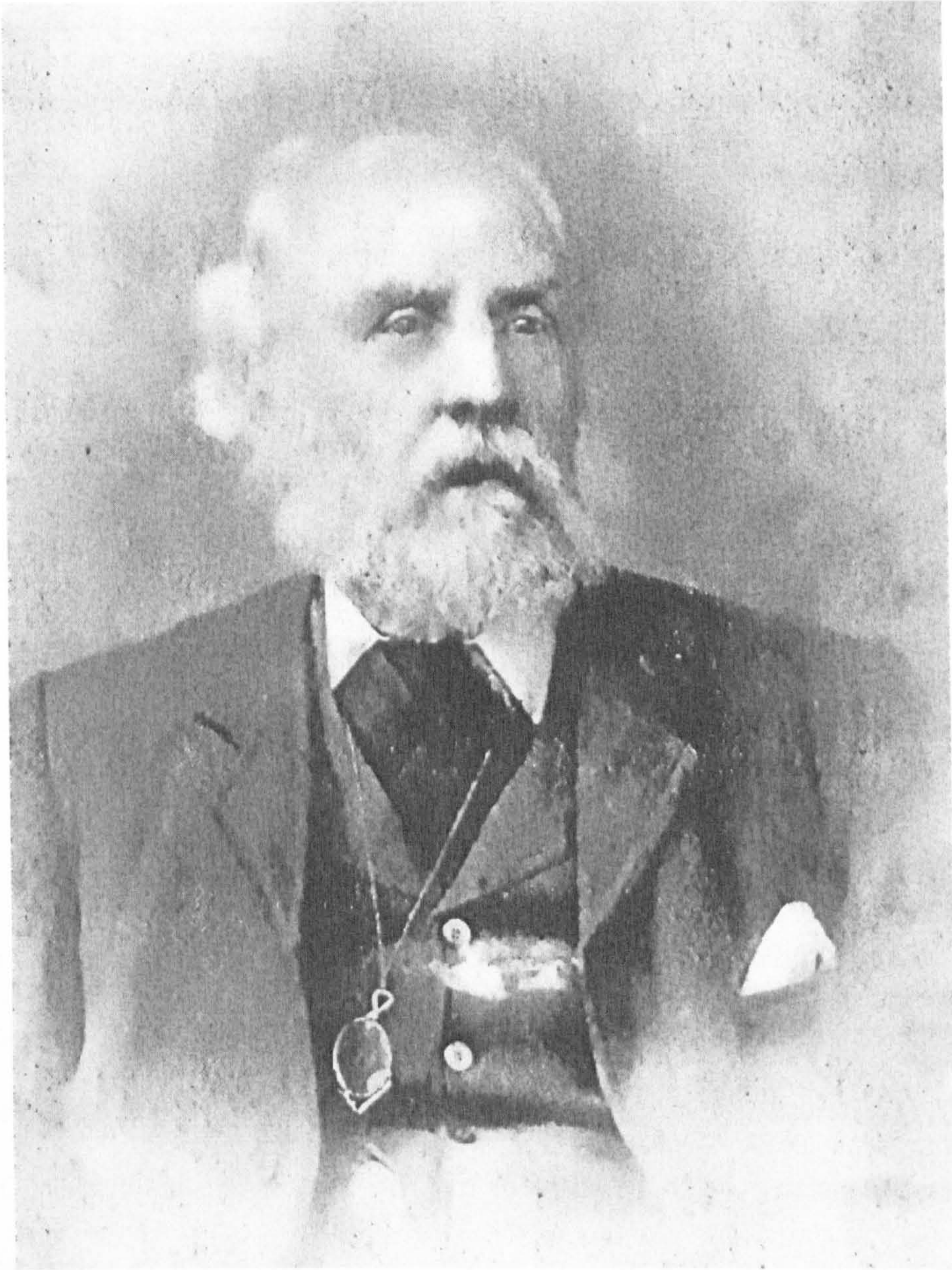
⁵⁸ Ashton, *W.E. Adams*, pp. 65-71, 93-114, 139-41; Owen R. Ashton, 'Adams, William Edwin (1832-1906)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2008, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/42327> accessed July 24, 2008]; *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 5 October 1892.

⁵⁹ *NWC*, 16 August 1879.

DBS 'branch' in 1877, appeared to follow immediately.⁶⁰ Given the claims that the nineteenth-century press was a ruthless business, it is curious that the success of the DBS did not provoke an immediate response from other newspapers, especially in Newcastle, keen to keep pace with such a novel initiative. Newspapers apparently adopted a 'wait and see' approach before following suit. It was not until 1879 that the *Newcastle Courant* launched its 'Young Folks Corner', and then it offered a short-lived Humane Society from 1882. In other parts of the country, there began a tentative replication of the DBS model. The *Stockport Advertiser* held up the DBS as an example when it launched the Band of Kindness [BOK] in 1882. A flurry of other clubs followed, including a Sunbeam Society in Dundee, the Golden Circle in Leeds and the Kind Hearted Brigade [KHB] in Sheffield. For this latter club, the appointment of the journalist, Lillie Harris, in 1888, to the *Weekly Telegraph* was a factor. Until 1885, Harris had worked on the *Newcastle Chronicle* and would have witnessed the growth of the DBS at first hand. She shared Adams's hatred of cruelty and spoke out against the feathered millinery trade. At the *Weekly Telegraph* Harris instigated a children's column in 1889 and her KHB railed against animal cruelty.⁶¹

⁶⁰ *Leigh Chronicle*, 21 July 1877; *Animal World*, IX/115 (April 1879), pp.51-54; *The Messenger*, XVI (October 1879), p. 389.

⁶¹ *Stockport Advertiser*, 6 January 1882; *Animal World*, XVII/201 (June 1886), p. 83; *Hearth and Home*, 17 (10 September 1891), p. 537; *Weekly Telegraph*, 4 May 1889; See *Appendix I* for a full list of societies, dates and their host publications.



*Figure 4.1: William Edwin Adams, 1832-1906.*⁶²

From the 1890s the pace of society formation quickened, perhaps stimulated by a favourable article in the *Review of Reviews* calling for other towns to expand the work of the DBS. By now, newspapers in Birmingham, Cardiff, Nottingham, and Portsmouth were catering for children. The popularity of such clubs did not diminish, and in the early twentieth century newspapers in Hull, Bristol, and London launched

⁶² *The Book and News Trade Gazette*, 6 October 1894, p. 303.

societies, as did the national *Daily Mirror*. The success of the DBS provided newspaper editors with an easily transferable feature to boost circulation by attracting readers at an early age. Given the spread of columns in other titles, this is not contentious. The *Irish Tribune* launched its Catholic Legion in 1890, which promoted animal welfare. However, its children's feature also had a political dimension. This aimed to foster Irish national identity, and secure young Catholics to the Irish cause.⁶³

The DBS was much emulated, including the direct transference of its title. Notably within its circulatory reach, the *Berwick Journal* launched its Border Dicky Bird Club, and in Swansea, the *Cambrian* newspaper formed a Welsh Dicky Bird Society. This modelling also extended to copying its masthead [fig. 4.2]. This was a woodcut image depicting the DBS leader, Uncle Toby, surrounded by adoring members. Facsimile mastheads [figs. 4.3 to 4.6] of similarly seated leaders adorned other societies. Even the *Hull Times*, which limited itself to just a children's column, used a similar image. Not all were in thrall to the seemingly inspirational *NWC*. The *Jersey Chronicle* spotlighted the work of the DBS in 1886, yet regardless of pleas from the editor to his readers for assistance to form a society, no such movement emerged.⁶⁴

⁶³ *Review of Reviews*, II/12 (December 1890), p. 57; Allen, 'Keeping the Faith', p. 88; See *Appendix I*.

⁶⁴ See *Appendix I*; *Jersey Chronicle*, 8 September 1886.



Figure 4.2: Dicky Bird Society. *NWC*, 15 October 1881.



Figure 4.3: *Hexham Courant*, 12 February 1881.

THE SUNBEAM CLUB—FOR GIRLS
AND BOYS.—No. XIV.
BY DAINTY DAVIE.



Figure 4.4: Sunbeam Club. *People's Journal*, 1 January 1887.

20 ORDERS OF THE
ROUND TABLE



By Maggie Symington.

Figure 4.5: Round Table. *Cardiff Times*, 6 December 1890.



Figure 4.6: Little Contributors. *Hull Times*, 7 September 1901.

Sources for surveying the vast majority of these press societies are restricted to the weekly columns of their publications. These offer little insight into their organisational affairs. However, the BOK discussed administrative affairs within its host publications. Allied with Mohr's survey of its child welfare work, for this society at least we have a comprehensive and intriguing account.⁶⁵ Begun by the journalist Frank Fearnley under the pseudonym of Uncle George, the *Stockport Advertiser's* BOK was an immediate success and initially enrolled members at twice the rate of the DBS. There the similarities ended. Just eight months later, the BOK acrimoniously branched out of its newspaper base and became the main feature of a new magazine, the *Children's Own Paper* [COP]. This was the only press society to follow such a route, and because of this, the BOK was probably untypical of the majority of these societies. During this transition, members were caught in the crossfire, as both

⁶⁵ Mohr, 'Philanthropy and the Crippled Child', passim; Mohr, 'Gilbert Kirlew and the Development of Crippled Children's Societies', passim.

publications claimed to be the true hosts of the BOK. Indicative of the value of the BOK, the *Advertiser* fought hard to retain its column, informing readers that 'some firm in Manchester' intended to copy their feature. Uncle George used the *COP* to retaliate and express his 'pain'; stressing 'old Uncle George' was most definitely the magazine's editor. He won the battle and in 1886, the *Advertiser's* column ceased. A *COP* editorial regretted the inability to reach agreement with the *Advertiser*, reiterating its position as the BOK's true organ. Mohr suggests this victory was the result of the BOK outgrowing its original roots and regarding the *Advertiser* merely as the Stockport branch of a much larger enterprise.⁶⁶

There was further upheaval. Fearnley left and the Manchester charity-worker, Gilbert Kirlew, assumed the leadership in 1883. The BOK became more than a children's column society and was reorganised with a management committee and shareholders in 1886-7. Although the society retained its conservationist pledge, Kirlew gradually steered it towards care for neglected children, a field that he had long championed as co-secretary of the Manchester Refuge. This work eventually led the BOK to give up its environmental agenda and it was renamed as the Crippled Children's Help Society in 1903. Kirlew's strong evangelicalism led him to criticise members for being 'sham' and not working hard. This condemnation, at a time when magazines were becoming more reader friendly, was not helpful. In 1891, the *COP* collapsed and the BOK, which was claiming 49,000 members, transferred to the *Christian Worker* magazine. A re-launch of the *COP* took place in 1893 and it limped on until 1895, when it was killed off by an extraordinary accusation by the yellow press paper, *Spy*. This accused Kirlew of being 'a prosperous being' whose 'real love

⁶⁶ *Stockport Advertiser*, 4 August 1882; 5 January 1883; *COP*, I/1 (5 August 1882), p. 13; II/40 (5 May 1883), p. 311; III/57 (1 September 1883), p. 128; Mohr, 'Philanthropy and the Crippled Child', p.73.

of street Arabs is too real'. This charge of paedophilia was based on tenuous evidence from boys known to harbour a grudge against Kirlew. The accusation left him 'dazed and maddened' and despite the support of friends, Kirlew resigned as an officer of the Manchester Refuge.⁶⁷ It is doubtful whether other societies had quite this dramatic history. Quite sensibly, any organisational difficulties they may have had were hidden from their reader's eyes.

Some societies were very successful; including five that had membership rolls exceeding six figures. Given that few of the newspaper societies held meetings, the large membership lists of some clubs point to their acceptability and a measure of their impact, particularly in the geographic locales of their host publication. The *Northern Weekly Gazette* and its Children's Corner predominantly served the relatively small area of Middlesbrough and its environs. From its launch in 1896 until 1914, this society enrolled 154,000 members. However, large recruitments did not necessarily constitute success or failure. The Golden Rule Society of the *Nottinghamshire Weekly Express* plodded away for twenty-four years mustering just 984 recruits. Furthermore, other newspaper titles launched a succession of different clubs. The *Hexham Courant* began Paul Boythorne's Children in 1881, then briefly Aunt Maggie's Round Table in 1890, and finally Uncle Fred's Children's Circle from 1907. Therefore, the arrangements for newspaper societies were complicated and did not fit the stable pattern set by the DBS. This society benefited from the strong leadership of the *NWC*'s editors. As Uncle Toby, William Adams and then his son

⁶⁷ *COP*, XII/299 (21 April 1888), pp.251-53; I/437 (August 1891); 18/451 (November 1893); *Spy* (15 June 1895), p.8; E. Kirlew, *Gilbert R. Kirlew: A Brief Memoir By His Wife*, (London: Morgan & Scott, 1908), p. 49; Mohr, 'Philanthropy and the crippled child', pp.73-92. Kirlew retained a link with the Crippled Children's Help Society (the renamed BOK) and moved to Leeds before his death in 1908.

Ernest, persuaded hundreds of thousands of children to enrol, making this particular club almost a Newcastle institution.⁶⁸

A club's existence rested on its support. Criticising the failures of children was never going to be a successful tactic for keeping a club going. It is noticeable that the Golden Circle of the *Leeds Times* struggled and then folded after Uncle John called his readers 'selfish' for not corresponding.⁶⁹ Any dip in interest, and a society could be quickly terminated. The *Weekly Times and Echo* made good its continued threats to close its Children's Corner in 1897, when the constant flow of new members dried up.⁷⁰ Other societies appeared to try just a little too hard to engage with children. An air of desperation is evident in the numerous competitions and appeals for support for the *Cambrian's* society that ran for just twenty-eight months.⁷¹ We also need to remember that these societies were ultimately reliant on the financial success of their host newspapers. When the *Northern Weekly Leader* ceased production in 1919, its Golden Circle folded. The *NWC*, by contrast, had a much stronger commercial base. Under William Adams's editorship, it had been given an international reach, being available in New York and Paris.⁷²

The Geographical Spread of the Societies and their Leaders

Newspapers used their miscellaneous contents as weapons to outperform their rivals. In correspondence with the *NWC's* editor, the author Mayne Reid stressed that when

⁶⁸ See *Appendix I*; Ashton, *W.E. Adams*, p. 153.

⁶⁹ *Leeds Times*, 10 June 1893.

⁷⁰ *Weekly Times and Echo*, 7 March 1897.

⁷¹ *Cambrian*, 2 March 1900.

⁷² *Northern Weekly Leader*, 27 December 1919; Ashton, *W.E. Adams*, pp 127-28.

the *Newcastle Courant* published his fiction, its circulation increased.⁷³ As 'miscellaneous' features, children's columns and societies were then part of the bitter circulation rivalry between newspapers. Once a newspaper had decided to host a feature for children, its rival had to decide whether to follow suit.

In the Tynedale town of Hexham, two weekly newspapers, the *Hexham Courant* and *Hexham Herald*, vied for supremacy. The spoiling nature of the press led the *Courant* to produce a bi-weekly edition three days before the *Herald* appeared.⁷⁴ The *Courant* introduced its 'Chats with Children' feature in 1881. Twenty-three months later, the *Herald* responded with its 'Sister Mercy' animal welfare society. Both newspapers pushed to attract young readers. The *Courant's* effort had petered out by 1887 and it relied on replicated articles from children's magazines to keep pace with the *Herald*. It is certainly not coincidental that both columns ceased in 1892, the *Courant's* surviving the *Herald's* efforts by just three weeks.⁷⁵ Such conflict was not always replicated elsewhere. A survey of Cumbrian newspapers reveals that readers of seven weekly or bi-weekly papers perused a similar diet of women's columns, gardening news, literature, and agricultural reports. Only the *West Cumberland Times* hosted a children's column, which although it did not offer a club, judging by the level of correspondence received, was extremely popular.⁷⁶ It is difficult, then, to comprehend why other Cumbrian papers did not replicate this. Certainly, a children's society column, according to one satirical Midland's periodical, positively affected

⁷³ Law, 'Novels in British Provincial Newspapers', pp. 57-60; Graham Pollard, 'Novels in Newspapers: Some Unpublished Letters of Captain Mayne Reid', *Review of English Studies*, 18/69 (1942), 72-85.

⁷⁴ Maurice Milne, *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, (Newcastle: Graham, 1971), pp. 47-48.

⁷⁵ *Hexham Courant*, 12 February 1881; 16 July 1887; 7 May 1892; *Hexham Herald*, 20 January 1883; 16 April 1892.

⁷⁶ *West Cumberland Times*, 2 January 1892. The other papers surveyed were the *Carlisle Express and Examiner*, *Carlisle Journal*, *Carlisle Patriot/Cumberland News*, *Cumberland Pacquet*, *Maryport Advertiser* and *Wigton Advertiser*.

sales. The *Dart*'s opinion of the 'Order of Kindness' initiated by the *Birmingham Daily Times* was that 'the circulation of the Tory evening paper must have profited by this movement – a copy of a similar scheme carried out for many years by the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*'.⁷⁷ Children enthusiastically enrolled in the Order of Kindness and pledged to be 'kind to all God's creatures', but the society lasted barely six months and, contrary to the *Dart*'s opinion, could not prevent the *Daily Times* entering into voluntary liquidation in 1890 as a result of insufficient capital and an overcrowded Unionist press.⁷⁸

The newspapers of some towns served their young readers well, but geographical variations in the content of newspapers were common. There were distinct discrepancies in the format of serial fiction published in Scottish and English newspapers in the period before the 1860s.⁷⁹ Inconsistencies are also apparent in the provision of a children's column. Newcastle youngsters could read columns or join societies offered by four titles in 1887. These included the newly established *Northern Weekly Leader*'s Golden Circle, which was very obviously created to compete with the *NWC* and its DBS. In contrast, newspapers in other parts of the country completely neglected the needs of young readers. None of the five weekly papers in Cambridge had space for a children's column or club; only in nearby Huntingdonshire and Newmarket were children catered for.⁸⁰ It is certainly noticeable that as one moves further south, children's columns become scarcer and the formation dates become later. Why should this be the case? It is obvious that there are some

⁷⁷ *The Dart*, 25 January 1889.

⁷⁸ *Birmingham Daily Times*, 29 June 1888; 31 March 1890.

⁷⁹ Law, 'Novels in British Provincial Newspapers', p. 45.

⁸⁰ See *Appendix I and II*; *Cambridge Weekly News*; *Cambridge Express and Eastern Counties Weekly News*; *Cambridge Independent Press and University Herald*; *Cambridge Chronicle and University Journal*; *Ely Gazette Cambridge Independent Press*. Editions sampled 1890-1910; *Huntingdonshire Post*, 2 April 1910; *Newmarket Journal*, 6 January 1900.

noticeable 'hubs' for these societies, As well as Newcastle the Northeast press also supported columns and clubs in County Durham and Northumberland, suggesting a 'ripple effect' of commercialism as newspapers emulated the *NWC*. This was also the case in northwest England, where other newspapers, jostling for young readers, followed the *Stockport Advertiser*. By 1892, children in Liverpool, Manchester, Huddersfield, Burnley and Preston had access to their own column.⁸¹

However, this 'hub' effect does not account for the society in the *Sunday Weekly Times*, whose rivals failed to copy it. Instead, to gauge the distribution of these clubs, we must examine the political allegiance of the host newspaper. It is striking that Liberal newspapers hosted the majority of these societies and the Conservative press was rare in the 'North'.⁸² Furthermore, newspapers in the 'South', such as the *Weekly Times* and the *Bristol Observer*, which supported clubs, were also Liberal. This preponderance of Liberal newspapers, engaged in what were essentially improving and campaigning activities continued a strong tradition. Liberal weekly journals had a greater tendency to publish serial fiction for the edification of their readers.⁸³ In addition, it was mid-nineteenth century Liberal provincial editors, who commonly campaigned for municipal improvement and reform.⁸⁴ By the late nineteenth century, William Adams not only agitated for the beautification of Newcastle, but also the erudition of its inhabitants through his newspaper.⁸⁵ Therefore, this domination by the Liberal press combined with their tendency to

⁸¹ See *Appendix I*.

⁸² Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, p. 45.

⁸³ Law, 'Novels in British Provincial Newspapers', p. 43.

⁸⁴ Derek Fraser, 'The Editor as Activist: Editors and Urban Politics in Early Victorian England' in *Papers for the Millions*, (see Wiener, above), pp. 121-42.

⁸⁵ Ashton, *W.E. Adams*, p. 140.

promote social reform, led these 'northern' regions to have the larger numbers of press societies.

Of the forty-three newspapers that hosted a children's society, all but seven had specific rules stipulating kindness towards animals and especially birds. For the remaining titles, five still regularly pressed the issue of animal welfare through editorials.⁸⁶ Significantly, the two remaining titles that completely ignored this issue, the *Norwich Mercury* and the *Cable* (the National Agricultural Union weekly journal) both predominantly served rural areas.⁸⁷ This absence of positive animal advice reflected a more pragmatic approach towards wildlife by agriculturalists that regularly emerges in their press. For instance, adult readers of the *Cable* called for culls of bird pests, an action also supported by the *Field*.⁸⁸ Turner suggests that urbanites have persistently taken a keener interest in animal welfare issues.⁸⁹ Yet this is a blurred issue, as town dwellers did not wholly embrace bird welfare. For example, caged wild songbirds were especially popular in towns.⁹⁰

The frequency with which many of these clubs encouraged animal welfare also has parallels with the parliamentary attempts to protect birds and animals. Bonhomme concedes a difficulty with correlating exactly the instigation of legislation with personal political affiliation, comparing the Sea Bird Act of 1869 sponsored in the Commons by one Liberal and two Conservatives, with the 1880 Wild Birds Act supported wholly by Liberals, but he notes that it was under Liberal

⁸⁶ See *Appendix I*.

⁸⁷ *The Cable*, 5 January 1895.

⁸⁸ *Agricultural World and Cable*, XXV/639 (17 June 1905), p. 182; *The Field*, 105 (15 April 1905), p. 638.

⁸⁹ Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, p. 25.

⁹⁰ Bonhomme, 'Nested Interests', p. 49.

administrations that this legislation was enacted.⁹¹ Liberals had a strong history of advocating moral reform, including temperance, and by widening timescales, Bonhomme's argument has greater substance. Although Martin's 1822 Act was passed by a Tory administration, significantly it was Whig governments that oversaw the 1835 prohibition of baiting and cock-fighting, extended protection of animals in 1849 and, working with a coalition of Peelites, passed the 1854 Act that defined 'animal' to include all domestic animals. With respect to bird legislation, Liberals also oversaw the 1872 Wild Bird Act and most importantly the 1894 Act, which protected eggs. For their part, the Conservatives were in power when the 1876 Wildfowl Act was passed (notably protecting birds shot for food), and then oversaw the tightening of bird legislation in the late 1890s and the instigation of minor acts outlawing various trapping contrivances in the early 1900s. The coalition government of Lloyd George then enacted the bans on feather millinery imports and trap shooting in the 1920s.⁹² The Conservative press and party did not ignore animal welfare issues, but it is not coincidental that the major animal legislation was enacted under Liberal administrations. The reforming instinct of Liberals therefore extended beyond social amelioration, and was one of the reasons why their press heavily supported animal welfare issues.

In contrast to the BOM, and in its latter years, the BOK, there is little evidence of the newspaper societies being organised by committees. Instead, and in order to make the children's column distinct from the other features within the newspaper, the

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

⁹² Harrison, 'State Intervention and Moral Reform', p. 296; See *Appendix IV*; De Montgomery, 'State Protection of Animals', pp. 33-39; Bonhomme, 'Nested Interests', p. 62; Eric J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain 1783-1870*, (Harlow: Longman, 1996), pp. 385-97; Keith Robbins, *The Eclipse of a Great Power: Modern Britain 1870-1992*, (Harlow: Longman, 1994), pp. 406-407.

impression was given that a separate editor had been commissioned to lead. Their identity was largely hidden from readers and, in common with magazines, the writers of children's columns assumed avuncular pseudonyms. There was a preponderance of 'Uncles', 'Aunts' and 'Cousins', with the occasional 'Grandpa', although the conservative *Leeds Mercury* retained 'Mr Editor'.⁹³ With regard to the magazine press, this use of familial titles was a deliberate tactic by publishers to strike a friendly note and part of the increasing drive to gain the confidence of young readers. The religious press of the 1820s had an authoritative attitude. As attitudes towards children softened and competition between the children's press became intense, publishers could not afford to maintain this acerbic relationship.⁹⁴ In the equally competitive newspaper industry, children's editors similarly reached out to children by assuring their 'dear young friends' that 'Uncle John' wanted to befriend his 'nieces and nephews'.⁹⁵

There are few clues within the newspapers pointing to the real identity of the individuals behind these pennames. However, it has been possible to trace a few individuals. The journalist Amy Inglis used her pen name of 'Innes Adair' to submit articles to the *Weekly Scotsman*. She used this title to lead her *Berwick Journal's* society.⁹⁶ Other titles were more random. Frank Fearnley began the BOK as 'Uncle George', although when he later relinquished control to Gilbert Kirlew, the new leader assumed the more obvious mantle of 'Uncle Gilbert'.⁹⁷ The choice of 'Uncle Toby' to lead the DBS was more judicious. Adams explained to his young readers

⁹³ See *Appendix I and II*.

⁹⁴ Dixon, 'From Instruction to Amusement', pp. 65-66.

⁹⁵ *Birmingham Weekly Post*, 1 January 1898.

⁹⁶ N[ational] L[ibrary] of S[cotland], ACC8493: 'Letter from M. Inglis to Librarian, Advocates Library, Edinburgh, 10 March 1926'.

⁹⁷ Mohr, 'Philanthropy and the Crippled Child' pp. 68, 73.

that Uncle Toby was a character in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and a fly had bothered him at his dining table. Instead of killing the insect, it was released. This led Adams to adopt this guise, which perfectly suited the humanitarian mission of his society.⁹⁸ It also meant that anyone could write the DBS feature. Adams travelled to America in 1882. In his absence, Uncle Toby's work continued. A seamless changeover also took place when staff moved on. Adams retired in 1898 and his son, Ernest, assumed editorship of the *NWC* and the DBS.⁹⁹

Lady journalists became more commonplace towards the end of the nineteenth century, but they were often relegated to 'feminine fields', such as the ladies' column.¹⁰⁰ Given the high level of female involvement with charitable societies, especially the BOM, one would have thought that a children's column would have been the ideal opportunity. There were instances when women edited columns, for example the 'Children's Hour' run by 'Aunt Maggie' (the children's author, Sarah Blathwayt, alias 'Maggie Symington') but this was rare.¹⁰¹ More usual was the role of women as a secondary figure, supporting the male editor of the column and 'Aunt Ruth's Letter' was a regular feature of Cousin Paul's Golden Circle.¹⁰² With regard to the magazine press, Dixon suggests that the appointment of an 'Aunt' was a deliberate tactic to appeal to younger children.¹⁰³ By implication therefore, publications that entrusted their readership to an 'Uncle' presumably catered for older children. If we transfer this argument to the newspaper societies, where the majority of editors were

⁹⁸ Adams, *History of the Dicky Bird Society*, pp. 1-2.

⁹⁹ Ashton, *W.E. Adams*, pp. 152-53.

¹⁰⁰ Mark Hampton, 'Defining Journalists in Late-Nineteenth Century Britain', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 22/2 (2005), 138-55.

¹⁰¹ Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, pp. 231-41; NLS, Blackwood Papers, MS4511/249: 'S.L. Blathwayt to Messrs Blackwood and Sons, 27 March 1888': See *Appendix I* and *II*.

¹⁰² *Northern Weekly Leader*, 3 December 1887.

¹⁰³ Dixon, 'From Instruction to Amusement', p. 66.

'Uncles', then it suggests they were also deliberately targeting older children. It is doubtful that such shrewd tactics were used. Instead, these societies were simply organised by journalists, who then adopted appropriate titles to make them more appealing. Despite the increase of 'lady journalists', leading a newspaper society remained almost wholly a male bastion.

Recruitment of Members, Pledges and Activities

The children's column editor encouraged children to recruit and fill the columns with their contributions. Such calls were not new. Children had been important as tract distributors for the biblical and missionary societies.¹⁰⁴ For the press societies, children were also involved in key organisational decisions, including voting on their society's name, the admission of adult members and appointments of helpers. Indeed, members were regularly assured it was 'their' society.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, children had a heightened role not found in the BOM with its heavily controlling committees.

Children responded individually or other members enrolled them on 'recruiting sheets' provided by society leaders. Hundreds of names were collected at any one time by also dangling prizes. Robert Henry enrolled 881 members to win a Golden Circle recruiting competition.¹⁰⁶ It is questionable whether these schemes actually recruited 'true' members committed to protecting animals or if children simply enrolled to help others win prizes. The working classes also complied with charity workers as a means of avoiding further pestering and gaining respectability. Given the large numbers of members enrolled by the press societies, it is possible that

¹⁰⁴ Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, pp. 74-77.

¹⁰⁵ *NWC*, 2 June 1877; 12 January 1878; *Northern Weekly Leader*, 13 November 1886; *Stockport Advertiser*, 17 February 1882.

¹⁰⁶ *Northern Weekly Leader*, 30 March 1889; 6 April 1889.

children similarly conformed.¹⁰⁷ Duplicate names submitted to the *Auckland Chronicle's* Children's Guild led Uncle Joe to warn recruiters that he wanted 'a Guild of truth and honour'. This suggests that fraud was common. This was inevitable when prizes, such as chocolates, were at stake. However, gifts had to be tempting. It is noticeable that the packet of 'flower seeds' offered by the Helpers Guild did not result in a flood of members.¹⁰⁸ Not all played this numbers game. Uncle William of the Golden Rule Society ordered that he 'did not want members for the sake of it. One hundred members honestly observing the rules will be of more real worth and influence than 1,000 who promise to observe the rules, but forget what they have promised'.¹⁰⁹

The first temperance societies expected children to make a pledge in the early 1830s. Similarly, the press societies defined their objectives in a set of regulations or a pledge generally published each week in the host paper. New members were called upon to copy out and sign their pledges, which were to be also written into school copybooks as an *aide memoir*. This had a much wider purpose than just ensuring an understanding of the objectives of the society. Rules were essential and had to be obeyed, because youth movements set out to deliver 'discipline, obedience, self-control, and self-respect' in order to achieve 'mental, moral and physical improvement'.¹¹⁰ This is particularly evident in the following extensive pledge that BOK members were expected to adhere to:

¹⁰⁷ Hoppen, *Mid-Victorian Generation*, p. 64.

¹⁰⁸ *Auckland Chronicle*, 11 August 1904; 4 June 1908; *Norwich Mercury*, 10 February 1912.

¹⁰⁹ *Nottinghamshire Weekly Express*, 7 February 1890.

¹¹⁰ Frederic Smith, ed., *The Jubilee of the Band of Hope Movement*, (London: Band of Hope Union, 1897), pp. 14-15; *NWC*, 10 February 1877; Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, p. 175.

I hereby promise to be kind to all living things, to protect them to the utmost of my power, to feed the birds in the winter time and never to take or destroy a nest. I also promise all kindness to domestic animals, and not to take pleasure in hurting them; to be kind to all with whom I may come into contact, and to abstain from all habits that might tend to lower my mind or enfeeble my health; I will give my word also that I will get as many boys and girls as possible to join the "Band of Kindness".¹¹¹

Obviously animal protection was paramount to the BOK, as it was to other societies, and the pledges controlled their behaviour towards animals. Innes Adair, leader of the Border Dicky Bird Club, recalled how a member of her club was about to throw a snowball at a dog. He was stopped and reminded, 'Hae ye forgotten yer a Dicky Bird and you jist gotten yer grand [pledge] caerd yesterday!'¹¹² Reserves of self-discipline were therefore essential. For those adults signing temperance pledges, many were unable to, or prevented from, associating with their friends.¹¹³ The evidence of boys jeering at a BOK member's attempt to stop them bird-nesting, suggest similar strains upon children's relationships. Indeed, Adams recalled how his failed efforts to stop his childhood friends from bird-nesting led him to break friendships and seek solace in his books.¹¹⁴ By pledge signing, an individual faced the curtailment of their freedom of choice. This was regarded as a sign of weakness. Children were certainly aware of this and several girls refused to enrol into the DBS because they would have had to give up wearing plumaged millinery, against which the society vigorously campaigned.¹¹⁵

Pledge signing did not necessarily guarantee success. Many Band of Hope members did not go on to join the adult temperance movements and simply cast aside

¹¹¹ *COP*, 1 (5 August 1882), p. 13.

¹¹² *Berwick Journal*, 7 February 1895.

¹¹³ Storch, 'Problem of Working-class Leisure', p. 154.

¹¹⁴ *Stockport Advertiser*, 13 January 1882; Adams, *Memoirs*, pp. 107-108.

¹¹⁵ Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 143; *NWC*, 21 September 1895.

their pledges when they grew up.¹¹⁶ Likewise, press society leaders candidly conceded that they did not expect all of their members to keep their pledges. Even the most optimistic leader, such as the BOK's Uncle George, admitted to his members that he believed it unlikely that they would all remain committed. Nonetheless, society leaders were quick to denounce members found to have broken their promises. The DBS censured three members who killed birds and threatened them with expulsion.¹¹⁷

Hosted by the *Birmingham Weekly Mercury*, the Band of Love and Kindness intended to promote humanitarianism, but it had wider aims, including encouraging civil behaviour between children, which led Aunt Mabel to omit animals from the title of her new club.¹¹⁸ It was nothing new for a society to attempt to civilise individuals. Several Societies for the Reformation of Manners were founded in the late seventeenth century, with a more concerted effort being made to enforce civility in 1802. The Society for the Suppression of Vice was formed to respond to the anxiety that immorality was on the rise. Notably one of its concerns was cruelty to animals, and it prosecuted a drover in 1803 for cruelty to an ox.¹¹⁹ The children's press constantly warned against disobedience and immoral behaviour. This concern became heightened by the late nineteenth century. Springhall points to the rise of youth movements as a panacea to this disquiet, citing the example of Baden-Powell who believed that his new Scouting movement would counter contemporary fears of moral

¹¹⁶ Shiman, 'Band of Hope Movement', p. 73.

¹¹⁷ *Stockport Advertiser*, 19 May 1882; *NWC*, 14 December 1878.

¹¹⁸ *Birmingham Weekly Mercury*, 14 March 1891.

¹¹⁹ T.C. Curtis and W.A. Speck, 'The Societies for the Reformation of Manners: A Case Study in the Theory and Practice of Moral Reform', *Literature and History*, 3 (1976), 45-64; M.J.D. Roberts, 'The Society for the Suppression of Vice and its Early Critics', *The Historical Journal*, 26/1 (1983), 159-76; *Morning Chronicle*, 1 January 1803.

deterioration.¹²⁰ Regular press society editorials dwelled on good behaviour, the importance of manners, avoidance of drink, and especially deference to parents. However, for those societies that constantly pressed animal protection, it was hoped that this would provoke wider outcomes. Praising the DBS, the *Review of Reviews* was convinced that it was 'impossible to begin too soon to train children for helpful service to those about them, and especially the dumb creatures'.¹²¹ These demands sometimes proved problematic. A concerned parent objected to the Round Table's insistence that members should undertake a daily kind deed. Such a promise would 'prove a heavy load' on her boy. Trial membership was granted and kind deeds redefined to include kind words.¹²²

Simply encouraging caring behaviour through regular addresses from society leaders was not enough for some newspaper societies. Some extended their work to include real charitable collections. This was not novel, as children had collected millions of pounds for the missionary movements.¹²³ Charitable appeals were common in children's magazines as editors realised they could easily manipulate their readers into supporting worthy causes. Funding appeals included child cots and lifeboats as beneficiaries, and were an extension of an editor's objectives to 'inculcate a charitable awareness among middle-class children'.¹²⁴ It also eased middle-class consciences, at a time when the gulf between them and the poor was growing even wider.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Drotner, *English Children and their Magazines*, p. 56; Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society*, pp. 13-16, 56.

¹²¹ *Huddersfield Examiner*, 6 June 1885; 1 August 1885; *Auckland Chronicle*, 4 March 1909; *Review of Reviews*, II/12 (December 1890), p. 570.

¹²² *Cardiff Times*, 2 March 1895.

¹²³ Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, pp.81-83.

¹²⁴ *Little Folks*, 59 (1904), p.106; *Boys of England*, I/22 (20 April 1867), p. 341; Dixon, 'Children and the Press', pp.143-44.

¹²⁵ Galbraith, *Reading Lives*, p. 60.

The press societies also pursued these altruistic schemes. The sizeable working-class membership of such societies (see below) suggests that the newspapers, compared to the magazines, were appealing to a different readership, ensuring that responsibility for philanthropic endeavour travelled down the social strata. The BOK was particularly vigorous and collected funds to pay the passage of 'street Arabs' to Canada, which was widely viewed as the solution to the 'swarms' of urban children.¹²⁶ Many societies offered basic charitable work. In 1888, the DBS began a Christmas appeal for unwanted toys and games to be given to workhouses and hospitals. Donations poured in and by 1913, Uncle Toby bragged that his society had distributed 272,700 gifts since the appeal's inception.¹²⁷ These schemes were also an extension of the ongoing newspaper rivalry. In 1890, the Golden Circle also issued an appeal for children's toys. Uncle Paul jibbed his Circle's 1904 'Toy Exhibition' was the only one where any entertainment was held, observing that 'only last week an exhibition took place and at a reasonable hour all was packed up and despatched. No tea or amusement was given'.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ *COP*, XIII/319 (8 September 1888), p. 153; Elaine Hadley, 'Natives in a Strange Land: The Philanthropic Discourse of Juvenile Emigration in mid-Nineteenth Century England', *Victorian Studies*, 33 (1990), 411-39.

¹²⁷ *NWC*, 2 October 1888; 27 December 1913.

¹²⁸ *Northern Weekly Leader*, 1 February 1890; 24 December 1904.

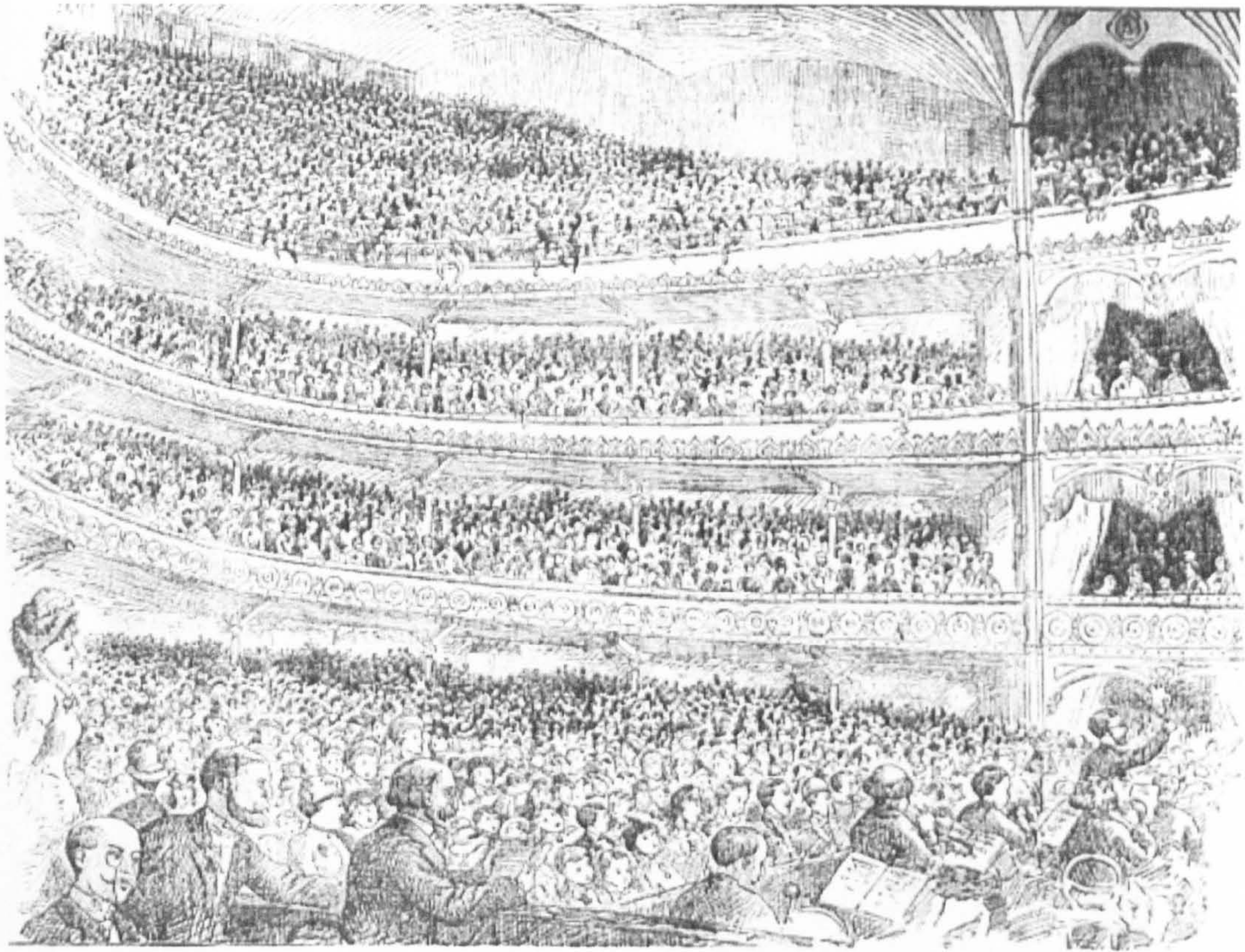


Figure 4.7: DBS Concert, Tyne Theatre. *NWC*, 31 July 1886.

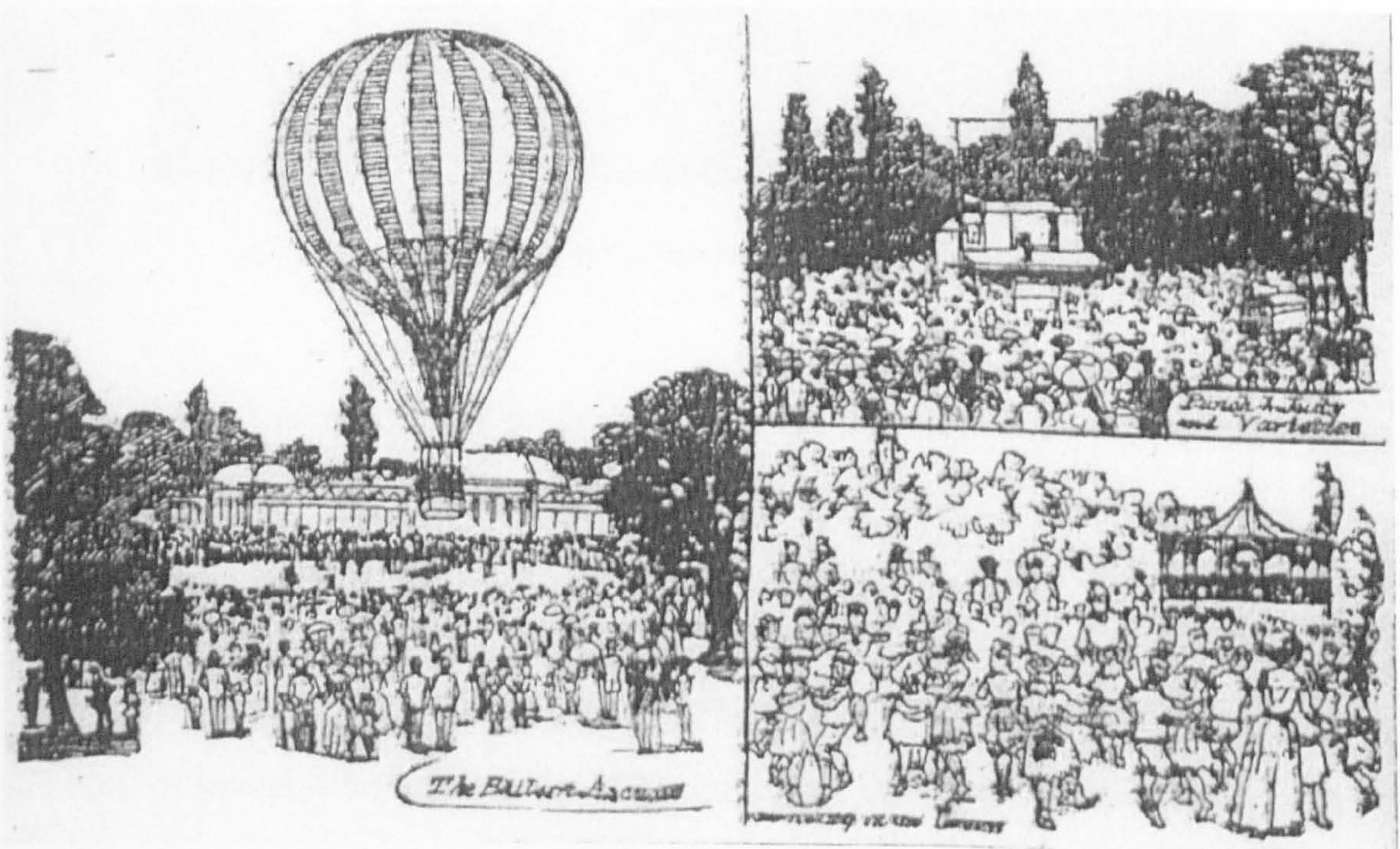


Figure 4.8: KHB Picnic. *Weekly Telegraph*, 9 August 1890.

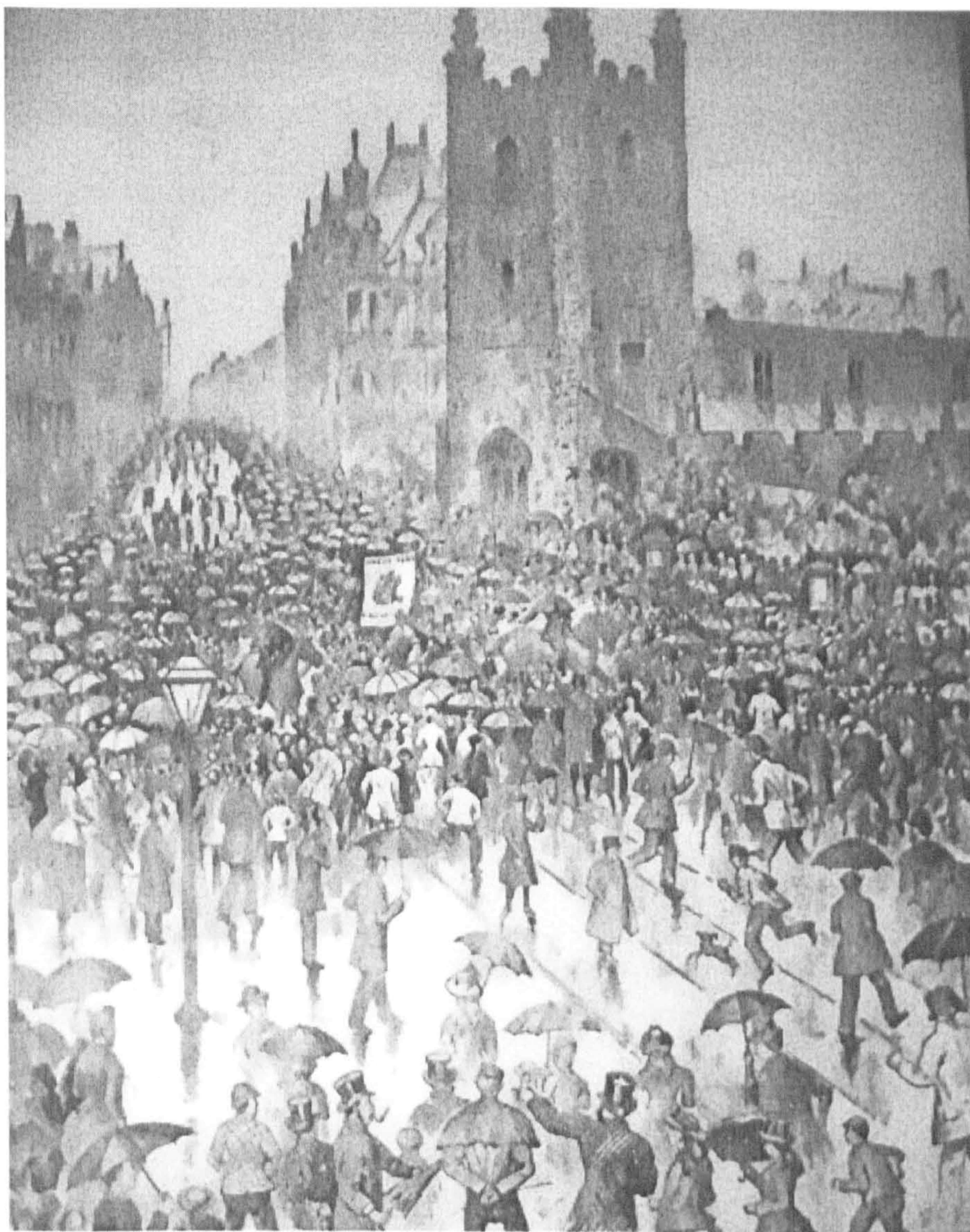


Figure 4.9: DBS March, Newcastle. NWC, 31 July 1886.

For the majority of the press societies there was little regular personal contact with the members, and activities took the form of instructive advice for wholesome hobbies, such as stamp collecting, posted in the newspapers. A small number encouraged members to form branches. The BOK was the most industrious with a network of seventy-three groups in 1883, largely in the core *COP* readership area of the Northwest. These were organised by committees staffed by members (whether they were children is unknown) with Kirlew chairing the Stockport branch. The format of meetings appeared similar to the BOM with hymns, readings, outings, and

lectures by invited speakers.¹²⁹ Other societies arranged occasional events that offered rational recreation whilst promoting the newspaper. These included concerts, picnics, and demonstrations [figs. 4.7 to 4.9]. The DBS claimed the biggest events. To commemorate 100,000 members enrolled a parade in Newcastle was followed by a concert at the Tyne Theatre in 1886 that attracted 3,900 members to hear renditions of special songs and performances.¹³⁰ Again, this sparked a response from the Golden Circle that began a series of annual concerts in 1890 to develop a 'musical culture amongst children'.¹³¹ The DBS then surpassed its rival in 1894, when it celebrated the quarter of a millionth member enrolled. Between 8-10,000 members marched through Newcastle to enjoy a day of games and entertainment on the Town Moor attended by 40,000 visitors. Although the event clearly promoted the DBS and its host publication, it had, like the BOM concerts, a secondary value. Florence Suckling claimed 100,000 bystanders watched the Newcastle procession. She believed that its success lay in its ability to convey the principles of the DBS to the watching crowd¹³²

Membership Analysis

Some form of badge or uniform was a marker of membership of a youth movement. These symbols were instigated to create social cohesion. William Smith, the founder of the Boys' Brigade, recognised this and was adamant his uniform should be inexpensive so as not to exclude poor boys.¹³³ None of the press societies had clothing uniforms, but many insisted their members wore some form of badge or ribbon to

¹²⁹ *Liverpool Weekly Mercury*, 6 January, 1900; *COP*, II/43 (26 May 1883), p.363.

¹³⁰ Adams, *History of the Dicky Bird Society*, p.4.

¹³¹ *Newcastle Daily Leader*, 14 April 1890; *Northern Weekly Leader*, 13 January 1900. The *Northern Weekly Leader* was quick to highlight the success of its musical treats. Nine-year-old Maria Hall, a performer at an 1894 event, went on to study music in London.

¹³² *NWC*, 4 August 1894; *The Animal's Friend*, I (1894-95), p. 80.

¹³³ Springhall, *Sure and Stedfast*, p. 44.

denote affiliation. The adoption of simple homemade yellow ribbons by the DBS signifying 'the golden rule' of membership, ensured an egalitarian approach, and any class distinctions were minimal. Such ribbons were, and still are, common identifiers of campaigning movements; temperance supporters wore dark blue and BOK members, crimson.¹³⁴ An elaborate uniform could prove divisive. The expensive Scouting uniform was a cause for the exclusion of poor boys and the identification of less wealthy individuals wearing low-cost uniforms.¹³⁵ This distinction also marked some press societies as Busy Bees were offered 3d gilt badges and 10s gold brooches.¹³⁶ Less wealthy members would have plumped for the cheaper badges, thus creating class division.

Once a member agreed to the rules, their name was added to the membership registers that were often printed in the newspapers. So many applied to join the Children's Circle of the *Northern Weekly Gazette* that the daily editions of the paper printed the burgeoning roll. The lists served several functions. Obviously, they offered a very public statement of membership. Given the letters requesting membership numbers and expressing delight at seeing names in print, it is clear that this was significant. Public display was important to indicate to neighbours and acquaintances that a working-class family was respectable.¹³⁷ In comparison to the BOM, actual membership of the newspaper societies was loosely defined. There were no subscriptions payable and in reality, these societies were simply lists of children who

¹³⁴ *NWC*, 4 August 1877; Dorothy A. Lander, 'The Ribbon Workers as Popular Educators: (Re)-presenting the Colours of the Crusade', *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 37/1 (2005), 47-62; *COP*, 1/1 (5 August 1882), p. 13.

¹³⁵ Tammy M. Proctor, '(Uni) Forming Youth: Girl Guides and Boy Scouts in Britain, 1908-39', *History Workshop Journal*, 45 (1998), 103-34 (p. 104).

¹³⁶ *Birmingham Weekly Post*, 7 February 1914.

¹³⁷ *Northern Weekly Gazette*, 31 October 1896; 13 May 1911; Ross, 'Respectability in Pre-World War I London Neighbourhoods', pp. 42-43.

had submitted to a pledge. Few movements bothered to ensure that their lists were correct, indeed printing errors meant sometimes that membership numbers leapt erratically, by hundreds of thousands.¹³⁸

Very little careful analysis of the membership of youth movements has been carried out. Only Springhall has undertaken a meticulous survey, albeit from a small sample, concluding that the Boys' Brigade catered primarily for the skilled working class.¹³⁹ Like the BOM, the DBS made a conscious effort to enrol working-class children and Uncle Toby specifically wanted to 'attract the Street Arabs of London, Newcastle, Liverpool and Manchester'. Ostensibly, he was successful. One letter began, 'please excuse me for a stamp, because I am in the Gateshead Union Workhouse'.¹⁴⁰ Despite this evidence of lower working-class children enrolling, a fuller picture of the societies' membership is required in order for us to understand the social class, age and gender of the individuals who were joining these societies and thus receiving the messages about animal cruelty.

The membership rolls are extensive, but their analysis poses methodological problems. For instance, the majority of DBS members were listed with initials only and without ages or addresses. Therefore, precise identification of an individual is difficult. The membership lists of the BOK in the *Stockport Advertiser* in 1882 are more complete. By combining these lists with the 1881 Census, to identify the household head's occupation, a revealing analysis of membership can be produced.

¹³⁸ *Weekly Telegraph*, 28 January 1911. The KHB had 153,515 members in 1911. An uncorrected printing error led to its membership leaping to 513,516 within a week.

¹³⁹ Springhall, *Sure and Stedfast*, p. 40.

¹⁴⁰ *NWC*, 11 August 1877; 29 December 1900.

Occupation Of Head Of Household or Member	Class Ranking	Number Of Members	Employment Of Members
Professional(Upper & Middle Class)	I	1	
Intermediate	II	21	
Skilled	III	49	7
Partly Skilled	IV	14	1
Unskilled	V	12	4
No Gainful Employment/No Occupation Given	X	2	
School		1	
TOTAL		100	12

*Figure 4.10: Class Analysis of 100 BOK Member's Households, 1882.*¹⁴¹

According to Mohr, although he does not quantify this, middle-class children chiefly supported the BOK.¹⁴² The analysis of membership [fig. 4.10] suggests otherwise, with the working classes dominating, although like the Boys' Brigade this society also failed to recruit among the 'Professional/Middle Class'.¹⁴³ The large numbers of working-class children suggest that they felt comfortable with these institutions. Members were not required to meet any of the strictures on cleanliness or Godly beliefs that marked Sunday schools or pay a membership fee like BOM members. Therefore, these press societies seemed ideal to mop-up the residuum, such as the unskilled working class, that the Boys' Brigade almost totally excluded.¹⁴⁴ Although prosecutions showed that elements of the upper classes were just as capable of animal cruelty, the RSPCA repeatedly targeted the working class. Its supporters regularly called for 'children and poor people' to be taught the benefits of kindness

¹⁴¹ *Stockport Advertiser*, 19 May 1882, 26 May 1882. Classification of occupational data extracted from General Register Office, *Census 1951: Classification of Occupations*, (HMSO, 1956); Census data extracted from: www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/frameset-search.asp?PAGE=census/search_census.asp [Accessed 1 December 2007]. Membership numbers 900-1,300 used to construct census matches. As in all the census analyses that follow, where there were several society members at the same address, only one was chosen as a representative for the household.

¹⁴² Mohr, 'Philanthropy and the Crippled Child', p. 67.

¹⁴³ Springhall, *Sure and Steadfast*, p. 40.

¹⁴⁴ Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society*, p. 25.

towards animals. Some elements of the working classes were hostile to the RSPCA, but given the numbers enrolling in the newspaper societies, it suggests the working classes found these societies more amenable.¹⁴⁵ Lacking any formal connection with the RSPCA, and more importantly, no network of inspectors ready to prosecute, the newspaper societies were therefore better placed to promote animal welfare. Even children classed as troublesome joined the BOK. The category 'school' denotes an industrial school pupil. The majority of other members were 'scholars', but it is also noteworthy that twelve members were in the world of work.

Occupation Of Head Of Household or Member	Class Ranking	Number Of Members	Employment Of Members
Professional (Upper & Middle Class)	I	15	
Intermediate	II	33	1
Skilled	III	33	1
Partly Skilled	IV	7	3
Unskilled	V	3	
No Gainful Employment/No Occupation Given	X	3	
School		6	
TOTAL		100	5

*Figure 4.11: Class Analysis of 100 LFHS Member's Households, 1882.*¹⁴⁶

A comparison with the LFHS is valuable [fig. 4.11]. Here, the membership composition was quite different. Although there was still a sizeable representation from the working classes, this particular sample of membership suggests a society

¹⁴⁵ *Animal World*, XXVI/ 314 (November 1895), p. 175; *The Era*, 16 September 1866; Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, pp. 146-50.

¹⁴⁶ *Little Folks*, 16 (1882), pp. 53-55; General Register Office, *Census 1951: Classification of Occupations*; www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/frameset_search.asp?PAGE=census/searchcensus.asp [accessed 1 May 2008]. Membership numbers 5,000-5,332 used to compile 100 census matches. Members residing in Scotland are omitted, owing to the 1881 Census data being restricted to England and Wales.

dominated by children of the middle and upper classes. Indeed, as further confirmation of this, the Princesses Louise, Victoria and Maud of Wales also joined the ranks of the LFHS. In comparison with the BOK, it is significant that just five LFHS members were in employment, although three were domestic servants. Whether they joined because their 'household' took *Little Folks* is a possibility, although speculative. The vast majority of LFHS members were scholars. It is worth underlining the six members in the 'school' category attending some form of private or boarding school, where the 'head' of household was the schoolmaster. This was a very different institution from the 'school' of the BOK member.

The data [figs. 4.10 to 4.11] shows that some household heads (including 'stable-keeper' 'horse dealer', 'riding master', 'cab driver' and 'agricultural labourer') were engaged in employment involving working with animals to some degree. Given the stress placed on children having the capacity to influence the behaviour of their parents, the teachings of the societies may have had a greater resonance in these households.

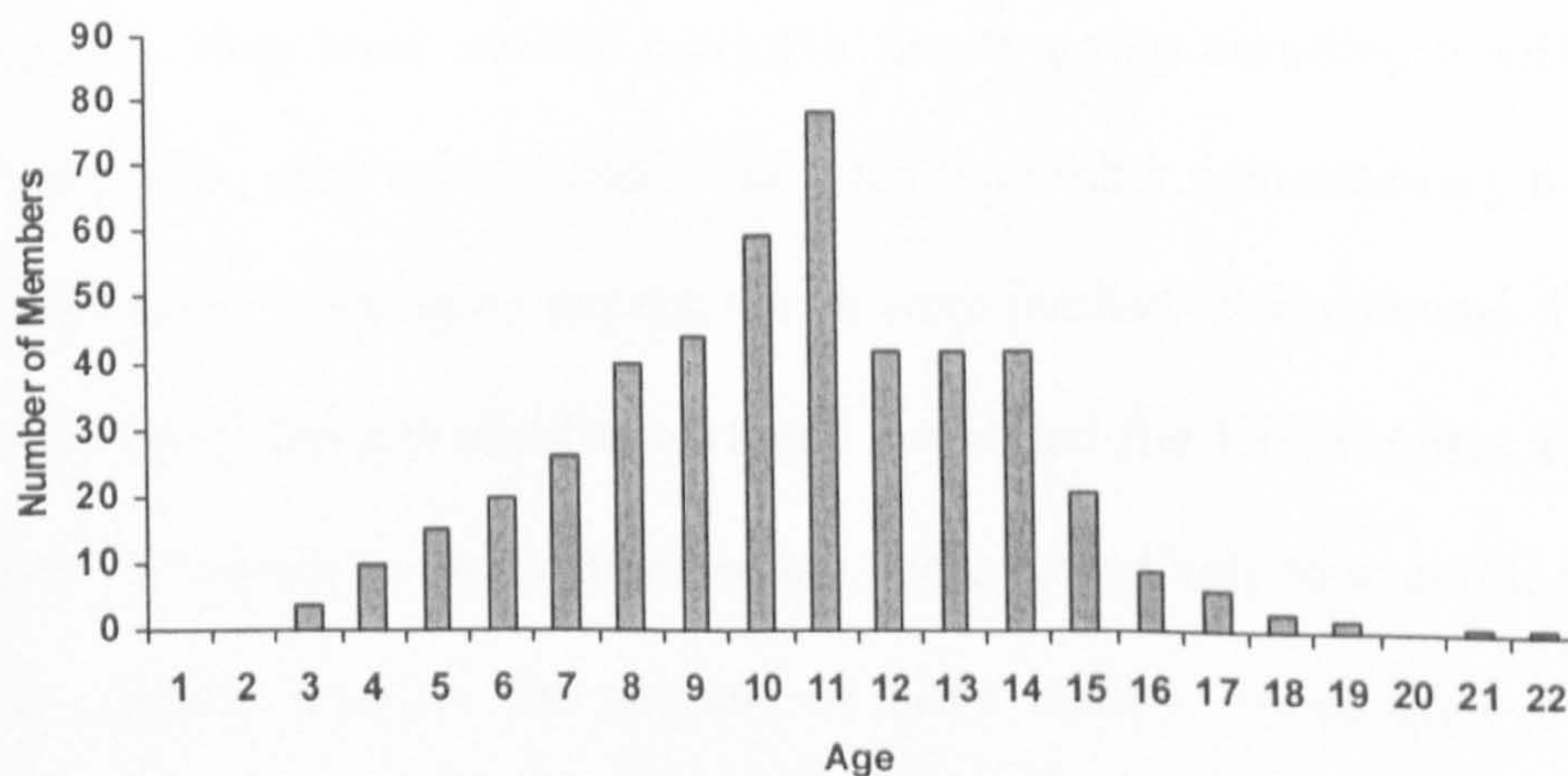


Figure 4.12 Age Distribution of BOK Members, 1882.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ *Stockport Advertiser*, 19 May 1882; 26 May 1882; 2 June 1882. Membership numbers 901-1,400 used to collate these statistics. Forty-one members were listed without ages.

There has also been little precise analysis of the ages of children in youth movements. Springhall suggests the Boys' Brigade attracted boys aged between twelve and seventeen, whereas Harrison merely points to the founding members of the Band of Hope as aged between six and sixteen years old.¹⁴⁸ An assessment of BOK members [fig 4.12] demonstrates that the mean age of children joining this society was eleven. A comparison with the LFHS [fig. 4.13] denotes a similar trend and peak.

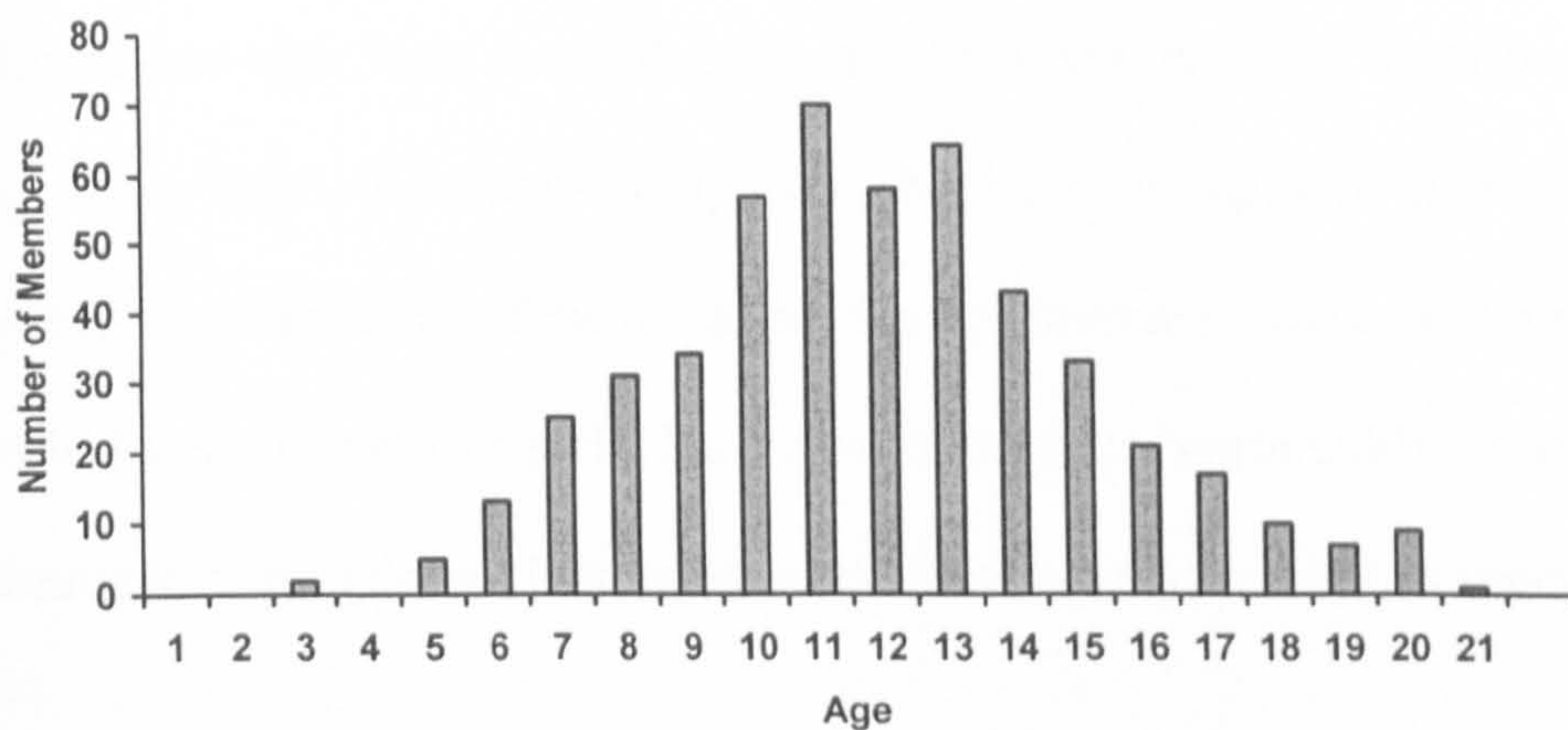


Figure 4.13: Age Distribution of LFHS Members, 1882.¹⁴⁹

Both societies recruited members from a wide age range. When very young children joined, they were usually part of a family group enrolling together. *Little Folks* in particular, targeted a younger audience than other contemporary magazines, such as some of the boys' story papers, which were pitched at adolescents. Hence, we can see why pre-pubescent children strongly supported the LFHS. Girls, because of their greater inclination towards philanthropy, were more likely to continue to support charitable appeals, whereas the support of boys visibly wanes after the age of

¹⁴⁸ Springhall, *Sure and Stedfast*, p. 28; Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p.192

¹⁴⁹ *Little Folks*, 16 (1882), pp. 54-56. Membership numbers 5,001-5,500.

twelve.¹⁵⁰ The BOM experienced similar problems, admitting that older children were ‘beginning to develop grown up ideas and look a trifle condescendingly upon association with younger lads’. Solutions included forming senior Bands for working boys, although after Knutsford Band invited boys to join, a lack of interest led to the project being abandoned, as it was ‘hopeless to pursue the matter further’.¹⁵¹ These trends are clearly demonstrated [figs. 4.14 and 4.15] and show that before the peak age of eleven years old there is a similar pattern of steady enrolment by both genders. However, in comparison to the slow decline of interest by girls, recruiting of boys sharply diminishes after their eleventh birthday. Two factors might contribute to this. Schooling in the 1880s was only compulsory between the ages of five and ten. In 1881, twenty-three percent of boys, aged ten to fourteen, were in employment, compared to fifteen percent of girls. New leisure pursuits, particularly football, were also becoming very popular and attracted predominantly males, both as spectators and players.¹⁵²

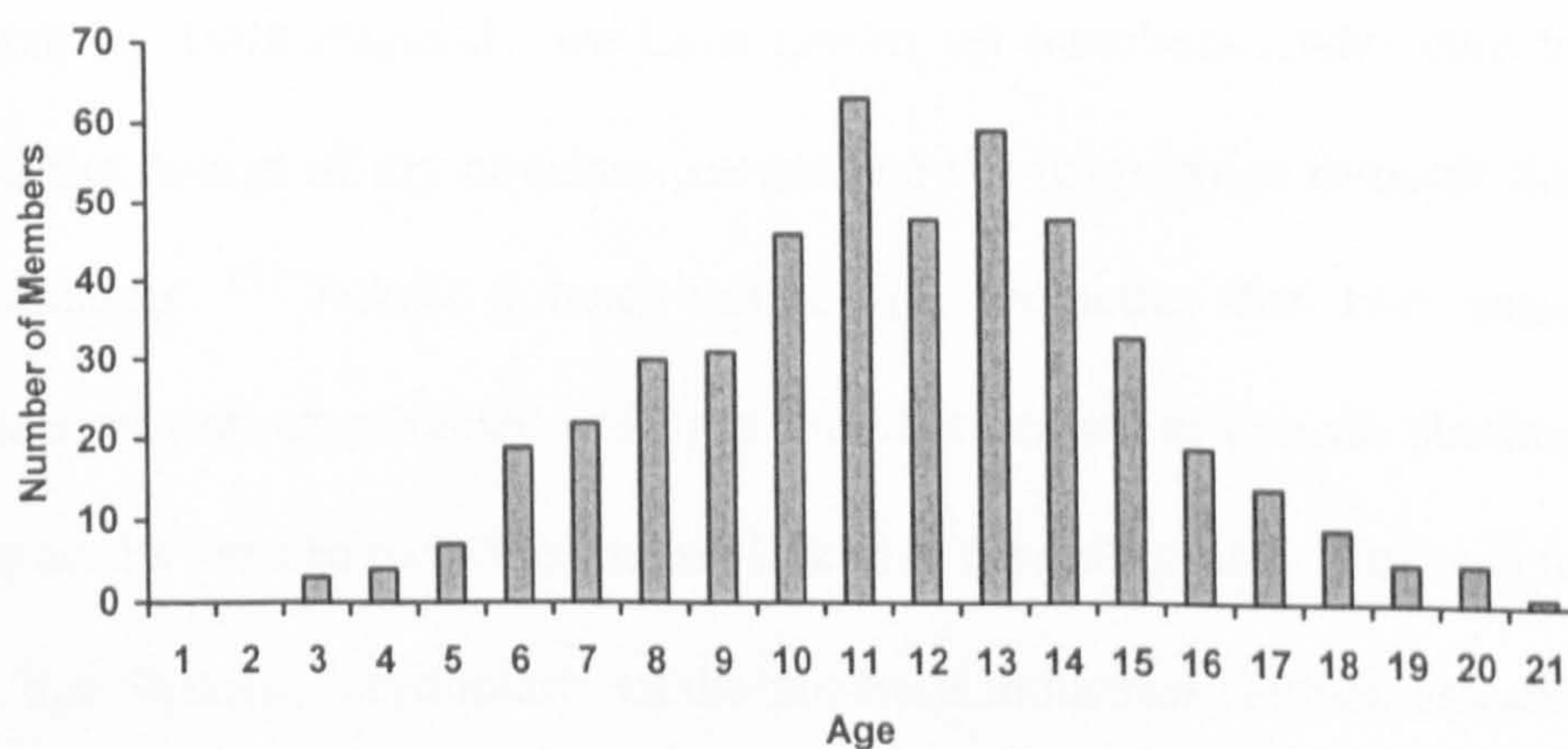
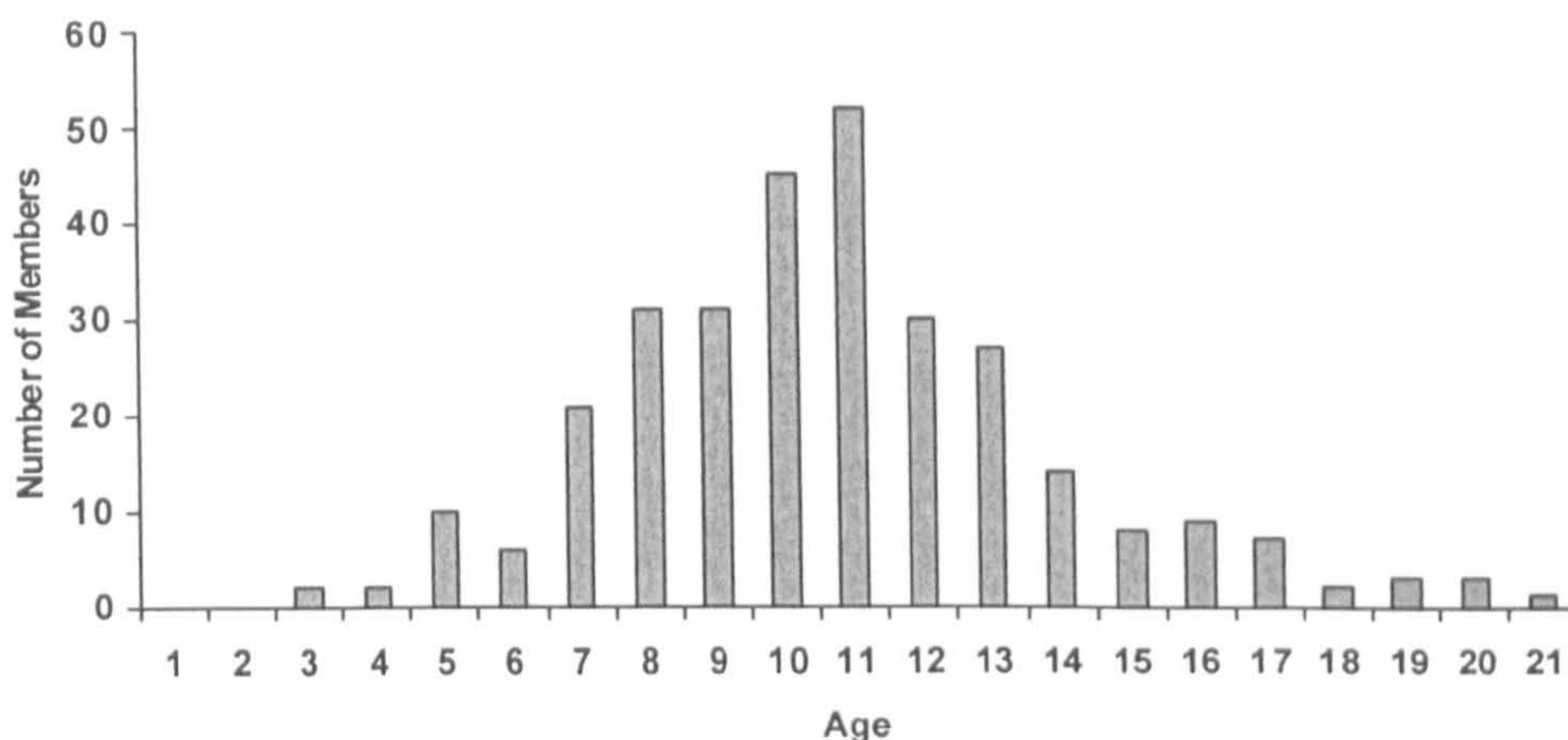


Figure 4.14: Age Distribution of Female BOK and LFHS Members, 1882.

¹⁵⁰ Galbraith, *Reading Lives*, pp. 53, 61.

¹⁵¹ *Band of Mercy*, (May 1906), pp. 35-36; 367 (July 1909), p. 55; ‘Knutsford Band of Mercy Minute Book’, 6 March 1899; 8 May 1900.

¹⁵² Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 29-30; Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, p. 302.



*Figure 4.15: Age Distribution of Male BOK and LFHS Members, 1882.*¹⁵³

Commentators were most anxious about the perceived juvenile delinquency issue in boys of fourteen to eighteen.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, this troublesome age group and sex remained largely outside the reach of the societies, although the admission of adult members meant that at least some older individuals were receiving their messages. This also confirms adult readership of children's literature. Some societies also specifically encouraged adults to join. The Golden Circle began as a children's society, but by 1908 claimed, 'we have grown up members...who take the honest interest in the doings of my cousins...cementing the friendships through the medium of our column'.¹⁵⁵ Adults joined 'improving' societies for two reasons. The temperance movement attracted ordinary members eager to remain abstinent. There were also adults keen to have their name linked to a youth group. This was for ulterior motives. For Shiman, 'particularly in the northern industrial centres, association with the juvenile groups could prove a political asset: it showed the local voters that one

¹⁵³ *Stockport Advertiser*, 19 May 1882; 26 May 1882; 2 June 1882; *Little Folks*, 16 (1 July 1882), pp. 54-56. BOK membership numbers 901-1,400. LFHS numbers 5,001-5,500. Total sample 776 members, 472 female, 304 male, remainder enrolled without age or gender undeterminable as name given with forename initials only.

¹⁵⁴ Yeo, 'Moral Panic over Working-Class Youth', p. 191.

¹⁵⁵ *Northern Weekly Leader*, 12 September 1908.

was concerned with the future of the community'.¹⁵⁶ This led local officials to be granted honorary membership of the press societies. The Guild of Gentleness appointed twenty-two honorary members, including six MPs, the Bishop of Manchester, and the newspaperman, W.T. Stead.¹⁵⁷

Obviously, such individuals enhanced their philanthropic image, but they also provided a society with kudos and respectability, and some figureheads were genuine humanitarians. The KHB's patrons were the Princess Louise of Wales (a previous LFHS member) and the president of the RSPB, the Duchess of Portland.¹⁵⁸ The renowned DBS attracted high profile personalities, including Lord Tennyson, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Florence Nightingale. Adams wrote to Nightingale, a long-term advocate of animal protection, suggesting that her name would 'materially increase the already deep interest taken in the DBS'. She enthusiastically replied and lent her support.¹⁵⁹ In 1894, there was no sign of DBS enrolment flagging, and this must be regarded as a strategy to ensure the DBS kept ahead of rival newspaper societies. There was also still the issue of respectability to consider and the appointment of the soldier-hero Lord Roberts as Honorary-Vice President of the Boys' Brigade was an ideal means to generate this value. Likewise, the DBS extended membership to 'the hero of Mafeking' Baden-Powell and the Commander in Chief of the Army, Field Marshall Lord Wolseley.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink*, p.150.

¹⁵⁷ *Manchester Weekly Times*, 22 February 1895.

¹⁵⁸ *Weekly Telegraph*, 7 January 1905; Samstag, *For the Love of Birds*, p. 23

¹⁵⁹ *NWC*, 27 September 1890; 22 September 1894; British Library, MS 45812 F 158: 'Letter from W.E. Adams to Florence Nightingale, June 1894'.

¹⁶⁰ Springhall, *Sure and Stedfast*, pp.25-26; *NWC*, 27 October 1900; 12 January 1901.

The recruitment of military heroes had further implications. Boy's clubs and schools traded upon soldiery images as advertisements for 'strength, virility, health, and youth' and a means of distilling control and order.¹⁶¹ Many civilian movements, including religious ones, adopted various facets of military organisation and its trappings.¹⁶² The press societies were similarly affected by this concept of militarism, although 'Captain Trim' of the KHB (itself a quasi-military title) was unique in being the only military-titled leader.¹⁶³ This militarism ideal stretched to encompass Arthurian legend and the promotion of medieval codes of chivalry. Interest in Arthur had been stirred by Walter Scott, heightened by the poems of Tennyson emphasising chivalrous ethics, and made accessible to children by J.T. Knowles's *Story of King Arthur*. Later still, Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* placed importance on chivalrous behaviour, most notably the 'good turn'. Formed in 1890, the Order of the Round Table press society promoted itself as a contemporary version of Arthur's Round Table, depicting its members as 'damsels', 'thimblemaids' and 'knights' who were expected to honour chivalric vows of worthy behaviour, including kindness towards animals.¹⁶⁴

Soldierly designations such as 'Captain' or 'Lieutenant' were commonly awarded to ardent press society members for hard work, such as recruiting new members, proactive conservation, or regular correspondence. This is most apparent in the BOK, which appointed Captains and Majors to follow a complicated set of

¹⁶¹ Glenn R. Wilkinson, 'To the Front': British Newspaper Advertising and the Boer War', in *The Boer War: Direction, Image and Experience*, ed. by John Gooch, (London: Cass, 2000), pp. 203-212 (p. 206).

¹⁶² Olive Anderson, 'Growth of Christian Militarism in Mid-Victorian Britain', *English Historical Review*, 86/338 (1971), 46-72 (p. 46).

¹⁶³ *Weekly Telegraph*, 4 January 1890.

¹⁶⁴ Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*, (London: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 178-96, 255; *Cardiff Times*, 4 January 1895.

'Officer's Orders'. These instructed the formation of 'Advance Guards' to distribute its magazine. Soldierly titles remained popular with most societies, although when the BOK became more religious, it abandoned the practice, reasoning 'such incentives to work in God's service often causes us to do God's work not for his glory, but for rank and title'. Not all BOK supporters were convinced and pointed to the DBS as an example of officer titles encouraging children to work for their society. This quasi-militarism extended to a judicial system to deal with members falling foul of rules. The DBS 'court marshalled' Edward Healy and suspended him for six months for sending in false names.¹⁶⁵

A major problem for some of the newspaper societies was that their titles, such as 'Guild of Gentleness' and 'League of Love' and their leaders, including 'Androcles the Fairy' and 'Daddy', were hardly appellations that exuded masculine enterprise. A correspondent to the *Animal World* scoffed at the idea of 'this baby institution' called the 'Dickey Bird Society' that he thought surely 'no English boy will care to own himself to be a member of'. He suggested renaming it the 'Red Cross Society of English Boys for the Protection of Animals'.¹⁶⁶ This particular advice was ignored, but there was considerable debate within the *NWC* over the DBS title. Only a ballot of members in favour of the original name prevented it being amended to the 'Bird Defender Society'.¹⁶⁷

There was real hesitancy among boys to enrol in some of these newspaper societies as the letters to the BOK demonstrate. Boys were mocked by their

¹⁶⁵ *COP*, I/1 (5 August 1882), pp. 12-13; VI/136 (7 March 1885), p. 154; XI/278 (26 November 1887), p. 346; *NWC*, 12 May 1877.

¹⁶⁶ *Animal World*, IX/111 (December 1878), p.185.

¹⁶⁷ *NWC*, 26 January 1878; 16 February 1878.

schoolmates for joining what they called a 'baby's corner'. Uncle George assured them that overcoming the 'jeers and scoffs of less thoughtful... cruel boys' could only add to 'the nobility of your character'.¹⁶⁸ This quandary faced by boys was compounded as other youth movements placed great stress on masculinity. The object of the Boys' Brigade was to create both 'self respect' and 'all that tends towards true manliness.'¹⁶⁹ By adopting militaristic motifs and military heroes at least some of the newspaper societies gave the impression that they were 'manly' associations in order to convince boys to join them.

Date	No. Of Members Enrolled	No. Of Males Identified	No. Of Females Identified
Feb 1880	1,239	265	274
Feb 1890	1,293	479	436
Feb 1900	245	75	137
Feb 1910	235	89	102

*Figure 4.16: Gender Analysis of DBS Members.*¹⁷⁰

Did this work? A complete gender analysis of membership lists is difficult since listings frequently give initials only, but by using those names available in the DBS membership register, it is possible to offer the above statistics [fig. 4.16]. Given the number of 'unidentifiable' members, this data is by no means a true representation of the DBS membership. Nevertheless, it does suggest that in both February 1890 and 1910 at least thirty-seven percent of the new members enrolled to the DBS were male.

¹⁶⁸ *Stockport Advertiser*, 10 March 1882.

¹⁶⁹ *BOP*, XXI/1039 (10 December 1898), pp.174-75.

¹⁷⁰ Derived from the *NWC*.

Date & Society	Sample Size	No. Of Males Identified	No. Of Females Identified	Unidentified Members
BOK 1882	500	164	158	178
BOK 1887-8	500	132	158	210
LFHS 1882	500	151	341	8

*Figure 4.17: Gender Analysis of LFHS and BOK Members.*¹⁷¹

A comparison with the other societies is useful [fig. 4.17]. Again it is impossible to gender profile all of the members, but even here sizeable numbers of boys were attracted to these societies, especially the LFHS, which was, according to Salmon's 1888 survey, hosted by a magazine read almost entirely by girls.¹⁷² Evidently, then not all boys were hesitant about joining these press societies or reading 'girl's magazines'.

The analysis of membership for these societies has provided a valuable snapshot of their composition and give us the insight to see the 'average' member as being eleven years old and drawn from the skilled working class, although as the data has shown, a broad swathe of individuals were attracted to these societies for a variety of reasons. Rather than being competitors to the LFHS, the newspaper societies complemented the work of this more up-market press society. For the sake of a homemade badge and the price of a newspaper allied to the lack of overbearing middle-class management, free membership, and wide geographical coverage, these

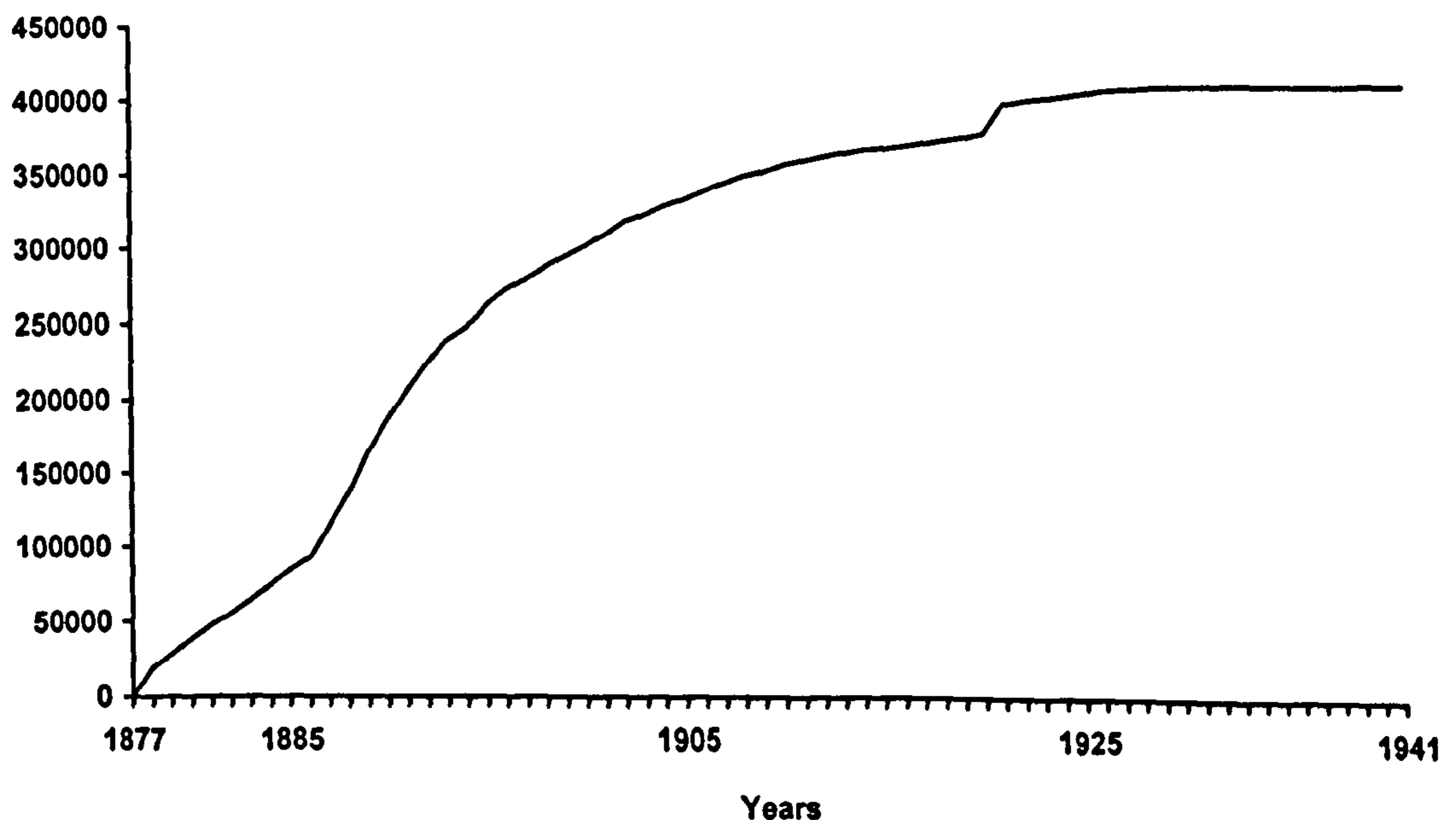
¹⁷¹*Stockport Advertiser*, 19 May 1882, 26 May 1882, 2 June 1882. Membership numbers 901-1,400; *COP*, XI/254 (11 June 1887), p. 382; XI/258 (9 July 1887), p. 30; XI/268 (17 September 1887), p. 190; XII/284 (7 January 1888), p. 14. Membership numbers 46,501-47,000; *Little Folks*, 16 (1 July 1882), pp. 54-56. Membership numbers 5,001-5,500.

¹⁷² Salmon, *Juvenile Literature*, p. 23.

societies were able to position themselves as worthy alternatives to the BOM, especially for the unskilled working classes.

The Societies After 1914

This thesis primarily surveys the work of the press societies up to 1914, but it is important to stress that although wartime paper shortages curtailed their work, some societies came through the years of conflict and continued to press the animal welfare agenda. As the original newspaper society, the DBS continued to grow, breaching the 400,000-membership barrier in 1921, but recruitment slowed to a trickle and a mere 1,129 members joined in the period 1930-1940.¹⁷³



*Figure 4.18: DBS Membership, 1876-1940.*¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ *NWC*, 8 October 1921.

¹⁷⁴ Figures extracted from the *NWC*, 1876-1940. Even this esteemed society was not free from printing glitches, as the sudden blip in membership numbers in the 1920s illustrates.

Children now had many more leisure attractions, including the Saturday cinema matinees. Alternative youth movements vied for their loyalty and provided far more exciting activities than writing letters. Despite the rules regarding uniforms, by 1933, over 1.1 million children were Scouts or Guides, whilst the boys' clubs experienced significant working-class support.¹⁷⁵ The weekly provincial press, which had served the press societies so well, was also in decline, as 'popular' dailies dominated. Children had access to an even wider range of literature including comics, whose focus shifted markedly from 'improvement' to fictional fun.¹⁷⁶

Beginning in 1922, the 'Children's Hour' radio programmes also vied for children's attention by introducing a new assemblage of 'Aunts' and 'Uncles' leading to 'Radio Circle' clubs, with some familiar titles of 'Sunbeams' and 'Leagues'. The newspaper press took advantage of these popular personalities. The DBS had originally been an innovative society, but a new form of press society, reflecting its own modernity, arrived. The *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* launched its Gloops Club in 1929 with rules similar to the DBS. However, unlike the older society, fronted by the *nom de plumed* Uncle Toby, significantly, 'Gloopers' could meet their leader and 'real' radio personality, 'Uncle Nick'. Within eight months, 100,000 Gloopers had enrolled.¹⁷⁷ Conversely, the DBS had changed little since its launch. Its masthead remained unaltered and it had lost much of its campaigning zeal that personified its earlier years.

¹⁷⁵ Proctor, '(Uni) Forming Youth', pp. 104-107; Dawes, *Cry from the Streets*, pp. 126-30.

¹⁷⁶ John Stevenson, *British Society 1914-45*, (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 402-407; Aled Jones, 'Local Journalism in Victorian Political Culture', in *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, (see Brake and others, above), pp. 63-70.

¹⁷⁷ David Oswell, 'Early Children's Broadcasting in Britain: Programming for a Liberal Democracy', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 18/3 (1998), 375-93; *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 2 January 1929; 17 August 1929.

Despite the many appeals, children were no longer interested in the DBS. This reflected the systemic lethargy in the conservation movement. The RSPB had five times as many members in 1901 as it had in 1945. This indifference was the result of lost momentum caused by war, 'discontent, apathy and inflation'.¹⁷⁸ The DBS ceased on 21 December 1940, because the 'emergencies of the time' led to the closure of the *NWC*.¹⁷⁹ This was not the end for children's nature societies, and there was clearly demand for such associations as the RSPB chose the war years to launch its Junior Bird Recorders Club. By 2007, there were 170,000 members of its successor, the Wildlife Explorers. Such support is symptomatic of the continuing effort by conservation societies to enthuse children to appreciate birdlife so that 'they care enough about wildlife to want to protect it for the future', a sentiment that could equally be applied to the nineteenth-century societies, which began this vital process.¹⁸⁰

Conclusion

Newspapers, whether *The Times* or provincial weeklies, were clearly important tools for furthering an interest in natural history and both carrying and then advocating the animal welfare debate. This was also a print form which children had long been acquainted with, and in contrast to their books and magazines, was more widely and freely available, either through schools or parents. Reading this media was made all the more pleasurable as publishers gradually recognised the value of this potential

¹⁷⁸ Evans, *History of Nature Conservation in Britain*, pp. 43-49; Samstag, *For the Love of Birds*, p. 149.

¹⁷⁹ *NWC*, 21 December 1940.

¹⁸⁰ Samstag, *For the Love of Birds*, p. 67; *Birds*, 22/3 (August-October 2008), p. 58; RSPB, *Annual Review 2006-2007*, p. 28 [www.rspb.org.uk/Images/annualreview0607_tcm9-174726.pdf, accessed 1 August 2008].

young readership and provided specialist columns and clubs, although their geographical spread was uneven and highly dependant on the commercial and political strength of rival papers. It is striking that the vast majority of the clubs chose to support animal welfare, suggesting that this was a populist issue of the day. The continuing battle for readership supremacy led to the formation of newspaper societies, but despite this commercial purpose, there were few detractors of these movements. It is true that the *London Standard* was concerned that the pledge of the DBS promising to protect 'all living things' might lead to children attempting to save rats, but to its general satisfaction, the DBS carried out nothing but good work.¹⁸¹

The very worthy charitable work organised by some advanced a newspaper's philanthropic prestige, but it also made the lives of thousands of poor people a little more comfortable. This was a component of their attempts to 'train' children into being better citizens, which drew applause. The *Daily News* congratulated the DBS for producing 'better husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, than the common run'.¹⁸² The membership analysis points to these clubs being particularly attractive to girls, but it is noteworthy that significant numbers of young males, despite hesitancy, enrolled. Engaging with young boys at the earliest possible age was vital. Prosecutions demonstrated that boys could develop a cruel streak and their press showed them to be keen egg-collectors. Children had already proved themselves capable of recruiting and undertaking vital charity work. These individuals were then given the responsibility to carry out progressive conservation to further the environmental agendas of both the press societies and the BOM.

¹⁸¹ *Standard*, 15 October 1883.

¹⁸² *Daily News*, 27 July 1886.

CHAPTER FIVE

dead nuts on anybody who tortures our dicky birds: **The Children's Nature Societies and Bird Conservation**

In 1873, the MP Auberon Herbert told the House of Commons that a 'young lady', had lobbied him asking why 'the amiable and accomplished chaffinch had been left out of the [1872] Act'. Herbert persuaded the House to set up a Select Committee [PSC] to examine extending the provisions of the new Act.¹ Evidently then, young people held some sway with politicians, and in February 1877, just four months after it was formed, DBS member E. Clark wrote 'I want, Dear Uncle Toby, to ask you something very particular. If the members of our D.B.S. were to send a petition to the House of Commons, do you think that we could stop pigeon shooting, which I think is very cruel?' Uncle Toby replied,

Wouldn't it be a feather in our caps, and shouldn't we be making our Society felt even in the government of this great nation... If we had our five thousand members, I would try and get the petition started at once, and I have already thought of a plan of doing it.²

That was the end of the matter. Despite this promise and the growth of the DBS and the other societies, there is no evidence linking them with the expansion of any animal or bird protection legislation. So how exactly did these nature societies aid the conservation effort?

All of these societies had access to members through their press, which carried the contemporary debates about nature conservation and animal welfare to children. The very appellation, 'Dicky Bird Society' signifies an agency passionate about bird

¹ *Hansard*, 3/CCXV, c.1187-90 (29 April 1873); *Select Committee on Wild Birds Protection*, 1873.

² *NWC*, 3 February 1877.

welfare. Focusing on this particular strand of conservation, this chapter begins by assessing how conservation issues were raised and then perpetuated by the societies. It argues that the rhetoric of the leaders of the societies was carefully constructed in order to appeal to different sections of their membership to challenge contemporary attitudes. The press societies in particular, keenly printed their members' correspondence, and these responses allow for an assessment of how this proselytising was received and a measurement of their success. Young children were not ignored by the nature societies, and the chapter will examine how the societies also carefully targeted this particular age group. Opponents to the animal protection lobby also used the press to voice their concern that 'sentimentalists' were undermining their interests. The chapter will examine a selection of these complaints to demonstrate that all did not broadly welcome nature conservation and that there were noted tensions within the popular press.

How did these Campaigns Work?

Before assessing the various conservation campaigns, it is important to consider how the debates were introduced to society members. By surveying the DBS and the BOM, an assessment will be made of how conservation themes were raised in order to contextualise the campaigns. Broadly, the societies dispensed animal welfare advice in three different ways. All were aimed at strengthening the 'tiny humanitarian' within a child. Through their publications, topical articles, stories, poems, and illustrations introduced animal welfare issues and attempted to discourage members from engaging in certain activities, such as egg-collecting. The intensity with which these societies

raised these issues varied considerably. For example, almost on a weekly basis the editorials of Sister Mercy in the *Hexham Herald* vigorously called into question all manner of field sports and animal cruelty. The Busy Bee Society of the *Birmingham Weekly Post*, by contrast, was content to issue occasional admonitions against egg-collecting.³ Regular meetings, a facility almost exclusive to the BOM, also provided the opportunity to pursue these matters. The societies did not just rely on lecturing; a second stratagem was direct appeals to children to undertake active conservation work. Finally, working with schools and essay competitions were also popular. Detailed assessment of the latter strategy will be considered in Chapter Six.

The issues of egg-collecting and feathered millinery are considered within this chapter, but by assessing how they were broached by the DBS and the BOM we can gain an understanding of how the children's societies worked. It is significant that the very first issue of *Band of Mercy Advocate* in 1879 introduced an article, laced with religiosity, condemning bird-nesting boys.⁴ Because the BOM magazine did not print member's letters, it is impossible to identify whether members actively drove campaigns. One group did allow its charges to choose subjects for discussion at meetings in order for them to prepare for the session. This was thought to produce 'excellent results'. But given what we know of the authoritarian nature of the RSPCA, this was probably a rare occurrence. A more plausible scenario was that BOM secretaries took their leave from the RSPCA and dispensed guidance using the *Animal World* and *Band of Mercy* magazines, which took every opportunity to denounce bird-nesting. This latter magazine also published lyrics and music for use at BOM

³ For example, *Hexham Herald*, 1 March 1884; *Birmingham Weekly Post*, 2 July 1898.

⁴ *Band of Mercy Advocate*, 1 (January 1879), p. 2.

meetings, and attendees at 1897 gatherings might have sung along to 'Bird Rhymes' that laboured the evils of nest robbing. In addition, it is highly probable that speakers would have castigated bird-nesting at some point.⁵

Adams immediately prioritised the curtailment of bird-nesting in a moralistic story in the first DBS column. His handling of this subject demonstrated a marked difference from the BOM. Despite his hatred of cruelty, Adams sanctioned judicious collecting, provided boys took just one egg. The following week this drew immediate criticism from the new DBS members, including his son. Ernest Adams wrote 'Boys shouldn't be allowed to take any eggs'. In the next DBS column, its leader defended his rationale, enmeshing his justification with both rational recreation and manly connotations. For Adams, cautious collecting made children 'learn, be wise and healthy' and such rambles into the 'open air' would make 'strong and healthy lads'. The 'one egg rule' was sanctioned because birds could not count and would not miss a single egg.⁶ In other words, reiterating the arguments of naturalists. Over the next few years, the subject of egg-collecting was repeatedly raised and there were similar exchanges between Uncle Toby and his members. It is possible that they influenced the DBS agenda, because by 1888 Adams declared that eggs could only be taken for serious study. Again, this was challenged. Members raised the concern of multiple robbing by boys taking just one egg. By 1890, Adams called for a total ban.⁷ Although many conservationists worked with the prior assumption of public ignorance of the environmental debates, the ability of DBS members to publicly challenge the editor of the *NWC* suggests there were individuals already well versed on the egg-collecting

⁵ *Band of Mercy*, 329 (May 1906), p. 36; 224 (August 1897), p. 72.

⁶ *NWC*, 7 October 1876; 14 October 1876; 21 October 1876.

debate. They might have drawn upon the devotional periodicals, which consistently portrayed any form of bird-nesting as abominable.⁸ Writing for some members was not enough, and children intervened to stop bird-nesting. It is telling that the members who reported stopping some Newcastle boys from nesting came just weeks after Uncle Toby promised rewards for such work.⁹

The campaign against feathered millinery was different. This was an issue construed as an 'adult' matter, as this was a highly lucrative business.¹⁰ Therefore, it is significant that a DBS member, Josephine Cooke, first raised the subject of feathered trimmings, after a prompt by Uncle Toby, in 1878. Cooke wrote, 'I hope all the little girls in the D.B.S. will protest with me against wearing poor little birds as ornaments. I was quite shocked to hear of so many thousand birds being destroyed in one week for such a purpose'.¹¹ The issue of feathered millinery then regularly re-appeared in the DBS column, and unlike the egg-collecting debate, Adams' advice was unambiguous. This was a trade he loathed, observing 'of all the forces that regulate human society, fashion is one of the most irresistible, the most irresponsible and the least intelligent.... it is independent alike of humanity, taste and sense'.¹² An Uncle Toby editorial would be then followed by a surge of letters, that demonstrated members were not just regurgitating the view of their leader, but were again well-informed. Some entered into a debate about how the trade might be outlawed. Suggestions included a prohibitive tax on the plumage trade and a boycott by men of

⁷ *Ibid.*, 28 July 1888; 12 July 1890.

⁸ Law, 'Development of Environmental Interest Groups on Britain', p. 119; *Child's Own Magazine*, 1881, p. 22.

⁹ *NWC*, 18 February 1911, 11 March 1911.

¹⁰ Doughty, *Feather Fashions*, pp. 23-31.

¹¹ *NWC*, 5 January 1878.

¹² Adams, *Memoirs*, p. 631.

women who wore a 'cemetery on their heads'. This was a balanced discussion, as defendant's letters were published which pointed out that it was wrong to attack the 'fair sex' and that girls should not be held accountable for their choice of clothes, instead parents were to blame. Despite this apparent even-handedness, girls who wore feathers were not immune from sanction. A righteous nature gripped many children, who quickly reported members who transgressed.¹³

Although its parent society, the RSPCA, agitated for a ban on plumaged millinery, the BOM took a more tempered approach, and tended to raise the issue within other articles. 'Your Promise' outlined the work children could do to mitigate animal cruelty. When it came to feathered millinery, girls were asked to 'never choose a hat that has a dead bird or a wing in it' and instead to 'wear flowers and ribbons'. There were few of the hard facts about the trade highlighted by the DBS.¹⁴ Branches of the BOM also raised the millinery question, and again this was sensitively done. A song extolled the beauties of the 'Seagull' and its plumes, comparing them with the 'maidens' who wore them for 'cruel fashion'.¹⁵ Bands did not always step softly. In one instance, which mirrored the calculated use of children by temperance workers to appeal to hardened drunkards, a Band had young members appealing directly to women wearing plumage. This manipulative technique apparently worked. One woman remarked, 'After such a remark from baby boys, I will never wear another bird'.¹⁶

¹³ *NWC*, 10 November 1888; 7 January 1888; 27 April 1889; 8 November 1890; 21 November 1894.

¹⁴ *Animal World*, XVII/201 (June 1886), pp. 81-83; *Band of Mercy*, 141 (September 1890), p. 66.

¹⁵ *Band of Mercy*, 296 (August 1903).

¹⁶ Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink*, p. 151; *Band of Mercy*, 155 (November 1891), p. 87.

There were instances of children leading the conservation debate, but overall they simply responded to prompts by their leaders, often affirming by letter that they were carrying out their duties. These conservation campaigns tended to follow the agendas of the more powerful RSPCA, and latterly, the RSPB. In the case of the DBS, this is not surprising. Adams was a committee member of the Newcastle RSPCA in 1887 and by 1892 was awarded life-membership in recognition of his work.¹⁷ Occasional examples can be found suggesting that the DBS might have been pushing the debate further than the RSPCA. For example, in 1891 *Animal World* reprinted some of the *NWC*'s anti-feathered millinery sketches. Evidence of this is rare and in most cases, the children's societies merely reported RSPCA or RSPB doctrine.¹⁸ This was never an inconsequential role. By reiterating this opinion in mass-circulation newspapers and magazines, they brought these issues to a much wider audience than could ever be reached by niche journals such as *Animal World* and the RSPB's *Bird Notes and News*.

Cruelty, Egg-collecting and the Benevolent Male

There was little change in the estimation of RSPCA supporters that children were excessively spiteful. Speaking in 1879, Colonel Henderson thought that there was a 'great tendency in young people to be cruel'.¹⁹ It is easy to see how such a belief was formed. Although children were keen to tell society leaders that they were certainly not cruel and were joining the society as an affirmation of this, in the columns of the societies there were frequent letters reporting children's cruel deeds. Given the aims

¹⁷ RSPCA, *63rd Annual Report 1887*, p. 160; *Annual Report 1892*, p. 27.

¹⁸ *Animal World*, XXII/261 (1 June 1891), p. 86; *NWC*, 21 June 1879; 18 March 1899.

of the societies, such reports seem paradoxical, and arguably, they would actually encourage cruelty. Conversely, the reports of boys stoning birds could have been deliberately placed to cause revulsion and to justify the aims and very existence of the society.²⁰ Leaders keenly rebuked such behaviour. Revealing that an offender had received a birching for tying two cats together, Aunt Ruth of the Golden Circle gave a Hogarthian admonition of the inevitable consequences of cruelty and the danger of becoming a 'cruel bad man'. Leaders threatened members with dismissal from their ranks if they were cruel. This shows a more authoritarian face of the societies and despite depicting themselves as genial characters, leaders publicly supported the whipping of any children found to have been excessively cruel; reflecting the continuing belief in the power of official beating as a means of correction.²¹

The behaviour of boys was especially alarming, as far as the public was concerned. Citing the evolutionary thinking of the German biologist Ernst Haeckel, the *Standard* believed that:

the development of the individual follows the same stages as the development of the type: and this discovery probably accounts for many of the habits and customs of boys. The youths have only reached the barbarian stage. This theory is put forward with some diffidence as the only scientific way of accounting for the extreme callousness with which boys regard the sufferings of the lower animals.²²

There is certainly some truth in the theory that boys have a greater tendency to be cruel. Dadds *et al* claim that the more aggressive nature of boys heightens their propensity to be cruel to animals.²³ However, this study does not intend to evaluate

¹⁹ *Animal World*, X/119 (August 1879), p. 119.

²⁰ *Northern Weekly Leader*, 13 March 1886; 7 April 1906.

²¹ *Northern Weekly Leader*, 13 November 1886; *Irish Tribune*, 2 November 1890; Walvin, *Child's World*, p. 58.

²² *Standard*, 15 October 1883; Ernst Haeckel, *The History of Creation: Or the Development of the Earth and its Inhabitants by the Action of Natural Causes*, 2 vols. (London: King, 1876), II pp. 359-69.

²³ Dadds and others, 'Measurement of Cruelty in Children', p. 329.

these psychological theories, but instead to draw attention to the contemporary ideology of manliness as a reason for the apparent spiteful attitude by boys. Writing in 1975, Norman Vance identified four types of manliness. These were the chivalric, the sturdy, the moral and the 'sentimental benevolent', which Vance defined as 'loving his neighbour and generally improving society'. Vance omitted this last type when he redefined his manliness categories in 1985 and interpretations of nineteenth-century manliness have since tended to examine the heroic and sturdy sort.²⁴ Indeed, there is almost academic consensus regarding this latter form of heightened masculinity. For Tosh, this 'hearty, stiff-upper-lip variant' became the dominant form of manliness as the nineteenth century progressed, overtaking the 'earnest, expressive' type so beloved by the Evangelicals.²⁵ Claudia Nelson's survey of boy's literature confirms this, and Kelly Boyd argues that sturdy manliness dominated the boys' story press.²⁶ This stress on sturdy manliness is not surprising, as it was a deliberately constructed bulwark against fears of youth decadence and Britain's declining industrial power.²⁷ However, Boddice has recently questioned whether the sturdy mode of manliness was as dominant as scholars suggest. Assessing Edward Freeman's attack on the 'morality of field sports', Boddice suggests that Freeman attempted to undermine contemporary masculinity beliefs linking field sports with acceptable manly values, and instead offered an alternative maxim for manliness, that of 'compassion'.²⁸ This caring form

²⁴ Norman Vance, 'The Ideal of Manliness' in *The Victorian Public School: Studies in the Development of an Educational Institution*, ed. by Brian Simon and Ian Bradley, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), pp. 115-28 (pp. 115-17); Norman Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.8-28.

²⁵ Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 31.

²⁶ Claudia Nelson, 'Sex and the Single Boy: Ideals of Manliness and Sexuality in Victorian Literature for Boys', *Victorian Studies*, 32/4 (1989), 525-50 (p.542); Kelly Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper in Britain: A Cultural History, 1855-1940*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 46.

²⁷ Kelly Boyd, 'Exemplars and Ingrates: Imperialism and the Boys' Story Paper, 1880-1930', *Historical Research*, 67/163 (1994), 143-55 (p.147).

²⁸ Boddice, 'Manliness and the Morality of Field Sports', pp. 14-25; Edward Freeman, 'The Morality of Field Sports', *Fortnightly Review*, XXXIV (October 1869), pp. 353-85.

of manly behaviour was also fixed upon by the nature societies as they attempted to deconstruct accepted modes of masculine behaviour towards animals.

For those concerned with animal welfare, manliness played a defining role. Vance identifies Pierce Egan as the 'Homer of Regency manliness'. Egan was a keen supporter of cock-fighting, and hunting, and he considered pigeon shooting 'quite a tip-top sort of thing', although it paled in comparison with the 'manly enjoyment of the sports of the field'.²⁹ Furthermore, if we are to assume that the themes of manliness were modelled by the public schools, then as Chapter One has illustrated, it was not helpful that cruelty appeared to be at epidemic levels in these institutions. A derivation of hunting was egg-collecting. This dominated the nature societies more than any issue. Indicative of its popularity among boys was the advice to girls given by the poem the 'Robin's Secret' in the *Preston Guardian*. The whereabouts of nests were not to be disclosed, as boys would surely rob them.³⁰ Manly connotations ingrained collecting. Thus, the *Union Jack* Field Club advised its readers, 'A lad who can't prepare an egg readily for mounting with the aid of a bit of darning needle or pin, ought to be sent to a girl's school at once and taught to sew, for assuredly he is out of his element among boys'.³¹ Where naturalists of the 1820s were considered figures of fun and went to great lengths to hide their equipment and activities, by 1879, the *Young Naturalist* was assuring its readers that the study of nature was a perfectly manly outdoor pursuit.³² This was then a highly charged masculine environment for any would-be conservationist to broach.

²⁹ Vance, *Sinews of the Spirit*, p.12; *Pierce Egan's Book of Sport and Mirror of Life*, (London: Tegy, 1832), pp. 145, 370-75.

³⁰ Vance, 'The Ideal of Manliness', pp. 118-19; *Preston Guardian*, 30 January 1909.

³¹ *Union Jack*, II/62 (3 March 1881), p. 351.

³² Allen, *Naturalist in Britain*, p. 137; *Young Naturalist*, I/1 (1 November 1879), p. 1.

By representing themselves as manly institutions with the use of militaristic titles and motifs, the nature societies had already convinced moderate numbers of boys to join their ranks. By utilising narratives that dwelled upon the importance of manliness and especially its benevolent type, the societies then picked away at notions that might have held cruelty and certainly egg-collecting to be acceptable for aspiring manly boys. A KHB member, who had reportedly tortured an animal, was cautioned that the action was both unmanly and cowardly.³³ However, this integration of manliness with benevolence was difficult. *Little Folks* acknowledged that boys regarded 'mercy and kindness' as 'derogatory to manliness' and those who saved birds or animals were worried that it would lay them open to charges of being 'womanish or wanting in spirits'. Protectionists had to demonstrate great courage the LFHS advised; this was the epitome of manliness, whereas any form of cruelty went 'hand in hand with cowardice'.³⁴

Applying these principles in practice was more difficult and the nature societies invoked several techniques to persuade boys to save small creatures and overcome peer pressure. A favourite invocation, imported from the temperance movement, was of the hero taking the 'right' stand. Such self-autonomy was a clear marker of manliness.³⁵ The BOM advised, 'any boy with a spark of manliness and true courage in him would run to help and soothe any creature in distress and would not mind how much trouble he took, nor how much other boys laughed at him.'³⁶ Such action sometimes led to a personal crisis, as Robert Lister, a Sunbeam Club member,

³³ *Weekly Telegraph*, 4 May 1889. See also Chapter Four.

³⁴ *Little Folks*, 15 (1882), p.50.

³⁵ Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink*, p. 147; Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, pp. 93-96.

³⁶ *Band of Mercy*, 349 (January 1908), pp. 2-3.

reported. He felt ashamed at crying when boys taunted him for defending birds and called him a coward or girl. Dainty Davie, the leader of the Sunbeam Club, assured Robert that he was neither of these things. The real cowards were the tormentors who persecuted birds.³⁷ Robert's shame is understandable. Crying was regarded as a sign of loss of control and weakness. In the face of adversity, boys were expected to contain their emotions.³⁸ The compassion shown by Dainty Davie undermines this and instead gives approval for doing what was right in the face of adversity. Given that the boys' story papers focussed upon character building, sympathy for emotional weaknesses was hardly a theme for discussion. Thus, we see a distinct difference between expectations of the readership of this medium and publications of the nature societies. Certainly, the membership of the BOK and LFHS points to a pre-adolescent majority. In contrast, the boys' story papers were largely aimed at readers in their early teens. Despite this age difference, it is certain that boys would have read both types of literature. Although some magazines, such as the *Union Jack*, targeted wealthy schoolboys, both the nature societies and the boys' magazines catered for the lower middle and working classes. Furthermore, recommendations of the *BOP* as healthy literature by nature society leaders, suggests that children would have been familiar with this magazine.³⁹

It was difficult to portray consideration as a defining characteristic of any boy who aspired to be manly. The masculine identity of working-class boys was determined not by benign statements of sturdiness or heroism, but by 'hardness'.⁴⁰

³⁷ *People's Journal*, 11 June 1887.

³⁸ Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper*, pp. 45-46.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13; *Liverpool Weekly Mercury*, 6 January 1900.

⁴⁰ Andrew Davies, 'Youth Gangs, Masculinity and Violence in Late Victorian Manchester and Salford', *Journal of Social History*, 32/2 (1998), 349-69.

This recourse to fighting as the manly means to settle disputes was also a feature of boys' literature, which also highlighted the 'sneaks' who informed on transgressors, and thereby unmanly individuals.⁴¹ Both of these scenarios were then played out through the pages of the nature societies, where any slippage in this tough image would have surely meant severe loss of credibility for boys, and for that matter, girls. For those members who informed on their peers, it is questionable whether they retained integrity. When reporting nest robbers to Sister Mercy, Catherine Robinson wrote 'My mother tells me I must not tell you their names as they would thrash me'.⁴² An account was published by the DBS that illustrates not only this culture of violence, but also the belief that it was noble to fight for a good cause. In the tough west end of Newcastle, William Tait, one of the first recruits to the DBS, converted a cruel boy, Tommy Smith, by giving him a 'good punching' for killing birds. Smith became a steadfast DBS member and was 'dead nuts on anybody who tortures our dicky birds'. Uncle Toby promoted both boys to officer status and later retold the episode in the published history of the club.⁴³ This served as an example that even tough boys could be converted to become benevolent males and justifiable violence was seemingly acceptable.

Not all societies encouraged such aggressive techniques. The boys' story papers bolstered manly credentials by capitalising on the imperialism of the late Victorian and Edwardian era.⁴⁴ These tales of valour by imperialist icons were also used to spike the benevolent form of manliness with credibility. BOM members were

⁴¹ Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper*, pp.61-62.

⁴² *Hexham Herald*, 3 October 1885.

⁴³ Adams, *History of the Dicky Bird Society*, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Boyd, 'Exemplars and Ingrates', pp. 143-55.

regaled with a tale of General Gordon being kind to a bird and told that although Gordon had an 'iron will', this example of compassion indicated that he also had a tender heart. The moral of this anecdote was that no boy should be ashamed of following Gordon's example.⁴⁵ The use of 'Great Men' by the *Hexham Herald* was an element of this process that exploited emerging nationalism to further champion the benevolent male. Sister Mercy appealed to the 'glory of Englishmen to stand up for the defenceless and to scorn the cowardly oppression of the weak'.⁴⁶ Use of such heroic figures had traces of the chivalric manliness that drove the ideology of the Round Table society, but not all societies veiled their objectives in Arthurian mythology. The *Bristol Observer* simply advised any boy who wished to be 'noble and great' to take pity on 'all dumb animals'.⁴⁷

The BOM was one of the few societies that actively promoted the moral style of manliness, which was suffused with evangelical religiosity, but had been swept away in the drive for sturdiness. The Bands, with their strong evangelical roots, infused 'militaristic' articles with traces of moral manliness. Enthusing the 'Mercy Army' to fight for 'kindness and mercy' members had to believe that their 'General' in this worthy campaign was Jesus and 'prayer' should be their weapon.⁴⁸ Clearly then moral manliness retained an appeal, but few blended their conservation campaigns with such heavy religiosity.

Catapults were the weapons of choice among collectors as they maimed without causing plumage damage and were deemed 'manly' tools for boys wishing to bag birds for taxidermy, therefore the societies took issue with them. Given the

⁴⁵ *Band of Mercy*, 101 (May 1887), p. 34.

⁴⁶ *Hexham Herald*, 4 September 1890.

⁴⁷ *Cardiff Times*, 5 January 1895; *Bristol Observer*, 5 October 1907.

repeated references to these weapons in children's magazines, evidently, they were popular toys, but they presented a danger not just confined to birds or the occasional broken window.⁴⁹ In 1875, newspapers reported that a misplaced stone from a boy's catapult had killed a woman. Such an incident gave ample justification for the nature societies to rail against these weapons, and the DBS urged its members to 'burn your catapults at once'.⁵⁰ Indicative of the danger posed, the KHB prohibited their use within its membership pledge, and local bylaws outlawed catapults. Offenders received stiff fines, the details of which were posted in the societies' pages to serve as a warning for would-be lawbreakers.⁵¹ For the catapult to lose its allure, any notions that it was a manly weapon had to be stripped away and society leaders encouraged members to take proactive action. Sister Mercy celebrated a girl who stopped two boys shooting birds with a catapult. The article inferred that catapult users were disreputable individuals. The girl was on her way to church, whilst the boys (obviously non-church goers) were shooting. The girl lectured the two boys that God made the 'poor birds' and victoriously declared that they 'went away ashamed of their bad conduct'.⁵² Any boy who shot at birds was described as 'very cruel', and as noted, cruelty was the absolute antithesis to manliness. There were signs that the manly image of the catapult was weakening. In 1900, the *BOP* allowed the RSPB to reprint an article as a leaflet. It warned that even countenancing the use of a catapult was an 'offence against your own chivalrous regard' for animals. Children confirmed to society leaders that they would never use their catapults again, and the DBS was credited with boys destroying their weapons, but the KHB's continued prohibition

⁴⁸ Vance, 'Ideal of Manliness', p.117; *Band of Mercy*, 229 (January 1898), pp. 2-3.

⁴⁹ Mearns and Mearns, *Bird Collectors*, p. 49; *Union Jack*, II/64 (17 March 1881), p. 383; *Child's Companion*, 111 (March 1878), p. 37

⁵⁰ *Gateshead Observer*, 6 November 1875; *NWC*, 8 June 1878.

⁵¹ *Weekly Telegraph*, 4 January 1890; *NWC*, 16 July 1887; 30 March 1889.

against catapults in 1914, suggests this particular campaign still had a long way to go.⁵³

The campaign against egg-collecting was much harder. As one Animal's Friend Society member complained, it was difficult to enrol members because 'so great is the temptation to take eggs out of nests of the little birds'.⁵⁴ They were not helped by the opposing opinions regarding nesting. Whilst the single egg-collecting mentality lingered, boys could continue to raid nests under the cloak of learned collection. Some societies, the BOK included, by contrast, advised that no eggs at all should be taken. Those societies promoting this agenda worked to strip egg-collecting of its legitimacy. As a deterrent, stories presented bird-nesting boys as truants who were therefore breaking school rules.⁵⁵ Children were fully aware that reformatory schools were institutions reserved for the worst sorts and received habitual truants.⁵⁶

The 1894 Act made the task easier, since one of its provisions was that 'public notices', detailing its conditions, be posted in 'conspicuous spots' and in 'two local newspapers'.⁵⁷ The nature societies proved ideal for this. BOM members were set to work posting public notices in their villages. The publications of the societies also carried notices in March stressing that the 'close season' was about to begin and nests should be left well alone.⁵⁸ Many doubted the workability of new legislation. In

⁵² *Hexham Herald*, 22 March 1884.

⁵³ *BOP*, XXII/1101 (17 February 1900), pp. 310-12; RSPB: Linda Gardiner, 'Birds and Boys', SPB Leaflet No. 35; *Hexham Herald*, 5 April 1884; *Weekly Telegraph*, 5 April 1890; 24 January 1914.

⁵⁴ *Preston Guardian*, 1 August 1885.

⁵⁵ *COP*, XIV/353 (4 May 1889), p. 282; XII/300 (28 April 1888), p. 269.

⁵⁶ Southgate, *That's the Way it Was*, p. 20.

⁵⁷ *Act to amend the Wild Birds Protection Act*, (20 July 1894).

⁵⁸ CCA, D5749: 'Knutsford Band of Mercy Minute Book', 27 May 1897; *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 3 March 1900.

debate, Lord Walsingham observed that 'boys will be boys; and... bird-nesting expeditions from school had often given [them] their first love of natural objects'.⁵⁹ These protestations suggest a sudden obsessive and incongruous concern for the welfare of small boys that points to naturalists using children as an excuse to continue their hobby. Although children were likely to continue egg-collecting, the real problems lay with those who claimed to be naturalists. As a measure of this reluctance, it is noticeable that it was not until 1909 that the British Ornithologists' Union ruled that it would exclude any members found taking eggs from rare birds.⁶⁰

Certainly, there is a sense that by the end of the century, collecting was losing its manly allure. As noted, the recalcitrant *BOP*, forced by legislation, modified its stance. Gordon Stables also called for 'some of my stronger lads, who have strong minds as well as good biceps' to engage in the 'exhilarating sport' of punching 'the heads of the soulless loons and white faced shargars they find bird nesting'.⁶¹ This was something new. The relationship between manliness and egg-collecting had been inverted. It now paralleled the benevolent type promoted by the nature societies, but it is noticeable that sturdiness was not compromised. Boys could remain manly if they now desisted from bird-nesting and like Tommy Smith, could then legitimately excel in this by taking tough action.

The nature societies carefully deconstructed the ideology of masculinity to build a multi-layered attack on cruelty and collecting designed to emasculate boys

⁵⁹ *Hansard*, 4/XIII, c.1158 (16 June 1893).

⁶⁰ *British Birds*, II/8 (1 January 1909), pp. 274-76.

⁶¹ *BOP*, XXIV/1215 (26 April 1902). <http://dictionary.oed.com> [Accessed 1 May 2008]. The *OED* defines a 'shargar' as 'a lean, thin, stunted person or animal; a weakly child'.

who believed these traits to be acceptable. At the same time, they offered a manly legitimacy for kindness to animals. In contrast to the heavy dose of sturdy manliness that dominated boy's literature, the nature societies portrayed the ideal manly boy as benevolent, brave, but open to raw emotion. How successful this approach was, is difficult to assess. Naturally, *NWC* correspondents held up the DBS operation as a great success because of the supposed increase in fledging birds. Despite this positive claim, collecting continued as a widespread children's pastime, and an air of resignation is notable in many of the society columns that nests would always hold a certain fascination. Even the game of beading eggs, as the warnings in the *Bristol Observer* in 1911 attest, continued. There are two possible reasons for this. There was still a dearth of play areas in urban districts at the beginning of the twentieth century. Children, therefore, continued to make their own amusements. Secondly, nature study had now appeared on the school timetable. This gave fresh impetus and official respectability to would-be nest hunters, and regular 'Nature Notes' articles filled the press society columns. Articles dwelled upon the beauties of birds' nests, although the mantra, even by the BOM, which had continually opposed collecting, advocated a 'New Kind of Birds-Nesting', was look by all means, but do not touch.⁶²

Using Death to Manipulate Behaviour

Focusing on narratives of manliness was not enough for some of the societies. Some employed drastic rhetoric to dissuade collecting by scaring children into responsible behaviour. Scholars have emphasised how nineteenth-century children's literature focussed upon death and debilitating injury, often in 'ghastly and frightening detail'

⁶² *NWC*, 20 May 1911; *Bristol Observer*, 6 May 1911; H.E. Meller, *Leisure and the Changing City 1870-1914*, (London: Routledge, 1976), p. 119; *Northern Weekly Leader*, 4 May 1912; *Band of Mercy*,

according to Walvin, to serve as a moralistic safety lesson and an example of divine justice reckoned on wayward individuals.⁶³ The devotional periodicals revelled in death. It is not therefore surprising to find the *Children's Friend* of 1824 warning bird nesters that a fall from a tree or cliff would lead to their death and the quandary of facing Christ on Judgement Day. The nature societies also used this rhetoric. Reports of individuals killed or injured whilst illicitly nesting, such as the boy who fell 300 feet down a cliff, used these accidents to serve as a warning to others. A Golden Circle member gloated, 'that's what naughty boys get when they rob the poor birds'.⁶⁴

This obsession with death was a consequence of the disproportionately high infant mortality rate leading to the familiarity children had with death and funeral pageantry.⁶⁵ Children's premature deaths were a regular feature of their literature that dwelled on describing their last moments, often in lurid detail. Although this preoccupation was common, Dixon suggests that by the second half of the nineteenth century narratives extending to mourning and grief were rare.⁶⁶ However, in the columns of the newspaper societies, there is evidence challenging this argument. From 1877, the DBS published sombre memoriam notices when a member had 'Gone Home'. During the same year the sixteen year-old daughter of Adams had died, which may have prompted these regular postings. A pathos-laden epitaph sympathising with the parents of a recently deceased DBS member, reflected Adams' grief. It read 'Uncle Toby... feels with them in their loss. He, too, in his time, has known what it is

426 (June 1914), pp. 42-44.

⁶³ Diana Dixon, 'The Two Faces of Death: Children's Magazines and their Treatment of Death in the Nineteenth Century', in *Death, Ritual, and Bereavement*, ed. by Ralph Houlbrooke, (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 136-50 (p. 144); Walvin, *Child's World*, pp. 30-31.

⁶⁴ *The Children's Friend*, (1824), pp. 6-11; *NWC*, 5 July 1879; *Northern Weekly Leader*, 6 December 1896.

⁶⁵ Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty on Britain, 1870-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 230-62; Drotner, *English Children and their Magazines*, pp. 53-56.

to have seen dear faces fade from him'.⁶⁷ Despite the high mortality rates, this deep emotion is understandable. The death of a child was hard for a family to bear as it 'meant the loss of all hope'.⁶⁸ The sense of personal loss, coupled with a possible therapeutic quality, may have prompted Adams to post such epitaphs, but it does not account for such notices in other publications. These also dwell upon the deceased child being an excellent member of their society. Maggie Wright was described as 'a good example... to the members of the Golden Circle, for she thought of us all up to the last'. Similarly, seven-year old Jessie Macdonald was remembered as being 'very proud of her member's card and took much interest in the Sunbeam Club column' and died 'after long suffering, borne with much patience'.⁶⁹

These in-memoriam announcements served the primary purpose of a eulogy for a dead child and were submitted by grieving families or friends. Arguably, the rhetoric of these epitaphs also acted as a subliminal appeal to carry out a society's work. It is noteworthy that many of these 'Gone Home' notices concluded with an appeal drawing attention to the fragility of life for children. Uncle Toby urged members to 'put forth their earnest efforts on behalf of our society, while they are yet young, strong and active'.⁷⁰ It is also striking how these notices blatantly attempted to persuade children to treat animals with respect. In 1883, the death of E.T. Hounan was announced. Uncle Toby recorded that:

after our dear little nephew's death, a letter to Uncle Toby, complaining of the way of which certain boys were trying to kill the birds, was found in his desk. Uncle Toby hopes that the circumstance now recorded [that is, the death of Hounan] will lead the boys mentioned in that letter to be as kind to the birds and all living things as their dead friend was.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Dixon, 'Two Faces of Death', pp. 145-47.

⁶⁷ *NWC*, 1 September 1877; Ashton, *W.E. Adams*, p.151.

⁶⁸ Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.119-21.

⁶⁹ *Northern Weekly Leader*, 25 August 1894; *People's Journal*, 4 February 1888.

⁷⁰ *NWC*, 19 August 1882; 10 February 1883.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 21 July 1883.

As a means of ensuring good behaviour, Walvin suggests the promise of 'eternal salvation' was constantly dangled as an incentive and he cites the example of a child convinced he would ascend to heaven because he attended a ragged school.⁷² We must therefore also consider the possibility that these 'Gone Home' announcements were subtle recruiting notices that pressurised children into enrolling and then adhering to their pledges in the belief, they would thereby gain spiritual advantage. There is no direct evidence of membership applications received following publication of a harrowing epitaph, but the memorial for George Brown of the BOK is particularly revealing. It describes how he 'kept his pledge nobly and well...when the appointed time came for his flight from this weary world, he was ready'.⁷³ There is obviously a strong inference here that by being a staunch member of the BOK, George was expedited to heaven. There is also a further religious significance to pledge signing. Those who signed temperance pledges were often indoctrinated with the belief that it provided a means of wiping the slate clean and, more importantly, salvation for those who then upheld good behaviour.⁷⁴ Given the rapid pledge-signing some societies experienced if such a promise of instant atonement was commonplace and believed, then it is easy to see why the societies would have been a powerful draw for children.

⁷² Walvin, *Child's World*, p.33.

⁷³ *Stockport Advertiser*, 23 June 1882.

The Use of Children against 'Murderous Millinery'

So far, we have considered how the societies confronted activities that were commonly associated with children, and especially boys. The societies also brought wider conservation matters to the attention of their members, who superficially would not seem implicated or have influence. After all, women were held accountable by conservationists for the foremost environmental issue of the late nineteenth century. This was the battle against 'murderous millinery', driven by women's taste for feathered headwear. The 1869 Act was supposed to protect seabirds against plumage hunters, but evidence put before the PSC of a shop stocking 200 robin skins for trimmings suggested that it was more than seabirds that required protection.⁷⁵ Feathers had always been an adornment to costume, but their popularity increased as hats became more fashionable from the 1850s, leading to the use of whole birds as trimmings from the mid-1870s.⁷⁶ Imports of bird skins soared. One calculation claimed that 'England alone imports 25 million slaughtered birds a year; Europe as a whole takes 300 million.... a single London dealer receives annually 400,000 hummingbirds'.⁷⁷ Such slaughter led to the formation of the RSPB in 1889, to discourage 'the enormous destruction of bird life exacted by milliners and others for purely decorative purposes'.⁷⁸

The 'free choice and ostentatious luxury' of the plumage trade ignited the passions of conservationists like no issue had. This growth in demand for feathered

⁷⁴ Reid, 'Pursuit of Respectability', p. 284.

⁷⁵ *Select Committee on Wild Birds Protection*, 1873, p. 5.

⁷⁶ Anne M. Buck, *Victorian Costume and Costume Accessories*, (London: Jenkins, 1961), pp. 114-26.

⁷⁷ Henry C. Ricketts, *Appeals for Mercy*, (London: Skeffington, 1898), p. 62.

⁷⁸ RSPB, *Annual Report 1891*, p. 7.

millinery was inextricably linked to changes in consumer culture. The eighteenth century was the true beginning of the 'consumer revolution' in Britain. Clothing became the first mass consumer product as the lower classes aspired to ape their betters. Fashion was a 'must'.⁷⁹ More changes in consumerism followed. The 1880s marked the start of a 'consumer society with a consumer culture' as shoppers switched their allegiances away from markets and local shops to department stores.⁸⁰ These stores became accessible to both the 'pitman's wife' and the wealthy. By pricing some goods within the reach of all classes, the 'poorer folk could enter a new world of material fantasy... and expect its glamour to rub off on their own small purchases'.⁸¹

Fashionable dress was the most aspirational item for consumption, especially amongst working-class girls. It was one of the cheapest and most accessible signs of respectability and an indicator of social status.⁸² Paradoxically, working-class girls had more choice over their wardrobe than their wealthier middle-class cousins, who were subject to greater parental authority.⁸³ Many girls of fourteen to seventeen kept control of their own finances, which they then spent in tailoring shops to express their youthful independence. Charles Booth found that even the 'lower grade of factory workers' wore 'a gorgeous plush hat with as many large ostrich feathers to match as

⁷⁹ Law, 'Environmental Interest Groups in Britain', p. 112; Neil McKendrick, 'The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth-century England' and 'The Commercialization of Fashion', in *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, ed. by Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb, (London: Europa, 1982), pp. 9-33, 40, 53.

⁸⁰ John Benson, *The Rise of Consumer Society in Britain, 1880-1980*, (London: Longman, 1994), pp. 61-2.

⁸¹ Bill Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), pp. 30-31, 98-100.

⁸² Peter Stearns, 'The Effort at Continuity in Working-Class Culture', *Journal of Modern History*, 52/4 (1980), 626-55 (p. 642); Diana Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing*, (London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 60.

⁸³ Benson, *Rise of Consumer Society*, p. 67.

her funds will run to' for her indispensable Sunday parading outfit.⁸⁴ Given this power fashion had over individuals and allied to the potential purchasing power of working girls, we can see why the children's societies attached themselves to the millinery debate.

The difficulty for anti-plumage campaigners was compounded by the fact that the wearing of feathers had become more commonplace among those further down the social scale as they strove to follow the latest fashions, premiered by socialites. As one RSPB campaigner commented in 1894, 'this craze for wearing birds is a universal leveller, mistress and maid must both alike wear them'.⁸⁵ These desires by servants to dress fashionably were statements against their compulsory uniforms and claims to higher social status.⁸⁶ A feathered hat seemed to be the priority, according to one 1898 commentator, who observed that young domestics 'get 3s or 4s a week besides their food, so that they can spend it all on their hats. Such hats...such feathers in them'.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London: The Trades of East London*, (London: Macmillan, 1893), IV, p. 323; Rose, *Erosion of Childhood*, p. 219.

⁸⁵ RSPB: Rev. H. Greene, 'As in a Mirror. An Appeal to the Ladies of England Against the Uses of Birds in Millinery', SPB, Leaflet No. 2 (1894), p. 8.

⁸⁶ Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas*, p. 58.

⁸⁷ Bernard Bosanquet, *The Standard of Life and Other Studies*, (London: Macmillan, 1898), p. 176.



Dooley (calling to take his daughter home for Sunday): "Go an now, an' pit on yure t'ings, en' doan' be all th' avenin', or yur mother 'll t'ump th' head aff yez, an' me too, be the same token".



(A half hour later, as Mary Ann comes down.) "Excuse me lady: Oi'm waiten' for me daughter, th' scull'ry maid: but, av yez'd rather hov me do it, Oi'll wait outside". (To himself.) "Musha! but how thim nob's does driss".

Figure 5.1: Birmingham Weekly Mercury, 26 September 1891

The role played by young domestics in stimulating demand should not be underestimated. This was the largest employment sector for young females. According to the 1911 Census, the total female workforce of 3.7 million had 474,000 girls under the age of twenty employed in some form of domestic service. A good proportion of the female working-class members of the nature societies would enter this sector; indeed, three LFHS members were domestic servants [Chapter Four]. For the eighteenth-century servant, her close association with her mistress ensured that the servant quickly gained news of the latest styles.⁸⁸ This argument has validity for the following century. The ability of domestics to ape their employers 'off-duty' was well known, as *fig. 5.1* and its accompanying text, appropriately entitled 'Fine Feathers', amply illustrates.

Print culture played a vital disseminating role. As print media grew, new women's magazines appeared and drove consumer desire by placing heavy emphasis on dress and accessories. Fashion advice naturally formed the content of girls' magazines. The *GOP* still lauded the beauty of wearing wings as decoration in 1910 when the campaign against feathers was well publicised.⁸⁹ Newspapers also carried fashion news. As early as 1796, *The Times* was discussing the 'rage' for 'high heels and high feathers', but of particular note were the women's columns of newspapers, which promoted consumption.⁹⁰ Notably, aspirational fashions dominated the content

⁸⁸ *Census of England and Wales, 1911: Occupations and Industries*, (HMSO, 1914), X (Part One), pp. 75-76; McKendrick, 'Commercialization of Fashion', p. 59.

⁸⁹ Erika Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 111-15; *GOP*, XXXI (1909-1910), p. 61.

⁹⁰ The *NWC* carried a specific column for ladies, beginning in 1880, which Ashton believes to be one of the first of its kind, yet the *Manchester Weekly Times* hosted a 'ladies' column' in 1861. This demonstrates that this issue deserves closer academic attention. Only Graham Law and Barbara Onslow appear to have examined this subject closely in their surveys of the *Illustrated London News* that began its Ladies' Column in 1886. Like the children's columns, this feature was often syndicated and by the

of these columns, including those in the provincial press [fig. 5.2]. To take one example, the 'Ladies Column' of the *Nottinghamshire Weekly Express* reviewed the attire of the Countess of Leinster and then moved on to describe some of the latest styles of millinery. A 'tucking hat' replete with two stuffed birds was shown, with the advice that there had been a 'great rage for birds as trimming for hats and bonnets last winter'. Some newspapers, especially *The Times*, were vociferous opponents of the feather-trade; however, this opposition was often juxtaposed with fashion advice advocating plumes. Parallel to the Ladies' Column of the Nottinghamshire newspaper was the Golden Rule Society column promoting kindness to 'dumb creatures'.⁹¹ This hypocrisy was, at times, most striking. Within a month of the *Preston Guardian's* children's society printing an essay condemning plumage shops, its 'Woman's Letter' described a 'toque... adorned with a large blackbird'.⁹² This internal contradiction did not go unnoticed, especially when many middle-class women protested against children raiding nests, whilst they sported magnificent feathered hats. As Suckling observed, 'why should boys be ashamed of killing what their mothers wear?'⁹³

1890s a 'ladies column' or 'letter' could be regularly found in provincial weeklies as part of their 'family' orientated content. *The Times*, 27 August 1796; Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, p. 114; *Manchester Weekly Times*, 12 October 1861; *Illustrated London News*, 6 March 1886; Ashton, *W.E. Adams*, p. 128; Graham Law, 'New Women Novels in Newspapers', *Media History*, 7/1 (2001), 17-31; Barbara Onslow, 'Preaching to the Ladies: Florence Fenwick Miller and her Readers in *The Illustrated London News*', in *Encounters in the Victorian Press*, ed. by Laurel Brake and Julie F. Coddell, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), pp. 88-102.

⁹¹ *Nottinghamshire Weekly Express*, 10 October 1890; Turner, *All Heaven in a Rage*, p. 191.

⁹² *Preston Guardian*, 6 January 1900; 3 February 1900.

⁹³ As cited in Turner, *All Heaven in a Rage*, p. 192.



Burnley Gazette
1 April 1899

THE LADIES' COLUMN.

There being such a great rage for birds as trimming for hats and bonnets last winter, it seemed very probable the fashion would be exhausted and replaced this coming season by some fresh fancy; instead of which the craze appears redoubled. There is scarcely a hat or bonnet shown without one, two, and even three on it, and the draper's windows present an unbroken front, in many cases, of birds of every shade and shape, like ghostly Aviaries: some are "made" birds, but these are not in much demand, and the most are really the pretty little feathered creatures themselves stuffed. We fear there must be a lamentable murder of the innocents to supply this enormous demand, but feeling or reason has little effect on fashion the inexorable.



Nottinghamshire Weekly Express
10 October 1890



Cardiff Times
4 May 1895



Northern Weekly Gazette
25 April 1896

Figure 5.2: Provincial Newspaper 'Ladies' Columns': Plumaged Millinery

The ladies' columns did not let these attacks on fashion go unnoticed. Some offered sympathy for the 'lamentable murder of the innocents'.⁹⁴ Naturally the *NWC*'s 'Geraldine's Letter' column supported the anti-plumage protesters, although not consistently. In 1893 the new season's hats adorned with a 'bunch of black feathers arranged like a bow and fastened with a jet black Aigrette' were admired.⁹⁵ Other papers were hostile. The *Hexham Courant's* Madame Rose believed that newspapers only decried feathered millinery during a dearth of other news and this publicity merely increased the demand for plumage.⁹⁶

Given that this was both a powerful trade and a visible mode of respectability, this was a difficult campaign. Some societies resorted to hard-line tactics to make feather wearing unpalatable. Articles attempted to turn members against the trade by giving accounts of some of the more grotesque creations, such as a woman who wore robin skins at a fancy dress ball to represent 'Winter'. Illustrations from the anti-plumage campaigns filled the DBS column. These frighteningly and poignantly focused on the slaughter the millinery trade caused. The 'Milliner's Nightmare' [fig. 5.3] depicted a lady wracked with dreams of skeletons of birds and 'The Shuddering Angel' [fig. 5.4] by the RSPB member George Watts (appointed an honorary DBS member) lamented the slaughter and was widely used by campaigners.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ *Nottinghamshire Weekly Express*, 10 October 1890.

⁹⁵ *NWC*, 2 March 1889; 8 April 1893; Doughty, *Feather Fashions*, pp. 10-11. The terms 'osprey' and 'aigrette' refer to the elaborate breeding plumes of egrets, a type of heron, which were prized by milliners.

⁹⁶ *Hexham Courant*, 4 November 1893.

⁹⁷ *NWC*, 25 January 1879; 28 November 1896; 2 December 1899; Doughty, *Feather Fashions*, p. 49.

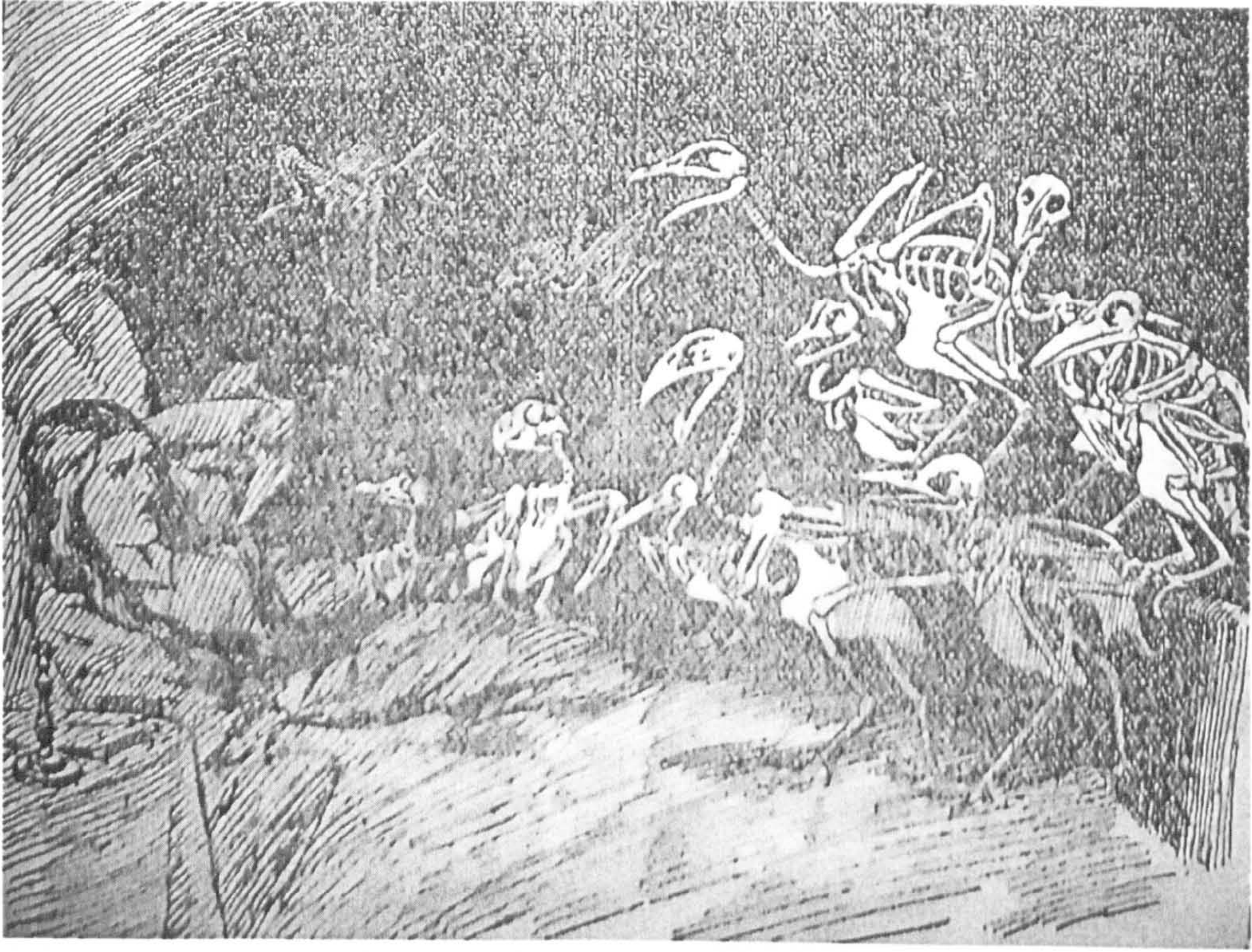


Figure 5.3: 'The Milliner's Nightmare', NWC, 28 November 1896.

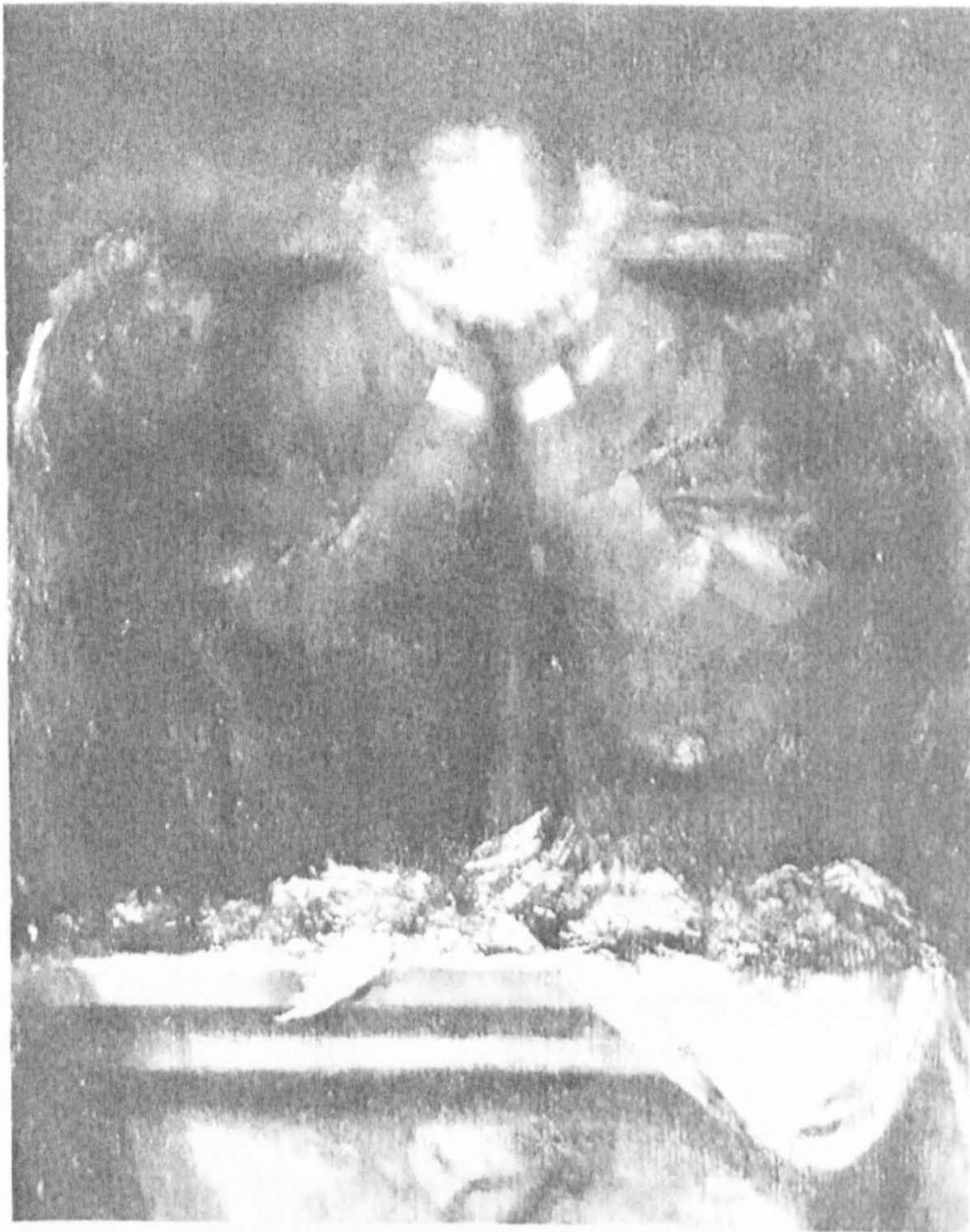


Figure 5.4: 'The Shuddering Angel', NWC, 2 December 1899.

More subtle techniques were adopted elsewhere and we can clearly see how members kept the issue of feathered millinery in the public domain by corresponding with their societies. Appeals were made to the maternal qualities of girls. The BOM reminded girls they had a 'tender woman's heart... that shrinks from inflicting unnecessary pain'.⁹⁸ This was especially apposite, since the choicest feathers were taken from breeding egrets. As twelve-year-old, Millicent Grundy pointed out to BOK members, the killing of adult birds unquestionably condemned their fledglings to death. This vivid portrayal entitled the 'Egret's Letter', stirred emotions. Another BOK member, Isa Nicholson, responded by urging all 'true hearted women and girls' to destroy their plumes and carefully consider the cost in cruelty this finery caused.⁹⁹

Hypocrisy in these environmental campaigns was commonly unearthed and exploited. The RSPB complained of the women who attended church attired in dead birds. This had already been a theme pursued by the DBS. Hilda Wilkins complained to Uncle Toby of the inappropriateness of girls at her Sunday school wearing feathered hats. Wilkins hoped her published letter might persuade them to think again. Certainly the duplicity of singing 'Each little bird that sings, He made their glowing colours, He made their tiny wings' with many of the congregation's bonnets adorned with 'tiny wings' must have been salient.¹⁰⁰

Children could be persuaded not to wear feathers, but in reality, their efforts had little bearing on the millinery industry, whose supporters squared up to the RSPB

⁹⁸ *Band of Mercy*, 141 (September 1890), p. 66.

⁹⁹ *COP*, 18/456 (April 1895), p. 42; 18/457 (May 1895), p. 52.

¹⁰⁰ RSPB: W.H. Hudson, 'Letter to Clergymen, Ministers and others', SPB, Leaflet No. 25 (1895); *NWC*, 27 April 1889; Cecil Frances Alexander, 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' in *The Church Hymnary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), Hymn Number 18, pp. 6-7.

and RSPCA. The children's societies were unlikely to defeat the trade outright, but instead, by raising awareness, demand could be stifled. The RSPB believed that children had a role to play, suggesting that boys could influence their mothers, sisters and friends. For those children seeking employment, there was evidence that the anti-millinery campaign was having an effect. Some feared they would break their society rules if they became apprentices to milliners. Perhaps realising that it was not his position to dictate the employment choices of his charges, Uncle Toby thought that workers should seize upon this opportunity to attempt to influence business practices. By creating 'tiny humanitarians', some of whom would have been too young to make choices about their clothing and spending, the intention was that when these individuals came of age they would make informed choices. For those members actually in employment, the anti-millinery campaign might have influenced their spending decisions.¹⁰¹

Working-Class Recreations

Print culture stimulated fashion; conversely, it could suppress demand. The local press was a tool utilised by the middle classes to shape working-class conduct into acceptable behaviour.¹⁰² For campaigners concerned with the reform of leisure this was especially obvious. Contemporary opinion held the view that the working classes were unruly and in need of moral sanitisation. This was an opinion the middle classes were happy to broadcast. During a debate held by Newcastle Council on the sports of pitmen on the Town Moor, a Mr Richardson concluded that the sportsmen were

¹⁰¹ RSPB: E. Phillips, 'An Appeal to Boys and Girls', SPB Leaflet No. 18 (December 1894); *NWC*, 1 November 1890.

¹⁰² Thompson, 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', p. 200.

'simply the scum of neighbouring villages'.¹⁰³ Given this prejudicial view that working-class leisure required some sort of purging and combined with the sizeable working-class interest in the children's societies, it is therefore not wholly surprising that the societies also targeted their recreations. Two were specifically singled out; blood-sports and aviculture. Moreover, reiterating the argument of Rauch who suggests adults regularly engaged with children's literature, the rationale behind children's societies challenging what were essentially 'adult' activities is obvious. Importantly, as 'family' newspapers hosted the majority of the nature societies then the probability of adults encountering the nature societies' campaigns becomes greater.¹⁰⁴

The keeping of birds in cages had long been a popular pastime for both rich and poor. Exotic birds filled the aviaries of aristocratic gardens and parks and by the mid- nineteenth century, there was a burgeoning trade in canary breeding to supply growing demand, as aviculture became a staple working-class hobby.¹⁰⁵ This was not just a pastime confined to adults. Children were encouraged to keep birds as a form of rational recreation. According to the gardening writer Shirley Hibberd,

The interest that young people take in their welfare should commend such a toy to the domestic circle, and the stern utilitarian may see in it an instrument in the air of education. The introduction to the fireside of a lively scrap from the book of nature is something which better lessons may be learned than from the best if Latin grammars or solemn treatises of physical education.¹⁰⁶

Aviculture might not have concerned conservationists if it was just canaries found in cages. Wild birds were cheaper, used to breed hybrids and readily available

¹⁰³ Storch, 'Problem of Working Class Leisure', pp. 138-42; *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 4 October 1877.

¹⁰⁴ Rauch, 'Parable and Parodies', p. 139.

for the aviaries and decorative birdcages of the middle classes that Hibberd advised were ideal for those seeking rural adornments to create a 'home of taste'.¹⁰⁷ Mayhew described a vibrant industry of street traders selling a wide variety of wild species. He was convinced that the working classes purchased the vast majority, although the children's press also gave frequent guidance for keeping all manner of British birds, indicating this was a common children's pastime.¹⁰⁸ There were differing opinions regarding the legitimacy of keeping birds. Such tensions appeared regularly in the debate that followed. For the urban poor, birds kept in small cages provided a splash of colour and song in desperate living conditions and likewise were an attempt to import a token of the countryside.¹⁰⁹ Mayhew thought this beneficial, having 'humanising and even refining influences' on the lower classes. In these households, an element of decorum prevailed that marked them apart from other working-class homes.¹¹⁰ Despite this evidence, there had been growing opposition to aviculture since the eighteenth century. A distinct line was drawn between the acceptable practice of keeping exotic birds and those who caged wild birds. Marking this is the hesitant advice Hibberd gives for keeping larks. Reticence is also apparent in children's literature. The *Girl's Own Book* denounced the keeping of robins, but then provided guidance for keeping bullfinches and goldfinches.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Sonia Roberts, *Bird-Keeping and Birdcages: A History*, (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1972), pp. 61-85.

¹⁰⁶ As cited in Roberts, *Bird-Keeping*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁷ Shirley Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste and Recreations for Town Folk in the Study and Imitation of Nature*, (1856; repr. London: Century Hutchinson, 1987), pp. 201-51; Roberts, *Bird-Keeping*, p. 68.

¹⁰⁸ Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, II, pp. 58-64; *BOP*, XIV/694, (30 April 1892), p. 494.

¹⁰⁹ Frederick Willis, *101 Jubilee Road: A Book of London Yesterday*, (London: Phoenix House, 1948), p. 50.

¹¹⁰ Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, II, pp. 63-64.

None of the wild bird protection acts specifically controlled aviculture. The only restriction was the 'close season' that prevented taking specific species, although importantly this included goldfinches and siskins, popular cage birds.¹¹²



Figure 5.5: *Band of Mercy*, 225 (September 1897).

¹¹¹ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp. 279-80; Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments*, p. 225; Child, *Girl's Own Book*, pp. 370-78.

¹¹² Sheail, *Nature in Trust*, pp. 25-27.

The nature societies frequently raised opposition to caging wild birds.¹¹³ Illustrations of birds being set free [fig. 5.5] laboured the point, particularly in the BOM magazine, although it is noticeable that the illustration hardly represented the average bird keeper.

This was not just a case of the societies preaching; KHB members eagerly reported their successes in destroying traps. The BOK was particularly vociferous and members debated the issue through the *COP*. Dissenters believed that keeping birds bestowed beneficial qualities on their keepers, mirroring Mayhew's observations, but overall, correspondents agreed with the 'motion' that imprisoning birds was cruel.¹¹⁴ There were good reasons for these protestations. Birds were often displayed in cramped cages and entered into singing competitions, where they were sometimes blinded to encourage better song.¹¹⁵ Birdcatchers scoured the countryside catching thousands of birds to feed the markets where survival rates were appallingly low and non-singing hen birds were destroyed. It was not just catching birds that attracted condemnation, the rhetoric of the PSC report, describing the birdcatchers as a 'very rough lot...and not...the best character', was reminiscent of that used by the RSPCA to denounce workingmen. Despite this accusation, one PSC witness advised against pursuing legislation, believing that any restrictions would be viewed as class legislation.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ *Northern Weekly Leader*, 2 May 1903.

¹¹⁴ *Weekly Telegraph*, 16 February 1889; *COP*, I/19 (9 December 1882), p. 282; II/22 (30 December 1882), p. 28.

¹¹⁵ Baillie, *Shabby Paradise*, p. 36; Turner, *All Heaven in a Rage*, p. 199.

¹¹⁶ *Select Committee on Wild Birds Protection*, 1873, pp. 92, 147-48, 185.

This was exactly what happened. An argument constantly repeated by conservationists was that the confinement of birds, especially larks that were renowned for their uplifting song, was associated with allegories of restricting liberty. This was an older argument that William Blake's *Auguries of Innocence* poem had so forcibly illustrated, particularly 'A robin redbreast in a cage, Puts all Heaven in rage' that Thomas interprets as a warning against the loss of an Englishman's freedom.¹¹⁷ Responding to attacks on their hobby, aviculturists inverted this argument. *Cage Birds* magazine retorted that any ban would undermine notions of English freedom as working-class activities were increasingly censured by individuals more concerned with their own 'sports' and determined to deprive workingmen of the few enjoyments they had left.¹¹⁸ We can see why they felt so aggrieved. Aviculture appeared to fulfil every notion of being the rational recreation the middle classes desperately wanted to promote.

The drive against caged birds hinged not on the difference between the middle classes and the working classes, but reflected divisions within the lower classes. Aviculturists staunchly defended their pastime as a 'pleasant' diversion carried out by 'straight' workingmen and definitely not 'roughs'.¹¹⁹ Such demarcation from undesirable sorts was a clear signal that aviculturists regarded themselves as members of the respectable working class who keenly segregated themselves off from the rest of their class.¹²⁰ Birdcatchers were not without their defenders. The PSC heard that

¹¹⁷ *Band of Mercy*, 43 (July 1882), p. 55; William Blake, 'Auguries of Innocence' in *The Poems of William Blake*, ed. by W.H. Stevenson, (London: Longman, 1971), p. 585; Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp. 279-80.

¹¹⁸ *Cage Birds*, XVII/440 (18 June 1910), p. 559.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, XVII/441 (25 June 1910), p. 577.

¹²⁰ Nadja Durbach, 'They Might As Well Brand Us': Working Class Resistance to Compulsory Vaccination in Victorian England', *Social History of Medicine*, 13/1 (2000), 45-62.

bird-catching provided employment for men of 'very little intellectual capacity', a view the trade shared, observing that trapping provided a valuable winter employment for the poor, sometimes unable to take up any other employment.¹²¹ Yet, this lower working class had few defenders amongst conservationists who held these excuses with contempt. Uncle Toby regarded any form of birdcatching as reprehensible. John Wardle, a Newcastle birdcatcher, protested that he was out of work and had a family to support. Uncle Toby dismissed this defence, caustically observing that burglars seeking to justify their crimes could easily use such excuses.¹²²

The complaints of aviculturists had foundation. One *Animal World* correspondent thought that children and poor people were 'selfish' for seeking pleasure by imprisoning birds. Instead, their pet keeping should be restricted to household animals. This dictatorial opinion clearly worried other RSPCA supporters, who complained of the incongruity of supporters attacking working-class pastimes, whilst maintaining 'their own'. The RSPCA was repeatedly accused of timidity in tackling field sports whilst readily repressing lower-class sports. An acerbic article in the *Fortnightly Review* argued that this prejudice was RSPCA policy. The Society seemingly preferring to remain silent on matters that it knew were supported by its own subscribers.¹²³

One sport was the exception to this wall of silence. This was the shooting of live pigeons sprung from traps. This began in the second half of the eighteenth century

¹²¹ *Select Committee on Wild Birds Protection*, 1873, p. 123; *Cage Birds*, XVII/441 (25 June 1910), p. 577.

¹²² *NWC*, 24 March 1888.

and increased reportage by *Bell's Life* denotes a popularisation from the 1840s that led to public houses and private shooting clubs for gentlemen promoting trap shooting. Its zenith was in the 1870s. A 'Tournament of Doves' at Hurlingham Club attracted both 'debutantes' to admire gentlemen marksmen and a Lords versus Commons match. These social gatherings attracted some of the poorer shots. Birds had feathers pulled out or were blinded, to make easier targets and were shot at from as little as twenty yards.¹²⁴ This cruelty, combined with the belief that fair play was being compromised, led *The Times* to denounce the shoots as 'the stupidest, tamest, lowest form' and the RSPCA called for real gentlemen to forsake the sport.¹²⁵ This sudden willingness of the middle class to intercede, when they had previously ignored other upper-class blood sports, reflected the belief that the slaughter of captive birds contravened the new climate of codified sport.¹²⁶ Trap-shooting matches also took aim at other birds. Although the *NWC* firmly denounced pigeon shooting, the weekday *Daily Chronicle*, which was not edited by Adams, took another line. Regular notices proclaimed shooting matches at public houses, '£1 Prize, 2s Entrance, Sparrows Free'.¹²⁷ This was the real reason why the RSPCA remonstrated. Believing that real sportsmen stayed clear of these bouts, certainly the ones organised for the working classes to shoot at sparrows, it protested safe in the knowledge it was offending few of its real 'sporting' members.

¹²³ *Animal World*, XXVI/314 (November 1895), p. 175; XXXII/385 (October 1901), p. 147; Edward Freeman, 'The Controversy on Field Sports', *Fortnightly Review*, XLVIII (1 December 1870), pp. 674-91.

¹²⁴ Stonehenge, *The Shot Gun and Sporting Rifle: and the Dogs, Ponies, Ferrets etc. used with them in the various kinds of Shooting and Trapping Etc.* (London: Routledge, Warne and Routledge, 1869), pp. 7-8; Turner, *All Heaven in a Rage*, pp. 179-84; Michael Yardley, *Clay Pigeon Shooting: A History*, (UK: Blaze Publishing, 2005), pp. 22-50; *Bell's Life*, 31 August, 1867.

¹²⁵ *The Times*, 21 June 1871; *Animal World*, VIII/91 (2 April 1877), p. 56.

¹²⁶ Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, p. 85.

This was a sport not confined to adults. A teacher of a Northumberland pit-village school recorded his consternation that parents encouraged their children to attend shooting bouts.¹²⁸ However, few of the children's nature societies appeared willing to tackle blood-sports, suggesting they might have been protecting the sensibilities of their young readers. In the case of the RSPCA's BOM, we could also argue that this avoided potential accusations of duplicity. On the other hand, the anxiety of the Northumberland teacher explains why some societies took up the fight against this sport. The DBS criticised the shoots of the upper class Hurlingham Club, but Northumberland was also DBS territory and like many campaigns taken up by the children's societies, these were part of broader fights. The middle classes of Newcastle had protested bitterly about miners using the Town Moor for their blood-sports.¹²⁹ The DBS focussed upon the unquestionable cruelty of the sports, but we can similarly view its work as an extension of the broader campaign to cleanse Newcastle of unsavoury sports carried out by rough miners. DBS members wrote strong letters of protest and one lad posted statistics of birds killed in local shoots. The campaign reached a crescendo in 1883. A bill was presented to outlaw trap-shooting. The self-interest of parliamentarians guaranteed defeat as MPs fretted that legislation would inexorably lead to a ban on field sports. This fractious debate between conservationists and shooting supporters cooled, but condemnatory letters from nature society members and editorials ensured that the campaign continued to simmer in the newspapers.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 30 October 1885.

¹²⁸ NRO, CES198/1/7: Newbiggin-by-the-Sea School logbook, 18 March 1898.

¹²⁹ Alan Metcalfe, 'Organised Sport in the Mining Communities of South Northumberland, 1800-1889', *Victorian Studies*, 25 (1982), 469-95.

Given his Chartist and republican pedigree, which led Adams to use his newspaper to attack aristocratic excesses in 1871, it is unsurprising he pursued a campaign against the Hurlingham shoots. However, the majority of newspaper society members were drawn from the working classes, and the *NWC* was renowned as the 'Pit-man's Bible'. It also suggests that Adams was comfortable in reproving the pastimes of many of his readers. Indeed, the DBS column went out of its way to promote the opinion that cruelty was more prevalent in colliery villages, and encouraged members to enrol pit-boys, hence creating young workers to convert their elders.¹³¹ The unsympathetic dismissal of evidently desperate measures by the poor to support their families and deliberate targeting of pit-villages was incongruous with Adams' usual support for the working class. It suggests that his deep-seated hatred of cruelty overrode any empathy he had for working-class leisure, but it also partially reflected his personal prejudice of the 'shiftless poor' and their improvident lifestyle.¹³²

Roberts suggests that the popularity of aviculture peaked in the 1860s. The conservation furore and the growth of alternative leisure attractions had seen a decline in the pastime's popularity by the late nineteenth century. However, the heavy campaigning by conservationists, suggests it retained entrenched devotees. Evidence of this continued popularity amongst children is found in *Cage Birds*. A special feature encouraged young enthusiasts, and many children sent letters to the nature societies describing their birds. These were often wild birds, and although such

¹³⁰ *Hansard*, 3/CCLXXVI, c. 1659-61 (7 March 1883); *NWC*, 10 February 1883; 26 April 1890; *Berwick Journal*, 7 March 1895.

¹³¹ Ashton, *W.E. Adams*, p. 112; *NWC*, 13 October 1877; 20 October 1877.

¹³² Ashton, *W.E. Adams*, p. 67.

correspondents received short shrift from some societies, others, such as the *Little Folks* Nature Club in 1909, willingly dispensed advice for keeping blackbirds.¹³³

Progressive Conservation Work for Children

Many conservation campaigns were long and drawn out and showed little sign of success. Even ardent campaigners against the feathered millinery trade were admitting a 'sense of exhaustion' in 1897 after striving for many years to combat demand. This particular debate dragged on until the importation trade was eventually banned in 1921, when even the DBS had lost interest.¹³⁴ Children, by contrast, had even shorter attention spans and quickly outgrew their societies. Therefore, they needed to be quickly engaged in project work that delivered instant results. The nature society campaigns constantly encouraged children to develop affection for birds, but the *Preston Guardian* was worried that this might prove counterproductive and that new 'bird lovers' would express their fondness for birds by becoming 'bird gaolers', that is, keeping birds in cages. The newspaper urged their readers to express kindness in other ways. One solution, the *Auckland Chronicle* ventured, lay in feeding the birds. This would not only provide a 'delightful source of entertainment' but would also do away with the need to cage birds.¹³⁵ This was also a practical and immediate means of fulfilling pledges, especially for timid or younger children unable to stop trappers and collectors, and it paved the way for children to develop an appreciation of the natural world.

¹³³ Roberts, *Bird-Keeping*, pp. 68-69; *Cage Birds*, XI/156 (7 January 1905), p. 711; *Northern Weekly Leader*, 2 May 1903; *Little Folks*, 69 (1909), p. 305.

¹³⁴ *The Times*, 31 December 1897; *An Act to prohibit the importation of Plumage*, 11 and 12 George VI, C.16, (1 July 1921).

The practice of providing food to birds during the winter for humanitarian reasons had been gradually growing. Early nineteenth-century correspondence between John Dovaston and Thomas Bewick describes a bird-feeding device, copied by Dovaston's neighbours. Allen argues that although *The Times*' readers were urged to feed the birds by the conservationist F.O. Morris in 1877, it was not until the hard winter of 1890-91 that the practice became truly widespread.¹³⁶ Evidence from the nascent children's magazine press contradicts this. In the 1820s there were regular articles urging readers to feed the birds in winter, suggesting this was a well-established practice.¹³⁷ As soon as the DBS launched, members were called upon to 'put out crumbs' and construct nestboxes. Uncle Toby told his members that feeding was essential during cold weather and boxes would supplement habitat loss. The campaign to get children to construct nestboxes was restricted to the early 1880s. Adams blatantly blackmailed his younger members into constructing boxes, suggesting that Santa Claus was secretary to the 'Uncle Toby Box Committee' noting all those who erected boxes.¹³⁸ This use of 'Santa Claus' suggests that younger children were being targeted, and adds weight to the evidence that point to these societies recruiting pre-pubescent children.

¹³⁵ *Preston Guardian*, 4 May 1895; *Auckland Chronicle*, 25 January 1912.

¹³⁶ D.E. Allen, 'J.F.M. Dovaston: An Overlooked Pioneer of Field Ornithology', *The Journal of the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History*, 4 (1962-68), 277-83.

¹³⁷ *The Child's Companion or Sunday Scholars Reward*, 4/25 (January 1826), p. 5.

¹³⁸ *NWC*, 14 October 1876; 27 January 1877; 6 December 1879; 13 March 1880; 30 April 1881.

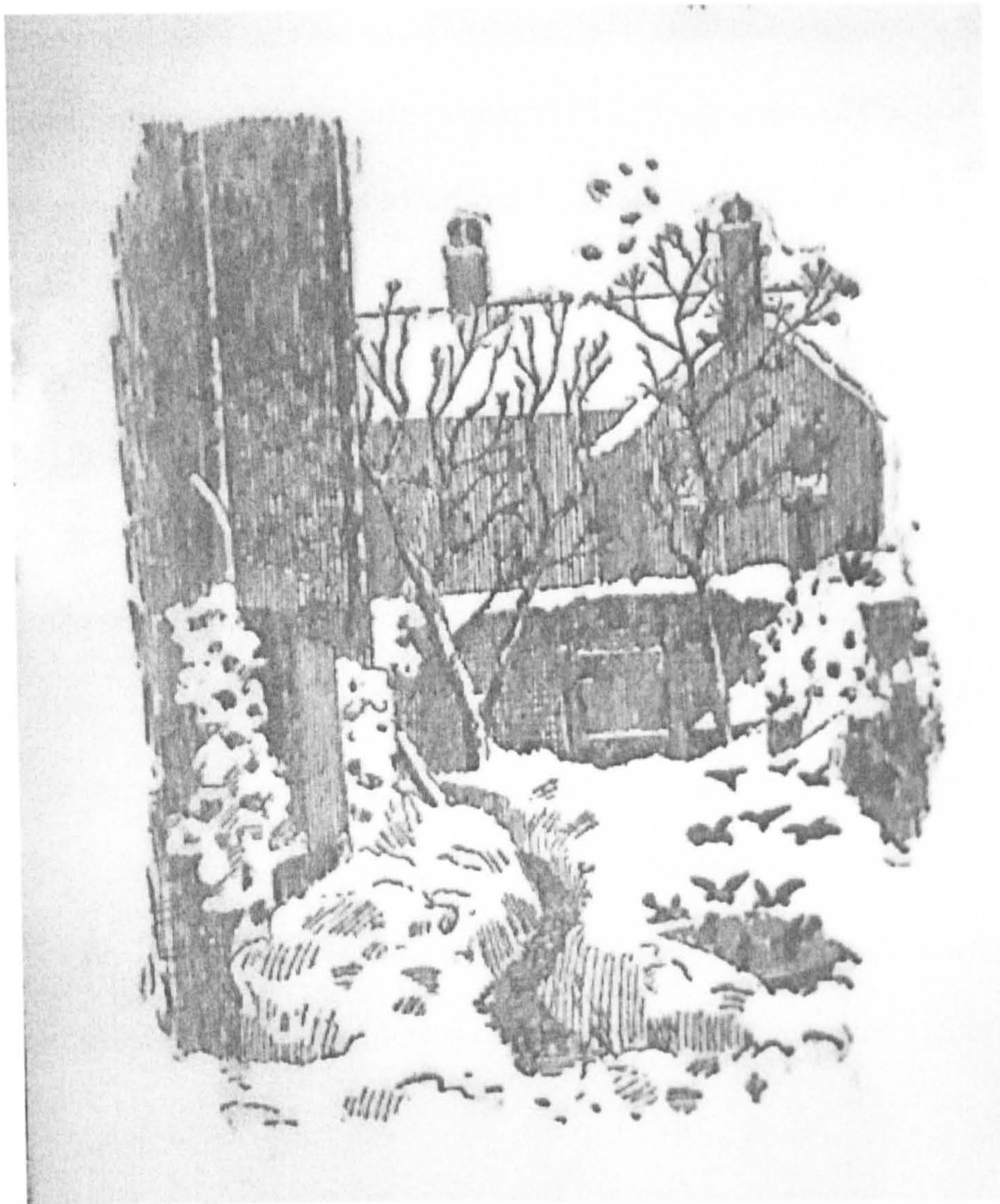


Figure 5.6: 'A Backyard in Newcastle'. NWC, 13 March 1886.

Demands to feed the birds were constant and heartfelt rhetoric and sketches were used to encourage children. Illustrations of birds coming to feed in snow-cleared backyards [fig. 5.6] supported reports of birds left frozen by sudden snowstorms in March 1886. Other societies might have balked at engaging with some of the more contentious conservation campaigns, but the overwhelming majority encouraged bird feeding.¹³⁹ This was easily done, as bread was apparently the main food given to birds. Despite some accounts of working-class deprivation in the early 1900s,

increased economic affluence meant that shortages in food were becoming rare. From the last quarter of the nineteenth century bread was a cheap staple of the working-class child's diet and seemingly given on demand.¹⁴⁰ Gradually more nutritional bird food was provided, and recipes for 'puddings for the dickies' that used waste food were printed in the early 1900s.¹⁴¹ This was not just a case of children being preached to. It is evident that providing bird food and constructing nestboxes truly seized individuals' enthusiasm. Correspondents from very different social classes describe how they were providing food and erecting boxes.¹⁴² Dover workhouse children wrote to Uncle Toby telling him how they provided crumbs from the dining hall for the birds, whilst honorary member Florence Nightingale described her London garden birds.¹⁴³ The promotion of 'feeding the dickies' suggests a childish or feminine activity, but by 1906 even publications such as the *BOP* were encouraging their readers to construct an 'open air' aviary and take pleasure in watching visitors.¹⁴⁴

By 1910, bird feeding and providing nestboxes appeared to have become routine. As an indication of this, an industry had grown up to produce birdtables, seed-hoppers, and birdbaths to satisfy public demand. Even in 1914, there were still reminders to provide food, despite the war.¹⁴⁵ However, there remains the question as to whether this was mainly a metropolitan practice promoted by town dwellers wanting to reconnect with nature. When the naturalist W.H. Hudson visited Cornwall

¹³⁹ *NWC*, 13 March 1886; *Portsmouth Times*, 3 November 1900; *Northern Weekly Gazette*, 6 January 1900.

¹⁴⁰ Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in The First Quarter of the Century*, (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 102-11; D.J. Oddy, 'A Nutritional Analysis of Historical Evidence: The Working Class Diet, 1880-1914', in *The Making of the Modern British Diet*, ed by Derek Oddy and Derek Miller, (London: Croom Helm, 1976), pp 214-31 (p. 219).

¹⁴¹ *Auckland Chronicle*, 5 February 1914; *NWC*, 9 February 1907.

¹⁴² *Cambrian*, 5 May 1899; *NWC*, 8 May 1880.

¹⁴³ *NWC*, 7 April 1886; *British Journal of Nursing*, 81/1978 (May 1933), pp. 140-41.

in 1905, he thought that the locals seemed bemused by him providing crusts for the birds.¹⁴⁶ Such puzzlement might stem from the fact that wild birds remained an important constituent of diet for the rural poor, and wasting food on what was potential fare, would of course have seemed strange. As Flora Thompson recalled, sparrow pudding was a popular fare in her village.¹⁴⁷ The DBS and BOM waged a campaign against eating small birds. This also targeted the upper classes, as larks in particular were a favourite of gourmets.¹⁴⁸ The evidence from the newspapers regarding bird feeding is conflicting. Most urban newspapers heavily promoted the practice to their young readers, but so did newspapers serving rural readers, such as the *Hexham Courant*.¹⁴⁹ It is possible that the Hexham paper merely copied the opinions of the influential DBS, and instead the lack of any support for bird feeding in the *Norwich Mercury* or *Cable* reflected the true opinion of country dwellers as to even this seemingly benign pastime.

Why should feeding birds enthuse children? Certain species share a highly aesthetic appeal. The robin had long held almost talismanic qualities and from the mid-nineteenth century began appearing on Christmas cards. Robins commonly featured in appeals for food, and it is easy to see the practical benefits for both bird and child. The practice retained devotional connotations, so members of the BOK were told they had a pious duty to help God's creatures. *Little Folks* chose to appeal to sentimental feelings, and in particular those of its female readers, by advising them

¹⁴⁴ BOP, XXIX/1452, (10 November 1906), p. 96.

¹⁴⁵ Allen, *Naturalist in Britain*, p. 210; NWC, 17 October 1914.

¹⁴⁶ W.H. Hudson, *The Land's End: A Naturalist's Impressions in West Cornwall*, (London: Dent, 1923), p. 13.

¹⁴⁷ Thompson, *Lark Rise*, p. 153.

¹⁴⁸ NWC, 20 January 1894; *Band of Mercy*, 203 (November 1895), p. 87; Kean, *Animal Rights*, pp. 120-21.

that if the birds were fed in the winter then they repaid this kindness by 'singing their sweetest songs'.¹⁵⁰ The supreme requirement of any rational recreation was education.¹⁵¹ Bird feeding certainly met this, as societies urged their members to keep notebooks of the birds visiting feeding stations and children described how they were able to study the behaviour of various birds at close range. With regard to nestboxes, there was no suggestion that they were being used for anything other than conservation. Indeed, the *Bristol Guardian* was of the opinion that 'the more we study the habits of our feathered friends, the more consideration we shall have for them and their protection'.¹⁵²

However, anyone attempting to feed the birds in some of the heavily industrialised conurbations was unlikely to find much success. Industrial activity on the banks of the Tyne had left 'no thrushes or blackbirds...visible, as owing to alkali and other fumes there is not a green tree left in the neighbourhood'.¹⁵³ In this denuded habitat, we can see why inhabitants of such areas valued their brightly-coloured caged birds. Nevertheless, a heavy element of scepticism sometimes met the entreaties for the working classes to feed the birds. One commentator viewed these calls as a blatant attempt to make the poor give up their caged birds and questioned the worthiness of

¹⁴⁹ *Hexham Courant*, 3 March 1883.

¹⁵⁰ Mark Cocker and Richard Mabey, *Birds Britannica*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 2005), pp. 335-39; *COP*, XI/262 (6 August 1887), p. 85; *Little Folks*, 69 (1909), p. 144.

¹⁵¹ Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, p. 68.

¹⁵² *Bradford Weekly Telegraph*, 14 January 1910; *People's Journal*, 14 February 1914; *Bristol Guardian*, 26 November 1910.

¹⁵³ NURL, Medical Tracts v. 54/iii: Dennis Embleton, *Note on the Birds seen at Nest House, Felling Shore, in May and June 1884*, (Newcastle: Bell, 1884).

feeding 'linnets in Limehouse and robins in Rotherhithe... whilst cats crouch ready'.¹⁵⁴

Opposition to the Nature Conservation Movement

Despite this attack on the methods of conservationists, there is little evidence of direct hostility to the children's societies. To understand how their operations were received, we need to examine reactions to the work of the RSPCA and RSPB. Bird feeding met its greatest opposition from agriculturalists. By the mid-nineteenth century, empirical evidence indicated that many bird species were valuable in combating insect pests, and the number of species castigated as 'vermin' had rapidly declined.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the house sparrow retained its verminous image. Combined with the agricultural decline of 1870 to 1890, which had been sparked by poor summer weather and the general economic depression, attitudes towards the bird hardened. Calls for its extermination, prompted by the growing tide of protectionism, led to farmers resurrecting 'sparrow clubs' in the 1890s and entreaties to the public not to feed the birds.¹⁵⁶

Children were partly culpable for this rise in pests, according to the Board of Agriculture. Blame was laid at the door of the schooling system for withdrawing rural

¹⁵⁴ Anon, *Narrow Waters: The First Volume of the Life and Thoughts of a Common Man*, (London: Hodge, 1935), pp. 107-108.

¹⁵⁵ John Donaldson, *The Enemies to Agriculture*, (London: Baldwin, 1847), p. 88; Fissell, 'Imagining Vermin in Early Modern England', pp. 1-29.

¹⁵⁶ *Select Committee on Wild Birds Protection*, 1873, pp. 219-55; Michael Tracy, *Government and Agriculture in Western Europe 1880-1988*, (New York: New York University Press, 1989), pp. 41-53; J.F. McDiarmid Clark, 'Eleanor Ormerod (1828-1901) As an Economic Entomologist: 'A Pioneer of Purity Even More Than of Paris Green'', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 25 (1992), 431-52 (pp. 447-51).

children from farm work; additionally the Board was certain that children had been frightened away from egg-collecting by conservationists publicising the protection laws.¹⁵⁷ On the contrary, the children's societies believed that they had a duty to defend birds against accusations they were agricultural pests, and tactics included printing mock 'petitions' supposedly from birds promoting their usefulness and entreaties purportedly from 'Cock Robin, Jenny Wren, Tom Tit and Billy Biter' to 'gardeners, farmers and fathers'.¹⁵⁸ This urge to defend sparrows had deep roots. The species had long been imbued with religious imagery by the children's press to encourage kindness to animals. The early Sunday school magazines repeatedly published the biblical quotation, 'Not a sparrow falleth to the ground, without my Father's will'.¹⁵⁹ Sparrows have a ubiquitous presence and a willingness to come to birdtables, leading them to become possibly the only bird familiar to urban children living in high-density housing. As evidence of this, and the persuasiveness of the DBS campaign, one member reported to Uncle Toby, 'I live at Hebburn Colliery and there are no little birds here except sparrows, it is so smoky. We put out crumbs in the mornings'.¹⁶⁰ Town dwellers staunchly defended their birds and passed these opinions onto children by creating sentimental images of the sparrow. Ernest Seton-Thompson's storybook championed these 'Street Troubadours' and the BOM earnestly appealed for the 'sparrows of the London squares' to be fed during cold weather.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ *Journal of the Board of Agriculture*, XIII (April 1906-March 1907), pp. 665-66.

¹⁵⁸ *COP*, XIV/373 (21 September 1889), p. 605.

¹⁵⁹ *The Child's Companion*, 59 (November 1828), p. 343.

¹⁶⁰ *NWC*, 3 March 1877.

¹⁶¹ Ernest Seton-Thompson, *Lives of the Hunted. Containing True Account of the Doings of Five Quadrupeds and Three Birds*, (London: Nutt, 1901), pp. 12; 109-36; *Band of Mercy*, 72 (December 1884), pp. 91-93.

It is noticeable that although the children's column of the *Newcastle Courant* had made an issue of defending sparrows, its Humane Society lasted just twelve months. The main audience for this paper had always been the farming community, a detail emphasised when the *Courant* merged with the *North of England Farmer* in 1876. Its agricultural column called for control of the 'Dicky Bird Pest' and it is probable that this was direct incitement against the *Courant's* rival, the *NWC*, which of course hosted the DBS and defended sparrows.¹⁶² The commercial viability of a publication was highly dependant on meeting the needs of its readers. Misjudging their opinions could have fatal consequences for a newspaper. The *Daily Leader* took a pro-Boer stance during the South African War. This miscalculation proved disastrous, causing lost advertising revenue and ultimately the collapse of the newspaper itself.¹⁶³ The opinions of a newspaper regarding sparrows were hardly in the same category as war; nevertheless, as the *Courant* demonstrates, care was taken. This was also complicated, as not all children's societies constantly promoted protection. Uncle John of the *Leeds Times* thought birds who 'came without any invitation to dinner' in the garden could be destroyed since they were breaking the Eighth Commandment.¹⁶⁴

Advocates of sparrow killing had an unlikely champion in the figure of the entomologist, Eleanor Ormerod. In 1885, in a letter to *The Times*, she called for sparrows to be 'lessened'.¹⁶⁵ This immediately met with opposition, and the children's societies were used to personally rebut contentious issues. Sister Mercy called for to a

¹⁶² *Newcastle Courant*, 18 September 1885, 15 February 1890; Milne, *Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, pp. 134-35.

¹⁶³ Plouman, 'Developments in the Newspaper Press', pp. 33-36.

¹⁶⁴ *Leeds Times*, 5 December 1891.

'higher authority' to settle the fate of sparrows.¹⁶⁶ Empirical evidence suggested that cereal crops formed upwards of eighty percent of a sparrow's diet, enabling agriculturalists to pour scorn on the main defence of conservationists that sparrows were useful insectivores. The apogee of the pest-control campaign was the formation of the Incorporated Society for the Destruction of Vermin [ISDV] in 1908 and the creation of a National Rat (and Sparrow) Killing Competition that aimed to fight a 'war of extermination'.¹⁶⁷ This led to anxiety from conservationists that much of their education work would be unravelled when children were paid cash for sparrow kills. The RSPB worked to educate rural children about birds and was especially concerned about these bounties for 'spadgers', the generic name given to miscellaneous birds. Given this, there was alarm that all birds falling under this definition would be killed in the quest for reward. Underlining the middle-class belief in working-class brutality, the RSPB observed that the 'average village boy needs perhaps little encouragement' to kill.¹⁶⁸ Given their vested interests it was obvious why agriculturalists attacked conservationists, who then heavily overstated the case for the sparrow. Even the *Children's Magazine* observed that 'bird-lovers try to discredit the evidence that farmers bring'.¹⁶⁹

Opinions were polarised. Criticising the conservationists, William Tegetmeier, incongruously a British Ornithologists' Union member, undermined their arguments by suggesting a climate of 'maudlin sentimentality' for birds had been created. It is

¹⁶⁵ Stephanie Pain, 'Miss Eleanor's Shilling', *New Scientist*, 172/2316 (2001), 48-49; *The Times*, 13 January 1885.

¹⁶⁶ *Hexham Herald*, 7 March 1885.

¹⁶⁷ *Journal of the Board of Agriculture*, IX (June 1902-March 1903), pp. 338-42; *Journal of the Incorporated Society for the Destruction of Vermin*, I/1 (October 1908), pp. 53-57.

¹⁶⁸ *NWC*, 19 September 1908; *Bird Notes and News*, III/5 (25 March 1909), pp. 57-59.

¹⁶⁹ *Children's Magazine*, 8 (1914), p. 539.

not hard to see how this opinion came about as he seized upon the inconsistency of conservationists who would protest if birds were poisoned, but 'would poison rats... with great pleasure'. Obviously, everyone regarded rats as vermin, and when the ISDV urged their destruction, there was no condemnation.¹⁷⁰ Tegetmeier was drawing attention to the distinction conservationists drew between the feathered and furred. Dissent was raised when aesthetically pleasing sparrows were destroyed, but there was silence regarding reviled rats.

Many of their opponents applied this 'sentimentalist' tag to conservationists. Sir Herbert Maxwell, in opposing the 1883 trap-shooting bill, spoke for many MPs, when he concluded the bill to be the work of 'sickly philanthropists who would not be content until the youth of this country proceeded forth on the bloodless bicycles'.¹⁷¹ As conservationists used the press to denounce practices and sports that did not meet with their approval, so the press was used to support the cases of those groups who felt threatened. The sporting press was jubilant when the 1883 bill was rejected and it rounded upon the 'sickly sentimentalists' thought to be 'trifling with Parliament'.¹⁷² The millinery trade's attack was wider and might well have been aimed at the campaigns organised by the children's societies. The *Millinery Record* denounced the 'tearful letters' to newspapers. The conclusion of many of these complainants was that those who protested were ignorant of the facts.¹⁷³ This is probably correct with regard to the majority of the members of the children's societies, who were guided by their

¹⁷⁰ *The Field*, 2730 (22 April 1905), p. 677; *Journal of the Incorporated Society for the Destruction of Vermin*, 1/1 (October 1908), pp. 53-57.

¹⁷¹ *Hansard*, 3/CCLXXVI, c. 1660 (7 March 1883); Sheail, *Nature in Trust*, p.28. The contradictory interests of parliamentarians curiously led Maxwell to introduce the bill that led to the 1894 Act to protect birds' eggs.

¹⁷² *Bell's Life in London*, 18 August 1883.

¹⁷³ *Millinery Record*, 2/23 (5 January 1898), p. 228.

leaders' jaundiced beliefs, although elsewhere in the press, alternative information was offered.

Complaints from vested interests would be expected. More surprising was the reaction of esteemed conservationists who appeared utterly ungrateful for the public's concern for birds. Alfred Newton thought those who debated animal cruelty in newspapers were meddlesome and lacked expertise, observing that 'our wild animals have no reason to be grateful to their ordinary defenders in the newspapers'.¹⁷⁴ Newton advised on the bird protection laws of the 1870s and in 1893 attempted to steer MPs considering the egg protection bills. For correspondents to *The Times* and elsewhere he was convinced that 'people will gush and be sentimental, and as I found out before, when I had to do with the Bird Protection Bills in Parliament, the sentimentalists gave far more trouble than anyone else'.¹⁷⁵ Here was one individual who distrusted the work of newspapers, preferring such work to be left to 'experts' such as him. Given his complaint, it is evident that the newspapers were responsible for pushing the debate further forward than he would have preferred. Especially contentious was the 1894 Wild Bird Act, which protected individual species, rather than conserving important sites and allowing boys to continue to collect as Newton had originally wished. Despite his misgivings, it is salient to note that although in 1900 Newton was still convinced that the 'silly sentimentalists' were to blame for poorly-thought out legislation, he admitted that it had led to an increase in the

¹⁷⁴ RSPB, *Annual Report 1893, Appendix*, pp. 24-31.

¹⁷⁵ A.F.R. Wollaston, *Life of Alfred Newton: Professor of Comparative Anatomy, Cambridge University, 1866-1907*, (London: Murray, 1921), pp. 146-53.

populations of several bird species. This included the great crested grebe, previously hunted remorselessly for its eggs and head plumes.¹⁷⁶

Stories and Pictures for Children

It is not difficult to see why the 'sentimentalist' tag was applied. The literature of the nature societies frequently carried mawkish stories and illustrations. These played on tales of animals, and had an equally important role in altering perceptions of wildlife and complemented the hard facts of the conservation campaigns. Children's literature from Aesop had commonly featured talking animals.¹⁷⁷ These stories were not actually very popular with children, but adults believed they were 'improving in some way, pointing oblique and therefore palatable morals, or helping one's nature study along'.¹⁷⁸ Evidently, we can see why the nature societies invested heavily in this literature. The BOM specialised in these narratives, indicative of an attempt to target young children. It is also easy to visualise older siblings or parents reading these stories to such individuals. Here, the reader engages with the literature, and by reading aloud to a child, a heightened sense of responsibility develops, as the older reader becomes, in the eyes of the child, the author.¹⁷⁹

In twelve issues of the 1897 *Band of Mercy*, thirteen creatures and even plants narrate thirty-three stories about fauna and flora. These tales naturally have some

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 153-54; Cocker and Mabey, *Birds Britannica*, p. 7.

¹⁷⁷ Tess Cosslett, 'Child's Place in Nature: Talking Animals in Victorian Children's Fiction', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 23 (2002), 475-95.

¹⁷⁸ Margaret Blount, *Animal Land: The Creatures of Children's Fiction*, (London: Hutchinson, 1974), p. 15.

¹⁷⁹ Rauch, 'Parable and Parodies', p. 139.

moral purpose and it is noticeable that the majority of the main 'characters' are familiar and appealing creatures, with dogs and cats predominating, suggesting a deliberate attempt to influence good pet husbandry. Birds feature ten times, including a timely placed story by 'Robin Redbreast' in the January issue who warns 'it is unlucky to kill me'.¹⁸⁰ Therefore, this literature was more than just 'improving'. The plots and metaphors of this genre created emotional responses and moral concern within the reader that made them 'care about the fate of...non-human characters'.¹⁸¹ Such a response was intended by the BOM story of 'Dickie' the chicken, who is tortured and stoned by boys, and has Hogarthian rhetoric. The tale concludes with the ringleader of the perpetrators recalling that Dickie's death had forced him to mend his ways to become a 'good man'.¹⁸²

These features also attempted to attribute human mentalities and intelligence to animals by means of applying the expression 'sagacity' to define a level of intelligence among animals. This measurement did not assess intelligent mental power, but instead 'the ability to adapt to human surroundings and to please people'. The most sagacious animals were the best servants; again, the dog featured highly in accounts of sagacious behaviour, most notably the RSPCA's romantic tale of *Greyfriars Bobby*.¹⁸³ Other articles also recounted tales of other creatures helping each other in difficulty. Implausible stories related ducks helping other ducks trapped in ice, wounded birds carried to safety by other birds, and cows pulling each other from mud.¹⁸⁴ Like many of the stories carried by the children's societies, there was a moral

¹⁸⁰ *Band of Mercy*, XIX (1897).

¹⁸¹ Armitage, 'Bird Day for Kids', p. 541.

¹⁸² *Band of Mercy*, 228 (December 1897), p. 102.

¹⁸³ Ritvo, *Animal Estate*, pp. 36-38; Kean, *Animal Rights*, pp. 84-88.

¹⁸⁴ *Band of Mercy*, 25 (January 1881), p. 2; 71 (November 1884), p. 85; 116 (August 1888), p. 63.

attached to these anthropomorphic tales imbuing animals with human compassion. This reflected the content of the RSPCA's periodicals that worked to stress the 'kinship' between animals and humans, that would, it was hoped, reduce cruelty.¹⁸⁵

Such narratives were not the preserve of the BOM, and although the content of the newspaper societies' literature was grittier, they also used animal stories, which promoted their wider objectives of fostering munificence among their members. Accounts of so-called 'lower creatures' being benevolent to each other were presented as an example to encourage humans to treat each other with respect. There were the stories of animals that helped humans in distress, such as the dog that saved a child from a house fire. Clearly, the moralistic message gained from these tales was that children should be kind to animals at all times, for they never could be sure when assistance might be called upon.¹⁸⁶ These tales suggest they were for younger members of the societies. The child read the article simply for its worth as a story rather than its didactic objective, but subconsciously developed respect for animals. Seemingly, any type of imaginary tale was used to press the animal welfare agenda, as the Guild of Gentleness story of a fairy anxiously avoiding a birdcatchers' birdlimed sticks shows.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Harrison, 'Press and Pressure Group', p. 283.

¹⁸⁶ *Manchester Weekly Times*, 9 March 1889.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 21 November 1890.



Figure 5.7: Band of Mercy, 218 (February 1897), p. 9.

Although they could not match the circulation levels of the newspapers, both *Band of Mercy* magazine and *Little Folks* had one advantage. As magazines, they were much better produced. On high-grade paper, stories and poems were interspersed with quality engravings and a small number of photographs that presented a well-spaced and attractive layout. This was in contrast to the newspaper societies, as even after the new journalism reforms, they were printed in dense small point text. *Band of Mercy* had a great tendency to rely on sentimentally romantic illustrations. These conveyed careful messages, as ‘Happy Children, Happy Pets, and Happier Mother’ more than demonstrates [fig 5.7]. Equally the front cover of the January *Band of Mercy* in 1897 titled ‘Trial of Faith and Hope’ [fig. 5.8] that depicted fluffed-up birds

in thick snow with an empty feeding dish demanded sympathy and action for the evidently pathetic creatures.

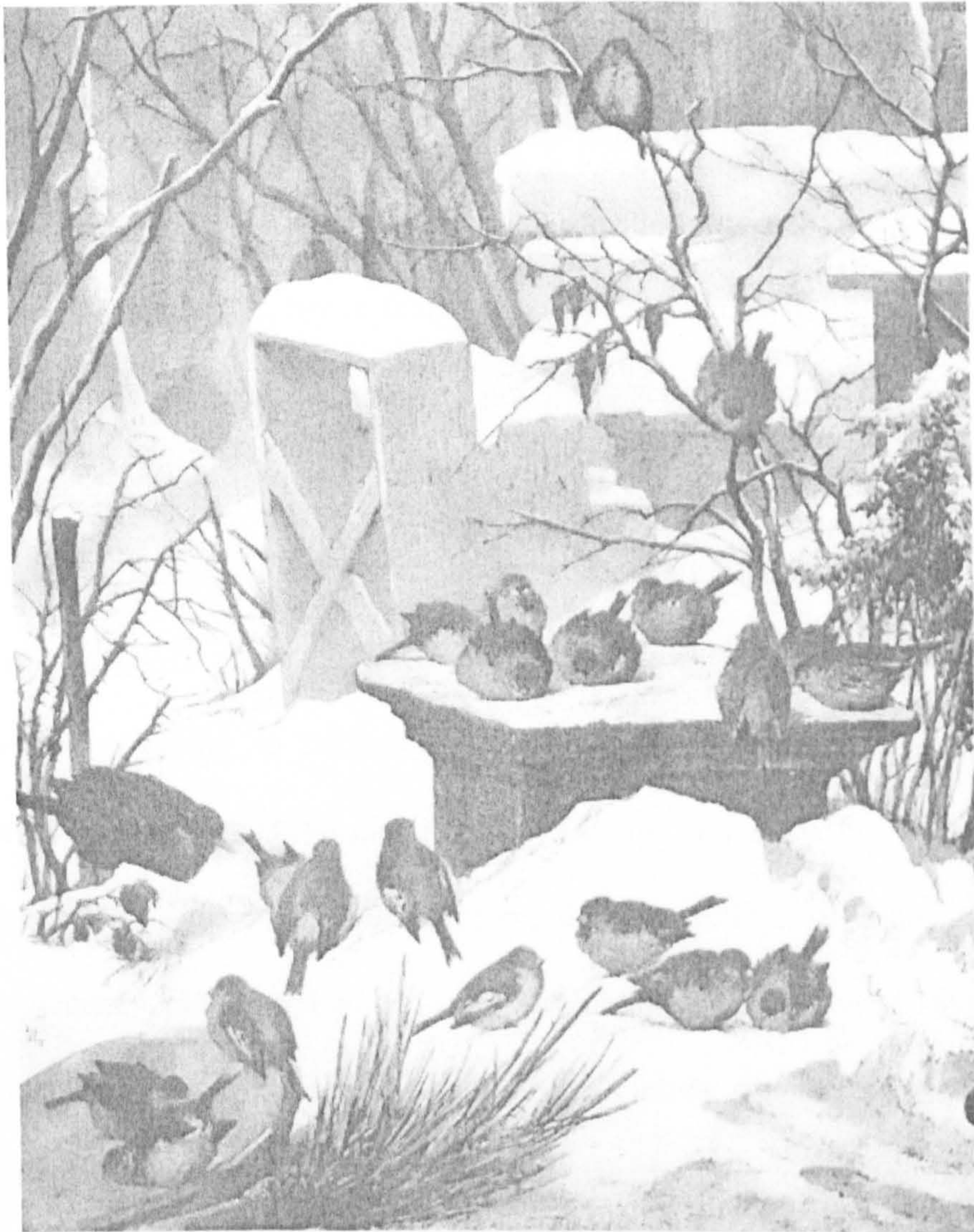


Figure 5.8: Band of Mercy, 217 (January 1897).

Such illustrations were thick with maudlin sentimentality, but we should not dismiss them. They made *Band of Mercy* visually appealing and evidently, they were deliberate attempts to create an affectionate impression of living things in order to foster sympathy from young children especially. These illustrations have a further quality. They speak to the illiterate or poorly educated, including adults.

Conclusion

Public opinion and masculine ideology were clearly swinging towards a more appreciative mindset towards birds and animals. In 1905, Hurlingham Club members challenged their fellow members' decision to halt pigeon shooting. Justice Joyce adjudicated, observing, 'In 1868 the practice of shooting pigeons from traps was considered a manly sport.... Since then times and manners had changed, and people were perhaps more humane. Now many not irrational persons... considered pigeon shooting to be a barbarous pastime'.¹⁸⁸ Not just a minority of private club members clung to older beliefs. 'Experts', such as Newton, resorted to calling the concerned public 'sentimentalists'. Newton failed to see his work was limited to advising on legislation and speaking to educated audiences, and besides, his estimation that legislation to protect eggs would simply 'fill the gaols with little boys' was questionable.¹⁸⁹ As this chapter has shown, the convictions of many children ran ahead of legislators, clearly not all boys were cruel and the new law of 1894 would not have troubled all children. The children's societies not only publicised such legalisation, but also worked to ensure its effectiveness by offering progressive conservation.

It was all very well advocating that children should not egg-collect, trap or keep birds in cages, but alternative amusement was needed. The range of activities presented worked well to create the 'tiny humanitarian' and were taken up by children of their own free will, not subject to watchful adults. Some children stopped bird-nesting, catapult use or destroyed bird traps. For others, there was bird feeding, that

might not have matched the adventure of exploring the countryside and the illicit enjoyment of torturing a small creature, but as the many children's letters illustrate, they took part with enthusiasm. These activities were valuable conservation work and fostered a paternal interest in birds that undoubtedly affected attitudes. There are definite indications of this. In 1914, the League of Love attempted to arrange a caged bird competition. Uncle Frank wanted this to promote an interest in pets, but he had to cancel the event, observing that he had 'incorrectly interpreted the feelings of our young folk'.¹⁹⁰ This forced cancellation suggests in this case the newspaper being required to follow rather than lead opinion and marks a waning of aviculture. It would be wrong to say that all the conservation issues had been similarly solved. This chapter has highlighted the many tensions between environmentalists and their opponents that continually surfaced in the popular press.

Joining and working for a nature society was largely a voluntary activity, but voluntarism and the lack of overseeing adults had a negative impact. The many attempts to provide wholesome activities for children rarely worked entirely as the roughs, who were the primary source of concern, avoided them.¹⁹¹ Therefore, in order to engage with all classes of children, it was productive to watch over them and direct compulsory schemes. Schools, with their authoritarian teachers and rules, were ideal.

¹⁸⁸ *The Times*, 22 May 1905; 23 February 1906

¹⁸⁹ *Select Committee on Wild Birds Protection*, 1873, pp. 38-39.

¹⁹⁰ *Portsmouth Times*, 24 April 1914.

¹⁹¹ Springhall, *Coming of Age*, p. 111.

CHAPTER SIX

Our "Corner" in the Schools: Animal Welfare Campaigns into Schools

The Lord Chancellor, Lord Herschell, during debate of the proposed egg protection measures in 1893, underlined the fallibility of newspapers publicising legislation, noting that 'boys who are in the habit of going birds'-nesting would probably not be likely to read advertisements in the newspapers'. Far more productive, Herschell suggested, were notices in schools, but this sensible proposal was not adopted.¹ Yet, 'Our "Corner" in the Schools' was a frequent feature in the DBS column. This detailed the extensive work the Society was doing in conjunction with teachers and their pupils.² As this chapter will argue, schools *were* targeted by conservationists to ensure that prohibitions on animal cruelty, including bird-nesting, were brought to the attention of recalcitrant boys.

As the tentative educational work begun by the RSPCA demonstrates, working with schools had long been an ambition of the animal protectionists. This helped them overcome several limitations to their activities so far. For instance, the majority of newspaper societies were hosted by publications with strong political affiliations. This ostensibly limited their briefs to the children of parents with like-minded political persuasions. As noted, cost sometimes barred the poorest from BOM meetings, therefore restricting the dissemination of the RSPCA's manifesto. The practical conservation work advocated by the societies relied upon children's goodwill, and

¹ *Hansard*, 4/XII, c. 1700 (1 June 1893); *Act to amend the Wild Birds Protection Act, 1880*, (20 July 1894).

² RSPCA, *11th Annual Report 1837*, p. 90; *NWC*, 16 August 1879.

was often seasonal. For instance, drives to prevent bird-nesting centred on springtime and bird-feeding was associated with winter. Much better, were activities that bypassed this seasonality and could be undertaken within the controlling environment of schools. Compulsory school attendance was introduced in 1880 and free education followed a year later. By the 1900s for the majority of children, under the age of fourteen, formal schooling occupied upwards of nine years of their lives.³ As this concluding chapter will demonstrate, a raft of conservation agencies sought to work with this captive audience.

Some of this work was carried out by the press societies. However, Hampton claims that after 1880 the 'educational ideal of the press' was diminishing, because the press came under attack from 'new journalism' and its obsession with digested news, obsessive factoid presentation and bottom line profit.⁴ It is easy to see how such an opinion emerged, since this reformatting even worried some of the newspaper editors themselves. Adams believed the 1870 Education Act created children who had 'been taught to read without being able to think'. Newspapers, he ventured, took advantage of these individuals and 'instead of being instructors of the people, many of our newspapers have become ministers to the passions of people'.⁵ This may be true of the new journalistic *Daily Mail*, but the cornucopia of comprehensive articles and features found in many provincial newspapers, which Hampton tends to ignore, allied to the concern of more traditional editors, illustrates that at least some believed they had a moral responsibility to continue to provide edifying reading. The argument that follows therefore parts with Hampton's and, by discussing the relationships between

³ Stephens, *Education in Britain*, p. 79; Davin, *Growing up Poor*, p. 216.

⁴ Hampton, *Visions of the Press*, pp. 76- 88.

schools and the nature societies, makes a case for the newspaper's continuing function as an educator.

Recruiting Schoolchildren

A multiplicity of 'improving' agencies targeted schools. For instance, a 'Guild of Courtesy' movement specifically attempted to 'inculcate habits of courtesy and gentleness among Board School children', whilst temperance workers regularly called at schools to lecture.⁶ One of the reasons why such individuals would have been broadly welcomed, was that late-nineteenth-century schools have been presented as 'beacons of civilisation' fighting a constant battle to create order. Working-class schools were yet another middle-class 'social control' instrument.⁷

The school visits of the BOM leader, William Coulson, demonstrate these attempts to civilise. In 1902, 'by permission of the Board', Coulson lectured South Gosforth School's pupils, exhorting 'Better Manners and Noble Ways'. Like Band of Hope workers who combined their sermons with recruitment, Coulson pressed his audience to take the pledge. It was not coincidental that within a month of his visit Gosforth pupils joined the DBS.⁸ His call to a Bridgenorth school resulted in the DBS ranks being swelled by a further 336 names. Coulson did not confine his visits to elementary schools and reportedly called on the majority of the public schools to

⁵ Adams, *Memoirs*, pp. 584-85.

⁶ *Berwick Journal*, 3 April 1902; TWAS, E/W14/2/1: Rowlands Gill Board School logbook, 19 November 1900.

⁷ Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, pp. 133-42; Richard Johnson, 'Educational Policy and Social Control in Early Victorian England', *Past and Present*, 49 (1970), 96-119; Robert Colls, "Oh Happy English Children!" Coal, Class and Education in the North-East', *Past and Present*, 73 (1976), 75-99.

⁸ Rowlands Gill Board School logbook, 19 November 1900; TWAS, E.GO3/2/1: South Gosforth Infants School logbook, 31 October 1902; NCL/LS/CR101487: DBS Register of Members

lecture on the importance of kindness towards animals.⁹ To have visitors moralising on animal cruelty would not have seemed extraordinary for pupils. A North Shields master, George Haswell, had continually pressed the issue and became renowned for this work leading to drovers being shamed into treating their animals with respect.¹⁰

Lecturing had demonstrable effects, but teachers were also regularly sought out to help boost recruitment. Kate Dodd was the first member of the DBS in 1876. Ten years later, she had become a Hull headmistress and was enrolling pupils into her old club, illustrating again that the commitment of some members remained strong.¹¹ Lacking the organisational structures and working committees of the BOM, the assistance of speakers and teachers ensured a regular and valuable source of recruits to the press societies. This also widened their remit beyond their often politically affiliated publications. As noted, Liberal-orientated newspapers hosted the majority of the newspaper societies.¹² School recruitment could also broaden the social class of the societies. Correlating LFHS membership lists with census data shows the pupils of Bancroft Boarding School and Westminster Union School joining in 1882.¹³

As a measure of the importance of this recruitment method, half of the DBS members enrolled in 1900 were recruited at schools [fig. 6.1]. Conversely, just seventeen percent of members were enrolled from schools in 1890. It is difficult to explain why there should be such large anomalies between the years. One explanation

⁹ *NWC*, 30 March 1907; *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 1 June 1911.

¹⁰ Haswell, *The Maister*, pp. 249-51.

¹¹ *Stockport Advertiser*, 17 March 1882; *NWC*, 28 August 1886.

¹² See *Appendix I*.

¹³ *Little Folks*, 15 (1 April 1882), p. 244 (membership no. 1,041); 16 (1 July 1882), p. 55 (membership no. 5,276); www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/frameset_search.asp?PAGE=census/searchcensus.asp [accessed 1 May 2008].

may lie in the sudden surges of interest from particular locales. For instance, in 1890 Sunderland pupils formed forty percent of school recruits.

Date	No. Of Schools	No. Of Schools Identified Within Northeast Region	Unidentified Geographical Location of School	No. Of Pupils Recruited	Percentage Of Total DBS Recruits For Year
1880	36	27	1	1,757	21%
1890	42	32	1	3,413	17%
1900	51	40	1	3,993	50%
1910	11	10	0	916	27%

Figure 6.1: Analysis of Pupils Recruited from Schools to the DBS.¹⁴

Owing to the imprecise names of some institutions in the DBS lists, their status as private or state schools remains indeterminate. However, analysis of the available data suggests a strong dominance of elementary schools. This confirms the BOK statistics [Chapter Four] that it was overwhelmingly working-class children who were enrolled *en-masse*. The finite number of schoolchildren meant that there must have been individuals who were members of several societies, since both the DBS and the Golden Circle also recruited from the same Gateshead school in 1887.¹⁵ However, this was essentially a name gathering exercise. Although societies bragged about their number of school recruits, it would be disingenuous to call them 'members'. Indeed, other societies were a little more circumspect. Uncle William of the *Bristol Observer's* Animals Friends Society pointedly observed it would have been 'easy... sending out pledge sheets to schools as some societies do and ask the headmaster to

¹⁴ Northumberland and County Durham define the 'Northeast Region'; DBS Register of Members.

¹⁵ DBS Register of Members; *Northern Weekly Leader*, 7 May 1887.

take a show of hands'. Instead, he wanted 'no outside influence' and only genuine members¹⁶

The school data [fig. 6.1] also presents a demographic picture of the DBS membership. It points to a wide geographical spread, as pupils from schools in urban Tyneside and rural Northumberland were recruited. The *Standard* applauded the DBS efforts in recruiting country schoolchildren to address the 'tribal sentiment' of rural animal cruelty.¹⁷ This might also have overcome the problem of reaching children whose parents read agricultural newspapers that were not inclined to support conservation, such as the *Cable*. Given the higher urban population density, it was obvious that the majority of members would be from towns, although there were geographical anomalies. For instance, schools in the Durham coalfields appeared to be more supportive of the DBS, than the colliery towns of south Northumberland. Support for the DBS's animal welfare agenda in County Durham had been historically strong. For example, in 1880 the master of Croxdale School threatened pupils with his 'gutta purcha stick' and warned that any nest robbers would face a week's hard labour.¹⁸ Furthermore, Durham County Council circulated wild bird protection orders to its schools in 1898. The DBS presented itself as the best way of enforcing this message.¹⁹ The influence of the DBS also stretched well beyond its North East heartlands. Pupils enrolled from neighbouring Cumberland and Yorkshire, and schools in Kent, the Midlands and Ireland also took an interest.

¹⁶ *Bristol Observer*, 1 November 1913.

¹⁷ *Standard*, 15 October 1883.

¹⁸ *NWC*, 22 May 1880.

¹⁹ It is acknowledged that this interpretation is based only upon a sample of dates. Northumberland schools may have recruited in other years. *NWC*, 19 March 1898; 9 April 1898.

It would be wrong to suggest that this was one-way badgering of schools by animal protectionists seeking a means to spread their messages. Although the RSPCA wrote to schools requesting their help, it reported that it received willing responses. Furthermore, its Ladies Committee recorded that they had received several applications from schools requesting its literature.²⁰ This indicates that schools regarded the societies positively. Letters of gratitude, conspicuously printed in the newspapers, can also be regarded as a measure of approval, and demonstrate that the worth of the societies extended beyond just animal welfare and included improving behaviour. One teacher thanked the Sunbeam Society 'for the golden opportunity you give some of us teachers of inculcating and impressing valuable moral lessons'.²¹ D.G. Paz has queried the extent to which 'social discipline' was imparted, especially once the child was outside the school gate.²² Behind the schools, there was this supportive network of agencies constantly cajoling children into good behaviour. By enrolling schoolchildren and reinforcing positive conduct through their conservationist pledges and publications, the nature societies played a vital role in ensuring the momentum of school teaching continued once the school bell had tolled. Any help was welcomed as school logbooks record a constant struggle against a tide of troublesome pupils and, at times, parents. One exasperated teacher remarked 'if only parents could be taught a little sense in managing their children, what pleasant lives teachers would have'.²³

²⁰ RSPCA, 'Ladies Committee Minute Book', 12 February 1894; 22 November 1897.

²¹ *People's Journal*, 16 July 1887.

²² D.G. Paz, 'Working-Class Education as Social Control in England 1860-1918', *History of Education Quarterly*, 21/4 (1981), 493-99 (p. 498).

²³ NRO, CES198/1/7-8: Newbiggin by the Sea School logbook, 26 July 1889, 13 January 1911; TWAS, T118/38: Fatfield CE School logbook, 26 September 1892.

Broadening Reading and Writing Skills

It could be argued that by enrolling children the societies were merely serving their own self-interest, especially for those hosted by commercial publications looking to boost market share. However, this was not always necessarily the case and there is proof that some societies took a genuine interest in their members' education. This was encouraged in a number of ways. In 1880, the Newcastle Corporation eventually addressed the 1850 Public Libraries Act, by opening a lending library, which included 1,000 volumes for junior readers.²⁴ The DBS heavily promoted this new facility, although with an element of egotism. Adams had been a leading campaigner for the Newcastle library and donated books for its 'Juvenile Catalogue'. The DBS column heavily promoted this stock, making it clear that it was full of wholesome reading and a 'bulwark of intelligence and of morality' against the 'publications of very questionable character'. This endorsement was successful and, allied to the DBS conservation agenda, it led directly to an increase in demand from children for natural history library books in the 1890s.²⁵

Of more importance was the use of the nature societies as tools to improve children's reading and writing proficiency. Children read about animals and birds in newspapers and periodicals, but the requirement of the 1862 *Revised Code* that schoolchildren should read from newspapers was removed in 1880. Now, scholars were tested on texts selected by the inspector.²⁶ Nevertheless, the introduction of the

²⁴ John C. Day, 'The Library Scene in an English City: Newcastle upon Tyne Libraries 1850-2000', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, 3 vols. ed. by Alistair Black and Peter Hoare, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), III, pp. 206-15 (p. 209).

²⁵ *NWC*, 2 October 1880; Maureen Callcott, 'The Campaign for Public Libraries in Victorian Newcastle', *North East History*, 35 (2004), 99-128; Ashton, *W.E. Adams*, p. 139.

²⁶ Education Department, *New Code of Regulations 1880*, Cd. 2512, (HMSO, 1880), p. 11.

NWC's children's column in 1876 and the call for *Band of Mercy Advocate* to be distributed in schools in 1879 meant that at least some pupils might have had the opportunity to officially encounter these societies during their lessons. For societies founded after 1880, there was officially no means by which they could be accessed by school pupils.²⁷ The recognition of newspapers as an educational tool did not entirely disappear, because the 1894 Code suggested that to improve reading, parents should 'hear their children read aloud from a newspaper... for a few minutes at home every day'.²⁸ Schools also did not rigidly follow these Codes. One South Shields school tested pupils with newspaper articles in 1890, long after their use was officially abandoned.²⁹ An Oxfordshire teacher also provided the *Scholar's Own* for her pupils, again in the 1890s, suggesting that ephemeral reading matter was commonly used by schools. There was a continuing shortage of reading books and some teachers simply wanted to provide their pupils with pleasurable reading.³⁰ Despite the lack of official sanction, it is quite conceivable then that children continued to read the press society pages at the behest of their teacher.

The ability to write competently was obviously an educative goal. Again, the 1862 *Revised Code* looked to newspapers, ruling that for pupils wishing to attain Group IV standard they should be able to transcribe a 'short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper' dictated to them.³¹ Teachers certainly took advantage of the press societies. Writing from a Kelso school, Isa Thomson told Uncle Toby, 'the

²⁷ *Band of Mercy Advocate*, 5 (May 1879), p. 39.

²⁸ Education Department, *Revised Instructions issued to Her Majesty's Inspectors and Applicable to the Code of 1894*, Cd. 7321, (HMSO, 1894), p. 10.

²⁹ TWAS, 487/657: Ocean Road Board School logbook, 30 May 1890.

³⁰ Pamela Horn, 'Mary Dew (1845-1936) of Lower Heyford: A Model Victorian Teacher', *Cake & Cockhouse*, 9/4 (1983), 112-26 (p. 118); TWAS, E.WA12/1/2: Wallsend Buddle Infant School logbook, 15 September 1905.

schoolchildren are very anxious to join the D.B.S....They are well aware of the sincere interest I have long taken in the little birds. Every week they have got for composition the stories in the Children's Corner.'³² More demonstrable of the value of the nature societies to education was their role as recipients for schoolchildren's letters. With the exception of the BOM, which rarely printed children's correspondence, children's letters were a mainstay of the nature societies' publications. It is important to discuss how this letter-writing habit emerged. One of the arguments for the introduction of the Penny Post system was that regular letter writing would stimulate education. By 1871, the authorities recognised this and sanctioned the requirement to construct a 'short theme or letter' as a measure of writing proficiency for Standard VI. This now privileged original compositional work over mechanical transcription.³³ This letter-writing requirement remained an educative goal into the twentieth century, although only two percent of pupils received this instruction.³⁴ This was certainly not because it was difficult. One HMI believed letter writing to be a simple accomplishment that placed little strain on 'mental powers or faculty of expression'. Importantly, a letter meditating on 'Kindness to Animals' was thought to be perfect.³⁵

Writing letters to 'real persons' had a high educative value. One teacher believed that this work, in comparison to compositional exercises on slates,

³¹ *Revised Code of Regulations*, 1862, p. 9.

³² *NWC*, 16 August 1879.

³³ David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 36; *Minute of the Right Honourable the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education*, C. 253, (HMSO, 1871), p. 7; B. Hollingworth, 'Developments in English Teaching in Elementary Schools under the Revised Code, 1862-1888', *Journal of Education Administration and History*, 4/2 (1972), 22-27.

³⁴ Board of Education, *Code of Regulations for Public Elementary Schools*, Cd. 2579, (HMSO, 1905), p. 43; Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture*, p. 43.

eliminated carelessness.³⁶ Newspaper editors also shared this belief in self-improvement. The *Leeds Saturday Journal* thought such correspondence would serve 'as a means of teaching the little folks how to write good letters'. As an incentive, societies offered prizes for the best compositions, judged on content, which according to Sister Mercy should include 'kindly sentiments, true anecdotes of birds and other animals, noble and gentle ideas'.³⁷ There is widespread evidence of batches of letters received by the societies from schools. For example, Annfield Plain schools sent large numbers of letters to the DBS in 1905. The teacher exploited this opportunity to impart the beliefs of the DBS to her pupils. Letters tell how 'Miss Gray' enrolled children, prompting one to write, 'I intend to keep my pledge for as long as I shall live'. The majority of letters were in this positive vein, but not all were so complimentary. Writing about their teacher, one Kirkhampton pupil confessed 'I do not like you and am glad you are going to leave the school'.³⁸ Such defiance suggests this exercise was mandatory for some pupils.

Other tensions are also apparent. Boys were worried about being teased if their letters were published. In 1879, Uncle Toby took hesitators to task and he questioned the manliness of falterers, noted that they were unlikely to become a 'hero' if they were afraid, and called for 'courage boys, courage'.³⁹ It would seem that Uncle Toby's call was briefly successful given the batch of letters received in 1880 [fig. 6.2]. However, this was short-lived and letter writing, especially to a society that advocated animal protection, was simply a more popular activity with girls.

³⁵ *Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland 1888-89*, C. 5800-1, (HMSO, 1889), p. 210.

³⁶ Horn, 'Mary Dew', p. 118.

³⁷ *Leeds Saturday Journal*, 6 February 1909; *Hexham Herald*, 7 August 1886.

³⁸ *NWC*, 16 December 1905; 31 July 1909.

Date	Total Letters Printed/Acknowledged	No. Of Letters From Boys	No. Of Letters From Girls	Males v Females As Percentage
February 1880	104	50	54	48%
February 1890	150	52	98	34%
February 1900	63	21	42	33%
February 1910	98	34	64	35%

Figure 6.2: Gender Analysis of DBS Letters.⁴⁰

Most letters printed by the societies appeared to be voluntary efforts. Children did not need orders from education authorities, and they regularly wrote to their favourite magazines, with their contributions forming a key element of such publications. This was part of a process adopted by the magazine press to cultivate less authoritarian relationships with its readers. Even so, the *Boy's Own Magazine* of 1862, caustically criticised readers' contributions, even those who professed limited education, if their handwriting or grammar was not up to standard.⁴¹ Such public criticism was definitely discouraging and led children to seek alternatives, as the letter from George Smith to Uncle George of the BOK in 1882 reveals:

I like you because you don't make remarks in your Corner about our writing and don't make fun of our spelling. I never dare to write to the *Boy's Own Paper* for that reason, because in the next number there would surely be some fun made of me; it is so nice finding stories &c, in your paper that have been written by my playmates.⁴²

³⁹ *NWC*, 18 October 1879.

⁴⁰ Figures calculated from letters printed or acknowledged in the DBS column in the *NWC* and does not include the regular entries and supply of puzzle competitions from members that also filled the column.

⁴¹ Dixon, 'From Instruction to Amusement', pp. 63-67; *Boy's Own Magazine*, VIII/2 (February 1862), p. 84.

⁴² *Stockport Advertiser*, 10 February 1882.

The following week Uncle George assured his readers that they should not be afraid to write to him as 'Uncle George never puts any bad spelling in the paper, nor will he criticise your writing'.⁴³

Such a sympathetic public sphere meant children eagerly wrote to these societies. From the point of view of the nature societies, such correspondence created a binding relationship with their members. This was very successful. On its foundation, the DBS had requested members to write, which they did in their hundreds each week until by 1881, Uncle Toby complained that he was receiving far more letters than he could possibly publish.⁴⁴ Even those newspapers without a club were popular. The *West Cumberland Times* crowed that it had received over 20,000 children's letters, drawings, and essays in one twelve-month period. There were several reasons why so much post was received. As some letters to the *Northern Weekly Gazette* reveal, there was a simple pleasure derived in seeing names and contributions in print. Furthermore, societies had explicit rules compelling members to correspond on a regular basis, although this did not always work. When postbags were light, leaders did not hesitate to criticise members for failing to write.⁴⁵

What did children write about? Naturally, they often expressed an interest in birds and an affirmation of conservation work. At times, this was brief, especially from younger members. Maggie Metcalfe wrote, 'Please Sir, Am I too little? I am

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 17 February 1882.

⁴⁴ *NWC*, 10 December 1881; Adams, *History of the Dicky Bird Society*, p. 11. Indicative of the volume of mail received by the DBS and its renown was that letters simply addressed 'Uncle Toby' were safely delivered by the Post Office to the *Newcastle Chronicle* offices.

⁴⁵ *West Cumberland Times*, 4 May 1895; *COP*, 1 (5 August 1882), p. 13; *Northern Weekly Gazette*, 3 June 1911; *Irish Tribune*, 11 March 1893.

four. I feed the birds'.⁴⁶ Other children were far more forthcoming and wrote repeatedly. Their letters reveal a deep interest in both active conservation and furthering the aims of their society. In a series of letters to Uncle Toby, ten-year-old Sarah Logan described her work in feeding her garden birds, enrolling members, and attempting to stop egg-collecting, and expressed her concern that her 'Uncle Toby' nestboxes were unoccupied.⁴⁷ A sense of missionary zeal gripped some regular correspondents. Fred Wood's letters from 1881 to 1889 report all manner of conservation issues. His involvement went as far as writing to the *Schoolmaster* magazine in 1883 extolling the virtues of the DBS of which he was such an energetic 'Captain'.⁴⁸ Although Wood gave valuable exposure to the work of the DBS, his title tells us that correspondents received reward. We can therefore assume that children wrote regularly in order to gain kudos.

These letters also provided newspapers with largely approving free copy. Resources for editors were thin, and they sought frugal means of filling their pages. Readers' contributions in particular filled the pages of the weekly newspapers, as such publications tended to include far more miscellaneous material than the news-driven dailies. Readers' contributions contributed up to twenty percent of the content of the *Weekly Telegraph* in 1890 and upwards of eighty-nine letters to the Golden Circle filled two pages of the *Northern Weekly Leader*.⁴⁹ Not all commentators were convinced of the worthiness of this activity. Evelyn March-Phillips insisted that the publication of a child's 'feeble literary efforts, and of absurdly trivial letters, cannot be

⁴⁶ *Huddersfield Examiner*, 9 February 1884.

⁴⁷ *NWC*, 18 July 1884; 9 August 1884; 9 July 1887.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 19 January 1881; 19 January 1887; 29 June 1889; *The Schoolmaster*, XXIV/611 (15 September 1883), p. 324.

very good for any small person'. Moreover, she thought that the publicity gained from printing such correspondence would 'inevitably breed insufferable young prigs'.⁵⁰ This appeared to be a lone complainant and certainly did not halt the stream of correspondence.

Occupation Of Head Of Household or Member	Class Ranking	Number Of Members	Employment Of Members
Professional(Upper & Middle Class)	I	13	
Intermediate	II	35	1
Skilled	III	36	3
Partly Skilled	IV	9	1
Unskilled	V	2	
No Gainful Employment/No Occupation Given	X	5	
Unidentifiable			1
TOTAL		100	6

Figure 6.3: Class Analysis of 100 DBS Correspondents, 1880-1882

Letter writing demonstrates an 'active' member, as opposed to the many who probably joined and thought no more of their pledge. From 227 letters printed in the DBS column over the period 1880 to 1882 it has been possible to match 100 letter writers to the 1881 census data and offer the above statistics of children who 'worked' for their society.⁵¹ There is a considerable contrast with the data presented in Chapter Four, suggesting the BOK membership was predominantly working class. Given that the recruiting tactics of the DBS were similar, it is probable that its membership was

⁴⁹ Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, p. 275; Law, *Serializing Fiction*, p. 146; *Northern Weekly Leader*, 7 March 1908.

⁵⁰ Evelyn March-Phillips, 'Women's Newspapers', *Fortnightly Review*, 56 (July-December 1894), 661-70 (pp. 668-69).

⁵¹ *NWC*, 1880-1882; General Register Office, *Census 1951: Classification of Occupations*; www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/frameaset_search.asp?PAGE=census/search_census.asp [accessed

also chiefly working-class. Children drawn from the skilled working classes continued to play a significant role [fig.6.3], but it was the better classes, at least in this sample, who tended to write letters. The six members in employment confirm that members kept up the letter writing habit. Noticeably, the lower working class were very much in the minority in this sample of correspondents. Therefore, mandatory schoolwork was essential in order for individuals from this particular class to engage with the nature societies.

Writing Prize Essays

Letter writing was not the only compositional task set by the nature societies. Prize essays were widely composed during the nineteenth century, as both commentaries on specific subjects and as a means of inculcating virtuous principles. Their use by mechanics' institutes and the RTS has led J.F.C. Harrison to suggest that their self-help value for the working classes was amplified when essays 'came from one of themselves' and broached matters that had direct relevance.⁵² With such self-improvement qualities, this was an ideal tool for the religious and temperance movements. Band of Hope Unions held competitions to produce suitable reading material and their children's magazines organised essay competitions.⁵³ As early as 1800, there are examples of children's essays in their press. The *Juvenile Library* offered prizes ranging from telescopes to books for prize-winning essays, which it

15 May 2007]. The sample was based on 227 letters with exact addresses and/or unambiguous full names. It proved impossible to match all the letters with the census.

⁵² J.F.C. Harrison, *Learning and Living 1790-1960*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 127, 206.

⁵³ Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink*, p. 144; *Band of Hope Review*, 50/596 (August 1900), p. 58.

then published. The increasing magazine market from the 1850s led to repeated calls from publishers for readers' compositions.⁵⁴

'Kindness to Animals' was a regular theme for prize-essay contests and both the *Cambrian* and the *Liverpool Weekly Mercury*, for instance, requested essays meditating on this issue.⁵⁵ Essays demonstrate children were well versed in the consequences of animal abuse. Winning a *Little Folks'* competition, thirteen-year old Howard Goldsmid wrote,

thoughtlessness often leads to wanton cruelty and fearfully disastrous results. The lad represented in Hogarth's "Four Stages of Cruelty" began by torturing a dog and ended by committing a murder. Thoughtless unkindness to the lower animals, if unrestrained, eventually leads to cruelty and injustice towards one's fellow men.⁵⁶

Although *Band of Mercy* regularly reported good-natured entertainment organised at meetings, individual Bands also organised some form of writing exercises for their members. These varied from essays, letter writing, and for members of Ipswich Band, exams.⁵⁷ These schemes offered a means by which Band leaders could measure progress and the worth of invited speakers. Swanmere Rye Branch was satisfied that 'essays [have been] written by girl members on "Wings in Hats". Some good papers were sent... the members all seem to have learnt a great deal as to the habitats and the needs of birds by their interesting lecture'.⁵⁸ More importantly, they made children reflect upon their behaviour. As one BOM advocate observed, in relation to essays on

⁵⁴ *The Juvenile Library, Including a Complete Course of Instruction on Every Useful Subject... With Prize Productions of Young Students*, (London: Gillet, 1800), I, pp. 405-7; [<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>, accessed 12/5/2005]; Alan Rauch, *Useful Knowledge: The Victorians, Morality, and the March of Intellect*, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 54-55; Drotner, *English Children and their Magazines*, p. 67.

⁵⁵ *Liverpool Weekly Mercury*, 6 April 1895; *Cambrian*, 14 April 1899.

⁵⁶ *Little Folks*, 13 (1881), pp. 122-23.

⁵⁷ *Band of Mercy*, 137 (May 1890), p. 39; 217 (January 1897), p. 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 230 (February 1898), p. 15.

the subject of 'Birds', 'this is a politic subject for the spring season, as, if the children are engaged in reading about the wonderful faculties of birds, with a view to writing humane essays, it is not likely that they will at the same time be planning to rob nests'.⁵⁹ Children's responses to these competitions varied. For example, Southport Band received eighty-two essays for a competition in 1885. Others were less successful, however, the Knutsford group received just three entries, despite having 423 members.⁶⁰ For this particular Band, it suggests that when the competition was voluntary and lacked a firm guiding hand, few children bothered to submit. By contrast, it was rare for leaders of the newspaper societies to complain they had only a few entries to their prize schemes, although the offer of Bovril chocolates for *Liverpool Weekly Mercury* competitions must have been a hefty stimulus.⁶¹

These were not just singular ventures by individual Bands or publications. The Newcastle RSPCA branch worked with the DBS and Newcastle schools to create the 'Uncle Toby' essay competition. Subjects for discussion naturally indicate the various DBS campaigns. Titles included 'The Cowardice of Cruelty', 'The Cruel Fashion of Wearing Birds as Ornaments' and, when recruitment appeared to be slowing, 'Give Six Good Reasons why all Boys and Girls should become Members of the DBS'. It had more success than some Bands, and the 1885 competition attracted ninety-one entries.⁶² These were popular competitions with schools, although logbook evidence throws little light on the real reason why schools entered these schemes. Certainly, there was no official guidance. The Education Department mooted essay competitions

⁵⁹ *Atalanta*, IX (1895-1896), p. 722.

⁶⁰ *Band of Mercy*, 78 (June 1885), p. 47; 'Knutsford Band of Mercy Minute Book', 16 November 1899; 9 February 1900.

⁶¹ *Liverpool Weekly Mercury*, 20 October 1900.

as a means of improving the prose of 'middle school' pupils in 1868. However, the numerous Codes ignored the use of such schemes for elementary schoolchildren.⁶³

For schools, a combination of moral guidance and academic benefit must have been a factor, added to the advantage of a scheme organised freely by an external agency that also provided positive publicity for the school. Such factors came into play when we assess the efforts of the RSPCA in London. This dwarfed all the other competitions. After the Ladies Education Committee revamped the RSPCA's educational work, its essay scheme gained an increased impetus. In 1870, the Society invited 150 schools within a four-mile radius of Charing Cross to participate in its essay competition. This radius and invitation had expanded to twenty miles and 5,500 schools of all denominations and standards by 1890.⁶⁴

The scheme was intended to 'instruct the minds and educate the hearts of children and teachers in their duties towards animals', but its organisers also recognised the scholarly value of such work and believed that it would provide pupils with good compositional practice.⁶⁵ It had much wider implications too. Whilst he did not specifically use the term 'tiny humanitarians', Sydney Buxton believed the scheme would have an escalating effect, not only the child but also 'their parents and all with whom they associate will feel the influence; for the child is able merely by what he does, or by what he does not do, to modify the conduct of others'.⁶⁶ This wider impact

⁶² RSPCA, *Annual Report of the Newcastle Branch 1883*, p. 14; *NWC*, 5 December 1885; 20 November 1886; 26 November 1887; 5 January 1901.

⁶³ Schools Inquiry Commission, *Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Commissioners, I/IV*, (HMSO, 1868), *appendix*, p. 60.

⁶⁴ *Animal World*, XXXI/369 (June 1900), pp. 94-96; XXI/251 (August 1890), p. 124.

⁶⁵ RSPCA, *64th Annual Report 1888*, pp. 87-88; *Animal World*, XVII/203 (August 1886), p. 120.

⁶⁶ RSPCA, *55th Annual Report 1879*, p. 112.

of the scheme was continually emphasised. The Society's President, Lord Aberdare, calculated that for every 50,000 essays received, as many as 200,000 persons would become interested in the competition. Aberdare conceded that the essay scheme was by far the most effective educational programme that the Society had formulated and would do more good than any form of legislation.⁶⁷ School authorities were equally keen. The *School Board Chronicle* thought that the essays were essential in drawing attention to the need for kindness towards animals.⁶⁸

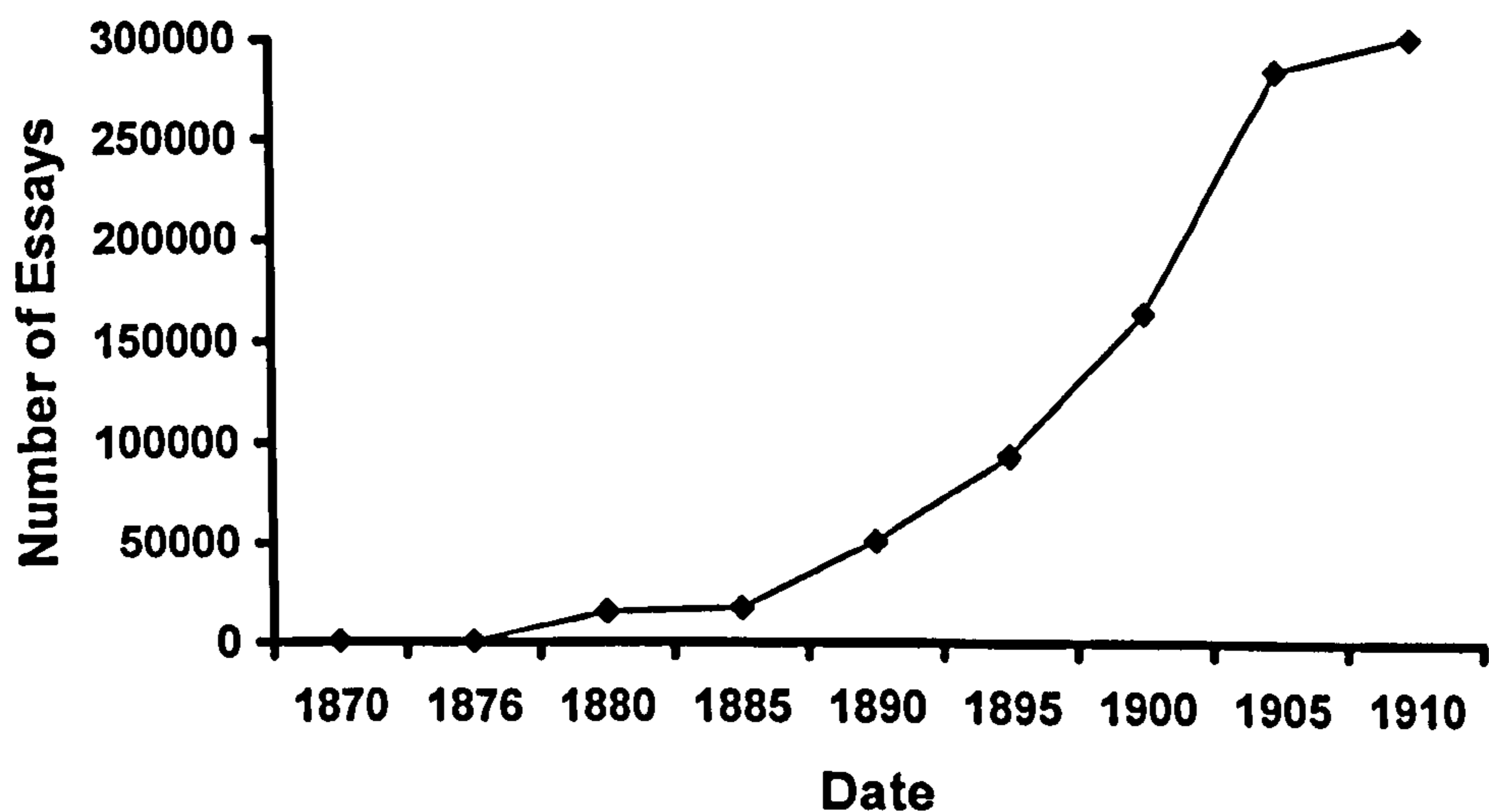


Figure 6.4: Number of RSPCA Prize Essays, 1870-1910.⁶⁹

Forty years after the first 300 essays were received, the scheme was attracting nearly 300,000 entrants in 1910 [fig. 6.4]. However, such apparent success masked the wide disparities between the different types of schools and their pupils [fig 6.5].

⁶⁷ *Animal World*, XXI/251 (August 1890), p. 123; X/119 (August 1879), p. 117.

⁶⁸ *School Board Chronicle*, XVIII/339 (11 August 1877), p. 142.

⁶⁹ Figures collated from *Animal World* and RSPCA Annual Reports.

Date	No. of Schools Invited	No. of Schools Responding		No. of Essays Received				
		Elementary	Private	Total	Elementary		Private	
					Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1886	N/A	N/A	N/A	19,664	6,969 (59)	10,012 (78)	851 (29)	1,668 (29)
1890	5,500	495	132	50,570	18,210 (76)	28,210 (109)	1,251 (34)	2,463 (26)
1895	N/A	1,047	199	93,514	30,825 (76)	55,078 (108)	1,638 (39)	3,477 (22)
1900	6,500	1,227	151	163,041	58,335 (116)	92,571 (163)	2,181 (57)	4,442 (46)
1905	7,000	1,616	56	282,961	113,574 (169)	154,071 (217)	None	14,098 (117)

Figure 6.5: Analysis of Essays Received, 1886-1905.⁷⁰

The entries from elementary schools always outweighed those from private schools. This variation troubled RSPCA officials, who expressed their disappointment at the low numbers of superior schools bothering to respond. This represented the ‘singular indifference of a large number of principles engaging in this work’.⁷¹ Whilst such a low turnout was irksome for RSPCA officials, there appears to have been no real attempt to address the problem. The complete absence of any essays from privately schooled boys in 1905 passed un-remarked in *Animal World*. It is possible this masked embarrassment. After all, the Society was failing to have its competition supported by schools that probably educated many of its own members’ children. Other conclusions might be drawn. We must consider whether such schools believed this scheme to be an instrument designed to educate the working classes, since prosecutions of workingmen had previously dominated RSPCA reports. It is not difficult to believe that society supporters thought that cruelty was an endemic

⁷⁰ Statistics drawn from *Animal World*. Some figures are unavailable. Figures in brackets denote mean numbers of essays received from schools. ‘Elementary’ includes denominational and board schools. ‘Private’ includes the categories ‘superior’, ‘private’ and, in 1905, ‘higher grade’ schools. Entries from pupil teachers and evening schools are omitted.

⁷¹ *Animal World*, XXVII/321 (June 1896), p. 83.

working-class trait. One *Animal World* correspondent noted the inconsistencies of members sermonising to children, but failing to recognise that their own behaviour of wearing feathered hats, hunting and using transport drawn by mistreated horses, led them to be just as culpable.⁷²

The RSPB, by contrast, were less blind to the cruelty perpetrated by the upper classes, especially public schoolboys who disregarded the bird protection laws by continuing the practice of buying eggs from 'village lads'. The Society issued an educational tract purportedly written by 'an old Eton fellow' and then devised an essay competition for public school pupils. Despite these special endeavours, the RSPB equally struggled to attract interest from privately educated boys. For example, it received just fourteen essays in 1911.⁷³

This lack of interest in the RSPB's scheme mirrored the obvious gender disparity in the RSPCA's competition. The low level of entries by boys from the elementary schools disturbed the RSPCA's secretary, although again anxiety fixed on the working classes. Colam believed that it was absolutely vital that boys entered the competition, surmising that they would probably go onto employment involving close contact with animals and such timely teaching of humane conduct was sure to have a 'salutary effect'.⁷⁴ This gender inequality [fig. 6.5] is not attributable to any great imbalance in the school population. In 1910, 2.7 million boys and 2.8 million girls

⁷² *Ibid.*, XXXII/385 (October 1901), p. 147.

⁷³ RSPB: Sir Hereward Wake, 'Fiat Justitia!', SPB, Leaflet (n.d.): RSPB: Publications Sub-Committee, *Information and Education Committee Minute Book*, 20 January 1903, RSPB: Finance and General Purposes Committee, *Finance Committee Minute Book*, January 1910-July 1912, 1 December 1911.

⁷⁴ *Animal World*, XXVI/311 (August 1895), p. 116.

attended the elementary schools in England.⁷⁵ Entries from logbooks similarly do not throw any light on this imbalance, but Davin makes the point that after infant schooling it was normal practice for the sexes to be taught separately. Male teachers had a more rigorous and tougher teaching style and taught boys.⁷⁶ By implication, we must assume that this had some impact on the essays, which were not a mandatory feature of the curriculum. Furthermore, the subject of animal welfare was one that boys were rather reticent to acknowledge. Indeed, there is an interesting comparison with the gender analysis of DBS letters [fig. 6.2]. It may be significant that the male to female ratio of DBS letter writers in 1890 and 1900 is almost equal to that of entrants to the RSPCA competition in the same years (thirty-eight percent and thirty-nine percent respectively).

The majority of RSPCA essays came from board school pupils, and their high standard took the Society aback. John Colam remarked that entries from 'elementary' schools had eclipsed essayists from 'superior' schools.⁷⁷ It is noticeable that in anticipation of the essay competition, schoolmasters coached their pupils. In London, at Glengall Road School, children were given lessons on 'Mans' Duty Towards Animals'.⁷⁸ This coaching might have helped children cope with the tough competition rules. These appeared weighted towards those with a superior education with little allowance made for the less accomplished. The invitation letter to schools stressed that all papers had to be at least four pages long, that quotations had to be properly cited, and that plagiarism would lead to immediate disqualification. Judges

⁷⁵ Board of Education, *Public Elementary Schools (England and Wales) (Numbers on Admission Registers)*, 28 (HMSO, 1912), pp. 2-3.

⁷⁶ Davin, *Growing up Poor*, p. 121.

⁷⁷ RSPCA, *57th Annual Report 1881*, p. 105

⁷⁸ LMA, EO/DIV5/GLE1/LB/1: Glengall Road Board School logbook, 18 July 1880.

were looking for 'evidence of thought and real appreciation of the subject discussed'. As an incentive, the Society promised a 'Royal lady' would present prizes.⁷⁹ Essayists had a wide range of potential questions and could variously address cruelty to animals, good pet husbandry, the evils of bird-nesting, and tail or ear cropping.⁸⁰

The comprehensive lists of prizewinners were an annual feature in *Animal World*, which published essay extracts in 1872, but the Society was reluctant to give further page space to young writers, even in *Band of Mercy*. An appeal to the Ladies Committee in 1892 to publish articles by children was flatly rejected.⁸¹ Clearly, the RSPCA was not as accommodating as the press societies. Importantly this marked their different priorities. The newspaper societies, and to a lesser extent the LFHS, relied upon children's contributions to fill their columns, this in turn helped boost circulation of what were essentially commercial entities absolutely reliant on bottom line sales and, in turn, advertisement revenue. As the *West Cumberland Times* observed, 'essays improves your valuable paper very much - at any rate it increases the anxiety of the young folks for the *West Cumberland Times* on Saturday morning and through them their parents'.⁸²

The RSPCA had no need for this, and it is striking that *Band of Mercy* remained unfettered by advertisements, apart from those promoting other BOM publications. Income for the RSPCA came from a variety of sources. However, sales of *Animal World* and *Band of Mercy* magazine made up just four percent of funding in

⁷⁹ RSPCA, 64th *Annual Report 1888*, pp. 88-90.

⁸⁰ RSPCA, 65th *Annual Report 1889*, p. 159

⁸¹ *Animal World*, III/35 (August 1872), pp. 194-98; RSPCA, 'Ladies Committee Minute Book', 8 February 1892, p. 56.

⁸² *West Cumberland Times*, 2 January 1892.

1894, as opposed to eighteen percent received in subscriptions and donations, and even more importantly, forty-six percent in legacies. It was these latter wealthy individuals that it prioritised and had to cultivate.⁸³



Figure 6.6: RSPCA Essay Prize-Giving, Band of Mercy, 294 (June 1903), p. 48.

⁸³ *Animal World*, XXVI/311 (August 1895), p. 122; *Band of Mercy*, 228 (December 1897), p. 103.

The RSPCA offered children alternative public recognition. All prizewinners and teachers were invited to an annual prize-giving ceremony. By 1905, the number attending this event had reached 35,000, requiring the large capacity of the Crystal Palace.⁸⁴ This substantial gathering mirrored similar large-scale events that the Band of Hope organised at the same venue from the 1860s.⁸⁵ For younger children, this was a tiresome event, the speeches were too long, and there was some disruption as they became bored with the proceedings. For the RSPCA, its supporters, sometimes in the company of royalty, could watch thousands of children gratefully accepting their hard-won prizes, giving this 'Grand Education Fete' visible affirmation of successful work amongst the working classes [fig 6.6].⁸⁶

Assisted by teachers, hundreds of thousands of children were writing essays each year by the early 1900s. Although some schemes were small-scale and at times poorly supported, this wide use of testing reflected the belief of both educationalists and humanitarians that this tool worked. The vast scale of the London competition, supported by the Board schools, certainly led to the widening of the RSPCA's principles beyond its respectable BOM groups and into the poorest of neighbourhoods. Although one child wrote to say 'it should be our earnest endeavour to treat animals kindly, and to try and persuade others to do the same', it would be difficult to believe that all essay writers or their families imbibed such ideologies, or that such sentiments lingered.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, such an experiential learning exercise,

⁸⁴ *Animal World*, XXXVI/429 (June 1905), p. 90.

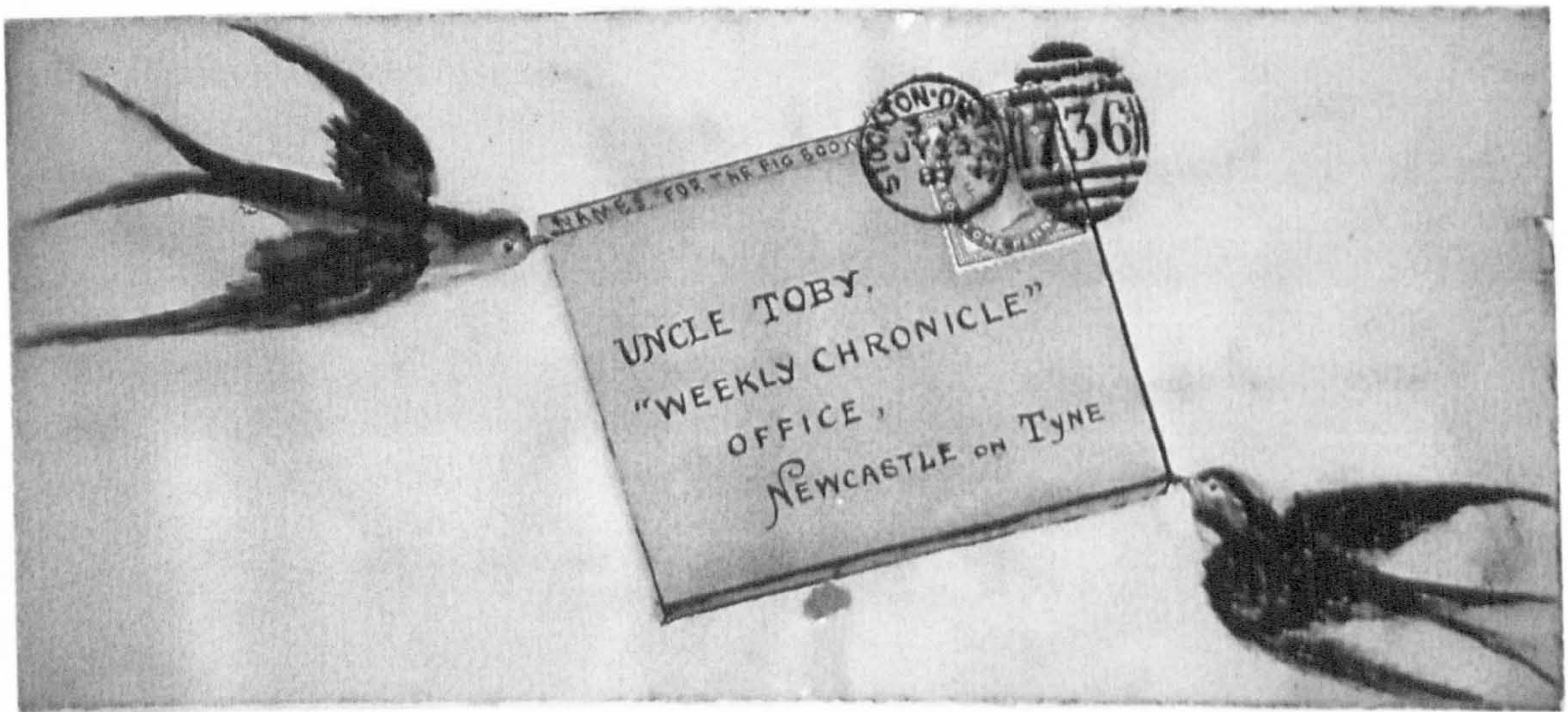
⁸⁵ *The Times*, 3 September 1868.

⁸⁶ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6031 (8 July 1884), p. 11; *Animal World*, XI/131 (August 1880), p. 120.

⁸⁷ *Animal World*, III/36 (September 1872), p. 197.

often under the guidance of a supervising teacher, must have had some effect on children, even if it simply just reminded them that cruelty was wrong.

Not all competitions revolved around onerous writing tests. By 1908, *Band of Mercy* offered less arduous exercises, including colouring competitions, which obviously had some form of natural history as their subject. John Colam retired in 1905 and the editorship of the magazine was now with Edward Fairholme. Notably the periodical underwent a definite change in style, with more emphasis placed upon trying to engage directly with children.⁸⁸ The most visible and imaginative use of children's artistic talents was by the DBS. It instigated a scheme whereby children decorated their envelopes with images of birds.



*Figure 6.7: DBS Illustrated Envelope, 1887
DBS, Uncle Toby's Big Book.*

Adams only intended that such pictorial envelopes should easily identify DBS letters, and like many of his initiatives members eagerly responded. Although

envelopes frequently featured appealing drawings of birds [fig. 6.7], others also conveyed conservation messages; birds being fed, warnings against egg-collecting, and cage-birds given their freedom.⁸⁹ They also depicted some of the grittier issues sponsored by the DBS, such as the feathered millinery controversy [fig. 6.8].

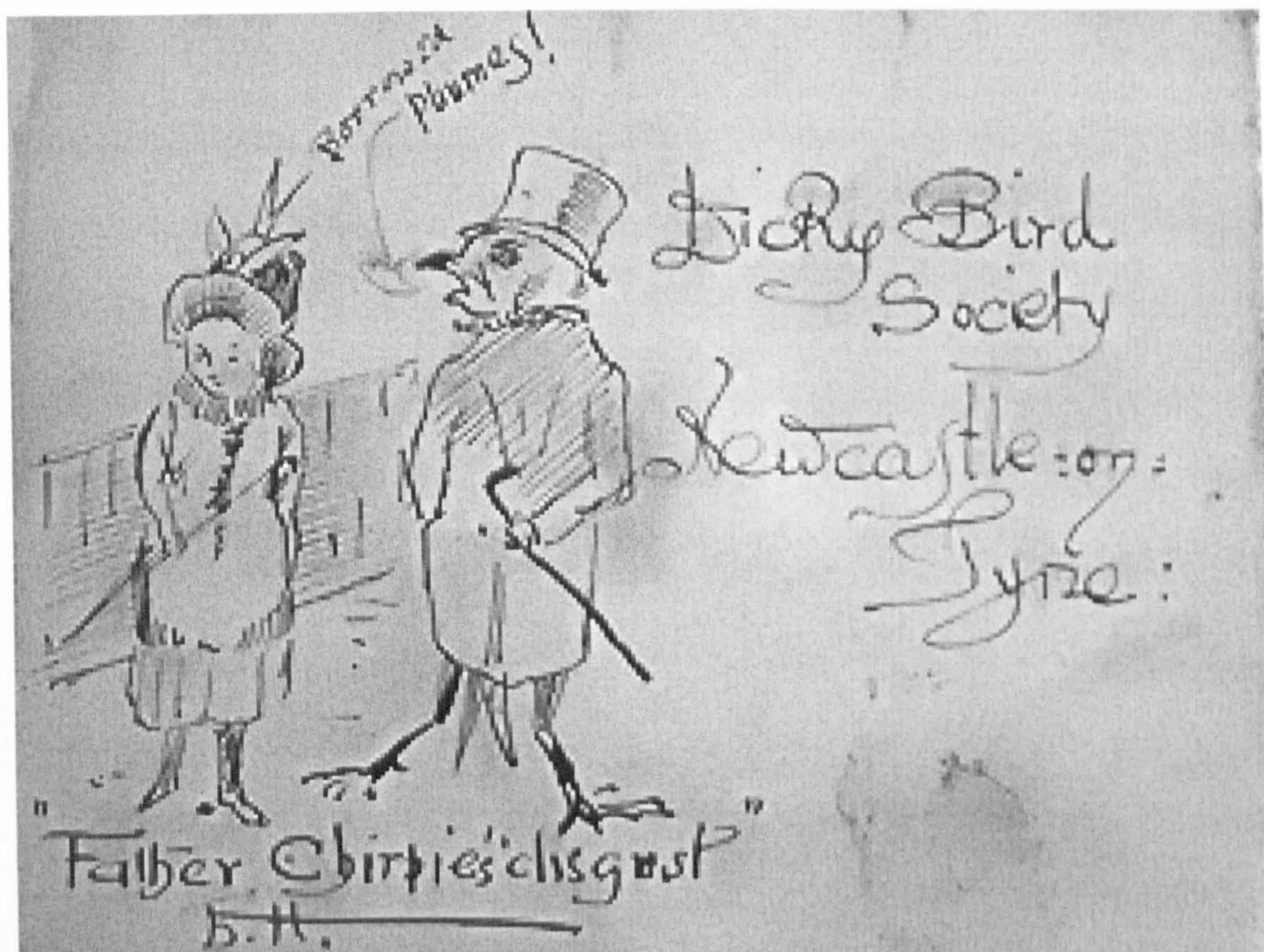


Figure 6.8: DBS Illustrated Envelope (n.d.).
DBS, *Uncle Toby's Big Book*.

This practical work evidently appealed to the artistic talents of children, but there was a rationale behind this. Again, there is the experiential educational purpose of carrying out this task, which was probably more pleasurable than writing an essay. Moreover, one can imagine that the public profile of the DBS and its conservation

⁸⁸ *Band of Mercy*, 320 (August 1905), p. 57; 321 (September 1905), pp. 67-68; 349 (January 1908), p. 8.

message must have been heightened as thousands of these illustrated envelopes depicting animal welfare messages, from all areas of Britain and overseas, passed through the postal system each year.

The Study of Natural History

The emphasis of the writing and drawing schemes was upon prevention of cruelty and disseminating the ideologies of the various societies. Similarly, the encouragement of active conservation work [Chapter Five] had attempted to reduce cruelty by publicising legislation and prohibiting popular pastimes and fashions. Yet the nature societies were not all about stringent educative assignments or, bird feeding apart, curtailing children's leisure. Instead, like much of the children's press they encouraged their readers to take an active interest in the study of natural history.⁹⁰

Given their much larger circulation, newspapers were even more important than the magazines in disseminating natural history knowledge. The positioning of a newspaper's 'nature notes' article, aimed at adult readers, adjacent to the children's column made it likely that young people would have also browsed these features.⁹¹ Children also merited their own natural history articles and to give them an authoritative air, a supposed 'Professor' or 'Naturalist' often authored these features.⁹² Descriptions of habitats and species were the most common type. The DBS described common birds. Tellingly, this naturalist series began with the house sparrow in order

⁸⁹ Adams, *History of the Dicky Bird Society*, pp. 10-14.

⁹⁰ Dixon, 'Children's Magazines and Science', pp. 228-38.

⁹¹ *Birmingham Weekly Mercury*, 7 April 1900.

⁹² *Hampshire Telegraph*, 9 October 1886; *NWC*, 17 July 1877; *Northern Weekly Leader*, 4 May 1914.

to persuade members to 'love them even better'.⁹³ Combined with these traditionally descriptive accounts of nature were articles engaging with real environmental issues. In the Golden Circle column, 'The Home of the Kingfisher' provided a narrative on the habitat of the species, and underscored an anxiety that the kingfisher population was declining because of increasing amounts of industrial pollution in watercourses.⁹⁴

Like the nature features found in magazines, the newspaper articles sometimes required advanced reading ability. For instance, an essay on seashore life by a Guild of Gentleness member described seaweeds using their Latin names.⁹⁵ The ability of all children to comprehend such technical articles was improbable. Logbooks regularly record pupils as having 'great dullness', 'natural incapacity' and for one poor child, 'dwarf in mind and body'.⁹⁶ There were less complex articles on offer elsewhere. In *Band of Mercy*, 'A Trip to Gull Land' by the naturalist author W. Percival Westell described the different species in the 'Gullery' at Regents Park Zoo. At its most simplistic, 'Robin and His Mate' described two very endearing-looking 'robins', although any child trying to use the inaccurate print as an identification aid would have struggled.⁹⁷ The narrative of this latter article was more simplistic and sentimental in style, making it more appealing to young children or those with lower reading abilities.

By providing children with practical natural history study, some of these articles reiterated the prevailing collecting mentality and contradicted the conservation

⁹³ *NWC*, 11 November 1876.

⁹⁴ *Northern Weekly Leader*, 6 September 1890.

⁹⁵ *Manchester Weekly Times*, 2 December 1892.

⁹⁶ Ocean Road Board School logbook, 13 September 1888; 15 January 1889; TWAS, T118/97; Marley Hill National School logbook, 13 June 1890.

objectives of the societies. The Sunbeam Club encouraged 'the study of Nature by observation, collection, and exchange of natural objects and facts' whilst its rules stated that all members should work towards the 'protection and kindly treatment of animals'.⁹⁸ The BOM, by contrast, issued 'Plain Words to Young Naturalists'. This reprised the earlier ambition of nature study to promote respect for natural beauty. Noticeably, the BOM still couched this advice in the rhetoric of natural theology, exhorting children to observe God's creatures, and suggesting that studying natural history would lead to greater animal protection.⁹⁹

By the early twentieth century, an 'observation only' mindset had supplanted the collecting mentality among naturalists.¹⁰⁰ This new attitude was widely encouraged by the nature societies, indeed the Golden Circle urged members to watch birds using field glasses. This equipment would have been beyond most children, but this observational approach sat better with the conservationist objectives of these societies. It also retained the 'rational amusement' tag. Children were encouraged to explore the countryside in order to study what they found, and most of all appreciate the beauties of the natural world.¹⁰¹

A degree of interactivity built up around the nature study features, and presented natural history as a pleasurable pastime for children to enjoy. A frequent request by the leaders of the nature societies was for members to send in field notes to increase observational powers. This appears to have been popular with children. BOK

⁹⁷ *Band of Mercy*, 337 (January 1907), pp. 2-3; 163 (July 1892), p. 52.

⁹⁸ *People's Journal*, 15 January 1887.

⁹⁹ *Band of Mercy*, 104 (February 1895), p. 10.

¹⁰⁰ Moss, *Bird in the Bush*, pp. 86-108.

¹⁰¹ *Northern Weekly Gazette*, 6 June 1896; *Northern Weekly Leader*, 10 January 1914.

members even called for an extension of the scheme into a separate natural history club, which would hold discussions and organise field trips. Although the BOK members did not get their wish, as Uncle Gilbert said he had no time, members of other societies were luckier. The DBS and the Golden Circle organised a series of rambling and picnic outings. Whether there was any real study undertaken is questionable. Accounts of these trips tend to dwell on the quality of teas, rather than any wildlife encountered. Despite these being ostensibly an extension of the educational and philanthropic work of the newspapers, it is noticeable that two rival Newcastle societies busily organised outings in 1897.¹⁰² Although evidently enjoyable for children, and probably educational, these events need to be regarded as promotional activities for the newspapers and as a means of creating group loyalty within the membership of each society. However, children's visits to the countryside were also thought to have regenerative powers and to promote respect for wildlife. This appeared to work. One London lad thought his trip to Reading was responsible for 'changing my outlook upon nature'.¹⁰³

Illustrative of this desire to interest children in natural history and create an interactive relationship with them were the efforts of *Little Folks* magazine, which repeatedly printed natural history articles, including a special 'nature' issue in 1913. This no longer dwelled on nature being a creation of God, nor was it narrated in the sometimes-cloying style of *Band of Mercy*, but instead was more critically scientific.¹⁰⁴ In 1908, the magazine attempted to heighten its readers' interest in nature

¹⁰² *COP*, IV/38 (21 April 1883), p. 272; XIII/320 (15 September 1888), p. 170; *NWVC*, 1 May 1897; 11 September 1897; *Northern Weekly Leader*, 7 August 1897.

¹⁰³ Maver, 'Children and the Quest for Purity', p. 811; Accord, *One of the Multitude*, p.10.

¹⁰⁴ *Little Folks*, 77 (1913), p. 397.

by forming the *Little Folks*' Nature Club, led by 'Kingfisher'. Like the earlier LHFS, this club proactively worked with members. Kingfisher called for their nature observations, offered practical instruction (including the building of a 'formicarium' or ant's nest in order to study insect behaviour), and provided useful tips for watching nature, such as access arrangements to a bird sanctuary. There was no membership fee. The only requisite was a promise to 'keep your eyes open' and to contribute monthly reports of 'what you have seen and heard'. This society appeared popular with readers who quickly voiced their approval, although as membership lists were unnumbered and printed infrequently, it is difficult to assess the true level of support.¹⁰⁵

This *Little Folks* club shared the anti-cruelty and conservation ideology of the 1880s LFHS, emphasising the importance of note taking rather than specimen collecting.¹⁰⁶ Members had to keep 'Nature Journals' full of observations, drawings and stories. These were sent to the magazine for judging, although contributions from boys were conspicuous by their absence. The magazine also urged schools to participate in its scheme, but this failed to attract widespread support. The repeated praise of the work of Guernsey Ladies College and Dorchester School suggests this particular undertaking attracted only privileged pupils, reflecting the magazine's more upmarket readership.¹⁰⁷ Like the earlier LFHS club, this Nature Club was an attempt by the magazine to refresh its content. It is noticeable that such a club did not appear earlier, and the instigation of this society should be regarded as an attempt by *Little*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 67 (1908), pp. 76-77; 68 (1908), pp. 66-68, 387.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 67 (1908), p. 396; 77 (1913), pp. 73-74.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 75 (1912), pp. 442-44; 73 (1911), pp. 153, 315.

Folks to capitalise on the growing vogue for nature study in schools in the early twentieth century.

Agitating for Curriculum Change

School nature study has a rather short history. It occasionally made its way onto the curriculum during the first half of the nineteenth century, but it was only after the 1850s that there was real interest in the subject. The formation of natural history societies at several public and grammar schools is indicative of growing interest.¹⁰⁸ In the elementary schools, the 1862 *Revised Code* was believed to strangle diversity in the curriculum as teachers concentrated on core subjects in order to gain the all-important grant.¹⁰⁹ This may not have been the case as logbooks record pupils being taken to zoological gardens, indicating that teachers bent the rules, but the introduction of 'class subjects' from 1875 certainly gave more flexibility. The 1880 *New Code* gave further encouragement as the class subject extended to 'Object Lessons' that could include natural history.¹¹⁰

Natural history study was presented as a worthy venture for nature society members, primarily as a means of promoting respect for nature, but their leaders also used these themes to agitate for school curriculum reform, in particular calling for nature study and humanitarian teaching to be added onto the timetable. The BOK

¹⁰⁸ W.H. Hudspeth, 'The History of the Teaching of Biological Subjects, including Nature Study in English Schools Since 1660', (unpublished master's thesis, Durham, 1962-1963), pp. 73-191; Jack W. Bainbridge, 'Origins of the Nature Study Movement', *Natural Science in Schools*, 16 (1978), 11-14 (p. 11).

¹⁰⁹ Ellis, 'Effects of the Revised Code of Education', p. 13.

¹¹⁰ All Saints School logbook, 24 June 1863; Bainbridge, 'Origins of the Nature Study Movement', p. 11; Education Department, *New Code of Regulations*, C. 2512, (HMSO, 1880), p. 8.

observed this form of instruction was essential to counteract the misinformation circulating about the habits of some animals, such as hedgehogs stealing cows' milk, which led to unwarranted persecution.¹¹¹ The content of the children's periodicals played a vital role from the 1850s onwards in popularising science in schools. The call from the *Union Jack* for schoolmasters to take a greater interest in natural history equally demonstrates that agitating for social reform was not reserved for newspaper editors.¹¹²

Why was there a sudden interest in nature studies when at least one government report admitted that observers would regard it as a 'trivial' subject?¹¹³ Clearly, we need to relate its rise partly because of the rapid increase in public concern for the environment and nature in general, demonstrated elsewhere in this thesis. However, there was also wide debate that pinpointed the lack of scientific instruction in schools as a contributory factor in Britain's perceived economic decline. Comparisons were made with the education systems of Germany, an increasing economic rival.¹¹⁴ A noticeable omission on the British timetable, compared to the German, was natural history or nature study. A Board of Education survey in 1900 concluded that nature study was imperative for it would provide 'increased powers of observation, description, manipulation of delicate objects'.¹¹⁵ Such skills would obviously be advantageous to industry, and such allusions to factory dexterity were occasionally repeated, although perhaps unwittingly, by the children's societies. The

¹¹¹ *Hexham Herald*, 13 June 1885; *Stockport Advertiser*, 5 September 1884.

¹¹² Dixon, 'Children's Magazines and Science', p. 228; *Union Jack*, 1/27 (1 July 1880), pp. 430-31.

¹¹³ Board of Education, *Special Reports on Educational Subjects*, Cd. 418, (HMSO, 1900), VI, p. 264.

¹¹⁴ E.W. Jenkins, 'Science, Sentimentalism or Social Control? The Nature Study Movement in England and Wales, 1899-1914', *History of Education*, 10/1 (1981), 33-43 (p. 39); Stephens, *Education in Britain*, pp. 125-28.

¹¹⁵ *Special Reports on Educational Subjects*, Cd. 418, pp. 86, 264.

Preston Guardian believed all children should possess a 'seeing eye' to 'cultivate the power of observation' and this would lead to members becoming 'wiser and very probably better'.¹¹⁶

Natural history also retained its role as a virtuous study to improve the morality of children. The Sunday schools already provided some form of restorative moral teaching laced with religiosity. The Moral Instruction League, created in 1897, offered a similar solution. This looked to divorce religion from 'moral teaching' and to provide this secular instruction on the school curriculum. The ultimate aim was to improve the character of children. With publications that meditated on the importance of kindness, moral education complemented nature study, which similarly promoted respect for the natural world.¹¹⁷ The nature societies constantly sought to uphold caring principles, and many societies called for moral instruction to augment their existing work. A key reason, the *Hexham Herald* argued, was that this schooling in 'moral training' would create 'good men'.¹¹⁸ Adams used his DBS to call for teaching innovations. He had an early success, but not in Britain. The international reach of his society led to the formation of an Australian DBS hosted by the *Sydney Mirror* newspaper. It received the patronage of the Australian Department of Public Instruction in 1888 and the promotion of the movement within schools. Capitalising on this, Adams insisted that his work should be the responsibility of government, demanding, 'when will the statesmen who are responsible for our national system of

¹¹⁶ *Preston Guardian*, 4 April 1914.

¹¹⁷ Trygve R. Tholfsen, 'Moral Education in The Victorian Sunday School', *History of Education Quarterly*, 20/1 (1980), 77-99; Robert Bérard, 'Frederick James Gould and the Transformation of Moral Education', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, XXXV/3 (1987), 233-47; Jenkins, 'Science, Sentimentalism or Social Control', pp. 38-39.

¹¹⁸ *Hexham Herald*, 3 July 1886.

education deem it within their provenance to promote and pay for humane teaching in schools?'¹¹⁹

Weighty support also came from HMIs. William Jolly called for the introduction of 'kindness to animals' lessons as part of a broader subject of 'Moral Duty' as early as 1872.¹²⁰ With their various agendas, it is doubtful that the nature societies would have been strong enough to see this campaign to fruition. Instead, we need to see their calls as contributing and providing commentary on educational reform. Codification of 'Moral Instruction' occurred in 1906. Pointedly, teachers were to convey to their pupils 'humanity to animals... and respect for beauty in nature'.¹²¹ The BOM, with its energetic workers and bespoke magazine, was a readymade agency to assist this work and the RSPCA quickly took advantage. It advised that Bands be worked in conjunction with natural history teaching, but should anyone object to their work,

advantage should be taken of the Clause dealing with Moral Instruction in the Code of Regulations for Public Elementary Schools... and humane teaching should be made a regular subject in the curriculum, the members of the classes receiving such teaching being enrolled as members of the Band of Mercy.¹²²

Such advice was heeded and regular humanitarian lessons, which varied from daily to bi-annual sessions, were given to some elementary schoolchildren. By 1910, at least fifty-four schools had a Band affiliated to them.¹²³

The drive to codify nature study followed a similar progression, although when object lessons became mandatory in 1895, the process accelerated. These elementary

¹¹⁹ *NWC*, 1 December 1888; 4 May 1889.

¹²⁰ *Report of the Committee of Council on Education, 1872-73*, (HMSO, 1873), p. 273.

¹²¹ Board of Education, *Code of Regulations for Public Elementary Schools*, 1906 Cd. 3043 (HMSO, 1906), pp. vii, 3.

¹²² *Band of Mercy*, 330 (June 1906), p. 47.

science lessons significantly included study 'on the chief tribes of animals and their habits'.¹²⁴ George Kekewich, the secretary of the Education Department, believed that Object Lessons would develop

a love of nature and an interest in living things, and corrects the tendency which exists in many children to destructiveness and thoughtless unkindness to animals, and shows the ignorance and cruelty of such conduct. The value of the services which many animals render to man should be dwelt upon, and the importance of kindly treating them and preserving them should be pointed out.¹²⁵

The BOM reproduced Kekewich's observations in its magazine, accompanied by a sketch of two boys drawing a bird, to underline the true value of this teaching to their members. The DBS had also pushed hard for some form of nature teaching on the curriculum, and it too welcomed the new lessons. It had already gained a victory elsewhere in its school curriculum campaign. In 1885, Uncle Toby had called for schoolmasters to take their charges along to the new Newcastle Hancock Museum to learn from the collections. He must have taken some satisfaction from the decision in 1894 that museum visits counted towards school attendance for elementary school pupils.¹²⁶

The RSPCA and press societies were certainly not the only associations offering advice to schools. The RSPB had already produced a series of educational tracts and it extended this by instigating work for elementary schools. The 'Birds and Arbor' progressive conservation initiative was begun in America in 1894. The RSPB

¹²³ LMA, EO/DIV9/SLE/LB/2: Sleaford Street School logbook, 17 January 1907; 3 February 1910; RSPCA, 87th Annual Report 1910, pp. 215-26.

¹²⁴ Hudspeth, 'Teaching of Biological Subject', pp. 223-25; Education Department, *Code of Regulations for Day Schools*, C. 7052, (HMSO, 1895), pp. 4, 34.

¹²⁵ *Report of the Committee of Council on Education (England and Wales) 1895-96*, C.8248, (HMSO, 1896), p. 499.

¹²⁶ *Band of Mercy*, 216 (December 1896), p. 89; *NWC*, 18 April 1885; 6 April 1895; Jenkins, 'Science, Sentimentalism or Social Control', p. 36.

copied this scheme in 1902 and began its 'Bird and Tree Day' project in an attempt to instil 'a real love and sympathy with every thing that lives' and make children 'bird lovers and protectors'.¹²⁷ This differed from the schemes organised by the RSPCA and press societies. It was less preachy and routine, as the bird society engaged pupils with an inventive practical project of tree planting, and observational studies of birds. The Director of Education for Hampshire praised this approach, noting 'Books are but second-hand knowledge; this is largely first-hand observation...of the living thing and its natural movements'.¹²⁸ Secondly, unlike the urban schools that dominated essay competitions, the RSPB specifically targeted rural schools, reflecting its concern about the behaviour of country people towards birds. Notably the Society targeted Norfolk, where animal welfare advice offered by the *Norwich Mercury's* Helpers Guild was also non-existent. However, the RSPB was unable to elucidate any interest and penetration into country schools elsewhere was patchy, as just six counties entered the 1909 competition. Despite the support of the press and sympathetic teachers, this was hard work. An RSPB representative reported that opposition from parents prevented the project expanding, as many villagers were 'inimical to bird protection'.¹²⁹

Despite the difficulties, this work suggests that at least some schools were amenable to teaching nature study. This is evident from a conference held in London in 1902 to pool and discuss best practice ideas from schools. The outcome of this

¹²⁷ RSPB, *13th Annual Report 1903*, p. 51; Armitage, 'Bird Day for Kids', p. 528; RSPB: *Bird and Tree Day: County Challenge Shield Competition*, Leaflet No. 45 (Reprinted from *Education*, 8 January 1903), p. 3.

¹²⁸ *Bird Notes and News*, IV/8 (December 1911).

¹²⁹ RSPB: *Council Minute Book*, (January 1910-December 1911), 16 December 1910; *Bird Notes & News*, IV/8 (December 1911); RSPB: *Finance & General Purposes Committee/Finance Committee Minute Book*, (January 1910-July 1912), 21 July 1911.

meeting was the formation of the School Nature Study Union (SNSU). This provided nature study teaching materials, but was restricted to London.¹³⁰ Nature study was eventually codified in 1905, although it was limited to standards I to IV.¹³¹ To assist teachers the Board of Education suggested that for bird study, pupils should examine the different species, their nests, eggs and notably, the 'usefulness of some birds' with the house sparrow given as an example.¹³² The work of the nature societies did not end with this codification and they continued to stress the importance of the subject by printing letters, recalling pupils' enjoyment of nature study teaching. Phyllis Dean told Uncle William of the Animals' Friends Society that 'We looked for all sorts of flowers and when we had a nice lot we had a lesson on them... We did not look for nests or chase the butterflies'.¹³³ It is interesting that Phyllis was keen to set an example that her studies did not involve egg collection, although a different attitude still prevailed regarding flora. Nevertheless, such letters must have provided incentives for other schools and their pupils to take up the subject.

Despite the great drive to codify nature study, there are signs that it was not as popular as advocates claimed. Indeed, the RSPB believed that nature teaching in some schools was 'worthless' and that some teachers had little interest in the subject. Calls in newspapers for the implementation of nature study teaching in 1910 confirm that

¹³⁰ *Official Report of the Nature Study Exhibition and Conferences held in the Royal Botanic Society's Gardens Regent's Park, London July 23rd to August 5th, 1902*, (London: Blackie, 1903); E.W. Jenkins and B.J. Swinnerton, 'The School Nature Study Union 1903-94', *History of Education*, 25/2 (1996), 181-98 (pp. 181-85).

¹³¹ Board of Education, *Code of Regulations for Public Elementary Schools*, 1905, Cd. 2579, (HMSO, 1905), p. 2; Bainbridge, 'Origins of the Nature Study Movement', p. 14.

¹³² Board of Education, *Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of Public Elementary Schools*, Cd. 2638 (HMSO, 1905), Appendix II, pp. 102-10.

¹³³ *Bristol Observer*, 10 June 1905.

many schools did not teach the subject at this time.¹³⁴ This corroborates the conclusion drawn by scholars, who observe that even in its infancy, nature study was beginning to relapse into a period of disillusion brought on by bad organisation and apathetic teachers.¹³⁵ The remit for the study was simply too wide, and it became an 'auxiliary Scripture' and a panacea for the ills of society.¹³⁶ This was because individuals believed nature study would address a gamut of perceived societal problems, including agricultural economic decline, untidy gardens, gambling and the perceived physical degeneration of the population.¹³⁷ There is little to suggest that the study tackled any of these problems, and indeed, with such impossible objectives it is obvious why apathy crept in.

For those pupils who received nature study teaching, what were the effects? Allen blames it for altering the perception of natural history and tainting it to become a risible activity fit only for 'a grubby urchin with a jam-jar'.¹³⁸ Not all children were grimy rogues. There were positive dividends to this popularisation. It broadened the study of nature out of the domain of the privileged schoolchild and left many with a greater familiarity with the natural world. The many sketches of animals and birds received by the *Preston Guardian* in 1914 led the paper to suggest that nature study teaching was having a positive effect.¹³⁹ However, this enthusiasm by the newspapers might have had a negative consequence. Jenkins sees the mass of publications offering advice leading to confusion and actually hampering teachers, whilst Allen attacks publishers, including the popular press and its 'nature note' features, for producing

¹³⁴ RSPB, *23rd Annual Report 1913*, p. 10; *Blaydon Courier*, 5 February 1910.

¹³⁵ Jenkins, 'Science, Sentimentalism or Social Control', pp. 41-42.

¹³⁶ Allen, *Naturalist in Britain*, p. 183.

¹³⁷ *Blaydon Courier*, 5 February 1910.

¹³⁸ Allen, *Naturalist in Britain*, pp. 183-84.

'mawkish' material that moved natural history study from exact recording to articles of 'softened impressionism'.¹⁴⁰ *Band of Mercy* excelled in sentimentality at times, but it is noteworthy that after nature study was codified, these essays became more serious.¹⁴¹ These features, especially in newspapers, also provided convenient teaching aides, further underlining the educational role of the newspaper. One correspondent to the *Bristol Observer* was fulsome in praise of that paper's 'Nature Notes', believing them to be 'well adapted for our day schools'.¹⁴²

The effects of nature study were wide, but the subject continued to build in vigour after the war. The nature societies should take some credit for this, but their prime reason for clamouring for nature study as a school subject was a belief it would foster a more appreciative mindset towards the natural world. Both Jenkins and Marsden highlight this objective, but fail to provide a satisfactory conclusion as to whether this was actually achieved.¹⁴³ This work had been ongoing by members of the nature societies long before the codification of nature study. Even so, there were authorities that believed school nature study had an immediate conservationist effect. According to *The Times* in 1914, there had been a demonstrable drop in cases of bird-nesting, attributable, not to legislation, but to humanitarian teaching and nature study.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ *Preston Guardian*, 7 February 1914.

¹⁴⁰ Jenkins, 'Science, Sentimentalism or Social Control', p. 42; Allen, *Naturalist in Britain*, p. 184.

¹⁴¹ For contrasting articles see, *Band of Mercy*, 219, (March 1897), pp. 18-19; 354 (June 1908), pp. 43-44.

¹⁴² *Bristol Observer*, 6 April 1907.

¹⁴³ Jenkins, 'Science, Sentimentalism or Social Control', pp. 38, 42; Marsden, 'Environmental Education', p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ *The Times*, 8 July 1914.

Conclusion

Animal protectionists viewed schools as useful institutions. They were ideal for boosting recruitment, widening the scope of the animal welfare debate, and by relying on the watchful eye of a teacher, a means of forcing schoolchildren to engage with testing educational work. The many essay and letter writing exercises provide tangible evidence that the societies were making headway. These schemes had all the hallmarks of middle-class social control, but they undoubtedly brought the treatment of animals to a wider urban and rural audience. The evidence presented in this chapter also shows that elements of the children's press, especially provincial newspapers, via their children's societies, took a keen interest in children's education. Reporting and agitating brought these issues into the public sphere. In the case of newspapers, their offer of interactive pedagogical work came long after the advent of 'new journalism' had supposedly diminished the educational ideal of the press. Hampton's argument therefore requires revision.

There were limitations to the school work of the various animal protection agencies. A school BOM required compliant teachers. The operations of the SNSU and the main RSPCA competitions were restricted to London. Despite valiant attempts, the RSPB could only claim minor victories in the private and country schools. Moreover, success in persuading boys to correspond or write essays was still limited. Overcoming the reluctance of boys was one campaign that was never going to be wholly successful. However, the efforts of the nature societies and the entries to the RSPCA's essay competition demonstrate that the Lord Chancellor's anxiety should have been directed elsewhere. Instead of boys who did not read newspapers, it was the

privately schooled boy, and his affluent school, who blatantly avoided the conservationists.

The press societies did not have teams of workers to organise their schemes, and instead relied upon partnerships with willing teachers, pupils and dedicated journalists to press their case for animal welfare and nature study. It would be wrong to say they entirely filled the gaps left by the other agencies or were responsible for the amendments to the school curriculum, but it is certain they played a valuable supporting role. This belief in vital educational work led to undoubted personal fulfilment. With respect to the DBS, Adams believed that his 'corner' sealed a tripartite 'alliance' between newspaper, child and school. As early as 1879, he conceded 'there is no feature of our society that has given me more satisfaction than the success met with in the public schools'.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ *NWC*, 16 August 1879.

CONCLUSION

Nine months after the launch of the DBS in 1876, Uncle Toby wrote,

some day I hope to see a worldwide federation of bird protection societies, with this English society of ours at its head, with a membership numbering a row of figures, which if I mentioned it now might make people laugh. But if we work and wait that may come.¹

By 1914, well over a million British children had pledged to be kind to animals and birds. The impact of this association had therefore reverberated far beyond its Newcastle base. This is why this society has been central to this study. Founded largely for commercial considerations and partly as an outcome of the new journalism which prompted innovations in the popular press, the newspaper societies were obliged to foster deep relationships with their members, leading to the creation of a community of regular correspondents. The continued establishment of these associations from 1876 to 1914 indicates that this trend was not just rooted in a particular decade, and confirms the declining influence of the church as individuals outside of its networks were taking responsibility for modelling children's behaviour.

Complementing Uncle Toby's 'worldwide federation' were the Bands of Mercy, which represented the more traditional form of children's associations. The RSPCA's longstanding reliance on punitive measures had stalled the formation of a children's wing, and created an even larger hurdle of working-class resentment to surmount. Only when women reorganised its educational work did the Society engage with children. Although the RSPCA's conservative control ensured the success of its Bands, of which 500 were operating by 1910, it stifled their real potential, which

¹ *NWC*, 30 June 1877.

could have been much greater with more financial input and a less authoritarian policy.

In his last message to DBS members, Uncle Toby hoped they would 'keep the pledge they took on joining the Society'.² This promise was central to the societies, and although leaders were not gullible enough to believe that all children would keep their pledge, they rebuked those who strayed, thus reinforcing the gravity of the campaigns of the societies. Although children enrolled for many reasons, there were those who assiduously carried out their pledge obligations, including intervening to stop cruelty or furthering the work of the societies when they were adults. These individuals provide sound testament for the positive impact of these clubs and their pledges.

The starting point for the animal protectionists was the frequently reprised anxiety that animal cruelty led to mimetic aggression. Whether the societies actually quelled this moral panic is difficult to quantify. Certainly, they made it difficult for children to deny the effects of cruelty, and correspondence confirms receipt of these messages. Yet the problem has not gone away, and animal protectionists continue to work to deconstruct this chain of behaviour, as a joint National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and RSPCA conference in 2001 illustrates.³

Although the issues surrounding the animal-child relationship were discussed by the nature societies, it was not excessively dwelled upon. Instead, it was subliminally addressed through the issue of bird protection and the encouragement of

² *NWC*, 21 December 1940.

³ Piper, 'Linkage of Animal Abuse', pp. 162-63.

progressive conservation. Of course there were admonishments for cruelty (usually egg-collecting), but there is strong evidence that encouraging positive action was the more frequent ploy adopted by the nature societies. Their scope went beyond children's activities to address the behaviour and attitudes of their parents. The societies were quietly effective in campaigning against blood-sports, aviculture, and feathered millinery. The intention was to inculcate the belief that these practices were abominable so that the 'tiny humanitarians' would not indulge in such habits in later life and might influence others. Sandford confidently reported that her 'tiny humanitarians' were doing good work in Blackfriars.⁴ This was not an isolated case, as across the country, nature society members, forcibly at times, converted their peers, and persuaded women to abandon plumaged hats.

The regularity with which this thesis cites children's contributions reveals a genuine willingness and real concern by children to protect animals from persecution. This had much to do with the methods employed by the nature societies. Using their publications, branch meetings, and then working with schools, they continually worked to inspire children, and sometimes adults, to care about animals and birds. This ensured that the message of animal welfare infiltrated both the domestic and public spheres. This was the most visible effect of the societies. They considerably widened the close-knit circle of privileged individuals, *Times* letter writers and parliamentarians who we associate with discussing animal welfare issues. All classes of society, and especially the respectable working classes, engaged with the nature societies and followed the usual route of penning protest letters to newspapers, but also took on more proactive duties. Children provided bird food, constructed bird

⁴ Sandford, 'School Pets as a Help to Moral Training', p. 118.

boxes, financially contributed to water trough schemes, and gave up egg-collecting. This was far from the portrayal of an uncaring working class pedalled by the RSPCA and some elements of the popular press. Indeed, if there were recalcitrant individuals, it was upper class males, who clung to their field sports, blithely ignored bird protection legislation, and cold-shouldered invitations to essay competitions.

This thesis has underlined the ability of print culture to mobilise children. From the mid-eighteenth century, there had been an increasing market for publications that attempted to project a respectful image of wildlife, although this momentum occasionally fractured. As a measure of changing public opinion, periodicals bowed under the pressure of legislation and became appreciably more concerned for wildlife. Newspapers chose to use their children's columns to press home the debate. These were far more accessible than the middle-class periodicals. Although the RSPCA's literature was widely distributed, individuals would have been well aware of its mission and its aloof moralising of working-class behaviour. In contrast, ordinary newspapers were purchased for many reasons other than nature conservation. They reached a much wider public, both numerically and socially, leading to campaigns capturing a broad audience. One in two households in some areas of Scotland bought the *People's Journal* (the host of the Sunbeam Club) and by 1914, it was claiming weekly sales of 250,000 copies as 'Scotland's National Newspaper'. Its readers held it in high esteem, hence its tag of the 'Ploughman's Bible'. Such a working-class affinity could never be apportioned to *Animal World*.⁵ Many adults probably ignored the children's column, but some did not. They read it with their children, or for their own edification. Therefore, conservation issues

⁵ *People's Journal*, 27 April 1878; 7 February 1914; Donaldson, *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland*, p. 26.

reached a much wider readership, who also appreciated this narrative. For instance, *NWC* readers nominated the DBS as the most popular column in the newspaper.⁶

What did the nature societies achieve in the field of conservation? By 1914, bird feeding had become a popular activity. This had two major consequences. It fostered respect for wildlife and saved thousands of birds. Such eager support for this rational recreation clearly demonstrates that not all leisure had to be a supervised indoor activity. Success in dealing with wider conservation issues is more difficult to assess. Understandably, the societies were keen to report decreases in egg-collecting and cruelty as evidence of their campaign's efficacy, but whether their work directly influenced changes in behaviour is uncertain. Collecting, despite legislation, remained a popular children's pastime, as the condemnation, post-1914, demonstrates.⁷ Yet as proof of the power of print culture to influence action, negative publicity of the imported plumaged trade and trap shooting by newspapers in particular, played a decisive role in subsequent nature conservation legislation as both practices were outlawed in 1921.⁸

The key to preventing animal abuse was to persuade the public to regard cruelty as unacceptable. There are signs that this was happening, and the nature societies played a vital role in fostering new attitudes. In 1898, Richard Welford of the RSPCA recognised that, 'Few movements have met with such rapid and widespread success and it must be extremely gratifying to you to know that the Dicky Bird Society has found numerous imitators at home and abroad... bearing witness to

⁶ *NWC*, 4 June 1904.

⁷ For example, *NWC*, 23 February 1935.

⁸ Yardley, *Clay Pigeon Shooting*, p. 59; Turner, *All Heaven in a Rage*, pp. 190-93.

the power and influence of your example'.⁹ Adams was quick to acknowledge that the work was not all his, but was heartened that 'Cruelty has come to be considered not only wrong, but cowardly. Even hardened men and women are beginning to be ashamed of brutal misdoings'.¹⁰ This estimation is given credence by the RSPCA's annual conviction report that showed convictions peaking in 1904, and then falling by a quarter by 1910.¹¹ Obviously, the children's societies were not entirely responsible for this, but their constant agitation and enrolment of children, who then encouraged to engage in 'pester power', would have played a part. As the DBS letter [fig 7.1] so visibly illustrates, this was a realisation shared by children. Interestingly, part of this sketch was copied from a *BOP* illustration [see fig 3.4 Chapter Three], demonstrating that *NWC* readers had access to this magazine and its pro-collecting opinions.

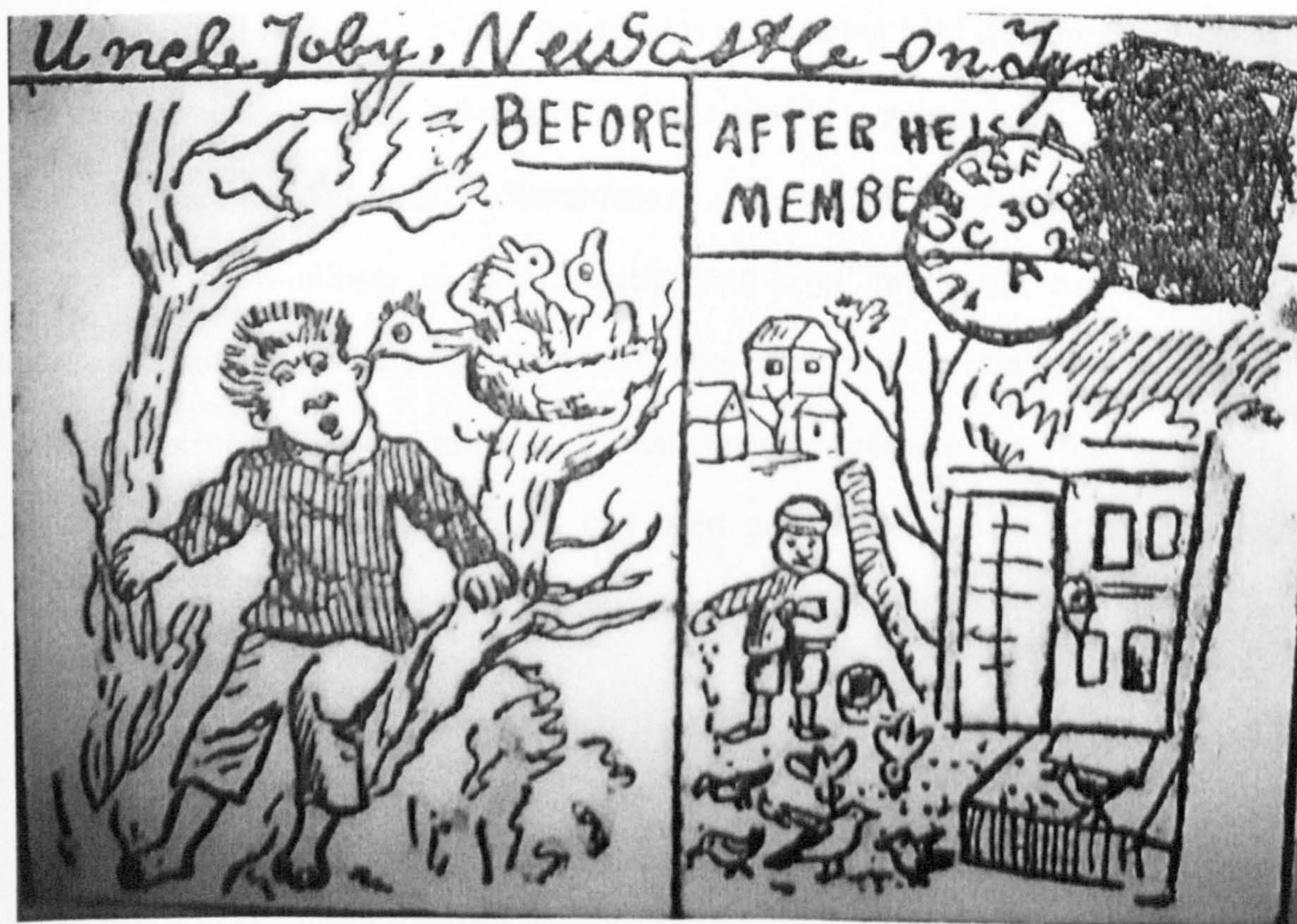


Figure 7.1: 'Before/After he is a Member', *NWC*, 4 February 1888.

⁹ *NWC*, 11 June 1898.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11 June 1898.

¹¹ RSPCA, 87th Annual Report 1910, p. 208.

It would be wrong to present these societies as being wholly successful. They constantly struggled to convince boys to see benevolence as an essential manly attribute. It is easy to see how this problem arose. The nature societies had distinctly unmanly names and leaders; they made special attempts to attract the attention of young children by dwelling upon anthropomorphic stories, and had a unisex membership. However, the concept of the benevolent male was gaining currency and was no longer the preserve of animal protectionists. Law Six of the Boy Scouts, the quintessential manly agency, stated that 'A SCOUT IS A FRIEND TO ANIMALS. He should save them as far as possible from pain, and should not kill any animal unnecessarily, even if it is only a fly – for it is one of God's creatures'.¹² Yet, despite scouting's directive to protect animals and its offer of new leisure opportunities, it is clear that not all boys had forsaken the delights of torturing wild creatures. In 1924, a DBS correspondent lamented that they had been unable to recruit boys, blaming their desire to 'take and kill birds'.¹³ Nevertheless, this study has shown that by looking beyond the quasi-military youth movements and boys' press, and considering the newspaper and unisex magazine press, manliness ideals, and especially the concept of the benevolent male, were reaching a much broader audience than the 'preachers, school masters and novelists' who had been previously recognised as peddling manliness messages.¹⁴ We can therefore add not just journalists to this list of peddlers, but also boys themselves.

Given the supposedly greater tendency of boys to be cruel, it is understandable that they were specifically targeted. However, it is important not to overlook the

¹² Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, (London: Cox, c1908; repr, Mineola: Dover Publications, 2007), p. 50.

¹³ *NWC*, 16 February 1924.

¹⁴ Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 31.

valuable contribution made to these societies by girls. They formed a majority of the membership, and as their letters illustrate, they took on highly proactive responsibilities to confront cruelty, whether it was contributing to debates on feathered millinery or challenging catapult-toting boys. Evidently, these nature societies played a vital role in offering leisure opportunities to girls, even if it was simply giving space for their written compositions.

By taking their campaigns into schools, elements of the press undertook key pedagogical work and moved from static instruments of instruction to ones that sought out interactive educational roles with children and their teachers. By surveying newspaper children's columns, this thesis calls attention to children as active newspaper readers, a hitherto unexplored area of children's literature. The calls for scholarly work to address the issue of reader response, especially on the part of the working classes, has been addressed by this thesis and its assessment of children's letters.¹⁵

By looking beyond the recognised canon of children's literature, this thesis has illustrated that significant youth movements existed with an aim of mobilising children and directing their leisure time. Although it is important to recognise the millions of children recruited by the nature societies to sign pledges, making these associations significant in their own right, their value does not entirely rest on such numbers. These were highly accessible associations open to prominent figures, as well as the poorest and youngest members of society. Their work went far beyond providing rational recreation or suitable reading. Variousy they were environmental

¹⁵ Hampton, 'Newspapers in Victorian Britain', p. 4.

campaigners, charitable fundraisers, and educationalists who always endeavoured to improve their members' moral behaviour. This combination indicates that these associations were highly significant in providing children, via their contributions to the conservation debate, with a sense of worth in order to challenge and reform behaviour towards animals and birds.

Appendix I: Table of Children's Societies.

Name Of Publication	Children's Column	Children's Clubs	Date In Existence	Leaders	No. Of Members	Animal Welfare	Political Orientation	Remarks
<i>Auckland Chronicle (1)</i>	Children's Guild	Children's Guild	1904-(1914)	Uncle Joe	116,138 (1914)	2	Liberal (1904)	Children's Column in 1903. Guild in existence in 1924.
<i>Auckland Times & Herald</i>	Children's Circle	Children's Circle	1907-1909	Uncle Paul	N/A	1	Independent (1907)	Paper Ceased 1910
<i>Band of Mercy</i>	Band of Mercy	Band of Mercy	1875-(1935)	Various	75-145,000 at one time (1905: estimate only)	1	Children's Magazine	Renamed RSPCA Junior Division 1935
<i>Berwick Journal</i>	Children's Corner	Border Dicky Bird Club Border Children's Club	1894-1917	Innes Adair Borderer	5,263 (1914)	1	Neutral (1894)	
<i>Birmingham Daily Times</i>	Order of Kindness	Order of Kindness	1888 (X)	Uncle Jack	1,494	1	Conservative (1888)	Paper folded 1890.
<i>Birmingham Weekly Mercury</i>	Children's Column	Mercury Club Band of Love & Kindness Band of Good Service Band of Mercy Boys Brigade	1891-1905 (Y)	Aunt Mabel/Uncle Bob	N/A	2	Family Newspaper (1891)	Continued to host children's column only after 1905 up to 1914
<i>Birmingham Weekly Post</i>	Young Folks Corner	Busy Bee Society	1898-(1914)	Uncle John	12,153 (1914)	1	Liberal (1898)	
<i>Bradford Weekly Telegraph</i>	Young Folks Circle Yorkshire Children's Circle	Sunshine Guild Yorkshire Children's Circle	1905-(1914)	Uncle Henry/Uncle Ben	389 (1912)	2	Liberal (1906)	
<i>Bristol Observer/Bath Observer</i>	Children's Column	Bristol Observer Animal Friends Society	1905-(1914)	Uncle William	2,158 (1914)	1	Independent /Liberal (1912)	

Burnley Gazette	Sunbeam Society	Sunbeam Society	1889-1906	Uncle Jack	17,109 (1905)	1	Liberal (1889)	Hosted children's column only from 1906
The Cable/Farm Life	Children's Order of the Cable	Order of Chivalry	1893-(1914)	None	14,272 (1900)	3	Agricultural Journal	
Cambrian (Swansea)	Children's Corner	Welsh Dicky Bird Society	1899-1901	Uncle Robin	c.800 (1900)	1	Independent (1900)	
Cardiff Times (2)	Round Table	Round Table	1890-1902	Maggie Symington Lady Greensleaves	c.27,900 (1900)	1	Liberal (1890)	Hosted children's column only after 1902
Children's Encyclopaedia (3)	League of the Helping Hand	League of the Helping Hand	1910-1912	Arthur Mee	11,439 (1911)	2	Children's Magazine	
Children's Own Paper (4)	Band of Kindness	Band of Kindness	1882-1903	Uncle George/Aunt Keziah Uncle Gilbert/Aunt Marianne/Aunt Lizzie	49,261 (1891)	1	Children's Magazine	Magazine ceased 1895
Daily Mirror (3)	Children's Hour	League of Helping Hand	1911-1912	Arthur Mee	See <i>Children's Encyclopaedia</i>	2	Unionist (1912)	Children's Corner in existence in 1907
Durham Chronicle & County Gazette (2)	Children's Hour	Round Table	1890-1892	Aunt Maggie	See <i>Cardiff Times</i>	1	Liberal (1890)	
Hampshire Telegraph & Sussex Chronicle (Portsmouth)	Children's Hour	Greenleaf Club	1896-1899	Grandpa Grimm	N/A	1	Liberal (1896)	Children's Corner began in 1883
Hexham Courant (2)	Chats With Children Children's Circle	Paul Boythorne's Children Round Table Children's Circle	1881-1886 1890 1907-(1914)	Paul Boythorne Aunt Maggie Uncle Fred	1,718 (1885) See <i>Cardiff Times</i> 1,652 (1914)	1 1 1	Liberal (1882)	Children's Column only 1886-1890

<i>Hexham Herald</i>	Sister Mercy & her Friends/ Band of Mercy	Sister Mercy & Her Friends/ Band of Mercy	1883-1892	Sister Mercy	2,279 (1888)	1	Independent (1882)	Children's column in 1914
<i>Huddersfield Daily Examiner</i>	The Children's Column	Androcles Society	1884-1890	Androcles	566 (1885)	2	Liberal (1884)	
<i>Hull News</i>	Happy Hours For Children	Big Birthday Book/Happy Hours Guild	1907-1911	None	3,942 (1909)	1	Independent (1907)	Children's Hour ran by Maggie Symington 1883-5 Children's Corner in 1913
<i>Ipswich Journal</i>	Children's Hour	Round Table	1890-1891	Aunt Maggie	N/A	1	Conservative (1890)	
<i>Irish Tribune</i>	Our Young Folks Corner	Catholic Legion	1890-1893 (Z)	Aunt Bessie	3,651 (1893)	1	Catholic (1890)	
<i>Leeds Times</i>	Selections for the Young/Children's Corner	Golden Circle	1889-1894	Uncle John	2,800 (1890)	1	Liberal (1889)	
<i>Leigh Chronicle</i>	Leigh Branch of the DBS	Leigh Branch of the DBS	1877	Uncle Toby	72 (1877)	1	Liberal (1877)	
<i>Little Folks</i>	<i>Little Folks'</i> Humane Society	Little Folks' Humane Society (LFHS)	1882-1909	The Editor	c.60-70,000 (1891)	1	Children's Magazine	Nature Study Society
<i>Liverpool Weekly Mercury</i>	<i>Little Folks'</i> Nature Club	Little Folks' Nature Club	1908-(1914)	Kingfisher	N/A	1	Liberal (1892)	
<i>Manchester Weekly Times</i>	Children's League/Children's Page	Children's League	1892-(1914)	The President	6,985 (1900)	1	Liberal (1889)	
<i>Manchester Weekly Times</i>	Children's Hour	Guild of Gentleness	1889-(1914)	Uncle Oldman/Aunt Mary	126,786 (1895)	1	Liberal (1889)	
<i>Newcastle Courant</i>	Young Folks Corner	Young Folks Humane Society	1882-1883	Aunt Maggie/Uncle Raymond Uncle Jack	N/A	1	Independent (1882)	Young Folks Corner 1879-1882 Children's Column 1885-1909

<i>Newcastle Weekly Chronicle</i>	Children's Column	Dicky Bird Society (DBS)	1876-1940	Uncle Toby	367,612 (1914) 411,660 (1940)	1	Liberal (1876)	Paper ceased in 1940.
<i>Newmarket Journal</i> (5)	Readings for the Young/For the Little Folks	Children's Corner Union	1913-(1914)	Uncle Ralph	2,604 (1914)	1	Neutral (1907)	Children's column (1900)-1913
<i>Northern Weekly Echo</i> (1)	Our Children's Guild	Our Children's Guild	1904-1906	Uncle Joe	See <i>Auckland Chronicle</i>	1	Liberal (1904)	Paper ceased 1906
<i>Northern Weekly Gazette</i> (Middlesborough)	Children's Corner	Children's Corner	1896-(1914)	Daddy	154,204 (1914) 161,343 (1919)	1	Liberal (1896)	
<i>Northern Weekly Leader</i> (Newcastle)	The Children's Hour/Golden Circle	The Golden Circle	1886-1919	Cousin Paul/Aunt Ruth/Bee/	90,892 (1914)	1	Liberal (1886)	Paper ceased 1919
<i>Norwich Mercury</i> (6)	Our Children's Corner	Young Folks Guild Helpers Guild	1907-(1914)	Uncle Arthur	N/A	3	Liberal (1907)	
<i>Nottinghamshire Guardian</i>	Round Table	Round Table	1890-1902	Aunt Maggie/Lady Greensleaves	See <i>Cardiff Times</i>	1	Conservative (1890)	
<i>Nottinghamshire Weekly Express</i>	Our Children's Column	Golden Rule Society	1890-(1914)	Uncle William	984 (1914)	1	Liberal (1890)	
<i>Paddington, Kensington and Bayswater Chronicle</i> (5)	Children's Corner	Children's Corner	1913-(1914)	Uncle Ralph	See <i>Newmarket Journal</i>	1	Conservative (1906)	Children's Column (1900)-1912
<i>Peoples Journal</i> (Dundee)	Sunbeam Club	Sunbeam Club	1886-1905	Daintie Davie	24,382 (1895)	1	Liberal (1886)	
<i>Portsmouth Times & Naval Gazette</i>	Sunbeam Club	Sunbeam Club	1911-(1914)	Sadie Sunshine	16,250 (1914)			
<i>Preston Guardian</i>	Children's Corner	League of Love	1893-(1914)	Uncle Taff/ Uncle Frank	N/A	1	Conservative (1893)	
	Children's Column	<i>Preston Guardian</i> Animals Friend Society	1884-(1914)	Uncle William	18,795 (1914)	1	Liberal (1884)	

<i>South Durham & Cleveland Mercury</i> (1) (Hartlepool)	Our Children's Guild	Our Children's Guild	1904-1906	Uncle Joe	See <i>Auckland Chronicle</i> (1906)	1	Liberal (1906)	Paper ceased 1906
<i>Stockport Advertiser</i> (4)	Children's Corner	Band of Kindness	1882-1886	Uncle George	See <i>Children's Own Paper</i>	1	Conservative (1882)	
<i>Union Jack</i>	Young Naturalist's Field Club	Young Naturalist's Field Club	1880-1882	Archibald McNeil	5,000 (1883)	3	Boy's Story Paper	Nature Study Society. Magazine ceased 1883
<i>Weekly Telegraph</i> (Nationwide 1889)	Children's Corner	Kind Hearted Brigade	1889-(1914)	Captain Trim	153,515 (1911)	1	Fiction Newspaper (1890)	Claimed 521,381 members 1914, but misprint
<i>Weekly Times & Echo</i> (London)	Children's Corner	Children's Corner	1885-1897	Uncle Sam	29,440 (1897)	1	Liberal (1885)	
<i>Yorkshire Factory Times</i> (5)	Children's Corner	Children's Corner	1894-1912	Grandad Grey/Uncle Fred/Cousin Maggie	4,317 (1896) 1,261 (1905)	1	Independent (1894)	
	Children's Corner Union	Children's Corner Union	1913-(1914)	Uncle Ralph	See <i>Newmarket Journal</i>	1		

Totals: 43 Newspaper Titles (Includes *Cable*, but see note A6).

5 Children's Magazines

1,273,083 Members of 'Newspaper' Societies (includes Band of Kindness, League of Helping Hand & Order of Chivalry).

Notes:

A. Name of Publication: Societies Hosted by Multiple Publications:

1 Children's Guild hosted by *Auckland Chronicle*, *Northern Weekly Echo* and *South Durham & Cleveland Mercury*

2 Round Table hosted by *Cardiff Times*, *Durham Chronicle*, *Hexham Courant*, *Ipswich Journal* and *Nottinghamshire Guardian*.

- 3 League of the Helping Hand hosted by the *Daily Mirror* and the *Children's Encyclopaedia*
- 4 Band of Kindness hosted by the *Children's Own Paper* and the *Stockport Advertiser*
- 5 Children's Corner Union hosted by *Newmarket Journal*, *Paddington Chronicle* and *Yorkshire Factory Times*.
- 6 Helpers Guild appeared intermittently in the *Norwich Mercury*. The following titles also supported this club, but they are not listed in the above table or included in the analysis. *Downham Market Gazette*, *Dareham & Fakenham Times*, *Lowestoft Journal*, *Peoples' Weekly Journal*, *Thetford & Watton Times* and *Yarmouth & Gorleston Times*.

B. Dates in Existence:

(1914) In existence to this date. Some dates are given for societies beyond this date when known.

- X Order of Kindness: Unable to trace exact cessation date and number of members enrolled because copies of *Birmingham Daily Times* unavailable for July to December 1888. No trace of society in 1889 editions of the newspaper.
- Y Band of Love & Kindness: Unable to trace cessation date, as copies of the *Birmingham Weekly Mercury* unavailable. No trace of society in 1905 editions of the newspaper.
- Z Catholic Legion: Unable to ascertain an end date as copies of the *Irish Tribune* unavailable. No trace of society in 1895 editions of the paper, suggesting it ceased sometime in 1894.

C. Political Orientation:

Derived from the *Newspaper Press Directory* 1877-1914, secondary sources and individual newspapers.

D. Animal Welfare:

- 1 Specific pledge or rule that members should be kind to animals or birds.
- 2 No specific rule, promise or pledge, but articles, editorials, or letters pressing the positive treatment of animals or birds
- 3 No expressions of animal or bird protection.

E. Remarks:

Some newspapers previously ran a children's column before beginning their societies or continued with children's articles after a society ceased.

Appendix II: Newspapers hosting children's columns without clubs.

Title	Children's Column	Identified Date of Column*	Leader/Editor	Notes
<i>Aberdeen Weekly Journal</i>	Children's Hour	1881-1889	Aunt Maggie	Edited by Maggie Symington
<i>Barnet Press</i>	Readings For the Young	1900		
<i>Bailey Reporter & Guardian</i>	Children's Column	1893		
<i>Belfast News-Letter</i>	A Corner For Children	1873		First identified children's column. Only ran for one issue
<i>Blackburn Times</i>	Chimney Chats With the Boys and Girls	1900	Uncle Jack	
<i>Blackburn Weekly Telegraph</i>	Children's Corner For the Boys & Girls	1905 1910 & 1912	Uncle Toby/Aunt Tina	
<i>Blaydon Courier</i>	For the Little Folks	1905 & 1914		
<i>Bradford Observer Budget/ Yorkshire Budget</i>	Children's Corner	1911-(1914)	Mother Hubbard	
<i>Bristol Guardian</i>	Something For Young Folks For the Little Folks	1905 1910	Cousin Kate	
<i>Bristol Times & Mirror</i>	Children's Corner	1905, 1910 & 1913	Uncle Jack	
<i>Carnforth Weekly News</i>	For the Little Folks	1887		
<i>Clarion</i>	Children's Corner For Children	1899 1912	Dorothea	
<i>Cromer & North Walsham Post</i>	Drawing Competition for Boys & Girls	1910		Syndicated Column
<i>Croydon Times</i>	Something For Young Folks	1900	Cousin Kate	
<i>Daily Mail</i>	Playtime for Little Ones	1909, 1910.		
<i>Heckmondwike Reporter</i>	Children's Column	1890	Androcles	Syndicated column with <i>Huddersfield Examiner</i>
<i>Hull & East Yorkshire Times</i>	Jottings for the Young The Little Contributors	1891 (1895)-(1901)	Uncle Ned	
<i>Huntingdonshire Post</i>	Something For Young Folks	1907- (1914)	Cousin Kate	
<i>Leeds Mercury</i>	Children's Column	1879-1905	Mr Editor	
<i>Leeds Saturday Journal/ People's Saturday Journal</i>	For the Youngsters & their Elders The Playground	1895, 1900 & 1905 1909	Ellaline	Paper folded 1909

<i>Liverpool Weekly Post</i>	Children's Column	1900		
<i>Manchester Courier & Lancashire General Advertiser</i>	Children's Column	1885 & 1890	Eva Graham	
<i>Marylebone Times & Independent</i>	Something For Young Folks	1900	Cousin Kate	
<i>Norfolk Weekly Standard & Argus</i>	Drawing Competition for Boys & Girls	1910		
<i>Paddington Times</i>	Something for Young Folks Science for Young Folks	1890 & 1914 1914		
<i>People's Weekly Journal</i>	Children's Corner	1910	Uncle Arthur	
<i>Shields Daily Gazette & Shipping Telegraph</i>	Stories for Children/Chats with Children	1887-1894	Uncle Silas	
<i>Shipley & Saltaire Times</i>	Young Folks Column Readings for the Young	1883-1890 (1900)-(1905)	Uncle William	
<i>Southampton Times & Hampshire Express</i>	Children's Corner/Something for Young People	1910		
<i>Sunderland Weekly Echo & Times</i>	Children's Corner Children's Hour	1884 1895	Paul Boynthorne Grandpa Grimm	
<i>Teesdale Mercury</i>	For the Little Folks	(1908)-(1910)		
<i>Thetford & Watton Weekly Standard & Post</i>	Drawing Competition for Boys & Girls	1910		
<i>Tyneside Echo</i>	Children's Hour	1887-1888	Grandpa Grimm	Paper Folded 1888
<i>Weekly Scotsman</i>	The Young Folks Corner	(1897)-1914	Greatheart	
<i>Wellington Post</i>	For the Little Folks	1890		
<i>West Cumberland Times</i>	Children's Corner	1890-(1914)	Cousin Charley	Regularly printed children's letters & essays. Published offshoot periodical <i>Cousin Charley's Magazine</i> (1900)
<i>Western Mail</i>	Children's Corner	1900	Uncle Joe	

Total 37 Titles.

Identified Date of Column: Individual dates refer to date column found in newspaper only. Where lifespan of column is known this is indicated with hyphenated dates. Dates in brackets refer to extent of research.

Appendix III: Prices of Selected Provincial Newspapers and *The Times* 1800-1900.

	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
<i>Aberdeen Journal</i> (1)	6 Mon	6 Wed	7 Wed	7 Wed	4½ Wed	4½ Wed	3½ Wed	3 Wed	1 Daily	1 Daily	1 Daily
<i>Ipswich Journal</i> (2)	6 Sat	6 Sat	7 Sat	7 Sat	4½ Sat	4½ Sat	3½ Sat	3½ Sat	3½ Tue Sat	1 Sat	1 Sat
<i>Leeds Mercury</i> (3)		6 Sat	7 Sat	7 Sat	4½ Sat	6* Sat	4* Thrice	1 Sat	1 Daily	1 Daily	1 Daily
<i>Liverpool Mercury</i> (4)		7 Fri (1811)	7 Fri	7 Fri	4 Fri	4½ Tues Fri	1 Daily	1 Daily	2 Daily	2 Daily	1 Daily
<i>Manchester Times</i> (5)				7 Sat 1831	4 Sat	4½* Wed Sat	2* Sat	2* Sat	2* Sat	1* Sat	1 Sat
<i>Newcastle Chronicle</i> (6)	6 Sat	6 Sat	7 Sat	7 Sat	4½ Sat	4½ Fri	2 Sat (1861)	2 Daily	2 Daily	2* Daily	1 Daily
<i>The Times</i> (7)	6	6½	7	7	5	5	4	3	3	3	3

Notes:

Newspaper prices are in pence for weekly or Saturday editions when published and for copies 'on demand', not postal or subscription charges.

* Price includes 'supplement', i.e. the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* in 1890 cost 2d, this was 1d for the newspaper and 1d for the supplement.

1. *Aberdeen Journal* from 1800-1860, then *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* from 1880-1900.
2. *Ipswich Journal*, children's society 1890-91.
3. *Leeds Mercury*. Thrice weekly in 1860, daily in 1880-1900. Children's column from 1879
4. *Liverpool Mercury*. Children's society began in *Liverpool Weekly Mercury* in 1892.
5. *Manchester Times* from 1860 *Manchester Weekly Times and Examiner* from 1857 onwards. Children's society from 1889.
6. *Newcastle Chronicle* from 1800-1861, then *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* 1870-1900. Children's society from 1876.
7. *The Times*, daily in 1800 and onwards. No children's features.

Appendix IV: Time Line of Major Developments Relating to this Thesis

Date	Parliamentary Activity (see bibliography for full citation)	Adult Society	Major Children's Societies/Institutions
1781			
1800	Bill... Preventing the Practice of Bull-baiting (Motion Lost)		Robert Raikes founds his Sunday school
1802	Bill... Preventing Practice of Bull-baiting & Bull-running (Motion Lost)		
1804			Sheffield Juvenile Bible Society
1809	Cruelty to Animals Bill (Motion Lost)		
1822	<i>Act to Prevent the Cruel & Improper Treatment of Cattle</i> (Limited protection to larger domestic & stock animals)		
1824		Society for Protection of Animals	
1833	Factories Act		
1835	<i>Act... relating to the cruel and improper Treatment of Animals</i> (Nationwide ban on baiting & cockfighting, protection & legal status extended to smaller domestic animals)		
1840		SPCA now RSPCA	
1847			Band of Hope
1849	<i>Act for the more effectual Prevention of Cruelty to Animals</i> Reinforces animal protection		
1853	Advertisement Duty Repealed		
1854	<i>Act... for the more effectual Prevention of Cruelty to Animals</i> (Banned use of dogs as draught animals, definition of 'animal' now encompassed all domestic animals)		

- 1855 Stamp Duty Repealed
1861 Paper Duty Repealed
- 1862 Revised Code of Education
- 1865 Commons Preservation Society
- 1869 *Act for the Preservation of Sea Birds*
(Close season 1 Apr-1 Aug for specific species of seabirds)
- 1870 Education Act
(Board Schools created).
- 1872 *Protection of certain Wild Birds during the Breeding Season*
(Close season 15 Mar-1 Aug for 79 species)
- 1873 Youth's Institute 'Boys Club'
- 1874 'A Corner for Children' (*Belfast News-Letter*)
Girls' Friendly Society
- 1875 Band of Mercy
- 1876 Dicky Bird Society (*Newcastle W. Chronicle*)
- 1877 Leigh DBS (*Leigh Chronicle*)
- 1880 *Act to amend the Laws relating to the Protection of Wild Birds*
(Close season extended to 1 Mar-1 Aug, replaced 1869 & 1872 Acts)
Education Act
(Compulsory school attendance for under-elevens)
- 1881 *Act to explain the Wild Birds Protection Act, 1880*
(Larks added to protected list, previous legislation clarified)
- 1882 P. Boythorne's Children (*Hexham Courant*)

Band of Kindness (*Stockport Advertiser*)
Little Folks' Humane Society
Young Folks Humane Soc. (*Ncl. Courant*)
- 1883 *Cruelty to Animals... Bill* (Motion Lost)
(Attempt to ban trap-shooting)

Sister Mercy (*Hexham Herald*)
Boys' Brigade

1884			Preston Humane Society (<i>Preston Guardian</i>) Adrocles Society (<i>Huddersfield D. Examiner</i>)
1885	Selborne League Plumage League		Children's Corner (<i>Weekly Times & Echo</i>)
1886			Sunbeam Club (<i>Peoples Journal</i>) Golden Circle (<i>Northern W. Leader</i>) Order of Kindness (<i>Birmingham D. Times</i>)
1888			Sunbeam Society (<i>Burnley Gazette</i>) Guild of Gentleness (<i>Manchester W. Times</i>) Kind Hearted Brigade (<i>Weekly Telegraph</i>) Golden Circle (<i>Leeds Times</i>)
1889	Society for the Protection of Birds		
1890			Round Table (<i>Cardiff Times et al</i>) Catholic Legion (<i>Irish Tribune</i>) Golden Rule Soc. (<i>Notts. W. Express</i>)
1891	Parliamentary attempt to ban egg-collecting (failed)	Humanitarian League	Band of Love (<i>Birmingham W. Mercury</i>).
1892			Children's League (<i>Liverpool W. Mercury</i>)
1893			Order of the Cable (<i>The Cable</i>) League of Love (<i>Portsmouth Times</i>)
1894	<i>Act to Amend the Wild Birds Protection Act, 1880.</i> (County councils given power to extend bird protection to eggs, framework for creation of protected areas)		Border Dicky Bird Club (<i>Berwick Journal</i>)
1895		National Trust	
1896	<i>Act to amend the Wild Birds Protection Acts</i> (Extension of Powers of 1894 Act)		Children's Corner (<i>Northern Weekly Gazette</i>) Greenleaf Club (<i>Hampshire Telegraph</i>)

1898	1898	Busy Bee Society (<i>Birmingham Weekly Post</i>)	
1899	1899	Welsh Dicky Bird Soc. (<i>Cambrian</i>)	
1902	1902	<i>Act to amend the Wild Birds Protection Acts</i> (Increased penalties) Education Act (Local education authorities created)	
1904	1904	<i>Act to amend the Wild Birds Protection Acts</i> (Gin traps outlawed)	SPB now RSPB
1905	1905	Nature Study Codified	
1906	1906	Moral Instruction Codified	
1907	1907		Children's Guild (<i>Auckland Chronicle et al</i>) Sunshine Guild (<i>Bradford Weekly Telegraph</i>) Bristol Obs. Animals F. Soc. (<i>Bristol Obs.</i>)
1908	1908	<i>Act to Amend Wild Birds Protection Acts, 1880</i> (Prohibits use of hooks to catch birds) Children's Act	Children's Circle (<i>Auckland Times</i>) Big Birthday Book (<i>Hull News</i>) Young Folks Guild (<i>Norwich Mercury et al</i>) <i>Little Folks' Nature Club</i> Boy Scouts
1909	1909		Girl Guides
1910	1910		League of the Helping Hand (<i>Daily Mirror</i>)
1911	1911		Sunbeam Club (<i>Peoples Journal</i>)
1913	1913		Children's Corner Union (<i>Newmkt Jnl et al</i>)
1921	1921	<i>Act to Prohibit the Importation of Plumage</i> <i>Captive Birds Shooting (Prohibition) Act</i> <i>Protection of Animals Act (1911, Amendment Act, 1921)</i> Prohibits coursing of captive animals	

Appendix V:

Water Troughs and Fountains with known Bands of Mercy Connection

DATE	LOCATION	COST	SOURCE OF INFORMATION	NOTES
1882	Wood Green, London	Unknown	<i>Band of Mercy Advocate</i> , Jan. 1882	Erected in memory of Catharine Smithies. Doubtful if a 'BOM' fountain.
1883	Portsmouth	Unknown	<i>Band of Mercy</i> , May 1883	Collection began no confirmation of installation.
1885	Ipswich	£25	<i>Band of Mercy</i> , Jul. 1885 <i>Ipswich Journal</i> , 30 Aug. 1884	Resorted to appeal for more funds.
1887	Ipswich	Unknown	<i>Ipswich Journal</i> , 17 Jun. 1887	May have replaced 1885 trough following complaints.
1889	Doncaster	Unknown	<i>Band of Mercy</i> , Feb. 1889	
1890	Newbrough, Northumberland	Unknown	<i>Band of Mercy</i> , May 1890	
1891	Wells, Somerset	Unknown	<i>Band of Mercy</i> , Jul. 1891	Contribution made towards town trough.
1894	New Malden	£125	New Malden BOM records	Resorted to appeal for more funds.
1897	Broomlee, West Linton	Unknown	<i>Band of Mercy</i> , Aug. 1897	Dogs' drinking trough
1899	Cliff, Lincoln	Unknown	<i>Band of Mercy</i> , Jul. 1899	
1902	Knutsford, Cheshire	£41	Knutsford BOM records	Resorted to appeal for more funds.
1906	Southampton	Unknown	<i>Band of Mercy</i> , May 1906	
1907	Worksop	Unknown	<i>Band of Mercy</i> , Apr. 1907	
1908	Stevenage	Unknown	<i>Band of Mercy</i> , Jul. 1908	
1908	York	Unknown	<i>Band of Mercy</i> , Jul. 1908	
1910	Camberwell, London	£40	<i>Band of Mercy</i> , Mar. 1910	

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