

THE IRISH IN YORK 1840-1875

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the Irish community in York between 1840 and 1875, and is concerned throughout with the effects of poverty on the individuals within it.

The introductory Chapter discusses the sources and methods used and the problems and advantages arising from linking different types of evidence. Chapter II examines the demographic, economic and social characteristics of the 1841 Irish community and Chapter III describes the impact of the first post-Famine immigrants. There follows a discussion of anti-Irish prejudice in the city, and the attitudes of those in authority is contrasted with the active concern displayed towards the destitute Irish by leading York Quakers. Chapter V describes working-class housing and slum properties in the city, particularly in Irish areas. Detailed studies are presented of two locations containing high concentrations of immigrants throughout the period, and various aspects of the inhabitants' lives are examined.

Chapter VI analyses the demographic characteristics of the post-Famine Irish community compared both with those of 1841 and the host population. Chapter VII considers the immigrants' occupations at each censal year. The changing pattern of Irish claims for poor relief are next examined from an analysis of all applications for relief throughout the period. Chapter IX

examines crime in the city, and the Irish contribution to prostitution is analysed in Chapter X which deals not only with the activity in general, but with the lives and circumstances of the prostitutes themselves.

The concluding Chapter considers, in the light of the previous evidence, the extent of Irish assimilation into York life. Religion and education are discussed as relevant factors, and an examination is made of the immigrants' occupational mobility. The turnover of the Irish population is then analysed, showing the limited extent of permanent settlement. This is followed by a discussion of the negligible contribution made by the immigrants to York politics, and a summary of their experience of poverty and prejudice in the city.

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the Irish community in York between 1840 and 1875. It is one of several studies of Irish communities in specific towns such as Bradford, Liverpool, Greenock, Leeds and London;<sup>1</sup> but being in article form, these are confined to particular aspects of Irish settlement, and to a more limited period of time. Longer studies of the Irish in nineteenth century England include Dr. J. H. Treble's The Place of Irish Catholics in the Social Life of the North of England, 1829-1851;<sup>2</sup> L. P. Curtis' Anglo-Saxons and Celts. A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England; and J. A. Jackson's The Irish in Britain. These, however, are general works drawing largely on Parliamentary Papers and other secondary sources.

The present study differs from these in the following respects. Firstly, it is based on an analysis by computer of the census enumerators' returns from 1841 to 1871, providing a framework to which all information from other primary sources relating to the Irish in York was systematically linked. Secondly, the information thus obtained not only provided a picture of the developing Irish

<sup>1</sup>C. Richardson, The Irish in Victorian Bradford, in Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research, 1970.  
R. A. Lawton, Irish Immigrants to England and Wales in the mid-nineteenth Century, in Irish Geography, IV, 1959.  
R. A. Lobban, The Irish Community in Greenock in the Nineteenth Century, in Irish Geography, VI, 1971.  
L. H. Lees, Patterns of Lower-Class Life: Irish Slum Communities, in Nineteenth Century London, in R. Sennett and S. Thornstrom, Nineteenth Century Cities: Essays on the New Urban History. Yale, 1969.

<sup>2</sup>University of Leeds Ph. D. Thesis, 1968.

community as a whole, but also of every individual within it, for each of whom demographic, economic and social material has been assembled. Thirdly, since this material was collected for each of the four censuses, not only could analyses be made of the community and its members for each censal year, but comparisons drawn through time, showing changes both in the entire Irish population in the city and in the circumstances of individuals within it.

Although not employing sampling techniques, the systematic analysis of large quantities of data from a variety of sources places this thesis in a similar area of study to that in which the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure are working, and to books already published by W. A. Armstrong and to M. Anderson.<sup>1</sup> It differs from the last two, however, in being concerned not only with aggregates but with individual members of the community. In this respect this thesis has more in common with Stephan Thernstrom's book Poverty and Progress, a study of social mobility in nineteenth century Newburyport.<sup>2</sup> His linking together of material from three censuses with other primary sources in an attempt to follow the history of a particular group of working-class individuals and their families and thus write history "from the bottom up"<sup>3</sup> is closer to the aims and objects of this thesis than any of the works already mentioned.

The contribution this thesis makes to existing histories of nineteenth century York consists not only of a detailed study of

<sup>1</sup>W. A. Armstrong, Stability and Change in an English County Town; A Social Study of York, 1801-1851. Cambridge, 1974.

M. Anderson, Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire. Cambridge, 1971.

<sup>2</sup>S. Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City. Harvard, 1974.

<sup>3</sup>Op. cit., p.7.



an important section of the poor in the city but also of the wider implications of their existence for the community as a whole. The examination of the housing conditions of the Irish in York, and the contribution made by the immigrants to overcrowding, applications for Poor Relief, crime and prostitution was the outcome of an analysis of these aspects of life for the entire population, and inevitably, therefore, throws light in these respects on the history of the non-Irish poor in the city, as well as the Irish themselves.

Further, in a more general sense and with wider implications than for the history of York alone, or for a particular community, the studies of poverty, crime and prostitution attempt to break new ground by examining these topics at the level of the participants themselves. Thus Chapter X is an analysis of the actual prostitutes in the city as well as a study of the "social evil" in York, and Chapter IX is concerned with identifying the criminals themselves, as well as with crime in general in the city.

From these analyses a measure of the Irish contribution to these activities was made - throwing light on the extent of the prejudices of those in authority, whose erroneous and misleading statements concerning the Irish, in the form, for example, of editorials, reported speeches, and evidence before Parliamentary and other Committees, are still uncritically accepted as reliable historical evidence. An examination of anti-Irish prejudice in the city, therefore, is an important aspect of the thesis.

The conclusions regarding prejudice, assimilation, occupational mobility and the demographic characteristics of the Irish in the

city are original material and make a contribution both to the study of an immigrant community and to the historical study of poverty.

Since the sources and methods used in this thesis require a lengthy and detailed discussion, this is the substance of Chapter I.

Come all you Irish harvesters wherever you may be,  
I pray you pay attention and listen unto me,  
For if you sail to England's shores be mindful what you do,  
For you'll have to fight both day and night  
With John Bull and his crew.

Irish song collected in Yorkshire.

## CHAPTER I

### SOURCES AND METHODS

The main sources used in this thesis are the York census enumerators' notebooks for 1841, 1851, 1861 and 1871; the four weekly York newspapers, the Yorkshire Gazette, the York Herald, the York Courant and the Yorkshireman and the York Union Poor Law Records, particularly the Application and Report Books. Although these sources are well-known to historians of nineteenth century society the use made of them here is perhaps less familiar, and since they posed certain methodological problems, these will be discussed fully below. Other sources used, such as material on slum clearance areas from the York Health Department, Watch Committee Reports, records of the Vicars Choral, material from the Roman Catholic Diocesan Archives in Leeds and the Bar Convent in York, the Tuke Family Papers in the possession of Mr. William Tuke of Honiton and Quaker records from the Library of the Society of Friends in London may be individually less familiar, but since they were used more conventionally they presented few difficulties. Any problems in their interpretation will be discussed as they arise in later Chapters.

The Census Enumerators' Notebooks, 1841, 1851, 1861 and 1871.

The definition of the Irish and identification of them as individuals were the essential preliminaries to this analysis of the Irish community in the city, and therefore the census enumerators' notebooks were fundamental to this thesis. The census abstracts, though available from 1841 to 1971, provide aggregate information only and as such do not permit identification of Irish individuals and their recorded characteristics such as age, occupation, address, civil condition, etc. Further, the abstracts do not reveal the real extent and composition of the Irish community in the city. Since such information can be obtained only from the census enumerators' notebooks, therefore, their present availability limits the scope of this study mainly to the period covered by the censal years 1841 to 1871.

It is clear that to define the Irish community in the city as consisting only of persons of Irish birthplace would be both inadequate and misleading since many individuals who should properly be (as they were at the time) regarded as Irish would be excluded. Therefore, in this study, the Irish community is defined as consisting at each census of all persons of Irish birth, their children, whether or not these were born in Ireland and the relatively few non-Irish individuals married to Irish partners, together with the children of such unions. The fact that for the most part members of these families were living in what were virtually Irish ghettos, and were, as will be seen, in other important respects quite distinct from the host population, was regarded as overriding the significance of their place of birth. Precise figures for each census showing the number of mixed marriages and the number of children born in York to Irish parents will be presented in Chapter VI. Of the 10,027 persons classified as Irish in York between 1841 and 1871, however, only 547 (5.5%) were non-Irish partners in

mixed marriages.<sup>1</sup>

Having defined the criteria by which people would be regarded as being Irish, the next stage was to identify them in the census enumerators' notebooks and extract them for the purpose of analysis. This meant examining the birthplace of each individual in the entire population of York at each of the four censuses. The number examined for each censal year was as follows: 1841, 28,842; 1851, 36,303; 1861, 40,433 and 1871, 43,796. Of the total 149,374 entries thus examined, 430 were found to be Irish-born in 1841, 1,963 in 1851, 1,918 in 1861 and 1,596 in 1871.<sup>2</sup> The inclusion of those individuals already defined as properly being regarded as members of the Irish community, though not actually born in Ireland, however, increased the totals to the following extent; 1841, 781, 1851, 2,618, 1861, 3,248 and 1871, 3,380.

The full particulars for each of the 10,027 persons thus extracted were transferred to individual record sheets for each member of the Irish community. Every person's name, parish, schedule number, address, birthplace, age, occupation, marital status, relationship to head of household, household size, address size and family size, together with any other relevant remarks such as "unmarried mother" or "living in mixed Irish/non-Irish household" were thus entered together on a separate form, each of the four censal years being

<sup>1</sup>Some of these partners, of course, though not actually born in Ireland may nevertheless themselves have been Irish. By 1871 York-born children of post-Famine Irish immigrants could have been up to 24 years of age. As such many of them might have left the parental home making identification of their "Irish" origins impossible, even though they married within the immigrant community. Where twosuch persons married and set up their own household they would, of course, cease to be definably Irish, and the 1871 census figures therefore probably underestimate the true size of the Irish community in the city.

<sup>2</sup>The figures returned in the census abstracts differ from these in each census as follows: 1841, 429; 1851, 1,928; 1861, 1,956 and 1871, 1,522.

kept distinct.<sup>1</sup> Having coded the information appropriately, the material was then ready for conversion into machine-readable form and programmed for computer analysis.

The computer was asked to supply information in the following ways. Firstly, for each of the censuses a straight alphabetical listing was required to facilitate easy identification of individuals. Secondly, for each of the censuses the computer listed individuals in the order in which they had originally been enumerated - thus providing in a convenient form information regarding the parochial distribution of the Irish community, and its composition within parishes, addresses and households. Both these print-outs were primarily required to enable material from the censuses to be linked with data from other sources. For example, in order to ascertain whether or not prostitute Catherine White,<sup>2</sup> reported in the Poor Law Application and Report Books as having died in the Workhouse in September 1866 was Irish, the alphabetical listing of all individuals in the Irish community was most relevant. On the other hand, for the purpose of identifying nineteenth century occupants of specific houses photographed and detailed in the 1930's slum clearance schedules, the parochial listing according to the enumerators' schedule numbers was more appropriate. The third type of listing required placed the entire 10,027 individuals in the Irish community in straight alphabetical order irrespective of census, thereby enabling inter-censal comparisons to be readily made. From this, the number of censuses for which an individual had been present in the city could be easily

<sup>1</sup>Some of this information, of course, was not recorded at the 1841 census, particularly the respondent's relationship to the head of household, his county of birth and his marital condition.

<sup>2</sup>See pages 372-3

ascertained, together with any changes which had occurred in his circumstances. This form of listing was, as will be seen in Chapter XI, of particular importance in assessing the degree of settlement and assimilation of the Irish community in the city during the period, and it too was used to facilitate the linking together of this information with the other main sources of evidence.

For each census the computer was required to make the following analyses of the basic material provided from the enumerators' notebooks: age, sex and occupational distribution of the Irish community, classification by birthplace, marital status, household status, household and family size and the proportion of mixed marriages. Some of this information was subjected to further analysis. For example, the information regarding occupation, birthplace, household status (with regard to lodgers) family and household size and mixed marriages was presented parochially, and for both sexes an occupational breakdown was given for each five-yearly age group. The information obtained from these analyses is presented in Chapters VI, VII and XI, on Demographic Characteristics, Occupations and Assimilation.

The census enumerators' notebooks posed various problems, some of which have been encountered and discussed elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> So far, however, these have related mainly to the use of notebooks for only one, or at most two censuses, and some of the difficulties are obviously increased if, as in this thesis, all four available censuses are examined. The circumstances and condition of the subjects of this study, most of whom were recently arrived at each census, are also particularly

<sup>1</sup>See for example, P. M. Tillott, Sources of Inaccuracy in the 1851 and 1861 Censuses, in E. A. Wrigley (ed.), Nineteenth-Century Society, Cambridge, 1972, pp. 82-133. Also M. Drake, The Census, 1801-1891 in Wrigley, op. cit. pp.7-46.



important in this respect. Uprooted by a national catastrophe and its continuing effects, confused, frequently speaking only Irish and often illiterate, impoverished and crowded into the worst slums in the city, the immigrants created peculiar problems for the enumerators which become apparent as successive censuses are compared either with each other or with additional records. Quite apart from reluctance to co-operate - whether from fear, hostility or ignorance - it is clear that many of the immigrants were unable to provide the information required with the necessary degree of accuracy.<sup>1</sup> Confusion arose particularly over names. Not only was an individual surname such as Callaghan spelled in a bewildering variety of ways in one census, but over succeeding censuses a family's spelling of their own name often changed. Michael and Mary Roun, for example, first recorded in York in 1851, changed the spelling of their name in 1861 to Rowan and in 1871 to Ruane. Similarly John and Anne Sheredon in 1851, appear as Sheridan in 1861 and Sherridan in 1871.<sup>2</sup>

Another source of confusion was ages, particularly of parents, who seemed, however, to be much more aware of the proper ages of their children. To illustrate again from information supplied to the enumerators by the Rouns, in 1851 Michael was recorded as being 39 years old and his wife Mary as 29. By 1861 he had aged only one year while his wife had aged 13 years, and in the following census he was returned as 55 and she was said to be 56, he having increased his age by only 16 years in the 20 year period, and she having increased hers by 27 years. The ages of their children, however, were consistently

<sup>1</sup>The enumerators apparently encountered difficulties with the Irish both in the Bedern and in Cross Alley, Water Lanes, in 1851. See pages 350-51

<sup>2</sup>Flannagan was another name with a variety of spellings, e.g. Flanagan, Flannagan, Flannigan, Flannigan, Flannigan, Flannigan, Flannigan. For a particular family's variation in the spelling of this name, see pages 18-20.

recorded from census to census. Similarly, another Irish respondent, Christopher Crump, claimed in 1851 to be 50 years old. In 1861 he admitted to being 54 and ten years later his age was recorded as 60. In view of such discrepancies particular care had to be taken when making inter-censal comparisons of individuals and families to ensure that the same people were, in fact, being examined.<sup>1</sup> This meant matching names and ages of other members of the family, and also occupations. Since, as will be seen, there was little occupational mobility within the Irish community in the period, the last indicator was more reliable than might have been expected. Addresses, however, though useful for comparing contemporary evidence from other sources with that from the census, lost much of their relevance for inter-censal comparisons, due to the frequency with which the immigrants changed addresses in the city during each decade. In addition, street numbers were rarely recorded, particularly in earlier censuses.

The enumerators themselves created a further deficiency in the required information by frequently failing to comply with the instruction from 1851 onwards, to return the respondent's county of birth. For most of the Irish immigrants in the city in each of the post-Famine censuses "Ireland" only was listed as the place of birth.

<sup>1</sup>Further details of the Roun and Crump families are given in Chapter XI.

The York Newspapers, 1840-1875.

The second major source was the four weekly York newspapers, the Yorkshire Gazette and the York Herald, both of which were published throughout the period and the Yorkshireman and Courant which ceased publication in 1858 and 1848 respectively, both being incorporated with the York Herald.<sup>1</sup> Obviously since the Gazette and Herald covered all 35 years, these were the ones most heavily relied on.

The principal use made of the first two publications was an examination of their coverage of the weekly proceedings of the York Magistrates' court, in order to establish the extent of Irish criminality in the city. For the four censal years, 1841, 1851, 1861 and 1871 full details of all 1,929 offences reported were extracted, so that all those individuals involved could be checked against the listing of the total Irish community in York obtained from the census enumerators' notebooks, to ascertain whether or not alleged offenders were Irish. To ensure as complete a coverage as possible this was done for a period extending for six months on either side of the taking of the census - i.e. from the October in the previous year to the end of September in the censal year. From this, any individuals not appearing on the computer print-out were regarded as being non-Irish. It is recognised, however, that there might well have been a small percentage of Irish persons, who, even within the limited period of six months on either side of the censal date, were either charged with committing an offence and left the city before the census was taken, or were indicted, having arrived in the city after the censal date.

<sup>1</sup>Tercentenary Handlist of English and Welsh Newspapers, Magazines and Reviews, London, 1920.

The extent to which this occurred would, therefore, underestimate the degree of Irish criminality in the city, but since the birthplaces of those charged were not recorded in the Guildhall reports themselves, this, though imperfect, remains the only method of identification possible. Offenders were fairly frequently described by the newspapers as being Irish, but only in rare instances were these found not to be present on the census print-outs. Naturally, in such cases, these were included in the statistics relating to Irish, rather than non-Irish criminality.

Having established the extent of Irish criminality in the city an analysis was made of the different types of offence for each censal year. Each was divided between Irish and non-Irish offenders to distinguish those crimes in which the Irish were most involved. Further, in view of the notorious reputation of the main areas of Irish settlement in the city, especially Walmgate, it was decided to see how far the Irish themselves were responsible for offences in these locations. Offences were, therefore, analysed according to where they had taken place and who had committed them in these areas for each of the censal years. The results of these analyses appear in Chapter IX.

To minimise the possible inadequacy which might have arisen from incomplete coverage of the Guildhall proceedings in the Gazette, for each of the censal years the Herald's reports were also examined and the infrequent additional cases reported only in the latter newspaper were added to those obtained from the Gazette. Again, the pronunciation by the Irish of their names obviously caused confusion both with spelling and even the name itself. Comparison between the Gazette and Herald showed that even when reporting on the same case

they could differ in this respect. The Gazette of 18th March 1854 for example, reported that Ann Moran and Martha Dorod had each been charged with having lodgers without license. The Herald, however, named the offenders as Ann Moreen and Martin Dowd.

For illustrative rather than analytical purposes, and also to obtain the fullest possible amount of recorded information on every individual, the Guildhall proceedings were further examined in the inter-censal years and all persons described in the reports as being Irish were extracted. Excluding the censal years this involved an examination of 1,612 weekly reports, containing details of approximately 15,000 cases. In addition to taking full details concerning offenders said to be Irish, incidents such as fights, disturbances or riots occurring amongst the Irish were fully recorded.

The weekly reports of the Guildhall proceedings were also used to help to establish the extent of Irish involvement in reported prostitution in the city. In this case, however, a record was made of every person described either as a brothel-keeper or prostitute,<sup>1</sup> whether in the inter-censal or censal years. In all in the 35 year period, 1,107 individual references occurred in the two newspapers relating to offences connected with prostitution. These, together with references to prostitutes and brothel-keepers taken from the Poor Law Application and Report Books (see below) were subjected to the same procedures as were applied to criminal offences generally, in order to determine the degree of Irish involvement in prostitution in the city. Further analysis was made of the location of prostitutes' addresses, brothels and locations where offences were committed, in

<sup>1</sup>For the full range of terms applied to these women in the York newspapers, see below, page 330.

order to see how far the activity was carried out in areas of Irish settlement in York. A full discussion of the methods used in the analysis is presented in the chapter on prostitution.

In addition to reports on the weekly Guildhall proceedings, the newspapers provided additional miscellaneous material in the form of editorials, coverage of news items, reports of meetings of the Poor Law Guardians and other bodies such as the York Female Penitentiary Society, the Ragged School Society, etc., and in so far as these related to the Irish and their problems they have been used throughout. Much of their interest and value, however, is in the attitudes expressed both by the newspapers themselves and those they are reporting. Much of this material is examined in Chapter IV which is concerned with prejudice.

None of the three surviving newspapers in the city in this period can be said to have regarded the Irish or Roman Catholics in a favourable light, whether these were in Ireland before or during the Famine, or in York after it.<sup>1</sup> The extent of their hostility, however, varied. The Herald, a relatively liberal paper whose editor and proprietor William Hargrove was a "strong admirer of the late Daniel O'Connell and deeply sympathised with the Irish people," nevertheless intimated to its readers on more than one occasion that the Irish were inferior to their "Saxon" neighbours.<sup>2</sup> The Tory Gazette, on the other hand, despised O'Connell, was deeply prejudiced against the Irish as a race, but above all, as is illustrated in Chapter IV, was virulently anti-Catholic. The following relatively

<sup>1</sup>The Courant did not display a particularly sympathetic attitude to the Irish problem, but since it ceased publication in 1848, its attitude towards the Irish in the city scarcely had time to emerge.

<sup>2</sup>Herald, 6 September 1862 - the obituary of William Hargrove. For references to the inferiority of the Irish, see Chapter IV.

mild example of the paper's attitude to the Church of Rome is taken from its report on the enthronement in the new Catholic church of St. George, Walmgate, of Dr. Briggs as the first Bishop of Beverley in 1851.

"On Thursday last the Romish priests in this city went through Papal mummeries of a mock enthronisation of John Briggs who under the authority of the late aggressive bull of the Pope has gone a step further in the impudent assumption of the title of Bishop of Beverley. There was as is usual among the Romanists a vast amount of dumb show on this occasion and as was worthy of this sort of fair day exhibition, the people who went to be amused by the mockery were charged 2d and 3d for admission. We suppose the next scene in this farce will be enacted when Mr. Briggs proceeds to Beverley to take up permanent residence in the Episcopal See."<sup>1</sup>

The Yorkshireman, a professedly radical paper, nevertheless also displayed a high degree of anti-Irish prejudice, this however, was apparently based on racial and social rather than religious grounds.

Whether the newspapers' general prejudice towards the Irish was a reflection of the public's attitude, or was instrumental in forming it is, of course, impossible to establish.<sup>2</sup> The fact remains however, that the Irish, whether in Ireland or in the city itself, were stereotyped as at best simple and comic and at worst as drunken, superstitious, violent and lazy, living in self-imposed squalor, and

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 13 February 1851.

<sup>2</sup>Some indication of the dissemination of these views can be seen from the newspapers' circulation figures, presented in the Herald on 4th June 1842. Between January 1st 1837 and December 31st 1841 the Herald sold 861,900 copies, the Courant 675,300, the Gazette 565,450 and the Yorkshireman 501,085. Later in the period, of course, both the Herald's and the Gazette's circulation increased considerably.

ungratefully dependent on English charity. The Irish in York appeared in the columns of the local press only in connection with their alleged crime, disorder, disease, filth and poverty. Only their anti-social behaviour was reported, and little or no attention was given to their ordinary lives and the tragic circumstances of their arrival.



Poor Law Records, 1840-1875.

The principal category of records used in this, the third major source of evidence, was the Application and Report Books for the York Poor Law Union. These contain the applicant's name, address, occupation, marital status, dependants (if any), physical condition, reasons for application and in most cases the amount or type of relief given. As with the newspapers, these were examined for each of the four censal years, though since some of the quarterly books were found to be missing for 1861 and 1871, a complete analysis for the whole year was possible only for 1841 and 1851. These early censal years were examined in full in order to assess over a 12 month period, the difference between pre-Famine and post-Famine applications, and also to compare the extent of Irish with non-Irish applications. The volumes covering the period January to March in all four censal years have survived, however, and it was therefore possible to compare all of these in this, the quarter immediately preceeding the taking of the census, enabling a measure to be made of the changing number of Irish applications for relief in these years, compared with non-Irish entries. To this end, full details of the 8,034 applications in the above mentioned periods were extracted and checked against the information obtained from the census enumerators' notebooks. Using the procedures already outlined above in relation to the newspapers, the extent of the Irish community's dependence on poor relief for each of the above quarters in the four censal years, and the degree to which this was disproportionate to their actual number was thus ascertained. A further analysis was then made of all reasons given for applications, to discover to what extent the causes of these differed between the

Irish and non-Irish communities. The information obtained from these analyses forms the basis of Chapter VIII.

Additional information obtained from the Application and Report Books was that relating to prostitutes and brothel-keepers, and this, combined with evidence taken from the newspapers was used in the analysis of prostitution in the city, contained in Chapter X.

Prostitutes making application for poor relief did so, of course, in the usual way, their identification being possible however, since not only was their occupation always given as that of prostitute, but they were invariably either suffering from venereal disease or were pregnant. Frequently the prostitute's address led additionally to the identification of a brothel-keeper. In view of the fact that this appears to be the first time either that this kind of study of prostitutes had been made, or that this source has been used for the purpose, and bearing in mind the difficulty inherent in obtaining information about what was a peculiarly furtive occupation, full details of all prostitutes applying for relief were extracted from every Application Book throughout the 35 year period. This involved an examination of approximately 150,000 entries in the Poor Law volumes, yielding a total of 304 applications from prostitutes and 139 references to specific brothels or brothel-keepers in the city. This method, together with that discussed above in relation to the newspapers, provided as complete an identification as possible of all recorded prostitutes and brothel-keepers in the city throughout the period. As with the evidence from the newspapers, all prostitutes and brothel-keepers from this source, in whatever the year, were checked against the listings of the Irish community in order to determine the extent of Irish involvement in the activity. Obviously,

since any individual not identified as Irish must be regarded as non-Irish, a check not related to the censal years could seriously underestimate the degree of Irish participation, especially in view of the highly transient nature of the Irish community in the city. To avoid this problem the usual intensive comparison of information was made for the six months on either side of the taking of the census, inevitably causing a considerable reduction in the number of women studied at these points in time.

Information from the Application and Report Books relating to prostitutes was more detailed and consistent than that extracted from the newspapers, and it was possible to make further analyses from this source, such as age distribution of prostitutes, reasons for relief and location of brothels. The general methods used to link together these sources of evidence will be discussed below and in Chapter X, together with the problems arising from inaccuracies and conflicting information sometimes revealed when two or more records were compared. Even within one source, however, as has already been observed in connection with both the censuses and the newspapers, discrepancies were encountered, particularly with regard to ages. Martha Stephenson, for example, a non-Irish prostitute frequently in need of Poor Relief, was recorded as being 22 years old in 1864, 30 in 1867, 27 a few months' later and 30 in 1872.<sup>1</sup>

Other Poor Law Records used consisted of the Guardians' Minute Books and the correspondence between them and the Poor Law Commissioners in London, the outgoing letters from York being held in the York City Archives and the incoming letters in the Public Record Office, Ashridge.

<sup>1</sup>See page 329.

## Multi-Source Linking.

Having discussed individually the major sources used in this thesis, and the methods of analysis applied to each, together with some of the difficulties encountered, it remains to consider the ways in which these records were combined. The reasons for record linking were firstly, to create by the systematic use of differing evidence as complete a picture as possible of the whole Irish community in the city. Secondly, to build up where possible an assembly of data relating to individual persons and particular locations (for example specific houses, courts or streets<sup>1</sup>) and thirdly to test the accuracy of each source by inter-record comparison.

It has been suggested that this type of approach to the study of a community, involving the large-scale and systematic analysis of different sources of evidence - and inevitably, therefore, the use of a computer, impersonalises the writing of history and leads to a loss of contact with the individuals involved. This argument is particularly concerned with the history of the poor - though as the Checklands point out, in this respect the difficulties have scarcely begun to emerge:

"These problems will almost certainly become more serious when the Poor Law history is brought under the new discipline of mechanized quantification. So far, however, the challenge has hardly arisen; a recent survey of work in Britain on economic and social history scarcely mentions the<sup>2</sup> Poor Law; the same is true of the American discussion."

The exclusive use of the quantitative approach to history, is, of course,

<sup>1</sup>See the locational studies in Chapter V.

<sup>2</sup>S. G. and E. O. A. Checkland, (eds.) The Poor Law Report of 1834. Penguin, 1974, p.51.

justifiably open to the objection that it:

"Tends to dehumanize and sterilize problems, masking the record of man's inhumanity to man under a swarm of anodyne digits."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, it is surely the case that a complete absence of the type of measurement used in this study, especially where the poor are concerned, is equally undesirable. Without the impartial evidence from a source such as the census enumerators' notebooks, recording as they do all members of the community or group selected for study, and lending themselves to systematic analysis, a distorted picture of the poor would certainly emerge, since it is only in these that they appear both in their entirety and as other than delinquents or paupers. Too much reliance on the use of the newspapers as a source of evidence is particularly unsatisfactory since though they deal with individuals rather than aggregates, these emerge only as seen through the eyes of their social superiors, with all the attendant bias illustrated below. They are on record in almost all cases only because of their anti-social behaviour and cannot necessarily be regarded as typical of their group as a whole. To counteract the difficulties and limitations arising from the exclusive use of either approach, it would seem that the linking together of all evidence from every source of information available, though laborious and time-consuming, is the most fruitful and reliable way to make a study of this kind. The quantitative method employed in using the basic evidence from the census enumerators' notebooks, the Application and Report Books and the weekly reports of the Guildhall proceedings in the newspapers, combined with the

<sup>1</sup>D. S. Landes and C. Tilly (eds.) History as Social Science, Prentice-Hall, 1971, p.15.

qualitative material from sources such as other newspaper evidence and complementary data in additional records already referred to, diminishes the danger of impressionistic selection, and far from dehumanizing the poor, leads in many cases to their vivid emergence as individuals.<sup>1</sup>

.....

Since this study is concerned with a particular sub-section of the poor, who themselves left no records, then the census enumerators' notebooks - the only source in which they all appear - were, as described above, the basis to which all other necessarily partial evidence was related. Having established that a particular individual was Irish, by bringing together all other information relating to him from additional sources, many of the details of his life and experience began to emerge. In systematically sifting through masses of evidence and piecing together the results, a quantitative assessment was made of the Irish community as a whole. It will become evident, however, that the poor, both as a class and as individuals, together with "man's inhumanity to man" were not masked by this method, but revealed by it.

An example of the use made of linking inter-censal evidence with material from other sources can be seen in the history of the Flanninghan<sup>2</sup> family, who first appear on the 1851 census. At this time they lived in Merrington's Buildings (a tenement apparently

<sup>1</sup>For an example of how a combination of sources thus used can yield interesting results, see the evidence collected on prostitute Maria Nettleton and her family, pages 333-35.

<sup>2</sup>It will be noted that the spelling of this family's name differs in almost every record.

divided into four dwellings) Bedern, which according to informed contemporary opinion was one of the most insanitary and otherwise undesirable locations in the city. Edward, aged 34, an agricultural labourer, his wife Catherine, aged 30, also an agricultural labourer and their son Thomas aged 2 (born in Huddersfield) shared their accommodation - which was at most two rooms - with 15 other individuals, all of whom were Irish. Though they were listed as the lodgers of the head of household, Thomas Flannighan, they may well have been related to him since he and his wife and children, as well as having the same peculiar spelling of their name, came from the same county in Ireland, Roscommon.

Later in the year, Catherine Flannegan, confined with another child (John) and destitute, applied for poor relief in the absence of her husband. She is recorded as living at Tom Flannegan's, Bedern, though her age was reduced to 24 years.<sup>1</sup>

By 1861 the Flanegans had increased their number to seven, Luke aged 6, James aged 3 and Edward, a baby, having been added to the family. Both parents were still agricultural labourers as was Thomas, correctly recorded as 12 years of age. John and Luke were listed as scholars, though evidence from a further source - the records relating to St. George's Roman Catholic Poor School - suggests that their attendance would have been at best irregular.<sup>2</sup> They still lived in the Bedern but had now become householders and had moved to Brown's Buildings, which in all housed 95 individuals. Earlier in that year Edward Flannegan, unemployed, had applied for poor relief on behalf of himself and his entire family. His age was recorded as 38 years,

<sup>1</sup>Application and Report Book, 1851.

<sup>2</sup>See pages 386, 387 and 393-5.

and his wife Catherine was said to be 40. Only four children were listed at this time, the baby presumably being born in the few weeks between the date of the application and the taking of the census.<sup>1</sup> On 10th May 1862 the Gazette reported that Edward Flannagan, together with his friend Carney had been fined 4/6d. and costs for playing pitch and toss in a back yard in Bedern, along with several other Irishmen.<sup>2</sup>

This family was one of the few in the Irish community who remained in York for three censuses - as will be seen in Chapter XI, of the 2,618 Irish persons in the city in 1851, only 102 were still present in 1871. In that year, still living in the Bedern (though at an unspecified address) Edward was still employed as an agricultural labourer and had been joined in the occupation by his sons Thomas, John and Luke.<sup>3</sup> Catherine was now recorded simply as a wife, and James, aged 12 was a scholar. Edward, the baby in the previous census was not listed, presumably having died.

The linking together of these three sources has thus provided a fairly detailed picture of an Irish family in York over a 20 year period. Had a full analysis of the Poor Law material and newspapers not been confined to the censal years, then it is probable that more information would have emerged. Equally, had the Flanigans<sup>4</sup> come from one of the other classic Irish areas of settlement in York such as Long Close Lane or one of the yards off Walmgate or Hungate, then another source of evidence - the records of municipal slum

<sup>1</sup>Application and Report Book, March 1861.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 10 May 1862.

<sup>3</sup>Aspects of occupational mobility in the city's Irish community are discussed in Chapter XI.

<sup>4</sup>The final variation of spelling, used in the 1871 census.



clearance - could have been drawn on, providing full details and probably photographs of the actual properties in which they lived. Since the Bedern was cleared at an earlier date, however, unfortunately no equivalent information for this street exists, though there is an abundance of contemporary descriptive material in several of the other sources referred to above. Some of this is used in later Chapters.

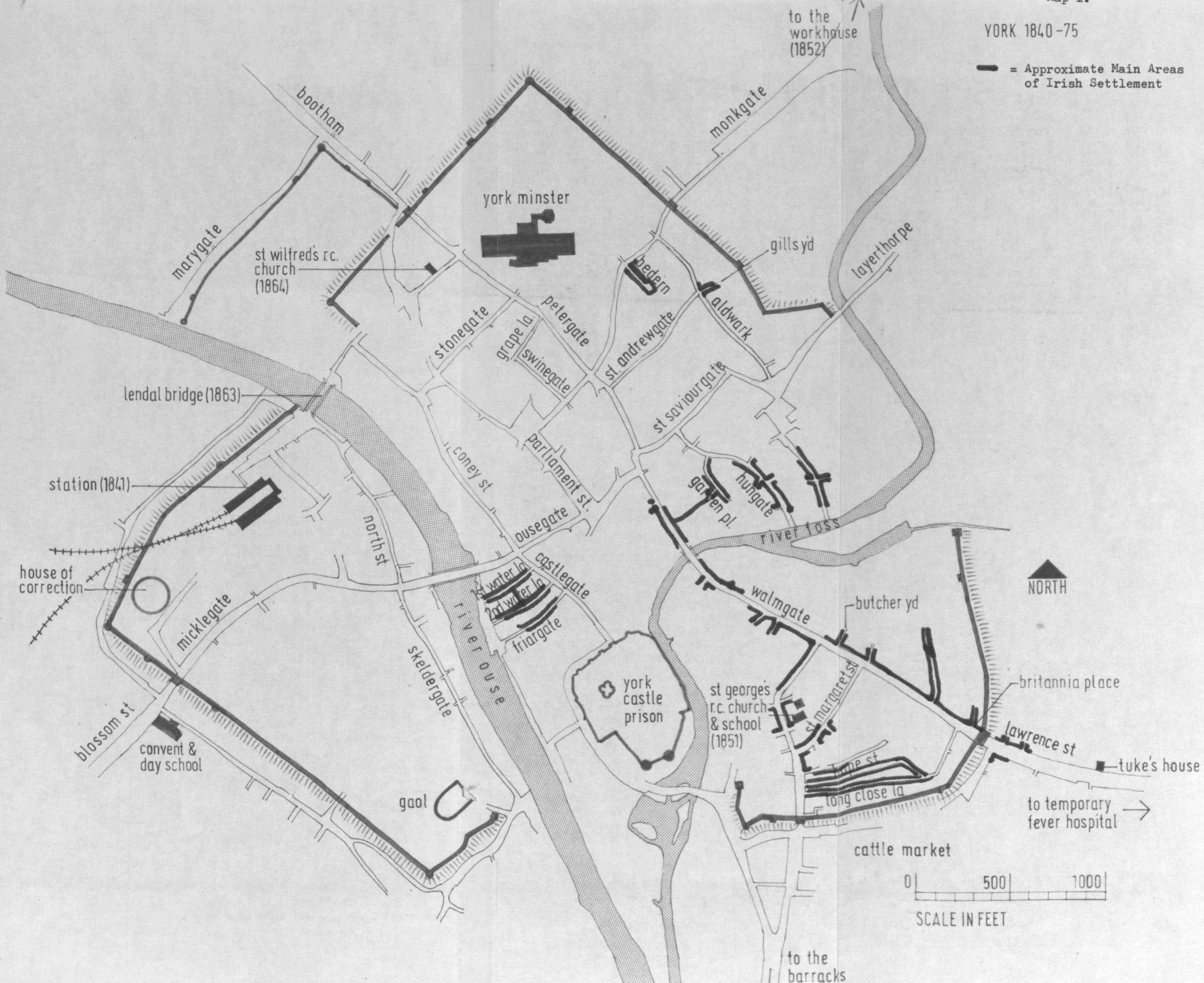
The history of this family provides an illustration of some of the difficulties involved in both inter-censal and inter-record linkage. On only two occasions is the family name spelled in the same way, and it is obvious that the parents had an equally confused notion of their own ages, or even of which of them was the elder. Nevertheless the evidence leaves no doubt that one is dealing throughout with the same family, an observation which can be made generally about data linkage in this study.

Having discussed the major sources used, and listed additional evidence complementary to these, the absence here of the Roman Catholic records of Baptisms, Burials and Marriages, the Registrar's records of Births, Marriages and Deaths and the Magistrates' Court records must be noted. Firstly, the Catholic Church records are seriously incomplete, those relating to Baptisms starting only in November 1857, thus omitting the first two censal years, and providing addresses only after 1874. The Marriage Registers have been preserved only since 1858 and in these too, for most of the period of this study, addresses are omitted. The most serious omissions, however, occur in the Burial Registers, which are complete only for one censal year, 1871. In addition, of course, the recording of baptisms rather than births, in a community with probably the highest infant mortality

rate in the city would seriously underestimate the actual birthrate, even allowing for the Catholic practice of early baptism. A further difficulty, even had these records been complete, would have been the fact that Irish-born persons in York need not necessarily have been Catholics, though doubtless most of them were, and similarly, not all Catholics were Irish. Secondly the use of the Registrar's records in determining the vital statistics of a particular group such as the Irish within a community is virtually impossible. Individuals in these records are not distinguished by birthplace and the cost, therefore, of attempting to identify them would be prohibitive, both financially and in terms of the time and labour involved. Thirdly, the Magistrates' Court records, which would no doubt have contained much fascinating material, unfortunately do not appear to have been preserved.

This discussion of the principal sources used in this thesis, together with the related methodological issues, provides an introduction to the study as a whole. Where necessary the sources are referred to again in the text, together with information relating to other less quantitatively impressive, but nevertheless important and complementary sources.

— = Approximate Main Areas of Irish Settlement



to the workhouse (1852)

st wilfred's r.c. church (1864)

york minster

marygate

monkgate

gills yd

layerthorpe

lendal bridge (1863)

station (1841)

house of correction

north st

micklegate

blossom st

convent & day school

gaol

york castle prison

st george's r.c. church & school (1851)

walmgate

butcher yd

NORTH

britannia place

lawrence st

tuke's house

to temporary fever hospital

cattle market

0 500 1000

SCALE IN FEET

to the barracks

bootham

york minster

st wilfred's r.c. church (1864)

marygate

monkgate

gills yd

layerthorpe

lendal bridge (1863)

station (1841)

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## CHAPTER II

### THE PRE-FAMINE IRISH

The population in York in 1841 was 28,842, of whom 781 (2.7%) formed the Irish community. The census of that year, though the first to be carried out in such detail, did not record precise information regarding county of birth - the respondent being required only to state whether he was born in the same county as the place of enumeration, or whether in Scotland, Ireland or Foreign Parts. As has already been discussed, for the purpose of this thesis the analysis of the 1841 and subsequent censuses includes, regardless of birthplace, all members of families in which either spouse was Irish-born, in order to arrive at a picture of the Irish community as a whole. This results, therefore, in a higher total for the Irish population in York than was recorded by the Registrar who was concerned only with those individuals actually born in Ireland. In the three post-Famine censuses, however, the higher total is arrived at largely because of the inclusion of children born in York (or elsewhere) to Irish-born parents.<sup>1</sup>

Of the 781 individuals in 1841 who were either Irish-born or living with Irish-born parents or partners, 430 (55%) were born in Ireland, 250 (32.1%) were born in Yorkshire, 79 (10.1%) were born

<sup>1</sup>Precise figures and an analysis of the birthplaces of the Irish population in York at each of these censuses is presented in Chapter VI.

elsewhere in England and 22 (2.8%) were either born outside this country or their birthplaces were unknown. The 351 persons included in the Irish community who were not actually born in Ireland consisted of the following: 252 were children recorded in the census as living with Irish-born parents, 29 were non-Irish males married to Irish females and 59 were non-Irish females married to Irish males. Of the remainder, one was an individual whose birthplace was not listed but who was married to an Irish partner, and 10 were individuals other than children (such as grandchildren, nieces and nephews) living in the households of Irish relatives.

Within the next decade this small Irish community increased to 2,618 (7.2% of the total population of York) and it is important to examine in the pre-Famine period, its special characteristics in order to discover to what extent it differed from and was affected by post-Famine immigration.

#### Distribution of the Irish in York in 1841.

Table I shows the distribution by parish of the Irish population in York in 1841. Column 2 shows each parish's percentage of the total number of Irish in York and Column 3 shows the Irish as a percentage of the total population of each parish. A clearer geographical expression of this information is presented in Maps II and III.

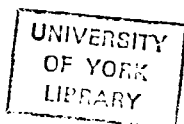


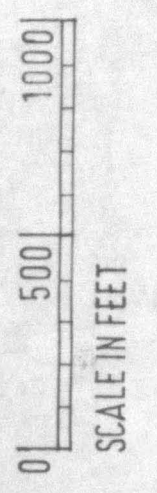
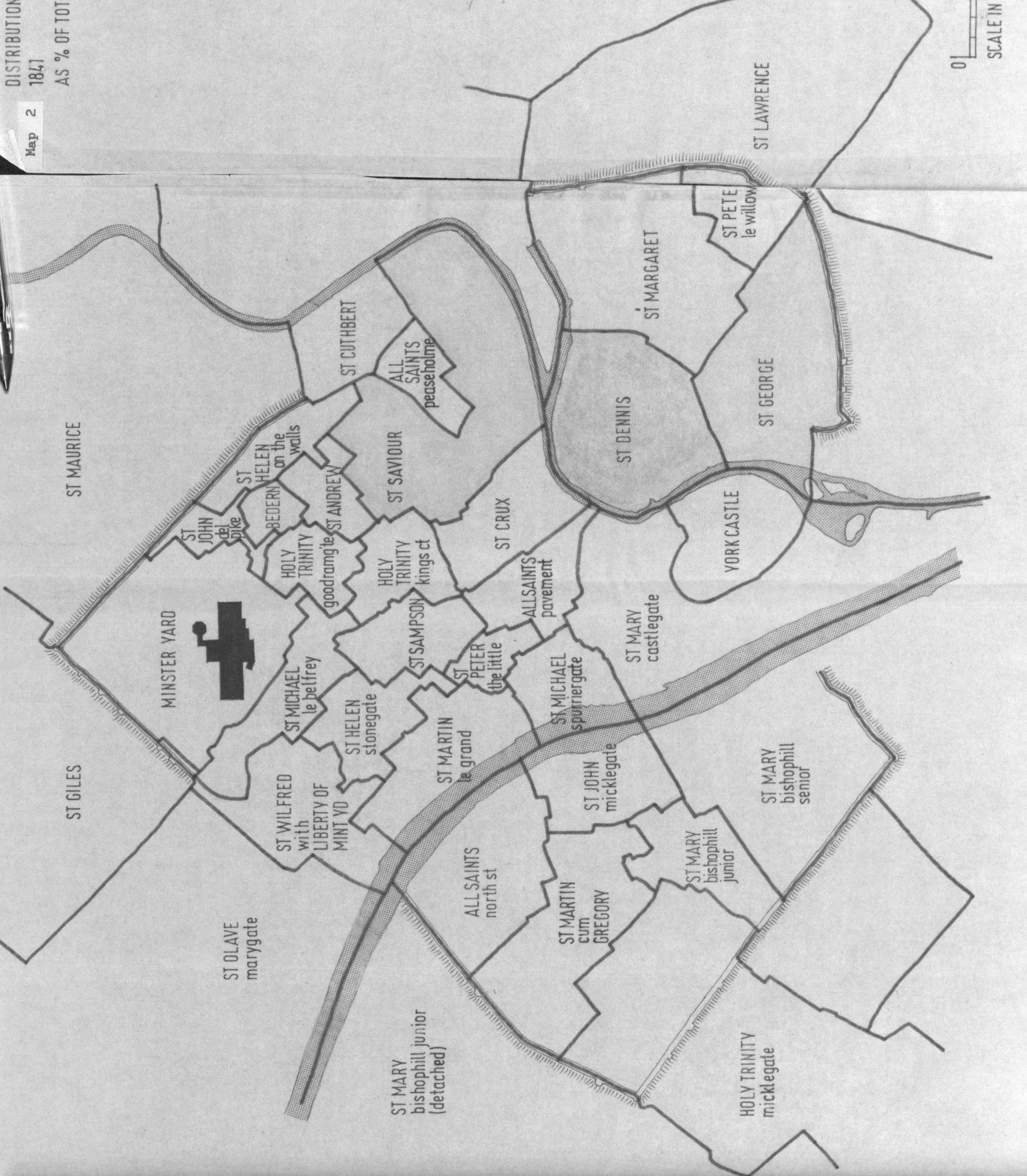
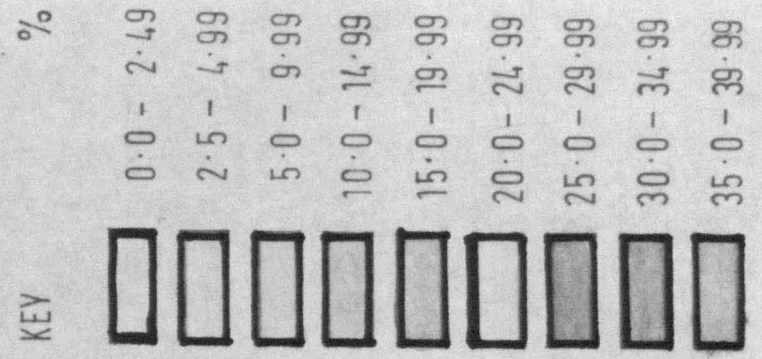
Table 1

Parochial Distribution of Irish Population in York, 1841

	<u>No. of Irish</u>	<u>% of total Irish in York</u>	<u>% of total parish population</u>
All Saints North Street	23	2.9	1.9
All Saints Pavement	3	.4	.7
All Saints Peaseholme	11	1.4	2.9
St. Andrew	19	2.4	6.0
St. Crux	18	2.3	2.0
St. Cuthbert	34	4.4	2.9
St. Dennis	84	10.8	6.4
St. George	43	5.5	4.2
St. Giles	2	.3	.2
St. Helen on the Walls	3	.4	.7
St. Helen Stonegate	1	.1	.2
Holy Trinity Goodramgate	12	1.5	2.2
Holy Trinity King's Court	4	.5	.6
Holy Trinity Micklegate	28	3.6	2.3
St. John del Pike	12	1.5	3.4
St. John Micklegate	12	1.5	2.3
St. Lawrence	25	3.2	2.5
St. Margaret	168	21.5	13.9
St. Martin le Grande with Davy Hall	5	.6	
St. Martin cum Gregory	5	.6	.9
St. Mary Bishophill Junior	24	3.1	1.4
St. Mary Bishophill Senior	30	3.8	2.7
St. Mary Castlegate	33	4.2	3.5
St. Maurice	13	1.7	.9
St. Michael le Belfrey	26	3.3	2.1
St. Michael Spurriergate	18	2.3	3.6
Minster Yard with Bedern	23	2.9	2.6
St. Nicholas	-	-	-
St. Olave Marygate	1	.1	.2
St. Peter the Little	12	1.5	2.1
St. Peter le Willows	18	2.3	3.6
St. Sampson	6	.8	.4
St. Saviour	57	7.3	2.8
St. Wilfred with the Liberty of Mint Yard	5	.6	2.0
York Castle	3 <sup>1</sup>	.4	1.2

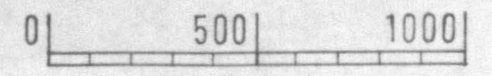
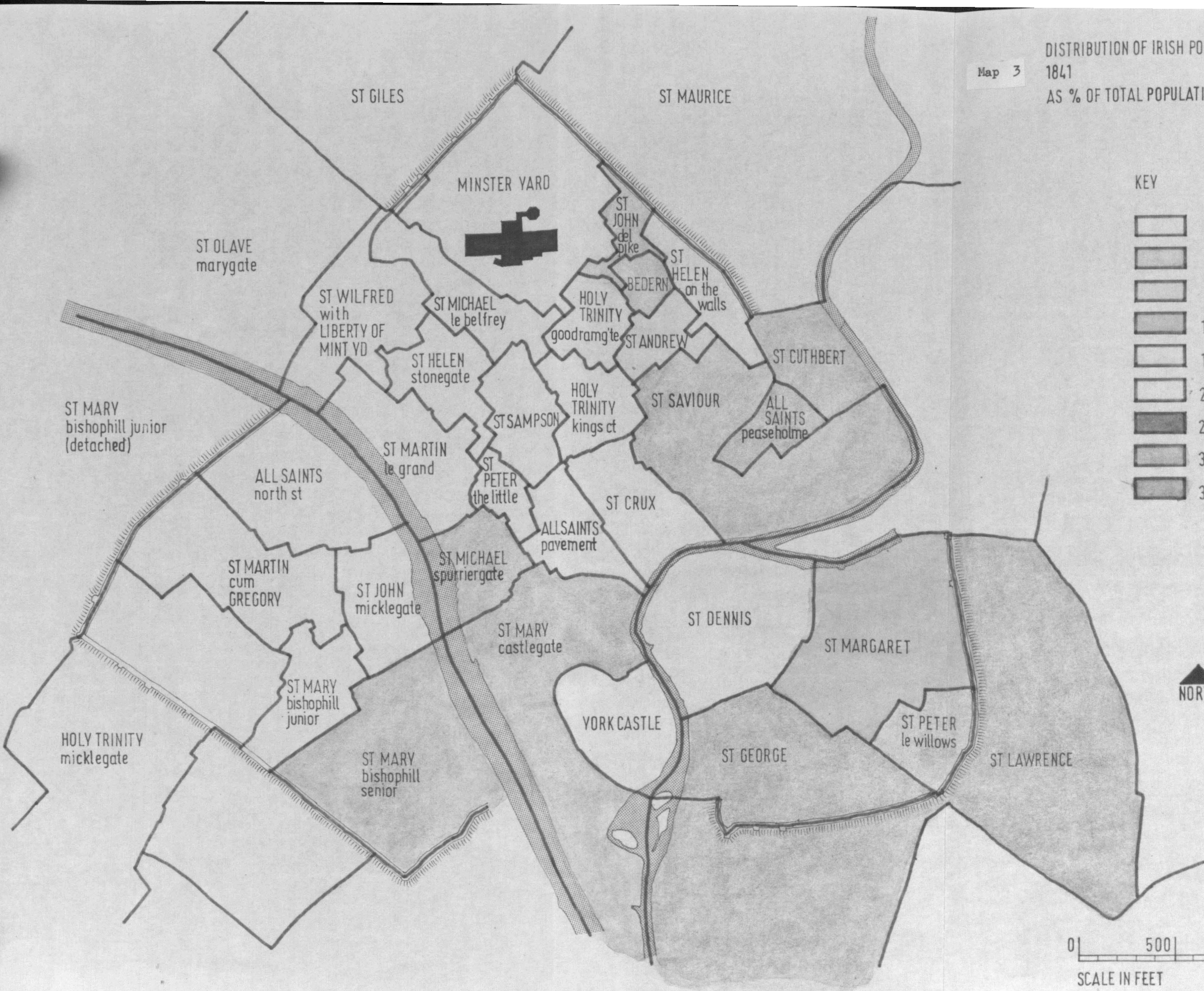
<sup>1</sup>One of these Irish prisoners was Chartist leader Feargus O'Connor.

DISTRIBUTION OF IRISH POPULATION IN YORK  
AS % OF TOTAL IRISH POPULATION OF YORK



DISTRIBUTION OF IRISH POPULATION IN YORK  
1841  
AS % OF TOTAL POPULATION IN PARISH

KEY	%
[White box]	0.0 - 2.49
[Light grey box]	2.5 - 4.99
[Medium-light grey box]	5.0 - 9.99
[Medium grey box]	10.0 - 14.99
[Medium-dark grey box]	15.0 - 19.99
[Dark grey box]	20.0 - 24.99
[Very dark grey box]	25.0 - 29.99
[Darkest grey box]	30.0 - 34.99
[Black box]	35.0 - 39.99



SCALE IN FEET



It is clear that although the Irish community was distributed throughout every parish in York with the exception of St. Nicholas,<sup>1</sup> there were already discernible concentrations in the neighbouring parishes of St. Margaret, St. Dennis and to a lesser extent, St. George (all in the Walmgate area) in St. Saviour and St. Cuthbert (in the Hungate area) and in St. Mary Castlegate, in which the notorious Water Lanes and Cross Alley were situated. Reference to Map 2 (page 27) shows that these were adjacent parishes in the south eastern quarter of the city, and all bordered, at least in part, on the river Foss and were within the city walls. The only other parishes which were subsequently to show consistently high concentrations of Irish - St. Peter le Willows, St. Helen on the Walls, Minster Yard with Bedern and the immediate fringes of St. Lawrence and St. Maurice were further extensions of this highly congested and traditionally poor and unhealthy area.

Map 2 gives the parochial percentages of the total Irish population in 1841, and comparison with the three subsequent census year parochial maps shows that the main post-Famine settlement took place in and around the area already most intensely populated by the Irish in 1841.<sup>2</sup> This concentration is even more marked in individual streets, yards and courts, some of which, already characterised by Irish settlement in 1841, were to be completely taken over by the post-Famine immigrants. Detailed descriptions of both the areas in which the Irish settled and of specific locations within these areas will be given in Chapters V and X.

<sup>1</sup>The York Barracks, not included in the 1841 census, subsequently increased the total number of Irish in the city.

<sup>2</sup>See maps between pages 118 and 121.

### Occupants per house.

The following Table shows the number of persons (excluding those in schools or other institutions) occupying each house in York in 1841 in which Irish persons lived, whether the house was wholly occupied by Irish inhabitants or whether it was shared between Irish and non-Irish people. It is not a measure of overcrowding, since information regarding the number of rooms per house is in most cases unobtainable. Only for those houses which survived long enough to be included in municipal slum clearance schemes in the 1930's such as the two and four roomed cottages of Hope Street, Long Close Lane and those in the yards and courts of the Walmgate and Hungate areas is such detailed information available, and as will be seen in Chapters V and X, a considerable amount of overcrowding did in fact occur in these smaller properties. Houses in areas such as Skeldergate, the Water Lanes and the Bedern, however, were cleared at an earlier period, and though these were often large, they were multi-occupied and according to contemporary description were usually as overcrowded as the smaller dwellings above. Therefore, even though an estimate of overcrowding based on the standard of more than two persons per room cannot be applied, in the absence of such information it is reasonable to conclude from Table 1A, that the Irish, even in 1841, were largely living in overcrowded conditions. Graph 1 illustrates this point.

Table 1A

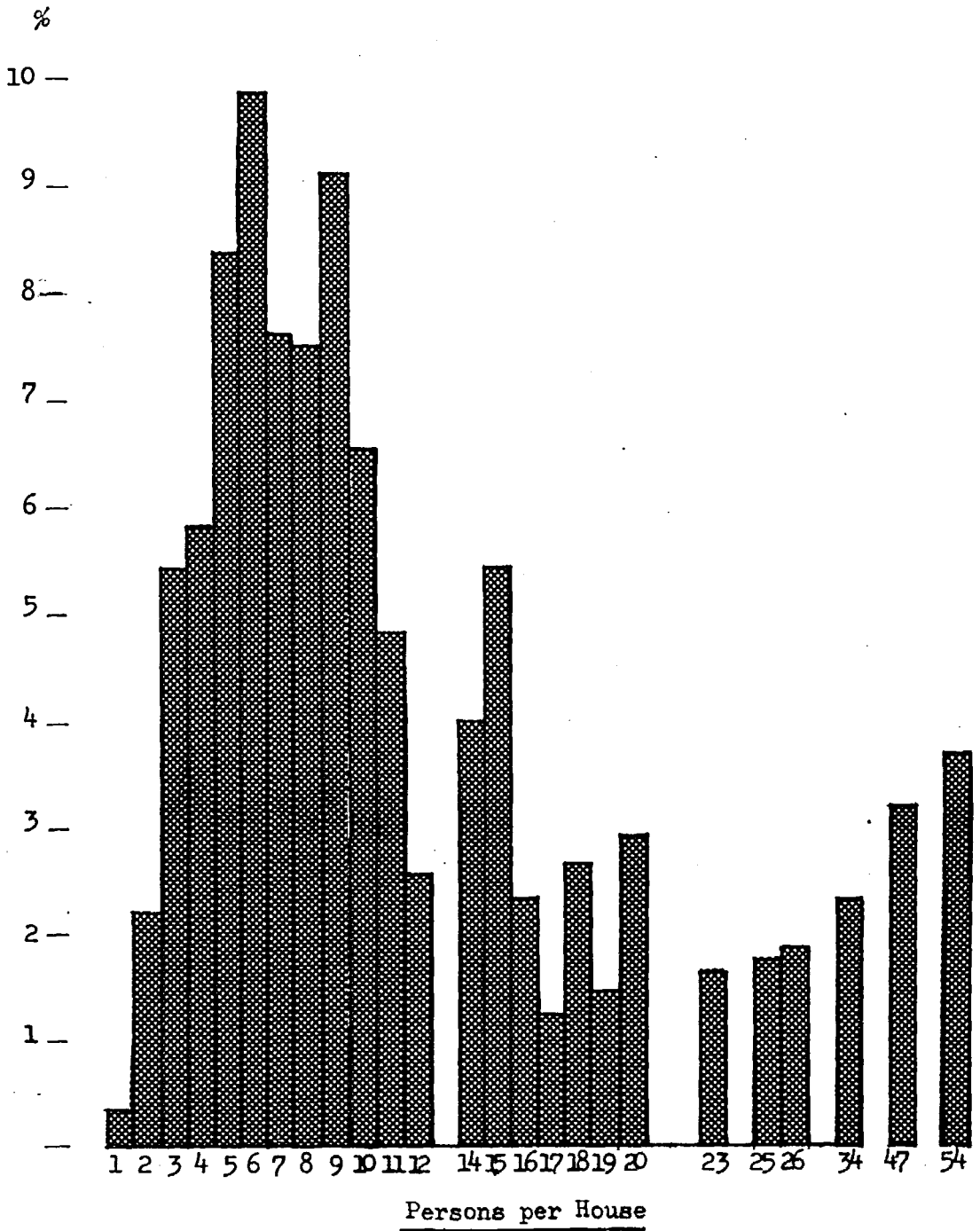
Persons in Houses containing Irish Occupants, 1841

1 <u>No. of persons per house</u>	2 <u>No. of houses</u>	3 <u>1 x 2</u>	4 <u>% of persons</u>
1	4	4	0.3
2	15	30	2.2
3	25	75	5.4
4	20	80	5.8
5	23	115	8.3
6	23	138	9.9
7	15	105	7.6
8	13	104	7.5
9	14	126	9.1
10	9	90	6.5
11	6	66	4.8
12	4	48	3.5
14	4	56	4.0
15	5	75	5.4
16	2	32	2.3
17	1	17	1.2
18	2	36	2.6
19	1	19	1.4
20	2	40	2.9
23	1	23	1.6
25	1	25	1.7
26	1	26	1.8
34	1	34	2.3
47	1	47	3.2
54	1	54	3.7

Graph 1

Percentages of Persons Per House Occupied  
by the York Irish Population, 1841.

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It will be seen that only 34 persons (2.5% of the population concerned) lived in houses containing 1 or 2 occupants, whereas 428 persons (30.1%) lived in houses of 15 or more occupants. Further, those houses containing the largest numbers of inhabitants - those of 15 or more - were almost entirely situated in what were already, or were subsequently to become areas of Irish concentration. In the Walmgate area alone, for example, there were 3 houses each containing 15 people (Walmgate, Church Lane and St. Dennis Street) 1 house containing 16 people (Butcher's Yard, Walmgate) 1 house with 17 occupants (Butcher's Yard) 2 houses each with 20 occupants (Paver Lane and Fossgate) 1 with 23 occupants (Walmgate) and 1 with 25 occupants (Church Lane). The remainder were either in other subsequent Irish areas such as the Water Lanes or Aldwark, or in the traditionally poor but non-Irish parts of York such as Skeldergate. The house containing the largest number of occupants - 54 - was in the Bedern, indicating the extent of concentration in an area already one of the most notorious in the city, but as yet not significantly populated by Irish people - only 13 out of a total of 897 living in the whole parish.

In order to examine the extent to which the Irish in 1841 were living in mixed Irish/non-Irish accommodation, all houses containing Irish people were divided between those in which all the occupants were Irish and those in which the occupants were mixed. Out of a total of 198 houses, 78 (39.4%) contained only Irish persons, and 120 houses (60.6%) contained a mixture of Irish and non-Irish occupants. Taking the individuals involved, as opposed to the houses, then 391 Irish persons (50%) lived in wholly Irish houses, and 390 Irish persons (50%) lived at addresses containing non-Irish residents too.

### Lodgers.

One indication of a community's social mobility is the extent to which heads of households take in lodgers, the number of persons in the community who are lodgers, and extent to which these proportions change over time. For the purpose of comparison with the three subsequent censuses, it would have been useful to establish these characteristics of the Irish population in York in 1841. Unfortunately, however, it is not possible to do so in this census since the enumerator was not required to specify respondents' relationship to head of household (as was subsequently to be the case) thus an accurate identification of lodgers is impossible. Though the relationship of servants to heads of households is usually clear (and even here a servant might in fact be lodging in a separate household rather than living with his employer) boarders, visitors and relatives such as in-laws, cannot be distinguished from lodgers. All that can be stated with certainty is the fact that, on the basis of family name only, 409 persons (52.4% of the Irish population) were living in households which did not contain lodgers.

### Family Size.

The same reservations must also apply, of course, with regard to family size and numbers of children per family - precise information in this respect too being unavailable in this census. However here, the common sense use of names and ages can establish family relationships with a reasonable degree of accuracy. Subject to this qualification, the following Table shows the distribution of the Irish population by size of family ranging from families of 1 to 9.

Table 2

Percentage Distribution of Irish Family Sizes in 1841

<u>No. of persons in family.</u>	<u>% of Irish population.</u>
1	18.8
2	14.8
3	11.5
4	12.3
5	14.6
6	10.7
7	10.7
8	3.1
9	3.1

Although as Armstrong noted for the total population of York at this census "the vast majority of all families were below 6 in size"<sup>1</sup>, the Irish population contained a higher proportion than the rest of the community of families above 6 - 16.9% compared with only 7.7% for the population as a whole. Bearing in mind that the sample on which Armstrong's calculations were based included Irish families, then the difference in family size between the total and the Irish population is accentuated even further. In addition, the Irish population displays a marked difference in the number of 2 and 3 person families, the total population containing 45% of these, compared with 26.3% for the Irish.

<sup>1</sup>Alan Armstrong, Stability and Change in an English County Town. Cambridge University Press. 1974. p. 176.

### Age and Sex Structure.

The age and sex structure of the Irish population in York in 1841 has been compared with that of the host population in the following two Tables. Table 3 divides the numbers of both populations by males and females into five yearly age groupings. Table 4 provides the same information, giving the percentage in each age group.

The principal differences between the age distribution of the Irish and the non-Irish populations are the high percentage of Irish females in the age group 0-5, the high percentage of both Irish males and females in the age group 30-35 and to a lesser extent in the age group 40-45. This information is also presented in Graph 2.

Table 5 and Graph 3 compare the percentages of Irish with non-Irish males in each five yearly age group. It is clear that females outnumbered males in the host population in every age group until 95-100. In the Irish population, however, the reverse was the case between the ages of 20 and 55, 60 and 65 and over 70.

Comparison with subsequent censuses shows that little change occurred in the sex structure of the host population, but that the post-Famine Irish community in York became consistently male-dominated.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See pages 204-210.



Table 3

Age & Sex Structure in York, 1841.

<u>Ages</u>	<u>Host Population</u> (excluding Irish)		<u>Irish Population</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
0-5	1,634	1,646	46	67
5-10	1,402	1,462	34	38
10-15	1,286	1,418	26	32
15-20	1,185	1,560	29	30
20-25	1,280	1,647	47	43
25-30	1,126	1,421	37	32
30-35	1,126	1,218	50	40
35-40	830	850	24	24
40-45	775	873	37	24
45-50	526	579	20	11
50-55	545	633	12	10
55-60	330	410	5	11
60-65	367	517	17	11
65-70	214	290	3	8
70-75	181	266	6	1
75-80	82	143	3	1
80-85	44	75	1	-
85-90	14	18	-	1
90-95	2	6	-	-
95-100	3	2	-	-
Not Known	50	25	-	-
Total	<u>13,002</u>	<u>15,059</u>	<u>397</u>	<u>384</u>

Table 4

Age & Sex Structure in York, 1841.

<u>Ages</u>	<u>Host Population (excluding Irish) % in each age group</u>		<u>Irish Population % in each age group</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
0-5	12.6	10.9	11.5	17.4
5-10	10.8	9.7	8.6	9.6
10-15	9.9	9.4	6.5	8.3
15-20	9.9	10.4	7.3	7.8
20-25	9.8	10.9	11.8	11.2
25-30	8.7	9.4	9.3	8.3
30-35	8.7	8.1	12.6	10.4
35-40	6.4	5.6	6.0	6.3
40-45	6.0	5.8	9.3	6.3
45-50	4.0	3.8	5.0	2.9
50-55	4.2	4.2	3.0	2.6
55-60	2.5	2.7	1.3	2.9
60-65	2.8	3.4	4.3	2.9
65-70	1.6	1.9	0.8	2.1
70-75	1.4	1.8	1.5	0.3
75-80	0.6	0.9	0.8	0.3
80-85	0.3	0.5	0.3	-
85-90	0.1	0.1	-	0.3
90-95	.01	.03	-	-
95-100	.02	.01	-	-
Not Known	.4	.2	-	-

Age and Sex Structure of York Population, 1841.

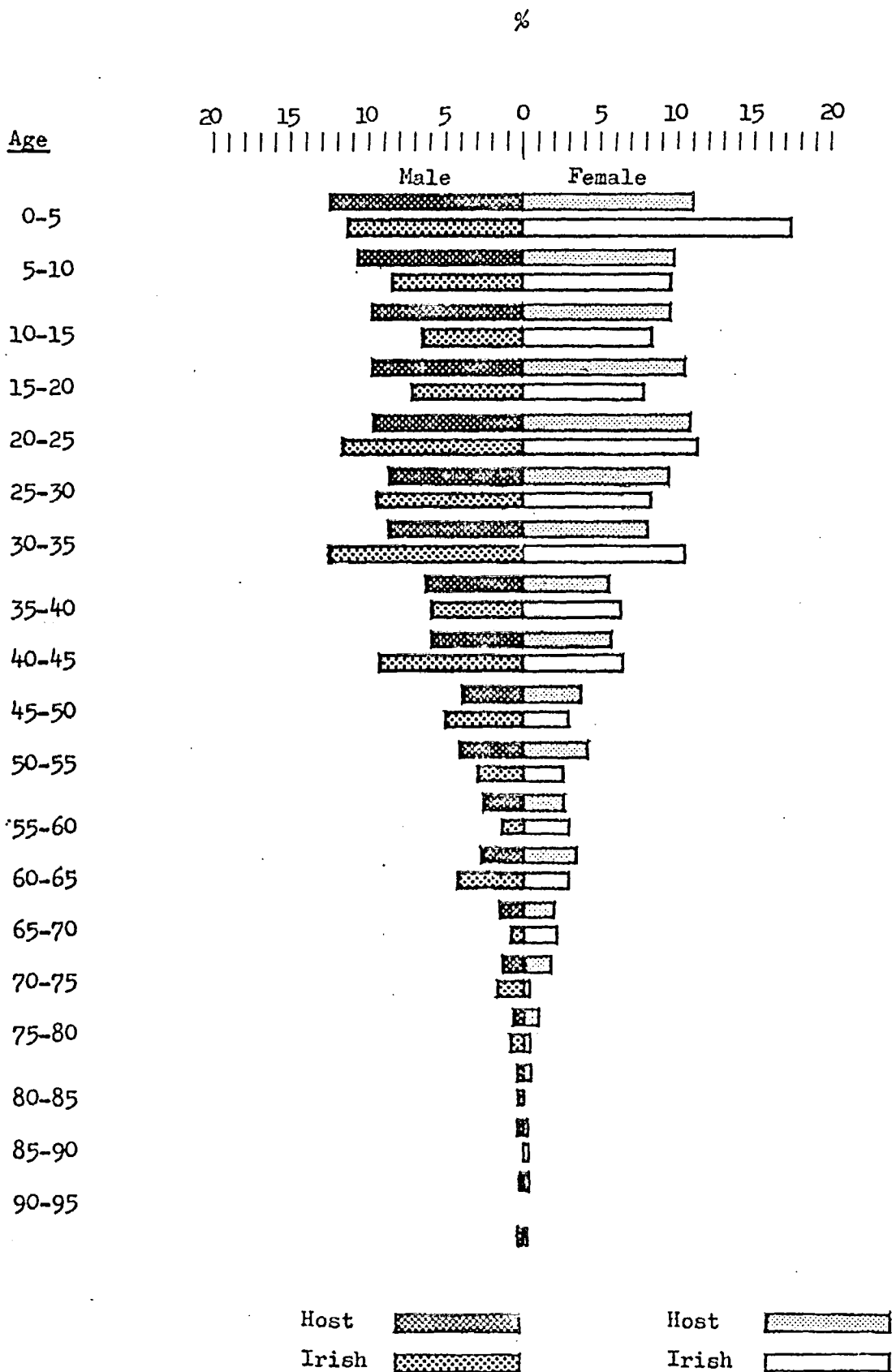


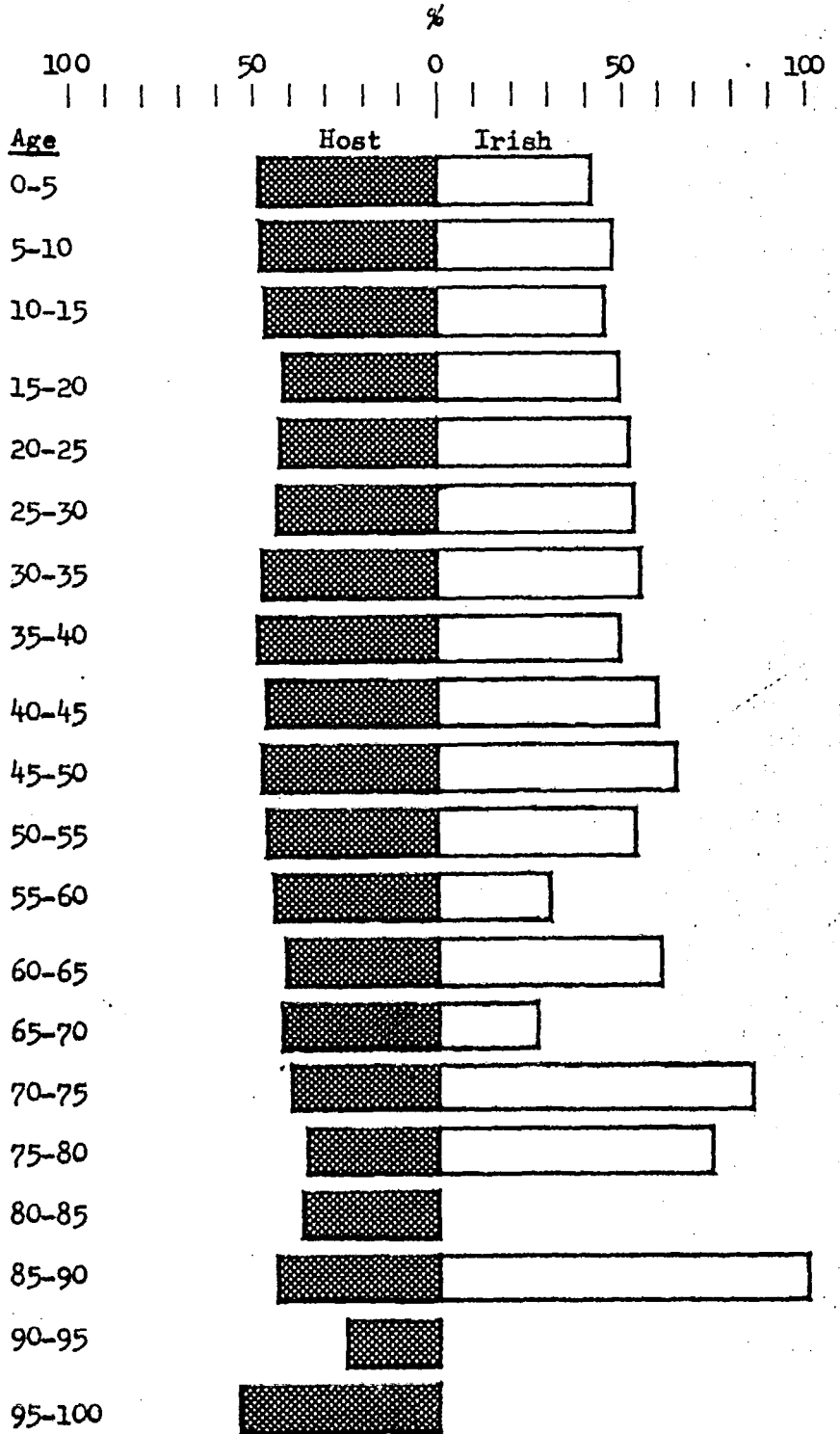
Table 5

Percentage of Males in Each Age Group.  
1841

Age Group	Host Pop. (exc. Irish) %	Irish %	Irish + or -
0-5	49.8	40.7	- 9.1
5-10	48.9	47.2	- 1.7
10-15	47.6	44.8	- 2.8
15-20	43.2	49.1	+ 5.9
20-25	43.7	52.2	+ 8.5
25-30	44.2	53.6	+ 9.4
30-35	48.0	55.5	+ 7.5
35-40	49.4	50.0	+ 0.6
40-45	47.0	60.7	+13.7
45-50	47.6	64.5	+16.9
50-55	46.3	54.5	+ 8.2
55-60	44.6	31.2	-13.4
60-65	41.5	60.7	+19.2
65-70	42.5	27.3	-15.2
70-75	40.0	85.7	+45.7
75-80	36.4	75.0	+38.6
80-85	36.9	0	-
85-90	43.7	100.0	-
90-95	25.0	0	-
95-100	60.0	0	-
Not Known	66.0	0	-

Graph 3

Percentage of York Males in Each Age Group, 1841.



### Civil Condition.

Since information relating to the civil condition of the total York population is not available in the printed abstracts for 1841, comparison between the host and the Irish communities is not possible. The civil condition of the Irish population in 1841, however, was as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of total</u>
Married people	280	35.8
Widows	6	.8
Widowers	-	-
Single persons	351	44.9
Unknown	144	18.4

### Mixed Marriages.

Analysis of the 280 married persons listed shows that only 40 marriages (28.6%) were between partners who were both Irish-born. 59 marriages (42.1%) were between Irish males and non-Irish females and 29 marriages (20.7%) were between Irish females and non-Irish males. The remaining 7.8% (22 persons) were those whose birthplace had not been recorded, those whose spouse was absent, or those (rarely in this census) who, although not born in Ireland themselves and married to non-Irish partners, were included in the Irish community because they were living in the household of their Irish parents.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This occurs more frequently in subsequent censuses, especially in 1871, by which time children born in England to post-famine Irish immigrants were of marriageable age. Few, however, once married, remained with their parents. Undoubtedly, many more, having left the parental home would, because of their English birthplace, fail to be picked up as Irish. My figures therefore, inevitably underestimate the total Irish population in York, particularly by the late 1860's.

Further analysis of the extent of mixed marriages according to parochial distribution, though yielding interesting results in the three subsequent censuses, failed to reveal any significant pattern for 1841 as both mixed and wholly Irish marriages were distributed fairly evenly throughout the city.

#### Occupational Structure.

Of the 397 Irish males in York in 1841, 275 (69.3%) were occupied while 122 (30.7%) were unoccupied. The latter may be divided as follows: 109 (27.5% of total males in the Irish community) were below the age of 16 and had no occupation, 1 was listed as a scholar, and 12 (3.0% of total males) were over the age of 16 with no occupation.

Occupied Irish males were engaged in 77 different types of employment, but of these, only the 21 occupations in the following Table accounted respectively for 1% or more of the total occupied. Column 3 compares those occupations accounting for more than 2% of the Irish male labour force (first 11 categories) with the total numbers engaged in those employments in York, where such information exists. Column 4 gives Irish males in these occupations as a percentage of the total.

Table 6

Occupations Accounting For More Than 1%  
of Total Occupied Irish Males in York in 1841.

<u>Occupation</u>	1 <u>Number</u>	2 <u>% of Occupied Irish Males</u>	3 <u>York Total in Occupation.</u>	4 <u>Irish as % of total</u>
Labourer	60	21.8	787	7.6
Traveller	17	6.2	1	
Shoemaker	14	5.1		
Farm worker	14	5.1	144	10.0
Hawker	11	4.0	35	31.4
Tailor	10	3.6	424	2.3
Glass blower	9	3.3	54	16.6
Soldier	8	2.9	29	27.6
Linen weaver	7	2.5		
Joiner	7	2.5	421	1.7
Bricklayer	6	2.2		
—				
Hatter	5	1.8		
Pensioner	5	1.8		
Surveyor	4	1.5		
Clerk	4	1.5		
Whitesmith	4	1.5		
Printer	4	1.5		
Coachman	3	1.1		
Drover	3	1.1		
Blacksmith	3	1.1		
Servant	3	1.1		



It will be seen that the only single category accounting for a significant proportion of occupied Irish males was that of labourer, though this was not a high percentage of the total labourers in York. The second highest category, that of traveller, creates some difficulty in interpretation, since in the census abstract for York only one traveller was listed. Obviously the compilers of the abstracts regarded the Irish respondents who termed themselves thus, not as Commercial Travellers, but as people of no fixed abode - "on tramp," listing the total number of "travellers" in the commercial sense as 1. Whether or not the 17 Irish individuals classed as travellers belong to the first or second interpretation is not clear. Two were in fact heads of households, one of which contained five lodgers who were recorded as travellers, which argues some degree of stability. The remainder were lodgers, 4 of whom were married and two had children living with them, making the probability of their being tramps even less likely, especially as genuine tramps were clearly listed as such.

The occupations of the Irish in 1841 were further analysed according to their parochial distribution, but since in this census the numbers in each occupation are so small, apart from comparison with later censuses, no further use has been made of this information. This also applies to the analysis of female occupations in 1841, the principal characteristics of which were as follows:

Of the 384 females in the Irish community, only 69 (17.9%) were occupied, the remaining 315 being accounted for as follows. 146 (38.0% of total Irish females) were under the age of 16 and without an occupation, 134 (34.8%) were widows or wives with no occupation and 31 (8.0%) were over 16 with no occupation. The 69 occupied females were engaged in the following 19 employments.

Table 7

Occupations Accounting for More Than 1%  
of Total Occupied Irish Females in York in 1841.

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<u>Occupation</u>	1 <u>Number</u>	2 <u>% of Occupied Irish Females</u>	3 <u>York Total in Occupation.</u>	4 <u>Irish as % of total</u>
Servant	13	18.8	2,175	0.6
Nun	7	10.1		
Spinster	7	10.1	25	28.0
Factory lab.	6	8.7	8	75.0
Hawker	6	8.7	17	35.3
Fundholder	6	8.7		
Dressmaker	4	5.8		
Charwoman	2	2.9		
Lodging House Keeper	2	2.9		
Teacher	2	2.9		
Linen weaver	2	2.9		
Flax spinner	2	2.9		
Milliner	2	2.9		
—				
Nurse	1	1.4		
Cook	1	1.4		
Dealer in clothes	1	1.4		
Capmaker	1	1.4		
Cotton larder	1	1.4		
Pauper	1	1.4		

Since the numbers of occupied females in the Irish community in 1841 were so small, every individual occupation accounted for more than 1% of the total labour force. The Table requires little comment, except to note that out of a total of 2,175 females employed as domestic servants in York in that year, only 13 were Irish. In subsequent censuses when the numbers of Irish females were greatly increased, this lack of employment in what was the major female occupation in the city is even more apparent. (see Chapter VII) Further, in 1841 only 7 of the Irish females classed as domestic servants were actually living on census night with the families by whom they were employed.

Using Armstrong's procedures,<sup>1</sup> the social classification of the occupied Irish in York in 1841 yields the following information:

<u>Social Class</u>	<u>Nos. of Occupied Irish</u>	<u>% of Occupied Irish</u>
I	9	2.7
II	21	6.4
III	167	50.6
IV	42	12.7
V	91	27.5

<sup>1</sup>Alan Armstrong, *The Use of Information about Occupation in Nineteenth-Century Society* (ed.) E. A. Wrigley. Cambridge University Press, 1972. pp.191-310.

Class I = professional, etc., occupations.

Class II = intermediate occupations.

Class III = skilled occupations.

Class IV = partly skilled occupations.

Class V = unskilled occupations.

As will be seen in Chapter VII, Occupations of the Post-Famine Irish Community, the proportions of occupied Irish in 1841 belonging to social classes II, III, and IV differed distinctly from those of the three post-Famine censuses, particularly that of 1851. The percentages in classes I and V however, were not significantly altered in the thirty year period, in spite of the arrival of large numbers of post-Famine immigrants. Unfortunately a comparison of the social structure of the Irish community in York in 1841 with that of the host community has not been possible.

.....

The Irish who flocked to York as a result of the Famine - whether they came temporarily or permanently - obviously posed severe problems for the authorities, quite apart from those pressures on accommodation, employment, sanitary facilities, etc. As well as being regarded as a threat to law, order and public health, the nature of the circumstances under which most of them arrived ensured that in the immediate post-famine period at least, they would be an unwelcome burden on Poor Relief. An examination of the entries in the Application and Report Books of the Poor Law Guardians for 1840/1841, however, shows that the pre-famine Irish community imposed no strain on Poor Law expenditure which was disproportionate to their number. Names and addresses, ages, occupations and members of family of all applicants were checked against Irish individuals listed on the census in order to establish the precise number of Irish persons requiring relief in the censal year - 6 months either side of the date of the census. Out of a total of 1,674 applications, only 46 (2.7% - exactly the same proportion as the Irish community was of the total) were identified as being Irish.

These 46 applications were on various grounds such as funeral expenses, destitution through disability, sickness, infirmity, or husband away or in prison, and were not in any way different from non-Irish applications for relief. Of the Irish applications, 28 came from parishes already containing early concentrations of Irish settlement, the remainder, though scattered throughout York, stemmed from other traditionally poor areas. From the 1,628 non-Irish applications the same pattern too emerged - as might be expected the vast majority belonged to poor parishes, and the greater part of these were concentrated around what were soon to be the main areas of Irish settlement, most notably from Walmgate itself. For comparative purposes the detailed information regarding Poor Relief in 1841 has been included in Chapter VIII.

#### The Irish Contribution to Crime.

In order to establish the extent of Irish criminality in York it was necessary to distinguish whether those individuals brought before the magistrates were Irish or non-Irish. Using the procedure explained in Chapter I, details of all alleged offenders in each of the censal years were checked against the list of all persons of Irish birth or family extracted from the censuses. In addition, for inter-censal years, where such an analysis was not possible, details were taken of all cases in which persons involved were described by the newspapers as Irish, and such incidents have been used for illustrative rather than analytical purposes.

Table 8 lists all types of crimes committed in York between October 1840 and September 1841 (inclusive) divided between charges against Irish and non-Irish offenders. It will be seen that the

number of Irish persons charged, though small, represented 3.4% of total charges made in the city, while the Irish community itself formed only 2.7% of the total York population. Their contribution to crime in 1841, therefore, though small, was nevertheless slightly disproportionate to their actual numbers.

Table 8

Crimes in York, October 1840-September, 1841.

<u>Offence</u>	<u>Numbers of Persons Charged.</u>		
	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Non-Irish</u>	<u>Total</u>
Assault	0	19	19
Assaulting Police Constable	1	6	7
Begging	2	11	13
Breaking glass	0	2	2
Disorderly conduct	0	9	9
Drunkenness	2	45	47
Embezzlement	0	2	2
False pretences	0	2	2
Fighting	0	1	1
Furious driving	0	1	1
Gaming, etc.	0	4	4
Hawking without licence	0	1	1
House breaking	0	3	3
Obstruction	0	2	2
Pickpocket	0	12	12
Possessing bad money	0	2	2
Prostitution*	0	12	12
Rescue from police	0	1	1
Riotous conduct	0	1	1
Suspicious character	0	11	11
Theft	2	49	51
Wilful damage	0	3	3
	—	—	—
	7	199	206
	—	—	—

Irish % of total = 3.4%

\*Prostitutes were rarely charged as such, they were usually brought before the magistrates for some other offence connected with their activities, such as indecency, wandering abroad and annoying gentlemen, or theft. (see Chapter X)

Analysis of the location of offences in York (Table 9 ) reveals that the largest number were committed in the central area of the city which included the busy streets containing the markets and main shopping centres, such as Parliament Street, Coney Street, Petergate and the Shambles. Here the majority of cases of theft and attempts to pick pockets occurred. The Walmgate area, soon to become the principal place of Irish settlement and already containing concentrations of Irish persons, was the district in which the second largest number of crimes occurred, though these were clearly not committed by the Irish themselves. This pattern emerges more clearly in the three subsequent censuses and will be examined in detail in the chapter devoted to the subject.



Table 9

Location of Crimes October 1840-September 1841.

<u>Area</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Persons Charged</u>	
		<u>Non-Irish</u>	<u>Irish</u>
Central (Markets, etc.)	60	57	3
Not known	40	37	3
Walmgate	33	33	0
Ousegate	12	12	0
Micklegate/Station	8	8	0
Bedern	7	7	0
Goodramgate/Minster	6	6	0
Fishergate	5	4	1
Bootham/St. Leonard's Place	4	4	0
Skeldergate/Bishophill	4	4	0
Knavesmire	3	3	0
Upper Hungate (Haver Lane, Palmer Lane, etc.)	3	3	0
Lawrence Street/Hull Road	2	2	0
St. Andrewgate/Aldwark	2	2	0
North Street	2	2	0
Lower Hungate (Hungate, Wesley & Garden Place, etc.)	2	2	0
Water Lanes	1	1	0
Long Close Lane/Hope Street	1	1	0
Castlegate	1	1	0
Peaseholme Green	1	1	0
Navigation Road	2	2	0
Blossom Street/Holgate Road	1	1	0
Gillygate/Groves	6	6	0
	<u>206</u>	<u>199</u>	<u>7</u>

The Irish contribution to prostitution in York in the pre-Famine period was not sufficiently important to merit separate treatment here, there being only six references involving Irish individuals between 1840 and 1847. Since Chapter X examines the subject in detail for the whole period, these cases will be more appropriately considered there.

However, references to other Irish miscreants occur between 1840 and the first waves of post-Famine immigration in late 1846, and these, in line with the general editorial comment on Irish affairs, become noticeably more hostile with the passage of time. In January 1840, for example, "Murgatroyd ... this insolent Irish pest, who has so frequently figured of late in our police reports" was sent to the House of Correction for 7 days for having ordered and consumed breakfast at an eating house without paying for it;<sup>1</sup> and in February:

"An ugly, half-starved creature who stated that he came over by way of Ireland was adjudged to 21 days imprisonment in the House of Correction for begging in the city. The poor man heard his sentence joyfully and we should imagine he will be more comfortable during his imprisonment than he has been for many a day."<sup>2</sup>

Irish beggars were not uncommon in the city even before the Great Famine. Several cases of beggars being brought before the magistrates and discharged on promising to leave the town immediately occur in the early 1840's, and in June 1842 the Lord Mayor declared that "This was the season of the year when the city was infested with Irish people begging about the streets."<sup>3</sup> In the same month two Irish women, Mary Ann Hope and Margaret Dalton "having a large family",

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 25 January 1840.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 29 February 1840.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 4 June 1842. (see page 86)

were both charged with begging and in October Irishman Patrick Connor was sentenced to five days imprisonment for the same offence.<sup>1</sup>

Other Irish offenders were brought before the Bench on a variety of charges. In January 1840 for example,

"On Tuesday last at York Castle ... an Irishman was charged with having that day taken a quart of rum contained in a bladder in his hat into the prison."<sup>2</sup>

In April of that year at the York City Sessions, Michael Carrol, aged 37, an Irish glassblower "at which trade he was so clever that he was competent to earn a large wage" was charged with bigamy. He had married his first wife in Cork in 1835 and came to England three years' later. He was transported in September 1840, leaving his wife Mary aged 20 and son John aged 2 to be recorded on the 1841 census, living in Aldwark - "husband away".<sup>3</sup> In May 1840, "Henry Crossgrove and Mary Dirkin, two squalid looking creatures from the Green Isle with two dirty ragged children" were charged with stealing cloth;<sup>4</sup> and in February 1841, Charles McGuin, Irishman, was charged with being drunk and violently assaulting a police officer.<sup>5</sup>

Other references to Irish offenders indicate the type of work - usually seasonal - in which they were engaged in the city, the occasional cattle drover, jobber or reaper "travelling in Yorkshire in search of employment in the harvest fields"<sup>6</sup> appearing before the magistrates. As the analysis of crime in the censal year indicates, however, such cases are infrequent since the number of Irish persons facing charges of any sort in the pre-Famine period is extremely low.

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, June 11, June 18 & October 15, 1842.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 11 January 1840.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 18 April and 19 September 1840.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 16 May 1840.

<sup>5</sup>Gazette, 13 February 1841.

<sup>6</sup>See pages 66-7.

This Chapter has attempted to analyse the main characteristics of the pre-Famine Irish population in York at about the time of the 1841 census for the purpose of comparison, in later Chapters, with those of the post-Famine Irish immigrants. At the same time, comparison, where possible, has been made between the Irish community and the host population and it seems clear that the main characteristics of the two groups were not markedly dissimilar. Though distributed throughout the city the Irish were mainly to be found in the poorer quarters, living in overcrowded, unhealthy conditions, as were the majority of the non-Irish population. They were employed in a variety of occupations, and were represented in all social classes, the greatest number, however, belonging to Class III. Their family, age and sex characteristics were not significantly different from those of the host community, and the extent to which they married and lived with non-Irish persons argues a fair degree of assimilation. Their contribution to crime was only marginally disproportionate to their number, and the extent of prostitution amongst Irish women at this time appears to have been negligible. Though Irish beggars were fairly frequently brought before the magistrates, the indigenous Irish community posed no more of a problem for the Poor Law Guardians than did the poor amongst the non-Irish themselves.

What does emerge, however, is that in this period there were already small concentrations of Irish settlement in the traditionally poor areas of the city, such as Walmgate, Hungate, the Water Lanes and Bedern, whose reputations had long since been amongst the most notorious in York, and which (with the exception of the Water Lanes) were later to be wrongly regarded as totally Irish areas. Further,

the seasonal flow of Irish harvesters and reapers to the York area would no doubt have intensified this concentration in the autumn months.

Already discernible too, were traces of mild hostility and contempt both towards Irish individuals and the race as a whole - traces which, by the 1850's, were to become a permanent feature and unavoidable fact of Irish life in the city. This aspect of their experience in York, however, will emerge more clearly in the following two Chapters.

## CHAPTER III

### THE IMPACT OF THE FAMINE IRISH

Before examining the various characteristics of the main body of Irish immigrants to York, and the immediate effects of their arrival, it is important to try to discover why, as refugees from the Great Famine of 1845-49 they settled in York rather than elsewhere. The reason generally put forward - that they came in connection with railway development - can be dismissed, since the York line was opened in May 1839, seven or eight years before the Irish began to arrive in large numbers. Extensions and improvements to this and other local lines were not built by Irish navvies coming to York for this purpose, for on the 1841 census there are no Irish railway employees listed, and very few appear even in 1851. The main expansion of the Carriage Works in York did not take place until the 1850's and 60's, too late to have been responsible for the arrival of the first waves of Famine refugees, who in any case, could rarely have possessed the necessary skills and training. Though these were largely replaced at the two subsequent censuses by fresh Irish immigrants (see Chapter XI) even the later arrivals can hardly be said to have been attracted to York by the prospect of Railway employment. The occupational breakdowns of the Irish population in the three post-Famine censuses show that in 1851 only 11 of them were employed in any category of railway work, in 1861 the figure was 13 and by 1871 the figure had increased to only 33. York as a railway centre, therefore, was not an inducement to Irish immigration.

Nevertheless, by 1851 the number of Irish-born persons

listed in York had increased from 430 in 1841 to 1,928<sup>1</sup> or 5.3% of the total population, a figure which, as Armstrong observes,

"was unexpectedly high compared with other large towns in the central and north-eastern districts of England (Lincoln 1.3, Hull 3.5, Nottingham 2.7, Derby 3.2, Sheffield 3.3, Leeds 4.9 per cent, etc.)"<sup>2</sup>

He omits, however, three Yorkshire towns in which the proportion of Irish-born persons was comparable with or significantly higher than that of York - Huddersfield 5.1, Halifax 6.2 and Bradford 8.9 per cent. Whatever attractions these, as industrial towns, offered, however, it can hardly be said that they were present in York, which by the mid-century was still fundamentally a pre-industrial city.

From the census enumerators' notebooks where in 1851 significant numbers of both Irish men and women were classed as agricultural labourers, it would appear that such employment was one reason for their coming to and settling in York, though the extent to which they remained, still being in the city at subsequent censuses will be discussed in Chapter XI. Out of a total Irish population of 2,618, 443 were employed as agricultural labourers. This represented 31.7% of the total occupied Irish in York, but only 16.9% of the total Irish population. The numbers of agricultural and field labourers in York had risen from 144 men and 1 female in 1841, to 658 men (336 of whom were Irish) and 109 women (107 of whom were Irish) in 1851. Armstrong gives the total number of agricultural labourers in York for that year as 541<sup>3</sup>, but it seems that he has

<sup>1</sup>My total of Irish-born persons at this census is in fact 1963, see page 3.

<sup>2</sup>Alan Armstrong, Stability and Change in an English County Town. Cambridge University Press, 1974. p.90.

<sup>3</sup>Armstrong, Stability and Change. p.97

taken into account only male agricultural labourers over the age of 20 - the census abstracts having divided the occupation into both males and females, in two age groups. Thus he has omitted the 117 male agricultural labourers under the age of 20, the 72 females over 20 in this employment and the 28 females under 20 years. His total therefore is 226 short, and should have been 767 instead of 541.

Further, Armstrong states that:

"an extremely large proportion of the York Irish described themselves as agricultural labourers in the Census of 1851."<sup>1</sup>

This exaggerated conclusion is reached from his examination of the York Irish

"by means of a Bedern sub-sample, consisting of the whole of the inhabitants of Snarr's Buildings, ... Pulley's, Jackson's and Henderson's buildings."<sup>2</sup>

Such a sub-sample, however, is quite unrepresentative of the Irish community as a whole. Whereas agricultural labourers represented 56.8% of all the Irish in the Bedern, for the total Irish population in York the figure is only 16.9%.<sup>3</sup> This difference of 40% illustrates not only how unrepresentative of the Irish community in York the highly homogeneous group in the Bedern was - originating as they did almost entirely from only three Irish counties, but also the inaccuracy resulting from an attempt to generalise on the grounds of

<sup>1</sup> Armstrong, Stability and Change, p.96.

<sup>2</sup> Armstrong, Stability and Change, p.125.

<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, by using "the whole of the inhabitants" of Bedern Irish-headed households, he is using a sample of the Irish population which contains non-Irish-born persons, in order to reach conclusions about the 1,928 returned in the abstract, all of whom, of course, were Irish-born. For a proper comparison he should either have omitted them in the Bedern sub-sample, or made allowance for their existence in Irish-headed households elsewhere in York.



such a biased sample.

The majority of the remaining occupied Irish persons were labourers,<sup>1</sup> indicating that the appearance of the Irish in York was in part due both to the possibility of agricultural employment in the surrounding countryside, and unskilled casual labour in the city itself.

A particular form of agricultural employment - that of chicory cultivation, seems to have been especially associated with the Irish immigrants; as we have seen, however, less than a third of their labour force was employed in agriculture - the number engaged in the cultivation of one particular crop, therefore, being necessarily even smaller. Even if it is assumed that a high proportion of the 443 agricultural labourers were engaged in this work, the numbers involved are hardly a convincing major reason for post-Famine Irish settlement in York, and chicory cultivation clearly not the vital inducement previously supposed. Rowntree, for example, speculated:

"These poor Irish people, whose early experiences of the city were so unpropitious, were probably attracted to York by the prospect of obtaining work in connection with the cultivation of chicory, for which the district was then noted. This industry has now practically disappeared, and the number of Irish in the city has begun to decline, but is still considerable. Of those who remain, many find work as general labourers, while some of the women pick up a more or less precarious livelihood by working in the fields outside the city, often tramping out for miles in the early morning to their work."<sup>2</sup>

Half a century earlier the Herald attributed Irish settlement in the city to the same reason:

"It is known to our readers that during the last

<sup>1</sup>Precise occupational figures at each Census are given in Chapter VII.

<sup>2</sup>B. Seebohm Rowntree, Poverty. London, 1903. p.10

few years owing to the extensive cultivation of chicory in the neighbourhood of York and the employment which has thereby been afforded to the Irish, many of the natives of Ireland have taken their residence in this city, several houses in Bedern, Walmgate and Long Close Lane being occupied by them. These persons, not forgetting their national peculiarities, have, on many occasions, been embroiled in serious quarrels,<sup>1</sup> either among themselves or their Saxon neighbours."

Mention is also made of Irish employment in chicory-growing in the York area (though this is not put forward as a reason for their coming to the city) in James Hack Tuke's pamphlet entitled A Visit to Connaught in the Autumn of 1847.<sup>2</sup> The pamphlet contains, incidentally, a very different account of Irish character and conduct in York from that suggested above, their behaviour being described by Tuke as "honourable, sober and inoffensive." The passage referred to, however, is more appropriate for inclusion in the following Chapter, in which prejudice in the city is discussed in detail.

The occupational breakdown of the Irish immigrants in 1851 shows that relatively few of them were, in fact, employed in the cultivation of chicory. Working in gangs containing women and children as well as men, however, and tramping considerable distances out to the fields each day, their numbers no doubt attracted attention so that gradually an undue importance was placed on their association with the crop, and they were seen in retrospect to have come to York with the sole purpose of cultivating it. Nevertheless, the records contain several

<sup>1</sup>Herald, 26 April, 1851.

<sup>2</sup>James Hack Tuke, Quaker. Born York 1819. Travelled in Ireland with W. and W. E. Forster 1846, 47 and 48 organising and distributing Friends' Relief Funds. Wrote various pamphlets on the subject. (See Chapter IV) Moved to Hitchen, 1852. During other visits to Ireland was responsible for raising a fund which helped nearly 10,000 to emigrate and wrote a paper Irish Emigration, based also on research in America. In 1880 was invited by W. E. Forster, then Secretary of State for Ireland, to revisit that country and report on the distress - this Tuke did in a pamphlet entitled Irish Distress and its Remedies. According to J. Hodgkin, (Friends' Quarterly Examiner, 1896, p.485) this report "was looked upon as a sort of textbook on the Irish problem ..... Mr. Tuke was thenceforward universally accepted as an authority, one might almost say the authority on the economic and social conditions of the poorest districts in the west of Ireland." Died 1896. For further details of the Tuke family see pp.103-14.

references to Irish chicory workers, and two statements in the Annual Reports of the York Ragged Schools actually attribute the Irish influx to York to the local cultivation of the crop. As will be seen below, however, this body's facts and figures relating to the Irish in the city are hardly reliable. In its first Annual Report in 1849, the Committee of the School, founded at that time in the Bedern:

"to reclaim the most neglected and degraded children resident in the city of York by providing them with a sound Christian education combined with training in such branches of industry and household employment as are suitable to their condition in life"

stated:

"Your Committee believe that the majority of Irish in these schools is larger than in the generality of Ragged Schools, which is attributable, they think, to the extensive cultivation of chicory in the neighbourhood."<sup>1</sup>

In the second Annual Report, W. D. Husband<sup>2</sup>, surgeon and important figure on the council, referring to an objection that the Ragged Schools themselves were attracting the Irish and that the country would soon be overrun with the immigrants:

"alluded to the anecdote of the old lady who thought of putting down the Slave Trade by not putting sugar into her coffee. So in this case it was one opinion that the using of chicory in coffee had a great deal more to do with the importation of the Irish than the Ragged Schools; and the only thing we had to do was not to drink chicory in our coffee in future."<sup>3</sup>

Such a notion was greeted with laughter and applause, nevertheless

<sup>1</sup>York Ragged Schools' 1st Annual Report. 1849.

<sup>2</sup>Married to an Irishwoman.

<sup>3</sup>York Ragged Schools' 2nd Annual Report. 1850.

in the following year the Committee was regarding both chicory and the school itself (now in the old Workhouse) as probable inducements to Irish settlement in the city. In its third Annual Report its attitude to the Irish immigrants is made quite plain.

"With few exceptions the committee continues to restrict admission to persons who have been resident for at least a year in the city ... to avoid the risk of inducing the Irish or other immigrants to the city. They regret they have not been able to reduce the proportion of the Irish children, but when they state that they have ascertained on good authority that not less than 3,000 acres of chicory are grown within six miles of York, and that the persons employed in its cultivation are chiefly Irish, they think there can be no doubt as to the cause of so large an influx into this neighbourhood."<sup>1</sup>

A further comment, however, that "three fourths of those brought before the magistrates in this city are Irish", is highly exaggerated<sup>2</sup> and casts doubt on the reliability of any of their information regarding the immigrants.

Nevertheless, chicory was grown in the surrounding countryside and many of the 443 Irish agricultural labourers listed on the 1851 census were no doubt engaged in its cultivation. Its fairly recent emergence as an important crop in the area co-incided approximately with the early large-scale waves of post-Famine immigration, and this too, no doubt, accounts in part for the subsequent importance placed on the crop as an inducement to Irish workers to the area.

At a meeting of the York Farmers' Club in 1847 some indication is given of the extent to which it was grown and the pioneering spirit with which it was regarded. Farmers were growing the crop

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in the Gazette, 26 April 1851.

<sup>2</sup>The actual proportion of Irish offenders in this, the censal year when maximum identification is possible, was 26.3%. See Chapter IX.

at Middlethorpe, Clifton Township and Dunnington - apparently the main centre, a farmer called Foster having grown it for twelve years. Mr. Smallwood of Middlethorpe had grown the crop for four years and had occasionally employed 60 or 70 labourers per day for a month at a time.<sup>1</sup> Not only did the root enrich the land but as the Chairman observed, since it required an unusual amount of tillage "the agriculturalists would also have the means of benefitting the poor among them by giving them employment."<sup>2</sup>

The first reference to individual Irish chicory workers appears in the police reports in April 1848, when Englishman George Myton was charged with stealing from John Kenny an iron tool - "an instrument used for digging up chicory." The Lord Mayor remarked that it seemed to him that some five or six men had agreed together to rob Kenny of his work tool to deprive him of his work, simply because he was a poor Irishman.<sup>3</sup> In February 1851 John and James Kilmartin, Irish brothers,

"who have obtained a living for some weeks past by either gleaning or stealing chicory from the fields at Dunnington and the neighbourhood,"

were charged with assault at Dunnington. Patrick Wier, also Irish, had accused them of stealing chicory, and a number of other Irishmen being present, "a regular Irish row took place."<sup>4</sup> In April of that year the detailed accounts in the newspapers of a "desperate affray in Long Close Lane" in which Irishman James Flannery was killed (see Chapter IX ) mention the fact that all the parties lived in Long Close Lane but worked in the neighbourhood of

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 6 March 1847.

<sup>2</sup>Herald, 6 March 1847.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 8 April. 1848.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette & Herãld, 15 February 1851.

Dunnington, "Where they are employed in the cultivation of chicory."<sup>1</sup>

Various other references to Irish chicory workers occur in the period, though not very frequently. On a couple of occasions, for example, Irishmen are described as having used their chicory tools to prise up paving stones (setts) for use as weapons, or the odd incident occurs of an Irishman having stolen a sack of chicory from his place of work. Occasionally too, an Irishman, brought before the magistrates on a charge or as a witness, is described in passing as working in the chicory fields at Dunnington. Two references of a more detailed kind are to be found in the early 1850's. In June 1850, four Irishmen and two Irish women were charged with having willfully set fire to a stable on the Stockton Road.

"There are two farms in the locality in question, one occupied by Mr. Graves and another by Mr. Bickerdile, who grows chicory and had the parties accused employed in hoeing it."

The Irish denied the charge and a Mr. Walls, Mr. Bickerdile's foreman spoke well of them, stating that they had been pounced upon only because of a previous difference between them and Mr. Graves. They were discharged but the spokesman of the party, "with the greatest coolness imaginable, asked for their expenses" - they having lost a day's pay. "Of course the magistrates had no assets for any such purpose."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, an amusing reference to chicory cultivation in Tollerton, where in January 1852 a farmer employed a party of Irish labourers to dig up a field of chicory. After giving the necessary

<sup>1</sup>Herald, 19 April, 1851.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 22 June, 1850.

instructions as to its whereabouts, he went to Knaresborough Fair.

"The Paddies, having duly reached Tollerton, entered a field belonging to another person (a respectable farmer) containing about 4 acres of teasles of the first year's growth, which they very expeditiously dug up to the dismay of their owner - the whole crop being utterly wasted. Having completed their labours they demanded their wages and in ignorance of the mistake they had committed they were duly paid. The crop of chicory remains in the ground."<sup>1</sup>

Villages such as Tollerton and Dunnington were several miles from York and the Irish agricultural labourer's residence in the city and consequent tramp to his place of work each day (a feature of life observed by Rowntree at the turn of the century) was, according to J. L. Foster, writing in 1864, due to:

"the want of cottage accommodation in the rural villages (so much to be deplored) and the increased demand for labour consequent on the improved mode of agriculture (which had) produced a state of affairs ... compelling the labourers - principally Irish - to walk several miles daily to and from their work, thus limited their hours of productive labour."<sup>2</sup>

Apart from the possibility of a relatively small proportion of the Irish people in York having been attracted to the city specifically to cultivate chicory, there seems to have been no other single

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 24 January 1852.

<sup>2</sup>J. Lancelot Foster. The Poor Laws: The Evils of Settlement and Removal. Paper read to the York Meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Social Science, 1864. p.5. For further comment see below page 141. Foster, ex Lord Mayor of York was obviously something of an authority on the cultivation of chicory, and was possibly the farmer referred to on page 63 as having grown the crop in Dunnington since 1835. According to Armstrong, op. cit. p.97, he "led a crusade for the revival of the industry; in 1885 he read a paper on the chicory duty to an assembly of interested farmers, and called for its reduction," and he instituted a Board of Agriculture Report on the crop.

occupational inducement. Having said this, however, it should be noted here that there were two special groups of Irish persons who were, in fact, drawn to the city in this period because of their occupations. These were the Ordnance Survey workers, all of whom were Irish, and who, as one would expect, appear only on the 1851 census, and the high proportion of Irish soldiers in the Barracks, which was first enumerated in 1851. These two groups are quite distinct from the immigrants arriving in York as refugees from the Famine, however, and as such they will be dealt with separately in Chapter VII.

If then, there was no single major occupational pull which attracted the Irish to York in particular, why did some of them settle in the city, and even larger numbers stay for a few years and then move elsewhere? One explanation is that there was already a tradition of seasonal migration to this area, Irish harvesters and reapers being familiar with the district before the Great Famine, and returning permanently when forced to leave their homeland. In October 1844, for example, Robert Moran was sentenced to nine months' hard labour for having robbed a man called Dillon of 17/6 at the Malt Shovel Inn in Walmgate, where they had spent the night. Both were described as Irishmen, "travelling in Yorkshire in search of employment in the harvest fields."<sup>1</sup> Even after the establishment of the post-Famine Irish community in York, seasonal gangs of Irish harvesters and reapers continued to fulfill their traditional role. There is an account of the "disgraceful conduct" of seven Irish reapers who arrived in the city by train in September 1862, for example. After causing a disturbance and "behaving violently" at their boarding house

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 10 October 1844.



they left before the arrival of the police, who eventually caught up with them and tried to turn them out of an eating house. They then

"set upon the police with their sickles, and the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, fearing for the safety of the officers, assisted them and the Irish were finally captured."<sup>1</sup>

As we have seen in Chapter II, there already existed in York too, a small Irish community before the Famine which may well have had links with Ireland, especially since the Irish cattle dealers and drovers in the city made regular trips back home. In November 1842 David and Patrick Tarpey, "two respectable looking Irish cattle jobbers" were charged with assault "when in charge of a large herd of Irish cattle",<sup>2</sup> and in February of the following year an unnamed Irish drover was charged with being drunk and disorderly.<sup>3</sup> In June 1842, Catherine Goodwin, Irishwoman, who stated that her husband was a drover in search of work, was sentenced to seven days in the house of correction for begging, the Lord Mayor stating that this was the season of the year when the city was "infested with Irish people begging about the streets."<sup>4</sup> Thus some early immigrants might well have been drawn to the city because of pre-Famine familiarity or because of the existence of relatives and friends already well established. Once settled, they too would no doubt have attracted further successive waves of immigrants, and the classic pattern result. This is borne out by the limited number of counties in Ireland from which the vast majority of immigrants originated, and the occasional indications (as on

<sup>1</sup>Gazette & Herald, 6 September, 1862.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 11 February 1843.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 6 Nov. 1842.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 4 June 1842.

page 318) of families having known one another before they emigrated.

Other than this, many no doubt, came to York simply because York was there. Birthplaces of children born immediately after the Famine indicate that many had stopped first in Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds, intending perhaps to settle in those cities, as many more of their numbers had done, but unable to find work moved further east. Some perhaps, came to York intending to stay but moved on even before 1851 - certainly, as will be seen in Chapter XI most of them did not settle long enough to be included on more than one census. Others, possibly intending merely to pass through, settled permanently in the city and were still being recorded in 1871.

Unlike Liverpool, Manchester or Leeds, York did not offer large-scale industrial employment, however in addition to opportunities for casual labour both in the surrounding countryside and the city itself, the occupational breakdown of the Irish community in 1851 shows that significant numbers of the early immigrants were employed in skilled and semi-skilled jobs in the town.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The precise figures at the 1851 census are:  
Class I - 48 = 3.4% of total occupied Irish.  
Class II - 39 = 2.8% of total occupied Irish.  
Class III - 327 = 23.4% of total occupied Irish.  
Class IV - 550 = 40.2% of total occupied Irish.  
In all, therefore, 964 or 69.6% of the total occupied Irish belonged to the social classes including the professional, intermediate, skilled and semi-skilled occupations. This figure is swollen by the inclusion, according to Armstrong's recommendation, of agricultural labourers in class IV. Had they not been included, then the percentage in classes I to IV would have been 35.3%. In other words, over a third of the immediate post-famine population found employment in skilled, semi-skilled or professional work.  
W. A. Armstrong, *The Use of Information about Occupation, in Nineteenth-Century Society*, ed. E.A. Wrigley, pp.191-310.

It seems apparent therefore, that for one reason or another - whether they were driven on to the city by their inability to gain a foothold in another town, or whether York was intended to be a mere stopping place en route to some other destination, many of them did settle, at least for a time, because the city and neighbouring countryside offered them some form of employment. No single occupation, however, seems to have been wholly, or even predominantly responsible for their concentration in the town. That they came to York for no particular reason other than the desperation which drove them anywhere and everywhere in the search of shelter and employment is the most probable explanation, and is the simple reason put forward by Maria Tuke in her diary in 1847.

"During this summer, my father's heart has been full of the wrongs and sufferings of Ireland, and his head busy in devising schemes for the temporary relief of the starving people. Many have flocked to York, as to other places, to escape the horrors of famine; and to find employment and food for these, was my father's unwearied care."<sup>1</sup>

The role of the Quakers, and in particular the Tuke family in influencing some of the Irish immigrants to head for York rather than elsewhere, is a possibility which cannot be ignored and which will be discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Family Portraiture, Memoirs of Samuel Tuke, London, 1860. Vol. I, p. 318. Privately printed for the family.

By the spring of 1847, victims of the Irish famine were already arriving in York in large numbers. Certain benevolent individuals had set up a fund two years earlier for vagrants passing through the city, who were given food and shelter in the Vagrant Office, but the numbers of such persons had increased alarmingly in the two year period. Between March 1845 and March 1846, 2,026 people - nearly six every day had been helped, in the following year, however, the number had increased to 3,513 or nearly 10 persons per day. During April and May of 1847 the number escalated to 2,736 or about 45 persons daily

"in consequence of the increasing number of Irish driven from their own country by famine, who made their way to this city in a most destitute condition. Not a few of these were in a state of fever or affected with smallpox or measles, and being rejected by keepers of lodging houses, an empty house in Jubbergate was appropriated for their use."<sup>1</sup>

In March the Finance Committee of the Health of Towns Association had received letters from Rev. Billington a Catholic Priest<sup>2</sup> and William Procter, Surgeon to the York Poor Law Union, "pointing out the existence of typhus fever to a serious extent in Walmgate." Mr. Procter reported:

I have several cases of typhus in Walmgate - three of these in Butcher's Yard; from the foul, dirty and loathsome state of that place, it appears to me that serious apprehensions of its spread to a fearful extent must be entertained. There are also other causes which will materially add to the increase of the disease, originating from the uncleanly habits

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 26 June 1847.

<sup>2</sup>Father Billington died later in the year of typhus, having contracted the disease while attending to his fever-ridden parishioners. Gazette, 2 & 9 October 1847.

and filthy abodes of the destitute Irish, amongst whom fever has appeared; the air of their habitations is rendered still more impure and unwholesome from the way in which they swarm together in the lodging houses. I myself have seen the rooms completely crowded at nights, and am told that it is not by any means uncommon for 10, 12 or more to sleep together in a low room, and so small that scarcely any space exists between the beds."

Four members of the Committee, Alderman Gray, Mr. Samuel Tuke<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Goldie and Dr. Laycock accordingly inspected the place and confirmed Mr. Procter's statement in the following report:

"The yard is bounded to the North by a high wall obstructing ventilation. On the West side of the Yard is a single privy open to and common to the Yard and used by above 50 persons, in a state of great filth and ruin and obviously even if repaired and cleansed, inadequate for the use of the inhabitants of the Yard. Next are the dilapidated pigsties containing Pigs and adjoining the sties is the slaughter house. The very offensive ooings from the before mentioned premises, and all the surface and house drainage of the yard fall into the centre gutter or open channel.

There are three lodging houses on the West side adjoining the slaughterhouse, and a row of thickly inhabited cottages opposite. The principal drainage of the gutter flows to the further end of the yard, where is a gully hole choked by a foetid pool of water. In the lodging houses nearest this gully hole are three cases of typhus fever."

They reported that two families consisting of 11 persons occupied one small room about 12 ft. square and not 8 ft. high, and recommended that the Yard should be repaired and cleansed, the slaughterhouse and pigsties removed and that "inasmuch as the fever is of a contagious character" the sick people should be placed in a house of recovery. The above reports were forwarded to the York Board of Guardians, who at their meeting of the 25th March resolved that the Committee should "look out for and hire some empty house in the Union to be

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter .IV.

used as a Fever Hospital and to provide all necessaries and attendance requisite."<sup>1</sup> The changes eventually effected in Butcher Yard<sup>2</sup> were described by Mr. Thomas, surgeon to the York Poor Law Union in his report to Chadwick's Commission two years' later, (see below) however, these were not of a lasting nature.

In the meantime the sub-committee appointed by the Poor Law Guardians to take a fever hospital was empowered on the 29th April to use the rooms adjoining the Vagrant Office in Jubbergate, "to meet the extraordinary number of Irish cases now pressing upon the Board," and directed to take immediate steps to provide for the "great increase in cases of Typhus Fever."<sup>3</sup> By the following week the further increase in the disease spurred the Guardians into advertising for a house or building in York or the neighbourhood to be used as a fever hospital "sufficient to accomodate 50 persons"; and they also requested the Corporation to allow the premises in Jubbergate then occupied by the destitute Irish, but due for demolition, to remain standing two weeks' longer.<sup>4</sup> Informed by the Guardians that if the house were pulled down they would have no place in which to house the fever-ridden immigrants, the Corporation had little alternative but to agree. Mr. Richard Thomas, appointed surgeon to the fever hospital in the following week, described the Jubbergate premises in a report to the Guardians on May 13th.

"Jubbergate is by far the most severely afflicted (with fever). Four rooms (taken by permission) have been used in that street for a few weeks past as a temporary shelter to the immense influx of Irish who have been driven by want and disease to seek some

<sup>1</sup>York Board of Guardians' Minute Book. 25 March, 1847.

<sup>2</sup>See O.S. map and further details in Chapter V.

<sup>3</sup>York Board of Guardians' Minute Book. 29 April, 1847.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. 6 May 1847.

asylum. Since that permission was granted, the scene ... baffles all attempts to describe. Parties hungering, exposed night and day to all weather, almost naked and engendering pestilence as they proceeded, were to be seen literally crawling, not able to support themselves erect, by the mingled effect of sickness and starvation. On entering they had nothing on which to rest their heads but bricks and boards and fortunate indeed was he who obtained a few shavings or a little straw to alleviate his state of misery. Nor was this the worst! Could but their domicile, miserable as it was, have been left to them alone; but, as evening drew on, whole droves of wanderers, impelled by 'self preservation' thrust themselves in amongst the rest until, to use an expression of one of the poor inmates, 'there was not space to turn in.' In these four rooms from 12 to 15 ft. square each, about 80 beings passed the night, the diseased sharing the same board with those who are well ... by far the greater portion remain very seriously afflicted and fresh cases of equal danger and importance appear every day to swell the numbers."<sup>1</sup>

The Guardians resolved to spend a sum not exceeding £600 for "the erection of a temporary building as a hospital for the poor Irish, and others now suffering from disease,"<sup>2</sup> and in the following week (May 20th) they informed the Poor Law Commissioners in London that a field had been rented in Heslington Lane and contracts entered into for the building and staffing of the hospital. Within three weeks, the workhouse master had been ordered to procure the necessary furniture, utensils, beds and bedding, and in addition to Mr. Thomas as surgeon, a Mr. Jackson and his wife Jane were engaged as Master and Matron (at 24/- per week and double rations.)<sup>3</sup>

In the following week the Courant reported that 52 persons had been installed in the new fever hospital, all except one being Irish. "About 20 persons had died of the fever, etc., ... and in Long Close Lane a family of 12 had been well nigh exterminated." (June 17)

<sup>1</sup>Courant, May 20, 1847.

<sup>2</sup>York Board of Guardians' Minute Book. 13 May 1847.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid 10 June 1847. Also York Union Letter Book, 10 May 1847.

Although it would appear from the above that the Poor Law Guardians themselves took over the empty house in Jubbergate for the use of the destitute and diseased Irish, they informed the Commissioners in London on 16th June that:

"In consequence of there being no room in the workhouse or Vagrant Office a great number of Irish forced themselves into an unoccupied house about to be pulled down in the parish of St. Peter the Little ..... were attacked with typhus fever, measles, and smallpox, etc., and were attended there by the York Medical Officer in whose district the house was situate, but were provided with food and other necessaries by a few benevolent individuals associated together for that purpose. At the time our new Fever Hospital was finished 50 individuals were removed from that house into the hospital ..."<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the truth of the matter, however, the fever hospital (in effect some hastily erected wooden sheds) soon proved inadequate, and by 3rd July the Guardians were asking the Poor Law Commissioners in London to provide them with

"the immediate loan of two tents for the purpose of having them pitched in a field, taken for the hospital, in addition to the building now erected therein, it being quite full and cases still pressing upon the Committee which has no room for them and a case of death occurred in a lane last night."<sup>2</sup>

In response to this urgent request the Poor Law Commissioners contacted the Ordnance Department in Whitehall, whose reply, at first favourable, resulted on 19th July in a refusal.

"owing to the numerous demands the Board of Ordnance cannot supply any more tents without great inconvenience to the public service."<sup>3</sup>

By August the hospital had received 249 patients, 15 of whom had

<sup>1</sup>York Union Letter Book, 16 June 1847.

<sup>2</sup>York Union Letter Book, 3 July 1847.

<sup>3</sup>Letter to Poor Law Commissioners, London, from William Somerville, Ordnance Department, Whitehall.



died and 188 of whom were discharged as cured.<sup>1</sup> Many of these, according to Thomas, spread themselves over the country to assist in the harvest. He described the patients as well behaved and orderly, and the convalescents, when not sufficiently strong to be discharged, were engaged in teasing oakum (which they did readily) to help cover the costs to the Union. In October he reported an increase in the fever due to

"its gradual extension from the destitute Irish to our own inhabitants in the various localities of Walmgate, Water Lanes, Long Close Lane, Bedern, etc., ... attributed not alone to their dirty, ill drained and worse ventilated residences, but in a greater measure to the fact of no step having been taken when sickness already exists ... entirely to eradicate the disease."<sup>2</sup>

In November the number of cases admitted was still very large and Thomas attributed this to the "non-interference of the legally authorised body within the city" - who did nothing to remove the causes of the disease.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, by the end of the year the numbers began to decline - by April there were only 18 inmates, and within three months the hospital was closed down. Presumably it was dismantled and the remains - in accordance with the terms of the original contract - returned to the suppliers; Mr. Walker having been given the option of taking back his fire grates at the reduced rate of £9. and Mr. John Bacon, the building materials for £150. Mr. Hodgsons, supplier of "necessary articles" had the option of redeeming these for £10.<sup>4</sup> Necessary articles obviously did not include nightshirts, for Thomas reported in October 1847 that

<sup>1</sup>York Board of Guardians' Minute Book. 12 August 1847.

<sup>2</sup>Courant 21 October 1847.

<sup>3</sup>York Board of Guardians' Minute Book. 4 November 1847.

<sup>4</sup>York Union Letter Book. 20 May 1847.

"in consequence of the decision of the Board not to allow a supply of shirts, etc., to the hospital, a very great proportion of the male inmates are necessarily confined to bed in a state of nudity and their convalescence much retarded. Owing to this fact the numbers discharged are not so numerous as they otherwise would be, and the wards are kept in a very undesirable state of overcrowding."<sup>1</sup>

In his Report to the General Board of Health in 1850, Richard Thomas the Union surgeon gave the following account of the events of 1847:

"I also attended the fever hospital in connection with the workhouse, previous to having our new workhouse erected, which hospital had to be built by the Guardians, in consequence of the inefficiency of the old workhouse, during the summer of 1847, when the Irish fever prevailed throughout the country.

What do you mean by the Irish fever?

Fever caused during the famine in Ireland; and the poor wretches came here, and deaths occurred before we had places in which to put them, and it became compulsory on the Guardians to erect a temporary hospital for their reception, at a cost of about £500. ...

In connection with my duties with respect to the fever hospital I took the trouble of collecting the parishes and the number of cases that were admitted into the fever hospital from the various parishes. I will favour you with the statement. I find that for the two quarters ending September and December, 1847 we had admitted into that hospital 632 cases. Of that number, the parish of St. George furnished during the first quarter 37, and 62 during the December quarter, being a total of 99 cases. The parish of St. Dennis, which is another low parish in Walmgate, containing a great number of low houses, furnished 35 in the first quarter and 61 in the second, being a total of 96.

The parish of St. Margaret, is another Walmgate parish, and in alluding to it, I may observe, it was there where the fever first showed itself. Mr. Procter had some cases of typhus, and he reported to the Board of Guardians, that the fever had broken out. The place was then called Butcher Yard, but it is now called St. Margaret's Court, where the disease originated, and it was occupied by the Irish, and the very lowest part of the community. The houses were all

<sup>1</sup>York Board of Guardians' Minute Book. 28 October 1847.

lodging houses, ill-drained, badly ventilated, and no doubt they were the means of producing the disease and causing it to extend. The parish authorities finding it was so very burdensome to the poor-rates, certain individuals in the parish have either rented or purchased the property. They have put the court into tolerable repair, and let the houses to a more respectable class of people. At the time to which I refer, it was one of the worst of parishes, for in the September quarter of 1847, 70 cases were sent from that parish to the fever hospital, but owing to the improvements I have mentioned, the second or December quarter of that year only amounted to 18, making altogether 88 cases."

He later refers to Snare's (sic) Buildings, Bedern, as the "monster nuisance" in York.<sup>1</sup>

"To see that to perfection, would require you to see it at nine o'clock at night, and then you will find the houses there crowded in the way I have described. Of course, fever is constantly prevalent there, and in two years, I have never been one day out of the place, and sometimes I have had 20 persons affected with diseases of that nature. ... There are many houses which are totally unfit for human habitations; they are occupied by the poor Irish, and they are not fit even for pigsties. No doubt you would see in Bedern low cellars underground, with a few shavings, where the people live upon a little Indian meal. They get the money upon which they live as well as they can. They beg, or they commence the trade of chopping wood, and send their children with it into the streets to sell. They are nearly naked, and of course when anything happens, the parish is their only refuge. They are always at the relieving officer's door, and, of course, a great deal of money is spent.

Is the influx of the Irish diminished? -

I don't think that it is. I think that every place where it is possible they can get a shelter in is at present occupied by them. They are so anxious to get a little shelter anywhere to keep them from the weather, that in some places the rate of charge is enormous. I refer more particularly to Smiths Buildings in Long Close Lane. There are 20 houses, I believe, there and the original rent fixed was at the rate of 1s. 6d. and in no case did it exceed 1s. 9d. per week. He let the houses to the Irish; he charged an extra rent, which got to 2s. and 2s. 6d. I believe nine of the houses have been taken off his hands, and instead

<sup>1</sup>The Inspector of Nuisances referred to them as "the modern Black Hole of Calcutta" - see Chapter X.

of charging 1s. 6d., as he did originally, he is now with 11 houses, charging 4s. a week, whereby he receives as much rent from them as he did formerly from 20 houses. I believe, positively, he could get twice that amount of rent."<sup>1</sup>

Thomas's description of the Irish inhabitants of the Bedern, just a year before the census was taken, is a further indication of how unrepresentative of the total Irish community that particular group was - even allowing for some exaggeration on his part. The question of prejudice, however, will be discussed in the following Chapter. It seems apparent from his closing remarks that the pressure on housing was as severe in the city as Foster observed it to be in the surrounding countryside - the Irish immigrants obviously aggravating (and being exploited by) the shortage.

.....

This then, was the immediate impact the large numbers of destitute and sometimes diseased Irish had on the city and its residents; and the above reports, abundant in details of filth and squalor must have been as familiar to Chadwick's Committee as they are to historians of the 19th century. The city described could have been one of many and in point of fact some of the locations differ little from Laycock's account of them in 1844, two or three years before the Irish began to arrive.

The outbreak of typhus fever amongst the Irish immigrants in 1847 may be thought of as an additional reason for the hostility which was certainly directed towards them, and it must of course have occasioned the city authorities a great deal of concern.

<sup>1</sup>James Smith, Report to the General Board of Health, London, 1850. pp.9-11.

However, it can have come as no very great surprise to them, the disease having been prevalent only a year or two before the immigrants' arrival in precisely the same location. From the warning issued by York Quaker Joseph Rowntree in September 1846 in a speech on the Formation of the Health of Towns Association, it is clear both that the Irish did not introduce the disease to the city, and that the insanitary condition of the Walmgate area meant that its recurrence was predictable, if not inevitable.

"He considered the existence of the River Foss, in its present state, was a most crying outrage on the knowledge, the patriotism and the common sense of the City of York; ... only last year, he had found that in a single parish bordering on the banks of the Foss no fewer than 17 deaths had taken place owing to typhus fever alone. But this number of deaths gave only a very faint idea of the amount of misery that was entailed upon the community by attacks of fever ... the number of those who were attacked and recovered was large compared with the number of those who died."<sup>1</sup>

Given that until the discovery in the 20th century of the transmission of typhus by lice, it was generally believed that the disease was due to infection from polluted water, it is significant that while Rowntree attributed the outbreak of 1845 to the insanitary condition of the river Foss,<sup>2</sup> the outbreak of 1847, occurring in the same neighbourhood, was seen to originate from the "uncleanly habits and filthy abodes of the Irish." Obviously, the state of destitution of the Irish immigrants and the attendant consequences such as dirt and overcrowding meant that the 1847/48 outbreak of typhus was more prolonged and severe than in previous years. However, their arrival merely aggravated conditions which had already been the

<sup>1</sup>J. S. Rowntree, (ed.) A Family Memoir of Joseph Rowntree, Birmingham, 1868. p.438.

<sup>2</sup>For further comment on the Foss, see page 136.

cause of earlier outbreaks - poverty, insanitary conditions and overcrowding always having been present in the city.

.....

Mr. Thomas, both in his capacity as surgeon to the York Poor Law Union and surgeon to the temporary fever hospital, was, of course, closely involved with the arrival of those Irish who were destitute. The Poor Law Guardians' urgent request for two tents on 3rd July 1847 (page 74 ) referred to "a case of death which occurred in a lane last night." This incident will be described in detail, since firstly it provides an interesting and rare account of an immigrant family's experience since leaving Ireland, and secondly it illustrates the contrasting attitudes and activities in response to the situation, of three men who were to play an important part in early Irish settlement in York - Mr. Thomas, Samuel Tuke and James Hack Tuke.

On 10th July the York newspapers carried reports on the inquest held on Teddy McAndrew, who had died suddenly on the roadside on the previous Saturday morning.

"The wife of the deceased, who was herself apparently much indisposed, stated that some weeks ago, she, her husband and four children came to this country from the county Sligo in Ireland, having at that time in their possession the sum of £2., the proceeds of the sale of their little property previous to their leaving their native country. Having reached Bradford they remained there until after she was confined and the whole of their money expended. The infant and three of the children died in the town of hunger and measles combined. Deceased, his wife and the remaining child afterwards proceeded to Leeds and from thence to York, where they slept in the Vagrant Office one night, and the next night in a barn ... They applied for admittance into several of the lodging houses but the inmates, thinking they had the fever, refused to take them in, saying that the priests and doctors had told them they were

not to admit them.

On the evening of Thursday 2nd July they found their way to the vicinity of the Union Hospital and here they were seen (among others) by Mr. Thomas, the surgeon to the institution. They were laid on the bank with their feet in a dry ditch. Having inquired into the circumstances, he told the deceased there was no room for him at that time in the hospital, but recommended him to go to the Relieving Officer whose duty it was to provide for them if they were destitute.

The deceased did apply to the city Relieving Officer who informed him that the case was not in his district and directed him to the rural officer. The deceased went to him but found that he was from home.

... On Friday evening Mr. Thomas found the deceased and family still on the roadside and he, along with Mr. Tuke junior, endeavoured to provide some place of shelter for them. Being unable to do so, Mr. Tuke furnished them with some straw and an additional blanket, they having had one previously, and he was determined to get the deceased into hospital the next day if possible. On Saturday morning the poor fellow expired suddenly at about 10 o'clock.

The deceased, was, in Mr. Thomas's opinion, "with the blankets and other covering better off than he would have been in many of the lodging houses, therefore his sleeping under a hedge had nothing to do with accelerating his death."

As for his having had no medical attendance:

"Mr. Thomas did not think it would have altered the case if he had ... and Mr. Thomas did not consider it any part of his duty as a Union Doctor to supply the deceased with medicine as he was not in his district."<sup>1</sup>

The Coroner regretted that Mr. Thomas had not "travelled a little out of his way," but the newspapers made no comment - giving only a straightforward factual account of the incident. The jury returned a verdict of "Died by a visitation of God."

The above account of one incident in the history of a situation rooted in mass misery and suffering, conceals, as do the figures

<sup>1</sup>Gazette and Herald, 10 July 1847.

relating to deaths in the fever hospital, the simple grief which every such death must have occasioned. Another very different account of the same affair, however (from Maria Tuke's Memoranda . . . 7th July 1847) enables us to appreciate the despair and wretchedness underlying the "uncleanly habits and filthy abodes of the destitute Irish" - so coldly and critically described by Mr. Procter and Mr. Thomas, and to penetrate beyond the statistics of mortality, Poor Relief applications and Sanitary Reports, which have tended ever since to overshadow the existence of the individuals themselves. At no time between their arrival and 1875 were the feelings of the Irish immigrants in York subjected to anything like as close a scrutiny as were their sanitary arrangements or general ways of behaviour. It is questionable, in fact, whether such feelings were acknowledged even to exist. It will be shown in the following Chapter concerning prejudice that the Irish, "brutalised" as they were thought to be, could scarcely have been allowed the finer feelings of their self-described "Saxon benefactors". Feelings such as humiliation in their nakedness (whether confined to fever hospital beds because of the meanness of the Guardians or shivering on a few wood shavings in their unfit dwellings in the Bedern - unfit, that is, for pigs) fear and despair in their poverty, bewilderment in their new and hostile surroundings, or grief in death. With few exceptions in York, apparently only the Quakers regarded them as human beings with feelings, rather than at best, a problem, and at worst, "the most beastly set of men on the face of the earth."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A description of the diseased and destitute Irish in York made by one of the Guardian's of the Poor - in public and quoted without comment in the press. See page 106.



Maria Tuke's account of the incident, however, describing the natural pain and grief of the two survivors of the sad little family not only provides a rare glimpse of the feelings of the immigrants themselves, but also illustrates the depth of sympathetic involvement of the Tuke family - contrasting so sharply with the attitude of authority in general.

"During this summer, my father's heart has been full of the wrongs and sufferings of Ireland, and his head busy devising schemes for the temporary relief of the starving people. Many have flocked to York, as to other places, to escape the horrors of famine; and to find employment and food for these was my father's unwearied care. They are dying of fever around us. One morning, a poor Irishman died of fever in a ditch. He and his wife and child had been travelling about for weeks, and at last being taken ill, had begged a lodging, but no one would take them in, so they sought shelter under a hedge. James took them a blanket and some old carpet, and William (Hargreaves) some straw for the night; but in the morning the man died. My father and James attended the inquest. The former said it was most affecting (and I remember well how much he was affected in narrating it) to see the child - a girl about ten - saying she would never leave her bonny father and holding a large clasp-knife, kissing it, and saying it was her father's knife. "A child full of sentiment", my father called her; and the poor woman said the man had been "a beautiful husband to her." My father went the Fever Hospital next day, to see the poor Irishwoman and her child. He found the woman living, but expecting to die. The child looked up at him so sweetly, he said; and he intends to take care of her if the mother dies."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Also in the Tuke Papers is a further account of the incident, written by Mrs. Georgina Tuke (James Hack Tuke's second wife) for inclusion in the biography Sir Edward Fry was preparing. Referring to her late husband, she wrote:

"The death of one poor man made a great impression on him; he left a widow and little girl, and when his things were being taken away, the child recognised some of them and burst into tears, crying 'Oh my daddy's knife, my daddy's knife.' It was from this man that James took the infection and the child's grief moved him deeply."

She was wrong about the final point however. Teddy McAndrew's death took place in early July, 1847, and James Hack Tuke caught typhus in 1848.

The temporary measures introduced by the Poor Law Guardians to deal with the outbreak of typhus amongst the Irish contained and eventually stamped out the disease, but other problems associated with their coming, remained. Arriving as they did, often without money, without employment and in many cases either diseased or already weakened from exposure and want<sup>1</sup> they were both a burden on the poor rates and a threat to law and order - though these aspects of their impact will be seen to have been exaggerated. The York Soup Kitchen, a temporary seasonal measure "for relieving the necessitous poor" had to be kept open longer than usual in the spring of 1847 because of the distress that prevailed in many parts of the city and the "immense numbers of poor applying for the soup" - leaving the organisers to feel "fully justified in continuing (its distribution, since) if the establishment were closed, they would have to open it again in a short time."<sup>2</sup>

In addition to swelling the large numbers of necessitous poor, who were obviously already a feature of York life, newly arrived Irish immigrants occasionally committed the type of petty crime indicating the sheer desperation of their situation. In April 1848, for example, two Irishmen, John McDonald and John Smith were charged with stealing bread. One of them entered a shop in Coppergate, asked for a loaf and when refused "sprang to the counter with an oath saying

<sup>1</sup>Other cases of death, though the verdict was "death by visitation of God" were acknowledged by the doctors to be the result of exposure and want. See for example Gazette 5 June 1847.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 23 January 1847.

he would have some." For this offence, both were committed to the House of Correction for two months with hard labour.<sup>1</sup> An even more severe sentence was passed on Irishmen Thomas Joyce and John Delaney. Brought before the Bench on a charge of "wandering about the streets with the intention of stealing", they were given hard labour for three months.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in January 1848 two Irishmen, stating they were hungry and destitute appeared before the bench for having, on being refused lodging at the Vagrant Office, entered it and remained there until removed by the police.<sup>3</sup>

Some were desperate enough to commit crimes merely to get into the Vagrant Office or House of Correction for food and shelter or to be given more adequate clothing. Irishman James Cornwall who had just been discharged from the House, where he had been confined twice for breaking gas lamps, was returned on a similar charge immediately on being released; and on the same day Thomas Burn was committed for 14 days for the same offence.<sup>4</sup> Dennis Donovan was guilty of the same act - with the aid of an oyster shell - for the purpose of obtaining another night's lodging at the vagrant office in December 1849,<sup>5</sup> and in the following month "a seeker after comfortable lodgings and something to eat, named James Donolly, one of Erin's unfortunate sons" was charged with having broken a gas lamp in Jubbergate.<sup>6</sup>

In the previous year "two strolling vagabonds", both Irish, were sentenced to 7 days hard labour for destroying their clothes

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 15 April, 1848.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 1 April, 1848.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 8 January 1848.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 8 December 1849.

<sup>5</sup>Gazette, 1 December 1849.

<sup>6</sup>Gazette, 19 January 1850.

at the Vagrant Office in order to be given new ones,<sup>1</sup> and in April 1849 William Clark was sentenced to 2 weeks hard labour for the same offence (committed while in the House of Correction for begging.) Another Irishman, "An incorrigible character James Smith a native of the Emerald Isle" was found on the streets by the police and taken into custody for begging. Whereupon he tore up his clothes during the night in order to get a new suit. -"In this idea however, he was mistaken for instead ... he was covered with a horse rug, and in that habiliment was taken to the Guildhall."<sup>2</sup>

Begging was of course the most common offence at this period, though less frequent cases continued throughout the period as fresh waves of immigrants arrived. In May, 1847, for example, several charges were preferred against Irish people for causing disturbances in Walmgate. Butcher Yard and other places had been "the scene of constant turmoil on Saturday nights and Sundays for the last 3 weeks past" where between 200 and 300 persons "had been assembled in a riotous manner." Mr. Meek observed that the city was overrun with Irish beggars who would not work "but begged from preference." Mr. Price, another magistrate, added that many of the Irish had money about them, and referred to the case of a friend of his who had taken pity on an Irish female who appeared to be in a state of destitution, but who, on the removal of her clothes (which had to be burned they were so dirty) was found to have nine sovereigns concealed in her flannel petticoat.<sup>3</sup> Other cases were more

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 30 December 1848.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 24 March 1849. An almost identical case was reported in the Gazette on 5 September 1868.

<sup>3</sup>Herald, 1 May 1847.

desperate. Two Irish beggars, having spent the night in the Vagrant Office, had their breakfast and then entered a cook shop where they asked for two basins of soup and bread. When asked for the money the men told the owner she might have their "bodies for pay." For this they each received 7 days hard labour.<sup>1</sup> This was the usual sentence for begging, though they were frequently discharged too - on promising to leave the city immediately - a good many Irish vagrants being got rid of in this way by the York magistrates. Another petty crime, apparently confined to Irish offenders, and indicative of their desperation, was the fairly frequent occurrence of women "milking cows without leave" for which they either received 7 days or were dismissed with a reprimand.<sup>2</sup>

The early post-Famine Irish immigrants, destitute, unskilled, and alien in speech, appearance and religion as most of them were, ragged, half-starved and diseased, obviously posed severe problems for those in authority in the city. Congregating in large disorderly numbers in the Bedern or Walmgate, begging in the streets or snatching loaves from shops out of sheer starvation, their gaunt presence must have been an alarming, if not horrifying spectacle. However, such offences were limited, both in number and largely to the early years of Irish settlement in the city; and though there are throughout the period various accounts of Irish disturbances and riotous behaviour, the Irish contribution to both crime and the pressure on Poor Law Relief was not, in fact, as great as was then represented or has been traditionally supposed.<sup>3</sup> Obviously

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 20 January 1849.

<sup>2</sup>This offence was not limited to the early years of post-famine settlement, several cases occurring in the 60's and 70's.

<sup>3</sup>These aspects of Irish life will be examined in detail in Chapters VIII and IX.

they increased the pressure on housing and employment, and by flocking to the worst and poorest parts of the city they aggravated and became identified with already appalling sanitary conditions. That the very poor, with their consequent living conditions and unsociable behaviour were very much in evidence in York both before and alongside their Irish fellow sufferers, however, tends to have been overlooked, though Laycock described the consequences of their poverty in 1844, and Rowntree in 1899. The Irish did not introduce either poverty or disorder to the city, but were on occasion, seen to be responsible for both. Contemporary descriptions and denunciations, however ill-informed, misleading or prejudiced have been clung to and quoted without query ever since. References have repeatedly been made to the disorderly and uncleanly habits of the Irish in York, to their overcrowding, squalor, pressure on the Poor Law and their overwhelming employment in agriculture (those who were not at the Relieving Officer's door) as though the Irish had a monopoly of poverty in the city and as though the 3,000 or so individuals who made up the Irish population at any one time in the post-Famine period in York, behaved, lived and worked as one. Anti-Irish prejudice was very much in evidence in York both before and during the period of post-Famine immigration, and it is this aspect of their history in the city, and the unquestioning way their resulting stereotyped image has been evoked ever since, which will be examined in the next Chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### PREJUDICE

The extent of prejudice towards a particular section of society cannot be measured statistically and the attitude of the non-Irish poor towards the Irish immigrants (having like the Irish themselves, left little or no record of their opinions) is even more difficult to establish. There are very occasional references in the newspapers to cases of Irishmen being attacked, such as the one quoted above (page 63), or as in May 1848 when Irishman Thomas Crain, walking between Fulford and Naburn in search of work was set upon by Joseph Carr a farm servant in what the magistrate described as a "brutal attack on the unoffending Irishman."<sup>1</sup> In the following year too, Irishman Luke Foley was stabbed while selling matches to the landlady of the Lamb Inn in Tanner Row. He was siezed by two Englishmen and dragged into a room where they had been drinking with other men, one of them crying "D- him, kill the Irish b-"<sup>2</sup> Occasionally also there are references to Irishmen attacking Englishmen, as for example in October 1850 when one was found lying bleeding in Walmgate "having been set upon by a gang of Irish labourers in the neighbourhood!"<sup>3</sup> Even more infrequently, fighting broke out between gangs from the two communities as in June 1848, in Church Street, Walmgate.<sup>4</sup> These, however, are isolated incidents, and

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 27 May 1848.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 4 August 1849.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 12 October 1850.

<sup>4</sup>Herald, 10 June 1848. Similarly in June, 1853 a "great muster" of Irish attacked a party of Englishmen in Walmgate, Gazette, 4 June 1853.

certainly none of the anti-Irish riots of the sort that Foster describes in Oldham in 1861 when Catholic chapels were attacked and threats made to drive the Irish from the town, occurred in York.<sup>1</sup>

There was, nevertheless, a high degree of prejudice towards the Irish community, stemming mainly from the middle-classes and apparent in the attitudes and utterances of people such as the Poor Law Guardians and magistrates, and more particularly the newspapers, both editorially and in their coverage of local news. The Irish, of course, being characterised by poverty as well as their own "inherent" disabilities, were the recipients of even more middle-class prejudice than were their non-Irish working-class counterparts - they were, as L. P. Curtis has observed in his study of anti-Irish prejudice in Victorian England, "white negroes"<sup>2</sup> having the misfortune to be possessed of an unfortunate combination of evils - poverty, Catholicism and Celtic origins. Curtis points to three elements of such prejudice in Victorian England based on racial, class and religious differences, and these are abundantly evident in York throughout the period of this study. The Irish were stereotyped not only as wild, reckless and indolent but simple and ungrateful; their real offence however, stemming from the fact that they were not

<sup>1</sup>John Foster, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution. London, 1974, p.243

<sup>2</sup>Daniel O'Connell, in fact, is reputed to have cried "Oh That Our Skins Were Black!" as he contrasted the concern of English philanthropists for distant negroes with their apparent indifference to the sufferings of Ireland. Quoted in John Ormerod Greenwood, Friends and Relief, (Vol.I.) of Quaker Encounters, p.25.



Anglo-Saxon, upper-class Protestants. His observation that "Paddies", simple figures of fun, reckless, devil-may-care, hard fighting and hard-drinking individuals, began, as the century wore on and they became politically more emancipated and organized, to assume more undesirable characteristics,<sup>1</sup> is particularly true of York where anti-Irish sentiment of a racial and religious nature fluctuated in accordance with the political situation in Ireland. In addition, the disorderly behaviour, filthy habits and squalid living conditions (in effect the poverty) of the Irish who had suddenly appeared in their midst was denounced by middle-class observers in York as elsewhere. These, however, disregarded the part their own society had played, both in the wider context of the situation in Ireland, and more particularly in the creation and continued exploitation of the slum conditions in which the Irish immigrants were forced to be housed - and in which, incidentally, many of the non-Irish poor too were forced to live.

Anti-Irish prejudice was, as has been observed, based on religious, racial and class differences, and it is interesting that all three aspects, mingled with political prejudice, were apparent in York before as well as after the city was subjected to waves of post-Famine Irish immigration. York, a Protestant stronghold, gave support to the London Hibernian Society on whose behalf public meetings were held and sermons preached in a kind of African Missionary spirit - its object being to promote scriptural education "in the darkest and most ignorant parts of Ireland."<sup>2</sup> The York Protestant Association was addressed

<sup>1</sup>L. P. Curtis, Anglo-Saxons and Celts. A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England. Bridgeport, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 2 April, 1845.

by the Rev. J. W. Charlton of the Irish Society for the Promotion of the Scriptural Education of the Native Irish through the medium of their own language. He attributed the wretched condition of the Roman Catholic peasantry in Ireland to the tyranny of the Priests, but assured his listeners, then and at the public meeting which followed, that his Society was

"effecting immense good among the Irish people by first instructing them in the art of reading, and then supplying them with bibles in the Irish language."<sup>1</sup>

Proposals to increase the grant to Maynooth College - a training centre for Catholic priests provoked outraged editorials in the Yorkshire Gazette<sup>2</sup> and public meetings were held in York and attended by about 2,000 people\* in opposition to the "unpopular and dangerous measure of Sir Robert Peel for the endowment of Popery."

By October 1846 when the full significance of the first stages of famine were at last being reluctantly admitted by the Gazette<sup>3</sup>, the newspaper's anti-Catholic sentiments were being openly professed in outbursts such as the following, which blamed Ireland's misfortunes on priestly domination:

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 15 March 1845

<sup>2</sup>See for example, Gazette, 5 April and 10 May, 1845.

<sup>3</sup>On 3 January 1846, for example, the Gazette quoted the Quarterly Review stating that in the 1822 potato famine the "cruel and oppressive Saxons raised a subscription of £300,000 for the relief of the distressed ... but that after all, the alarm turned out to be greater than the danger, and the charity larger than the necessity ... (a fact) which should make us a little careful not to over estimate similar distresses."

\*On 3 May and 14 June, 1845. See reports in Gazette.

"To such mad lengths has priestly influence dragged their infatuated slaves that even the gaunt figure of famine will not open their eyes to their own interests and to clerical cupidity and intolerance ... Let any man ask himself what is the vital evil, the great curse under which Ireland groans, his own judgement will answer, priestly domination - the growth of the Papal system, turning all things to its advantage and gaining strength by social disorganisation."<sup>1</sup>

In June the following year a more explicit claim was made by the Gazette

"The present state of affairs in the United Kingdom, and more especially in Ireland is indicative of the just wrath of God being upon us for our national sins. Famine and Pestilence have been visited upon us, and in the hour of adversity does it not become us to consider whether or not the displeasure of the Almighty may not have arisen from the departure which has been made from true Protestant principles and the disposition, also so prevalent, to encourage the idolatries of Papacy?"<sup>2</sup>

This statement was ridiculed the following week by the Gazette's most bitter opponent, the Yorkshireman, a short-lived paper of limited circulation. Though in general it prided itself on its radical views, the Yorkshireman was, as will be seen almost as bigoted and prejudiced with regard to the Irish question as was the Tory/Protestant mouthpiece for the city, the Gazette itself. In this instance, however, the extraordinary claims made by the Gazette are dismissed as not only arrogant but blasphemous, especially as in the same week the Gazette published a chemical remedy for arresting the famine by subduing the potato rot - the writer thus presumably attempting to "oppose God's will with chemistry."<sup>3</sup> The Gazette warned its readers in 1845 that "Roman Catholics were seeking to obtain supremacy in this country"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 24 October 1846.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 12 June 1847.

<sup>3</sup>Yorkshireman, 19 June 1847.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 2 January 1845.

and in September 1850, the opening of the new Roman Catholic Church in York occasioned the following editorial, under the heading "On the Progress of Romanism".

"On Wednesday last a very excellent and beautiful fabric built by the Roman Catholics was dedicated to the purpose of public worship ... The Established Church was assailed in unmeasured terms and the return of the people of England to the "true faith" was treated as an event not too far distant. The possession of York Minster by the Roman Catholics was more than hinted at; their claim to that and all other ecclesiastical buildings in the country being dealt with as a matter no longer in doubt."<sup>1</sup>

Evidence of racial and social prejudice towards the Irish is, of course, far more common, indications of it being found both in the newspapers' own comments, and in their coverage of the utterances of those in authority in the city - who left their own records of prejudice too. The religious aspect in anti-Irish sentiment however, cannot be overlooked, since though evidence of it is almost entirely limited to the pages of the Gazette, this paper had the widest circulation of any in York, and was no doubt both a reflection of and influence on its readers opinions.

The racial - and therefore permanent and unalterable - characteristics of the Irish were contrasted - both in the Gazette and the radical Yorkshireman, with the strikingly different national image these papers had formed of their own countrymen. Racial prejudice is, of course, irrational, and anti-Irish sentiment betrayed the same departures from reality, similar lapses of national memory or conscience and the same inconsistencies and contradictions as anti-Semitism was later to do. The Irishman was condemned to a stereotyped image well before his appearance in York caused offence - what is interesting is that in a

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 7 June 1850

relatively short space of time, but still before the first post-Famine victims arrived, this image changed and he acquired more undesirable traits. In November, 1845, for example, the Gazette stereotypes both:

"The Englishman is patient, forbearing, but he will not endure oppression, he is tractable only so long as he is well used... England's people will endure no oppression, no injustice ... every man is always striving up the ladder for the step above him."

The Irishman on the other hand, though not as yet regarded as violent and depraved, cuts by contrast a poor figure, he "is contented as he is - satisfied with shelter and a turf fire and potatoes and water to live on."<sup>1</sup> Both races being neatly cast into their roles, it is interesting to observe that it is somehow praiseworthy of the English to "endure no oppression, no injustice", and rather contemptible of the Irishman to be "content as he is." Yet within three years the Irish are condemned for assuming the very role so commendable in the Englishman. The priest who was advocating in Ireland in 1848:

"It is the duty of every man to prepare himself, to exert himself to strike with the bold resolve of conquering that government that is lying like a load upon the heart of the country, with the fixed determination of conquering that government or dying in the effort"

was accused of inciting "rebellion against the English rule", and denounced by the Gazette as a "surpliced ruffian" who should be apprehended.<sup>2</sup> This indicates, as does the following quotation, the additional element of political prejudice involved. Following the Repeal of the Corn Laws the Gazette declared

"Let the Conservative Party dismiss from its ranks all those who have proved traitors to its cause ... In condemning Sir Robert Peel as no longer worthy of

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 8 November 1845.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 29 April 1848.

confidence we throw overboard his conduct in 1829. He has sufficient to answer for in his more recent delinquencies. His truckling to Popery and Dissent and his endowment of Maynooth - his patronage of Irish Education schemes without religion or the Bible."<sup>1</sup>

Though this type of hostility was less in evidence in the late 50's and 60's it flared up during periods of political unrest in Ireland, as in October 1874, for example, in the Gazette's editorial on Irish Home Rule.

"The Roman Catholic population of Ireland have but rarely evinced a patriotic feeling; on the contrary they have been guilty of numerous acts of barbarity and have set law and order at defiance ... but for the annexation with England, Ireland in all probability would at this time be in abject poverty. Irishmen should therefore, thank their stars that they are the subjects of Queen Victoria."<sup>2</sup>

By late 1846 the newsreading public in York was being treated to more regular recitals regarding Irish characteristics which were hardening into permanent - racial - features. Stereotyped now as violent, lazy and dirty the Irishman was a menacing contrast to his "Saxon benefactors".

"Englishmen have the reputation throughout civilized Europe of being the most enlightened, plodding, charitable nation on the face of the earth ... Shew us a case of apparent distress and do not our purse strings as if by instinct loosen themselves."<sup>3</sup>

Yet the Irish betrayed a lamentable ingratitude. Referring to the suspension of public works in Ireland the Gazette comments:

"The Irish people are literally Irish in everything they do. Every act of their lives denotes their peculiarity."

It was this characteristic "difference" in the Irish race which had led to the suspension of the works:

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 27 June 1846.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 24 October 1874

<sup>3</sup>Yorkshireman, 7 November 1846

"in consequence of the infatuated and wicked conduct of the peasantry, who have obstructed the operation of those means of employment intended for their relief, and by a system of insubordination and outrage have endangered the lives of the officers and overseers appointed to superintend the works ... Where is the people except in Ireland, who would by brutal force and violence assail the very parties who are engaged in laudable efforts to save a nation from famine and death?"<sup>1</sup>

Racial and religious prejudice are combined in the Gazette's editorial of 10th July 1847 regarding the "fearful visitations to which Ireland has been subjected during the past two years".

"Famine and pestilence have, we trust taught wisdom and English benevolence conquered in some degree the prejudices of the Celt. The Irish people are not so stolid as not to perceive that the acts of the Saxons give the lie to the ravings of the lay and clerical agitators, and that in the hour of need, when tens of thousands were falling victims to famine, the excitors of turbulence even if they were willing, were powerless to check its ravages until Saxon energy and Christian philanthropy stepped between the living and the dead."<sup>2</sup>

Similar references to the Irish national character - some of them contrasting it with that of "the most civilized empire in the world" occur quite frequently, the following, however, being sufficient to indicate the misgivings with which citizens of York - if they believed what they read in their newspapers - must have regarded the daily arrival of hoards of ragged, half-starved Irish immigrants.

Commenting on the report of an Irish murder the Gazette asks:

"By what cause and through what process can man, the image of his Maker, be thus transformed into a Demon? Are the Irish peasants naturally so depraved, are they so low in the scale of creation as to be intuitively demons in human shape, having neither sympathy nor affinity with their fellow men? Such a conclusion would not only be unjust but absurd. How is it then, we ask again, that their crimes have earned for them a supremacy in the deeds of blood over the Thugs of India?"

Regular readers might have guessed that the answer to the question lay

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 7 November 1846.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 10 July 1847.

"the teaching of the Irish priesthood and Repeal Agitators who have destroyed every right feeling and inculcated a deadly revenge amongst a peasantry who, with proper education might be rendered tractable, obedient, honourable and useful members of society."<sup>1</sup>

The Yorkshireman too was conscious of an unfortunate "difference" in the Irish race. In April, 1847 it stated:

"The Irish are a strange and unfathomable people. Their ways are not such as other men - their motives are often past finding out. They will neither profit by exhortation nor learn wisdom by the science which teaches by example."<sup>2</sup>

Their ingratitude too is once more the subject for condemnation.

In its editorial entitled "The Irish Begging Box Again" in October 1848 the Yorkshireman comments:

"Our readers will recollect that during the last two years this country, while labouring under the deepest depression of trade and a declining revenue, came magnanimously forward ... to arrest ... the famine and plague in its sister country. Englishmen did this in the front of the deepest ingratitude. They gave upwards of 3 million in money, the recipients all the while thanking them with a gibe and menacingly shouldering a pike. England, however, laughed this mockery of rebellion to scorn and continued to pour golden gifts into the lap of the disaffected and miserable people. We had thought that there would be an end to this; and that Ireland newly emerged from the rebel field would scarcely have the hardihood to again appeal to the extraordinary charity and benevolence of the English Parliament. Irish beggary is importunate and its objurations and solicitations stereotyped. The inhabitants will take no refusal. Shut the door in their faces and ten to one a musket is levelled at the door. Remind them of the hundreds of thousands already distributed amongst them, and they will reply that they got no more than their own... The cry hitherto has been "Ireland for the Irish". Let it be so. England will be the gainer by the bargain."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 5 February, 1848.

<sup>2</sup>Yorkshireman, 17 April, 1847

<sup>3</sup>Yorkshireman, 21 October, 1848.



The above quotations illustrate the extent and type of prejudice to be found in two York newspapers, largely before the influx of the post-Famine Irish immigrants. Their influence, of course, cannot be measured and would in any case have been confined to the comparatively limited newspaper readership of the well-to-do classes in York. However, if such attitudes were not merely reflections of the public's views but also instrumental in forming them, then their influence could have been considerable within that very group which was to be responsible not only for administering to and governing the Irish, but, in the shape of Reports, Minutes, letters, etc., leaving a legacy of descriptions and impressions concerning them, which has been accepted without question ever since. That those in authority - magistrates, Poor Law Guardians, sanitary officials and governors of the Ragged Schools, etc., were prejudiced against the Irish, will be illustrated throughout this study. The extent to which this prejudice led them to make stereotyped, misleading judgements about them however, and even worse, official reports containing evidence apparently (but not in reality) based on hard facts, will be examined on the basis of statistical analysis in the chapters on location, occupation, crime, prostitution and the applications for Poor Relief.

With the arrival of the Irish immigrants to York, prejudice of a more personal kind naturally emerged. Evidence of this is to be found in the weekly police reports, both in the magistrates' attitudes to Irish offenders, and in the newspapers' own treatment of such cases - where straight-forward reporting is garnished with a faint covering of unpleasant witticism. Irish offenders are often "ugly", "miserable looking", "incorrigible" or "wretched sons of the Emerald Isle", and their hard-drinking, hard-fighting image is evoked on the slightest pretext. In 1860, an Irishman, fetching the police to stop a fight for example (and incidentally being arrested himself in the confusion that followed) was referred to by the Gazette as "possessing that remarkable (in an Irishman) idiosyncrasy of character - a peaceful disposition."<sup>1</sup> The Irish were also portrayed as simple, childish figures, affording both the court and the reading public considerable amusement, as in the following illustration, from the Gazette in 1849.

Three Irish people, charged with stealing potatoes had called another Irishman as witness on their behalf, who stated that he had met one of the prisoners about ten miles from York at five o'clock and walked home with him, reaching his house in Long Close Lane at about midnight.

Lord Mayor. 'About midnight. What time is midnight?'

Witness. 'Midnight. About six o'clock.' (laughter)

Lord Mayor. 'Was it daylight?'

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 1 Dec. 1860.

Witness. 'It was daylight.'

Lord Mayor. 'Then you were ten miles off York at five o'clock and here at six. Did you fly or how did you come? (Renewed laughter) What do you call midday if six o'clock be midnight? Is it before breakfast or after?'

Witness. 'It is before breakfast.' (Renewed laughter)

Lord Mayor. 'I don't believe a word you say ... hold your tongue ... as to what you Irish say we can't pay any attention to it scarcely. ... to bring forward such a man as witness who has just been before us is a burlesque of evidence and we English people can't do with such things.'<sup>1</sup>

2

The reporting of other incidents produces the same effect and the reader is presented with the image of a simple, work-shy, shuffling race incapable of understanding or taking part in English society and system of justice, but eager to accept her charity. The attitude of the magistrates is interesting too. At first dryly amused and tolerant of such pitiful confusion - even adding to it by egging on the humble, bewildered Irish stooge. Then quickly roused to anger and condemnation of the whole race.

Irish people were also obviously regarded as being slightly less than human. In the case of some meat siezed by the market superintendent as unfit for human consumption, for example, a witness, Mr. Thackery, butcher, was called upon to give evidence as to its state of corruption. He declared:

"Some part of the meat was not fit for human food; other parts perhaps an Irishman would eat - (laughter) - and it might not do him any harm. Taking one part with another the meat was in a very unfit state for any market or any person to eat. He would not eat it."<sup>2</sup>

Further evidence of prejudice is apparent in the Reports, references to and descriptions of the Irish appearing throughout

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 7 April, 1849. <sup>2</sup>see, for example, Gazette, 24 Nov.1849

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 5 October, 1850.

this study, some of which have already been quoted in the previous chapter, others contained in the chapters on Poor Relief and the Location of the Irish. Of the newspapers, only the Herald was generally sympathetic towards the state of the peasantry in Ireland - those "hapless victims of want" and encouraged proposals for the relief of that country's "warm hearted though now distressed people."<sup>1</sup> However, even that newspaper attributed to them "national peculiarities" (page 60) and they were regarded by it as being slightly inferior creatures to their "Saxon" neighbours. In June 1847, for example, the Herald declared:

"Nothing can be more fallacious than the assertion that Ireland is over-populated, or more ridiculous than the belief that existing evils would be remedied by an extended system of emigration. In a just and proper mode of government, and with the honest and zealous discharge of the general duties of the landowners, useful and beneficial employment might be found for every able bodied labour throughout the land, whilst emigration would neither benefit the country nor the paupers who would be removed from its shores, especially if they had<sup>2</sup> to compete with superior and more industrious labourers."

There were, however, notable exceptions in York, individuals without the usual social, political, racial or religious prejudice, and who possessed an almost unique understanding of the Irish problem. Individuals better informed and with more first-

<sup>1</sup>Herald, 26. December 1846. See also December 12 and 19. On the death of its senior editor and proprietor William Hargrove (1788-1862) author of the 3 vol. History of York, the Herald stated "Mr. Hargrove was a strong admirer of the late Daniel O'Connell and deeply sympathised with the Irish people." 6 September 1862. The Gazette on the other hand on the death of O'Connell stated on 29 May 1847, "His life has been devoted to the service of Rome and enriching his family. For the attainment of these objects he has entailed on his own country the most miserable conditions."

<sup>2</sup>Herald, 12 June 1847.

hand experience as to the state of Ireland certainly than anyone in York - probably in England; and who were also intimately involved with the arrival of the Irish in the city and the problems of their settlement. Yet the evidence of these undoubted authorities on the subject, whose statements concerning the conditions and behaviour of most of the Irish in York are almost without exception completely contradictory to that of the above, has been ignored by subsequent historians; who, by quoting only from sources which can be shown to be both biased and inaccurate have furthered the myth of the extreme anti-social behaviour of the Irish community in the city.

The individuals referred to were the leading Quakers in York and in particular the Tuke family who had displayed an active and sympathetic interest in the Irish problem for many years. In 1828 for example in a speech delivered to the Religious Tract Society, Samuel Tuke<sup>1</sup> stated that Irish backwardness was due:

"not to the interference of the Romish priests, but from the lethargy and miserable policy of Protestant England in regard to the ancient language<sub>2</sub> of this ... warm-hearted and intelligent people."<sup>2</sup>

Three years later at a public meeting in York on behalf of the Distressed Irish he widened the area of England's responsibility for Ireland's condition:

"The state of destitution in which so many of our Irish fellow subjects were placed called upon us

<sup>1</sup>Samuel Tuke. 1784-1857. Grandson of William Tuke, founder of the York Retreat. Was Vice-Chairman of the York Board of Poor Law Guardians, and served on various other committees.

<sup>2</sup>Tuke Family Portraiture. Vol.II. pp.1-2. Compare this with the Rev. Charlton's declaration 17 years later, - that the wretched condition of the peasantry was due to the tyranny of the Priests. (page 92 )

as men and as Christians, to render them the most prompt and effectual aid in our power. The violent and criminal conduct of the suffering Irish had been referred to, and we had been rightly reminded that any misconduct on their part could not form an apology for our withholding our aid on such an occasion as the present. He would, however, suggest, whether the crimes as well as the distress of Ireland during the seven centuries which she had been annexed to England, would not lead us to conclude that her vices and her sorrows laid at our door, and that they called for from us, as an act of justice, the most earnest efforts for the amelioration and advancement of her condition."<sup>1</sup>

From his unpublished diary and correspondence it would appear that the York Quakers had strong links with Ireland and had for some years before 1845 been engaged in Relief work there. In the light of these sympathies it is not surprising that he and other members of the Tuke family were prominent in their efforts to help the Irish during the Great Famine not only in York, but in Ireland itself in an attempt to familiarize themselves with the root causes of Irish distress as well as to relieve it. In 1846 Samuel Tuke, together with Joseph Rowntree, another prominent York Quaker, paid a visit to Ireland and wrote to his daughter Maria:

"The magnitude of the evils of Ireland deters many from attempting anything for their removal, and there is evidently a degree of callousness engendered by the constant sight of suffering which it seems impossible to relieve."<sup>2</sup>

He dismissed, however, popular reasons then current for the cause of the distress, such as overpopulation, the Celtic origin, innate idleness, the Roman Catholic religion, etc., but instead declared that

"however mysterious the immediate cause of the aggravated distress - the failure of the potato

<sup>1</sup>Tuke Family Portraiture. Vol.2. pp.46-7

<sup>2</sup>Tuke Family Portraiture. Vol.2. p.284

crop - might be, the real cause of the chronic misery of the people must be traced to the unhealthy and false condition of the land-holding system of Ireland, and to the nominal ownership of land, which the then existing laws upheld."<sup>1</sup>

In sharp contrast to what we have already seen of the opinions of those in authority in York, which have become part of the mythology surrounding Irish immigration, Samuel Tuke upheld his enlightened but unorthodox views publicly as well as privately. Addressing a meeting of Friends at Devonshire House in June, 1847,

"He entered into an animated apology for the Irish people, against the wholesale condemnation in which they are commonly involved. They are stigmatized, he said, as lazy, reckless, and regardless of human life. But the charge of laziness is disproved by the multitudes of those who come over to reap our harvests, and those who labour at the heaviest employments. They have been most thankful for work; they have undertaken it even in a state of destitution and depression of animal powers which might well have excused them from the task ... It is said the Irish are reckless, yet a most interesting evidence of their thrift, their patriotism and their natural affection is to be seen in the remittances of the poor emigrants in America to their relations at home."<sup>2</sup>

He was equally active on behalf of the newly arrived Irish in his own town, many of whom were stricken with typhus fever but unable to be cared for either at the Vagrant Office or Workhouse. It will be remembered that in May, 1847, the York Guardians informed the Poor Law Commissioners in London that a field had been rented for the erection of a temporary fever hospital (see page 74 ). The entry in the Guardians' Minute Book of 20th May merely records that the Fever Hospital Committee had taken of Mr. Robert Penty a field in Heslington Lane for one year for the sum of £31. 10. 0.<sup>3</sup> What did not emerge was the fact that the field belonged to Samuel Tuke

<sup>1</sup>Tuke Family Portraiture. Vol.II. P.306.

<sup>2</sup>The Friend. June 1847. Quoted in Tuke Family Portraiture.  
Vol.II. p.315-17.

<sup>3</sup>York Board of Guardians' Minute Book. 20 May, 1847.

he, apparently, being the only person in York willing to provide land for the purpose. The full story behind this action is to be found in the Courant's report of the previous week's Poor Law Guardians' meeting,<sup>1</sup> and in the unpublished family papers.

Following a report that in Mr. Tuke's district there were 31 cases of fever and others of smallpox, measles, and whooping cough, all amongst the Irish, Mr. Wilson, Guardian of St. Cuthbert parish declared that "they were making a great mountain out of a small molehill.(laughter)", while Mr. Nash, another Guardian, wanted the Irish to be carried away in river vessels. Mr. Pritchett, Guardian, then suggested the building of a temporary fever hospital, with which Mr. Tuke agreed, saying that:

"The greater part of the Irish who were now afflicted had no more thought of quitting their houses twelve or six months ago than any member of that Board, and were persons who were in the habit of supporting themselves by industrious and humble labour in their respective districts."

Mr. Wilson, unconvinced, however, declared that

"The statements were violently exaggerated and must have been received from Major Longbow ... the persons alluded to were the most beastly set of men on the face of the earth." (my underlining)

At this, another Guardian, a Mr. Hardman,

"expressed his disgust at what he had just heard relative to the poor Irish upon whom mockery and insult, in addition to their sufferings, had been heaped in the presence of the Guardians of the Poor, and that insult too, diffused ... through the medium of the public press."<sup>1</sup>

The motion to erect a temporary fever hospital was, in fact, carried; however, there then arose the further difficulty of the provision of a site, so great was the dread of infection and the reluctance

<sup>1</sup>Courant, 20 May 1847

The full report of the meeting has already been quoted on pages 72-3.



to make the necessary land available.

"This was met by Samuel Tuke's offering to allow a portion of a field, not far from his own house, for the purpose - his tenant (Mr. Penty) who sold milk, coming to the conclusion that 'the coos would not tak' fever!' Here many a poor sufferer died. So fatal was the fever that few except the medical men and the nurses dared to enter its walls. Samuel Tuke's visits were frequent, and we can never forget the deep emotion which some of these scenes of misery caused him."<sup>1</sup>

His concern for the welfare of the Irish committed to the fever hospital was apparent also in other conflicts with his fellow Guardians. For example when one of them objected to the inclusion of cocoa and chocolate in the diet of the sick Irish on the grounds that these were unnecessary luxuries

"such as the Irish were not accustomed to at home, it being their habit to live on the coarsest kind of food,"

Samuel Tuke reminded the Committee that

"The food a great number of the people of Ireland obtain, such as turnip tops, etc., was not what they lived, but what they died upon."<sup>2</sup>

His reaction to the death of one Irish vagrant, Teddy McAndrews, has already been described (page 83) and his exertions on behalf of others during 1847 and 1848 brought on the ill health from which he suffered until his death in 1857. His daughter noted in her diary in 1848,

"During the whole of this year my father was becoming less and less able to bear the constant mental exertion to which he had been so long subjected. How often I remember him coming home from the penitentiary, hospital, or new workhouse committee, every nerve, like the chords of an overstrung harp, ready to break with the tension too unflinchingly sustained."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Tuke Family Portraiture. Vol.II. pp.318-20.

<sup>3</sup>Maria Tuke's Memoranda. 1848. Quoted in Tuke Family Portraiture, Vol.II.p.401.

<sup>2</sup>Courant, 13 January 1848.

Early in the following year he suffered a stroke which left him partly paralysed until his death.

In 1846-47 young William E. Forster<sup>1</sup> visited the West of Ireland on behalf of the Friends' Relief Committee, in company with Samuel Tuke's second son, James Hack Tuke<sup>2</sup> and other Quakers. During this journey and more especially in writing his subsequent Reports and Pamphlets, James Hack Tuke had the great advantage of his father's support, criticism and wide knowledge, which was also extended to Jonathan Pim, another of the party, as in the following letter dated 26th August, 1847. It is quoted in full, firstly because of its reference to the Irish community in York, which directly contradicts the views held by those in authority in the city and also because of its perceptive relationship of crime to poverty - discussed in Chapter IX.

<sup>1</sup>William E. Forster. 1818-1886. Woollen manufacturer of Burley, near Bradford. A Quaker until his marriage in 1850. Elected M.P. for Leeds in 1861. In 1870 promoted his Education Bill. 1880 Cabinet Minister under Gladstone. Served as Chief Secretary for Ireland. - From the Quaker Dictionary of Biography (not yet in print.)

It was he, in fact, who as a young man on holiday in Ireland in September 1846, first alerted the Society of Friends to the extent of distress in that country. Both he and his father William Forster who joined him in November 1846, were instrumental in setting up and distributing Quaker Relief. Both Forsters, with James Hack Tuke, were immediate and untiring in their response to the disaster, and were the leaders of the campaign for its relief, both in England and in Ireland.

<sup>2</sup>James Hack Tuke. A Memoir. (ed.) Sir Edward Fry. London 1899. indicates Tuke's attitude to the elder Forster.

"I have often thought in looking back how strange and remarkable it was that, among the many experienced men of his time in England, one man alone, and he in advanced years and in poor health, should have so strongly felt the burden of this misery as to be impelled to devote many months of that terrible season to the task of organising local relief committees for the relief of the starving multitudes in the West of Ireland."

"I have been interested in looking at the Parliamentary Reports of the extent of crime in Ireland and England. It is not fair to compare the proportion of offences per cent of the population in the two countries, without considering the much larger proportion of persons in Ireland who may be said to be destitute or very poor. We know that committments for offences chiefly takes place in both countries among the poor, and that in times of distress the proportion of criminal committments to the population in England increases very greatly. These circumstances considered, the comparison between the disposition to crime in Ireland and in England, is not so very much in favour of the latter as we have been wont to think. I have seen a great deal lately of your Connaught men, from County Mayo in particular, and I really believe they are in as good a moral state as the class of labourers in this country. I have not met with a man who was not anxious to work, and their strong social attachments interest me much. I was afraid we should have had children left in our fever hospital, deserted by their parents; but no such thing has occurred. Drunkenness is very rare amongst them, and I found one morning at our Post Office that seventeen of them had been there from 9 to 1 o'clock and had obtained Post Office Orders for from 5/- to 50/- to send to their poor friends in Ireland. These are your reckless countrymen! I have frequently asked them what they most want in Ireland to help them, and I have received substantially, but one answer, 'Work, your honour, Work.' These are your idle men!"<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to compare the attitude of Samuel Tuke with that of Mr. Oldfield, York Post Master, who, writing to the York Poor Law Guardians three weeks' earlier had complained of

"the great nuisance caused during the week and particularly on Fridays by great numbers of Irish and other paupers, many of whom were afflicted with contagious and other diseases, lying about the door of the money order office to the great annoyance of ladies and gentlemen."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Letter from Samuel Tuke to Jonathan Pim.  
Quoted in Tuke Family Portraiture. Vol.II. pp.323-4

<sup>2</sup>Courant, 5 August 1847.

According to the Report of the Select Committee on the Irremovable Poor, P.P. 1860 (520) XVIII, Appx. 16, p.488, in one year during the Famine period the Irish in York sent £8,000 to their relatives in the West of Ireland. Quoted in J. H. Treble, op. cit. James Hack Tuke put the figure at just over £1,000 in ten months. (see over.)

Samuel Tuke's son James gave further evidence on this subject in his letter (subsequently a pamphlet) A Visit to Connaught in the Autumn of 1847, addressed to the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends in Dublin. The following extract contains the reference to Irish chicory workers in the York area already quoted on page 60.

"There are still other honourable traits of character which the conduct of Irishmen in England strikingly exhibits; ... I have already said that these 'reckless' creatures are generally frugal; ... have been more than ordinarily careful in their expenditure and have transmitted every farthing which they could spare to their miserable families or friends at home. Many hundreds of these were employed in the neighbourhood of York in hoeing the chicory during the summer - in the autumn at the harvest - and now they are engaged in the gathering of the chicory. It may be safely asserted that their general conduct has been sober and inoffensive. The obtaining of means for their own and their families' present and future support has evidently been the great object of their pursuit. The records of the Post Office afford the strongest and most gratifying confirmation of this statement. Through the liberality of the Post Master I have been able to ascertain correctly the sums transmitted to Ireland by these poor Irish labourers, who are chiefly from Connaught. During the ten months of the present year, (1847) these sums, varying from 2/6d. to £5, amount in the whole to no less a sum than £1,042.10.2. and have been obtained in 866 orders.<sup>1</sup> These are the people who are so often said to be reckless of property, and who require to be taught by our English labourers the principle and habit of self-reliance."<sup>2</sup>

During his visit to Ireland with Forster in 1846-47 James Hack Tuke wrote his first pamphlet, Distress in Ireland and following his return to York, spoke at a public meeting in the city in

<sup>1</sup>This total did not include business accounts or sums remitted by charitable organisations or individuals.

<sup>2</sup>James Hack Tuke, A Visit to Connaught in the Autumn of 1847.

January 1847, giving an eye-witness account of the disaster and calling for:

"every selfish and party feeling to be merged in an anxious desire to arrest the spirit of famine and pestilence amongst those, who ought to be considered as our fellow countrymen."<sup>1</sup>

Returning to Ireland in the following autumn, he spent a further harrowing two months in Mayo, Sligo, Roscommon, Donegal and Galway, during which he wrote his letter A Visit to Connaught in the Autumn of 1847, already quoted above. His purpose was to investigate the distress and the condition of the people and to distribute Quaker Funds. He returned again in the winter of 1848 spending some weeks studying the effects of the famine and making further arrangements for the continued distribution of funds for its relief.

Like his father, James Hack Tuke suffered as a result of his efforts on behalf of the Irish - contracting typhus fever in 1848 from which he never fully recovered.

"The dreadful fever which James contracted in York in 1848 whilst attending to the wants and comfort of some poor Irish people for whom his father had put up sheds in one of his fields near the house, well nigh cost him his life, and but for the devoted care and nursing of the young wife to whom he had been only a few months married, he would have had small chance of recovery. He was for months invalided ... indeed he used to say 'I caught the Irish fever in 1848 and have had it with more or less severity ever since.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Herald, 23 January 1847.

<sup>2</sup>From Notes by Mrs. Georgina Tuke (James Hack Tuke's second wife) for inclusion in the biography of her husband at that time being prepared by Sir Edward Fry. (1899) Tuke Family Papers, in the possession of Mr. E. C. W. Tuke, of Honiton.

It is clear that there was a strong link between the Quakers and relief work in Ireland before, as well as during the Great Famine, the Society of Friends' Library in London containing evidence of this dating from the 1820's and 1830's. By 1846, York Quakers, particularly the Tukes, were prominent among those most active - and none were more active than the Quakers. Following a meeting in London in November 1846, for example, the Circular to the Society of Friends in England which called for liberal subscriptions for relief in Ireland contained among six others, the signature of Samuel Tuke.<sup>1</sup> In the following March the printed list of the subscriptions accordingly raised by Friends and Others, shows that York's response was greater than all other towns in the country with the predictable exceptions of Bristol, Liverpool, Plaistow and Darlington.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the Friends' pamphlet dated January 1847, containing William E. Forster's appeal for clothing for the half-naked Irish population requested contributions to be addressed either to Joseph Crossfield<sup>3</sup> of Liverpool, or to James Hack Tuke, of York.<sup>4</sup>

The probability of there being a connection between the relief work and distribution of Friends' funds carried out by James Hack Tuke, in the West of Ireland (particularly Connaught) and the subsequent arrival of immigrants to York from that Province cannot be ignored. County of birth was unfortunately not recorded for the majority of Irish-born persons in York in the 1851 census (or for those of 1861 and 1871) however of the 780 for

<sup>1</sup>Circular to the Society of Friends in England, 9 November, 1846. Society of Friends' Library, London.

<sup>2</sup>Printed list of subscriptions for the Relief of Distress in Ireland. 17 March 1847. Friends' Library, London.

<sup>3</sup>Another prominent Quaker who was one of Forster's party on the visit to Ireland in 1846-47;

<sup>4</sup>A Circular entitled, Clothing for the Destitute Irish. York, 4 January 1847. Friends' Library, London.

whom this information is recorded, 69.0% originated from Mayo, Sligo, Roscommon or Galway<sup>1</sup> - the very counties visited by James Hack Tuke in 1846, 47 and 48. Obviously since these were amongst the worst hit counties in Ireland, refugees from the West could be expected to be found in almost any Irish immigrant community; but not perhaps in the disproportionately large numbers in which they were found in York. Bearing in mind the contrast between English behaviour in general towards the Irish during the Famine, and that displayed in both humane and practical terms by Tuke and other Quakers, it would hardly be surprising if, once uprooted, many made for York as a possible haven. Daniel O'Connell's charge that English philanthropists were much more sympathetic and generous towards far away negroes than sufferers in Ireland is not without foundation, but cannot be laid against the leaders of the Quaker campaign for Irish Relief, such as the Forsters and James Hack Tuke. John Ormerod Greenwood in Friends and Relief discusses James Hack Tuke's continuing role in Irish affairs, and illustrates the love of the Irish people for him.

"Tuke delighted to serve Forster and everyone loved to serve Tuke.....'Come to Erris again,' wrote one of his Irish hosts, 'Rivers will be netted for you, mountains will be poached in your honour, poteen will be publicly made for your especial delectation; and God help the unlucky landlord, policeman or gauger that will dare to interfere.'

'Goodbye gentlemen', said an armed English landlord as he watched Tuke's party move off, 'You're the only people here who can travel without fear of being shot.'

'Every time I took my eye off the horses, 'his driver told a groom, 'I seen Misther Tuke leppin' along the road, and leppin' over walls, and leppin'

<sup>1</sup>The precise percentages are: Mayo 40.8%, Sligo 11.5%  
Roscommon 9.1% and Galway 7.4%.

up and down off the car."<sup>1</sup>

I was informed by James Hack Tuke's great nephew, Mr. Anthony Tuke that:

"My late wife and I went to stay at Carma (North West of Galway in Connemara) in the 1930's, and when we arrived at Mongan's Hotel there the proprietor asked whether by any chance I was related to the "great" Mr. Tuke, as he called him. When I claimed that honour he fell on our necks, and told us that when he was a small boy his father lifted him on his shoulder so that he could see Mr. Tuke pass by in his carriage. He told us with great emphasis that the Quakers were the only people who gave out their relief without any strings, as we should say today".<sup>2</sup>

The evidence above may account, to some extent, for the surprisingly large number of Irish immigrants to a city which, on the whole, did not offer an obvious source of employment. Even in this respect, however, they were helped by the Tuke family, for as Maria Tuke wrote in her diary in 1847, to find work and food for these starving people was her father's unwearied care.

.....

The evidence in this chapter suggests that there was anti-Irish prejudice in York before as well as after post-Famine immigration, and that this affected behaviour towards and descriptions and official reports made concerning the Irish, their effect on the city, their general character and their way of life. Their living conditions were condemned without regard to the poverty which caused them, and rarely were the owners of the slum properties in which they existed seen to share in the responsibility. The fact that appalling sanitary conditions

<sup>1</sup>John Ormerod Greenwood. Friends & Relief p.25  
Vol.I. Quaker Encounters.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from Mr. Anthony Tuke. Andover, 3 February 1975.



existed in certain areas of York before the arrival of the Irish immigrants was largely ignored, and the uncleanly habits of the Irish contrasted, even by Smith in 1850, with those of the native inhabitants of York. These were, he declared in his Report on the Sanitary Condition of the city,

"a cleanly people ... it was pleasing ... to see in passing along the streets, the thoroughly clean cottage, the bright window frames, the scrupulously clean door step, stoned to whiteness with great precision, and forming a margin to the well-washed brick floor" - so different from "the unfortunate sons and daughters of Erin, whose national habits are less orderly."<sup>1</sup>

Yet earlier reports of the very areas which were subsequently to be occupied by Irish immigrants, illustrate that not only had those districts inhabited by the very poor of York traditionally been recognised as insanitary, overcrowded and unclean, but also that they had been the centres of crime, drunkenness and prostitution years before the arrival of the Irish Famine victims. The actual extent of Irish involvement in the above offences and their burden on Poor Relief for the city will be examined in subsequent chapters, but it is already clear that given the existing prejudice, contemporary judgement and evidence in this respect is both exaggerated and misleading, and should at best be used with caution. That such evidence concerning the Irish was indeed biased is illustrated not only from quotations like the one above, seeking to depict the essential difference between the two races by pointing to the pleasingly clean cottages of the native poor of York on the one hand, in contrast to the

<sup>1</sup>Smith, op. cit., p.16.

disorderly "national" - i.e. racial - habits of their Irish neighbours on the other. (The former image, incidentally is very much at odds with Laycock's sanitary report on York of 1844 and Rowntree's description of the effects of poverty in the city in 1899.) Evidence of bias is present too in the attitudes of the newspapers and the behaviour of the magistrates, Guardians of the Poor and other authorities in the city.

It is only when such behaviour and attitudes are seen in the light of the perception, humanity and sympathetic understanding of the Tuke family, however, and in sharp contrast to the evidence regarding the Irish put forward by them, that the extent of that prejudice can be fully recognised and some allowance made for its consequent misleading impressions and continuing distortion of facts.

## CHAPTER V

### LOCATION AND HOUSING

Before discussing their demographic, economic and social characteristics, the distribution and housing conditions of the Irish in the city will first be examined. Map 1, giving the approximate main areas of Irish settlement in York between 1840 and 1875 shows that the immigrants were principally concentrated in the Walmgate area, with additional smaller settlements in the Bedern, the Water Lanes and Hungate.<sup>1</sup> Though the Irish population was largely confined to these areas, however, its precise distribution fluctuated from census to census, and these changes are presented in Tables 10 to 12 and their accompanying maps. The Tables show the parochial distribution of the Irish population in York at each census. Column 2 in the Tables shows the percentage of the total Irish population in York resident in each parish and column 3 shows the Irish as a percentage of the total population of each parish.

<sup>1</sup>There were other minor concentrations of Irish in the city - e.g. in St. Mary Bishophill Junior in 1851, a parish which for a few years contained a temporary settlement of Irish Ordnance Survey workers. (See below, pages 224-5. The Barracks also contained varying numbers of Irish individuals in the period, depending on which regiments were stationed in the city. (See below page 224.)

By 1871 there was also a sizeable Irish settlement in the parish of St. Helen on the Walls, the immigrants being largely concentrated in one small court, "Gill's" Yard, off Aldwark. Here 82 Irish people were crowded into 9 of the 10 small cottages. Aldwark itself housed another 39 Irish individuals and 30 others occupied two additional yards.

Table 10

Parochial Distribution of Irish Population in York, 1851

<u>Parish</u>	<u>No. of Irish</u>	<u>% of total Irish in York</u>	<u>% of total parish population</u>
All Saints North Street	0	0	0
All Saints Pavement	25	0.9	5.9
All Saints Peaseholme	11	0.4	2.6
St. Andrew	7	0.3	1.9
St. Crux	6	0.2	0.6
St. Cuthbert	14	0.5	0.8
St. Dennis	230	8.8	15.5
St. George	493	18.8	23.5
St. Giles	29	1.1	1.5
St. Helen on the Walls	9	0.5	2.3
St. Helen Stonegate	3	0.1	0.5
Holy Trinity Goodramgate	28	1.0	5.3
Holy Trinity King's Court	13	0.5	1.8
Holy Trinity Micklegate	48	1.8	3.2
St. John del Pike	2	0.1	0.5
St. John Micklegate	11	0.4	1.2
St. Lawrence	59	2.2	4.2
St. Margaret	233	8.9	14.1
St. Martin le Grand with Davy Hall	4	0.1	0.7
St. Martin cum Gregory	14	0.5	2.3
St. Mary Bishophill Junior	226	8.6	8.0
St. Mary Bishophill Senior	46	1.8	3.7
St. Mary Castlegate	132	5.0	12.6
St. Maurice	59	2.3	2.0
St. Michael le Belfrey	36	1.4	3.2
St. Michael Spurriergate	54	2.1	9.2
Minster Yard with Bedern	374	14.3	33.8
St. Nicholas	-	-	-
St. Olave Marygate	39	1.5	5.8
St. Peter the Little	10	0.4	3.4
St. Peter le Willows	170	6.5	28.9
St. Sampson	4	0.1	0.5
St. Saviour	72	2.8	2.8
St. Wilfred with Liberty of Mint Yard	20	0.8	6.3
York Barracks	134	5.1	37.5
York Castle	3	0.1	1.7

Table 11

Parochial Distribution of Irish Population in York, 1861

<u>Parish</u>	<u>No. of Irish</u>	<u>% of total Irish in York</u>	<u>% of total parish population</u>
All Saints North Street	21	0.6	1.5
All Saints Pavement	21	0.6	5.4
All Saints Peaseholme	7	0.2	1.8
St. Andrew	9	0.3	3.2
St. Crux	20	0.6	2.2
St. Cuthbert	83	2.5	4.0
St. Dennis	401	12.3	27.4
St. George	700	21.5	31.5
St. Giles	26	0.5	1.2
St. Helen on the Walls	114	3.5	13.9
St. Helen Stonegate	19	0.6	3.5
Holy Trinity Goodramgate	21	0.6	4.8
Holy Trinity King's Court	11	0.3	1.8
Holy Trinity Micklegate	70	2.1	3.8
St. John del Pike (missing)			
St. Lawrence	88	2.7	4.6
St. John Micklegate	42	1.3	4.9
St. Margaret	463	14.2	27.2
St. Martin le Grand with Davy Hall	2	0.1	0.4
St. Martin cum Gregory	20	0.6	3.2
St. Mary Bishophill Junior	60	0.2	1.3
St. Mary Bishophill Senior	42	1.3	1.9
St. Mary Castlegate	115	3.5	11.6
St. Maurice	50	1.5	1.7
St. Michael le Belfrey	54	1.7	5.7
Minster Yard with Bedern	371	11.5	39.4
St. Nicholas	3	0.1	1.3
St. Olave Marygate	38	1.2	4.0
St. Peter the Little	3	0.1	0.7
St. Peter le Willows	164	5.1	31.2
St. Sampson	10	0.3	1.4
St. Saviour	95	2.9	3.7
St. Wilfred with Liberty of Mint Yard	13	0.4	5.0
York Barracks	69	2.1	18.1
York Castle	3	0.1	1.1
St. Michael Spurriergate	20	0.6	4.1

Table 12

Parochial Distribution of Irish Population in York, 1871

<u>Parish</u>	<u>No. of Irish</u>	<u>% of total Irish in York</u>	<u>% of total parish population</u>
All Saints North Street	28	0.8	2.1
All Saints Pavement	11	0.3	2.7
All Saints Peaseholme	2	0.1	0.5
St. Andrew	9	0.2	3.5
St. Crux	25	0.7	2.9
St. Cuthbert	82	2.4	4.1
St. Dennis	341	10.0	28.9
St. George	620	18.3	29.3
St. Giles	33	1.0	1.4
St. Helen on the Walls	151	4.5	33.3
St. Helen Stonegate	19	0.5	3.9
Holy Trinity Goodramgate	46	1.4	10.0
Holy Trinity King's Court	39	1.2	6.4
Holy Trinity Micklegate	37	1.1	2.0
St. John del Pike	30	0.9	8.6
St. John Micklegate	38	1.1	2.8
St. Lawrence	132	3.9	5.6
St. Margaret	521	15.4	29.8
St. Martin le Grand with Davy Hall	11	0.3	2.2
St. Martin cum Gregory	7	0.2	0.9
St. Mary Bishophill Junior	108	3.2	2.0
St. Mary Bishophill Senior	82	2.4	2.0
St. Mary Castlegate	109	3.2	11.1
St. Maurice	78	2.3	1.9
St. Michael le Belfrey	30	0.9	3.4
St. Michael Spurriergate	3	0.1	0.7
Minster Yard with Bedern	250	8.3	36.0
St. Nicholas	3	0.1	1.4
St. Olave Marygate	11	0.3	1.0
St. Peter the Little	11	0.3	3.4
St. Peter le Willows	188	5.6	35.4
St. Sampson	15	0.4	2.1
St. Saviour	105	3.1	4.1
St. Wilfred with Liberty of Mint Yard	3	0.1	1.5
York Barracks	148	4.4	19.9
York Castle	16	0.5	9.4
York Union Workhouse	39	1.2	8.5

The Walmgate area contained the parishes of St. Dennis, St. George, St. Margaret and St. Peter le Willows. Together these accounted for 40.1% of the Irish population in 1841, 42.7% in 1851, 53.1% in 1861 and 49.4% in 1871. The Bedern was situated in the Liberty of Minster Yard with Bedern, containing 2.9% of the Irish in 1841, 14.3% in 1851, 11.5% in 1861 and 8.3% in 1871. The Water Lanes were split between the parishes of St. Mary Castlegate and St. Michael Spurriergate. The First Water Lane (King Street) was in the latter parish and contained fewer of the immigrants than Middle and Far Water Lane (Friargate) which were situated in St. Mary Castlegate. Together the two parishes accounted for 6.5% of the Irish in the city in 1841, 7.1% in 1851, 5.2% in 1861 and 3.3% in 1871. The Hungate area contained the parishes of St. Saviour, St. Crux and All Saints Peaseholme. Most of the Irish, however, were concentrated in St. Saviourgate. Since the above districts together contained the bulk of the Irish population throughout the period, particular attention will be paid to them in this and subsequent chapters. As in Rowntree's study of poverty, in which he described them as the poorest section in the city, the adjacent areas of Walmgate and Hungate will be dealt with together in this chapter.

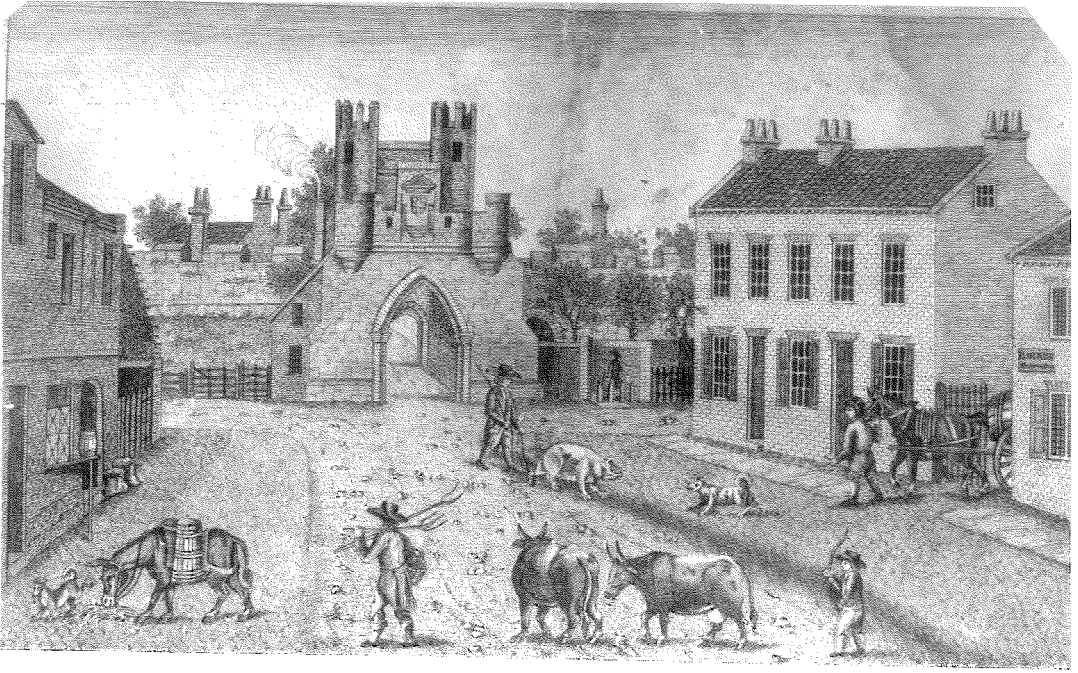
Walmgate and Hungate. (See details of 1852 Ordnance Survey Map page 139 and Maps 10, 11 and 12.)

Map I shows this district situated on the south-eastern side of the city; the Walmgate area being bounded by the river Foss and the city walls, and the Hungate section by the Foss and Peaseholme Green and St. Saviourgate, the two areas being separated by the section of the river running from the canal (Wormald's Cut) to Foss Bridge. The Walmgate area is intersected by Walmgate itself, running from

the eastern gate of the city, Walmgate Bar, to Foss Bridge, and by Fossgate, running from Foss Bridge to Pavement and St. Saviourgate. These broad thoroughfares had once contained fine Georgian houses and shops, but many of these by the middle of the nineteenth century had long since been abandoned by the middle-classes and were converted to multi-occupied tenements. Branching off Walmgate particularly were numerous courts and alleys, often situated behind the many public houses and inns in the street such as the Old Malt Shovel, the Bay Horse, the Barley Corn and the Duke of York, whose yards had been infilled with clusters of one-up one-down, usually single-back cottages. These inn yards, though containing few dwellings, were chronically overcrowded, and many of them were colonized by the Irish. Barley Corn Passage, for example, contained five houses in 1851 which were occupied by 49 Irish individuals, and Malt Shovel Yard with seven houses sheltered 36 of the immigrants. Other yards off Walmgate, though hardly more spacious, were even more congested. Britannia Yard for example in 1851 contained 16 two-roomed cottages occupied by 171 persons, 154 of them Irish;<sup>1</sup> and Clancy's Yard with 13 houses accommodated 104 individuals in 1861, 76 of whom were Irish. Off Fossgate were the long courtyards and passages often only a few feet wide, such as Straker's, Hill's and Black Horse Passages. These, stretching alongside clusters of houses, out-buildings and workshops, eventually reached Wesley Place, thus linking the Walmgate and Hungate areas. Reference to the Ordnance Survey maps of 1852 (Maps 10, 11 and 12) shows that many of the yards in the area contained slaughter-houses, pigsties, stables and small manufactories whose premises were

<sup>1</sup>Full details of this yard during the whole post-Famine period are given in the Case Study at the end of this chapter.





A VIEW OF WALMGATE BAR YORK.

(1)

Walmgate Bar, 1805. Outside the city walls.



(2)

View of Fossgate from Foss Bridge, about 1900.  
York Minster in the background.



(3)

Hill's Yard, immediately inside Walmgate Bar.  
This court contained 8 two-roomed cottages.



(4) Shaftoe's Yard, behind the Britannia Inn, near  
Foss Bridge. The yard was entered by a narrow  
covered passage and contained 12 small houses.  
Water was obtained from a shared external tap.  
(See Map 10)

indiscriminately mixed with the houses of the poor as in Butcher Yard, Walmgate, where the outbreak of typhus fever amongst the Irish first occurred in 1847. It will be remembered that the Poor Law Guardians' description of this court referred to the lodging houses, the "thickly inhabited cottages" and the slaughter house, all packed into this narrow and enclosed space. By 1852 the yard (re-named St. Margaret's Court) was additionally hemmed in by a smithy and a tannery. By the end of the period further infilling in the area had resulted in even greater congestion, a comparison between the 1852 and the 1889 Ordnance Survey maps showing the conversion into some type of building (mainly densely packed working-class accommodation) of practically every available open space.

In addition to these overcrowded and insanitary yards off the main street, the Walmgate area contained a second type of working-class housing development in the rows of tiny through or back-to-back dwellings containing two or at most four rooms. Streets such as Long Close Lane (with about 60 cottages in the late 1840's, many occupied by 25 to 30 Irish individuals)<sup>1</sup> Hope Street, Albert Street and Charles Street on the south side of Walmgate; and Navigation Road, Rosemary Place, St. Margaret's Terrace and Speculation Street to the north. Most of these properties were photographed before they were demolished, and some are examined in greater detail below.

Hungate, though smaller, was similar to the Walmgate area, its main thoroughfare, Hungate itself, however, was narrower than Walmgate and contained fewer public houses. Writing as early as 1818

<sup>1</sup>See below page 168. Like Britannia Yard, Long Close Lane, containing hundreds of Irish persons throughout the post-Famine period, is used in this chapter as a Case Study.



- (5) Hope Street looking towards George Street. Demolished 1928-1931. Most of the houses on the left were of back-to-back construction and contained only two rooms. 322 Irish persons lived in this street in 1861. (See Map 12)

12 "hovels" in Rosemary Place, off Navigation Road Walmgate. These dwellings, York's nearest equivalent to the one-roomed Irish cabin, were closed by Magistrate's Order in 1902. Note the absence of windows.

Rosemary Place was the location of the Catholic creche opened in July 1866 for children too young to attend the boys' and girls' infant school off Walmgate. "Any child however young who is able to walk may be sent to the Rosemary School...to enable the older brothers and sisters who are detained at home in charge of them to go to their own school." (see page 394, also Map 12)



(6)

Hargrove observed:

"Here are now very few superior houses; and though wealth formerly was displayed in its splendid mansions, poverty and its attendants, at present seem to prevail amongst most of the inhabitants."<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the Walmgate and Fossgate yards which were long and narrow and usually contained only a single row of cottages, the Hungate Yards such as Bradley's Buildings, Church Buildings, Drummonds Court and Foster's Yard covered a wider area and contained houses and large tenements built in a square. These often backed on to other buildings in neighbouring yards; or, as in the case of Church and Bradley's Buildings, adjoined the overworked burial ground of St. Crux - the seepage from which penetrated the walls of the houses.

Bradley's Buildings provides an example of the tenement type of property crammed into the yards off Hungate, as distinct from the cottage property in courts such as Shaftoe's and Britannia Yards off Walmgate. The map detail (map 10) merely shows a plan of the yard, giving no indication of the warren-like properties it contained. Rowntree described it in detail in 1899, and though he was not prepared to name the yard, the photograph and description of it in Poverty make its identification clear.<sup>2</sup>

"Courtyard. Entered by a passage 3 ft. wide. Yard contains in the basement, (a) the entrance to six single-roomed tenements, one of which is three stories high, three are two stories high, two are on first storey, and below these, on the ground level, are (b) six water closets. The tenement house contains no water, the inmates using a tap in the yard. The roof of the water-closets (approached by a flight of steps) constitutes a landing onto which

<sup>1</sup>W. Hargrove, History of York, York, 1818, Vol.II, p.340.

<sup>2</sup>B. S. Rowntree, Poverty; A Study of Town Life, London, 1903, p.156.

(7)

Hungate, 1911.  
Showing the two  
entrances to Bradley's  
Buildings.  
(See Map 10)



(8)

Interior courtyard of  
Bradley's Buildings,  
showing the height of  
the tenements and the  
narrow passage entrance.



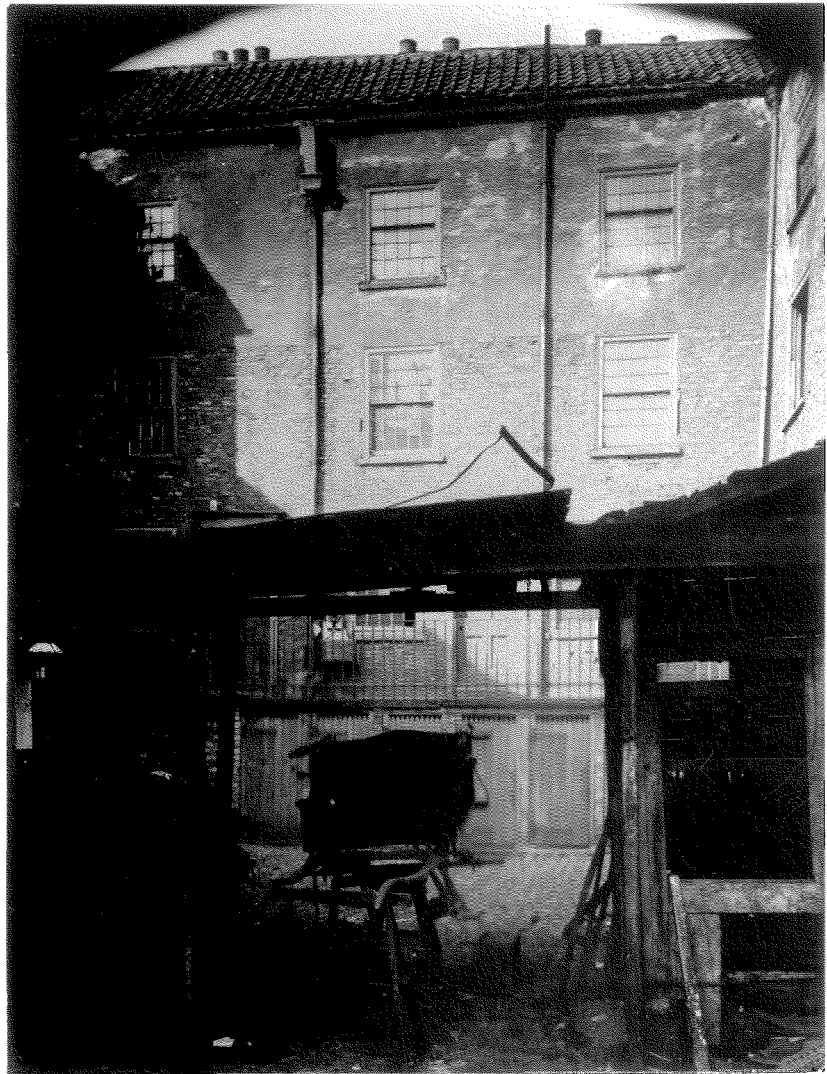
(9)

Bradley's Buildings, 1911.  
This photograph is similar  
to that in Rowntree's  
Poverty (1903) page 157.  
Note the entrances to the  
houses, situated above  
the water closets.



(10)

General view of the  
yard, 1907.  
Described by the  
Medical Officer of  
Health in that year  
as "very dark, ill-  
ventilated, dilapidated  
and grossly unfit."





open four other houses, one of them being let in one-roomed tenements. There is a water-tap on the landing but the tenents use the closets referred to in the yard below. (See illustration on next page. Note the closets under the balcony.)"<sup>1</sup>

The Medical Officer's Report on the yard in 1907 declared all the tenements to be "very dark, ill ventilated, dilapidated and grossly unfit."<sup>2</sup>

Photographs 7-10 illustrate the entrances to the yard, and the inner arrangements of the court - the height of the buildings, the density of accommodation and the landing and doors situated over the water closets. These would, of course, have been dry privy-middens during the period of this study. As with similar tenements in the Water Lanes and the Bedern, it is impossible to ascertain the precise number of dwellings in this type of property either from the Ordnance Survey and Slum Clearance maps or from the census enumerators' notebooks.

Wide Yard, another court off Hungate, contained 21 Irish persons in 1861. This, despite its name, was similar in type to the narrow yards in the Walmgate area. It was 78 ft. long and 22 ft. wide and was entered by a covered passage only a few feet in width.

Hargrove referred to it as follows:

"A large building formerly called "The Shoemakers' Hall," stands in Hungate; where the company of cordwainers held their meetings; but on the dissolution of that body, it was sold, and divided into small tenements, for the accommodation of poor families."<sup>3</sup>

By the middle of the century several small cottages had been added to

<sup>1</sup>ibid., 156.

<sup>2</sup>York Medical Officer of Health Report on Hungate Slum Clearance Area. 1907.

<sup>3</sup>Hargrove, op.cit., p.340.



(11) Wide Yard, Hungate, late 1920's. Contained ten houses and tenements, most of which were two-roomed and back-to-back, "dilapidated and unfit."  
(See Map 11)



(12)  
Nos. 6-24 Carmelite Street, off Hungate. Early 1930's. All these were through, two-roomed houses. When inspected in 1935 none contained a sink, and water for each was supplied from an external tap.  
(See Map 11)

the rear of this building and the yard also contained a store for old fish bones. By 1907 when it was originally inspected for clearance, Wide Yard contained a total of 10 houses and tenements. Twenty-eight years' later in 1935, when the yard was re-inspected for slum clearance, the following details of its meagre amenities were reported. Five of the houses contained only two rooms, and one house had only one room. Not one of them possessed a sink, but some (in contrast to many of the cottages in the yards off Walmgate as late as 1933) were provided with a tap. The water closets were shared. The average size of each of the rooms was about 12.ft. square. The 21 Irish persons living in the yard in 1861 occupied three of the houses - the Glesons, Spences and Flannerys all living in a house containing 20 people, the Smiths and William Harrison in a house occupied by 19 and the Quinns in a seven person house. These, however, as the Case Studies of Britannia Yard and Long Close Lane will show, were by no means the most overcrowded conditions under which the Irish in York existed, or the most insanitary.

Branching off Hungate were the long narrow streets of Garden Place, Haver Lane and Palmer Lane, and smaller streets off these such as Carmelite Street, Upper and Lower Wesley Place and Dundas Street. All these contained blocks of small, working-class properties, two or four-roomed, often back-to-back, and it was amongst these that the Irish were scattered. Though the area was both densely populated and heavily congested it contained no major Irish concentrations such as those occurring in Long Close Lane, Hope Street and the Walmgate yards and courts already referred to. By the end of the period only 219 Irish individuals were living in this area, whereas in the Walmgate parishes in 1871 there were 1,669 Irish persons or 49.4% of the total Irish community.



Nos. 1-21 Lower Wesley Place, off Garden Place, Hungate, early 1930's. With the exception of the four tenements on the left all the houses in the street were two-roomed and backed on to similar cottages in neighbouring yards. Throughout the period there are numerous references to prostitutes and brothels in Lower Wesley, Cross Wesley and Wesley Place, Garden Place and Palmer Lane (above). (See Map 10)

(14)

No. 15 Palmer Lane and 1-25 Dundas Street in the Hungate Area, early 1930's. Mostly two-roomed through houses. (See Map 11)

(13)



Like the Walmgate area, the Hungate district, in addition to its densely packed working-class houses, contained numerous small manufactories such as smithies, timber yards, breweries, stone masons, flour mills, the gas works, coach works, hay and straw merchants, etc. Common to both districts were the many piggeries and stables together with other offensive trading premises such as those belonging to skin and bone merchants and gut scrapers. Especially complained of, however, were the numerous slaughter-houses in the area, many of which were situated, as in Butcher Yard, next to the very houses of the poor.<sup>1</sup>

Another nuisance, in the earlier part of the period at least, was the immense dung heap situated just behind St. Margaret's Church Walmgate, which according to Laycock in 1844:

"quite pollutes the atmosphere around it. Minor similar heaps are placed (for the convenience of water carriage) in the neighbourhood of the Foss, into which the liquid contents of all are discharged."<sup>2</sup>

The Foss either passed through or bounded much of the Walmgate/

<sup>1</sup>Rowntree, writing 24 years after the end of the period of this study, by which time some improvement might well have taken place, commented on the city's slaughter-houses as follows: "There are no less than 94 private slaughter houses in York. These are too frequently situated in densely populated poor districts, often up narrow passages. After slaughtering, the blood is allowed to run into the common sewer, the grates of which are in some cases close to dwelling houses; the occupants of such houses not unnaturally complain of smells from these open grates. Not a single one of these 94 slaughter houses is built in accordance with the Local Government Board byelaws.

Not only is it unsatisfactory for the people to have these slaughter houses in such close proximity to their dwellings, but their number and situation render adequate inspection all but impossible." op. cit. p.191

<sup>2</sup>T. Laycock, Report on the State of the City of York, 1844. p.7-8.

Hungate area. Throughout the period the inhabitants of this locality had a much higher death rate than those of the rest of the city and this was primarily attributed to the unhealthy condition of the river, described by James Smith in his report on the sanitary condition of York in 1850 as:

"a great open cesspool into the stagnating waters of which the sewers of near half the city sluggishly pass ... It winds for more than a mile about the city, and penetrates the low south-east side of it, among a crowded and poor population, obstructing the drainage, so as to make it impracticable in some parts, and very imperfect in others, keeping the neighbouring land ... continually wet and deteriorating the atmosphere around with mephitic gases."<sup>1</sup>

The areas on both sides of the Foss were liable to additional hazard from flooding - the matter already described as being emptied into the river thus being deposited back into the streets of the Walmgate and Hungate districts. Not until after the end of the period covered in this study were any effective measures taken to improve the state of the river - and even after such improvements the Foss continued to flood its banks and pollute neighbouring streets, as Photographs 15-18 of Navigation Road (Walmgate) and Lower Wesley Place (Hungate) taken in 1932 and 1933 illustrate. Both these streets contained Irish occupants during the period of this study. Additional sources of nuisance in the area were the pig market next to Foss Bridge and the cattle market outside Walmgate Bar, the beasts being driven up Walmgate to the slaughter-houses serving the Shambles. Further pollution arose from the heavier industries in the district, such as the glass works and the iron foundries off Walmgate - the largest of these being the Victoria Iron Works next to Butcher Yard.

<sup>1</sup>J. Smith, Report to the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Enquiry into ... the Sanitary Condition ... of York. p.37.

Flooding in Navigation Road. (See Map 12)



(15)

Nos. 44, 46 and 48. May 23rd 1932. These houses were condemned in 1913.



(16)

Nos. 19, 35, 50 and 52. 28th February 1933.

Two views of Lower Wesley Place, showing level of flood waters in February 1933.



(17)



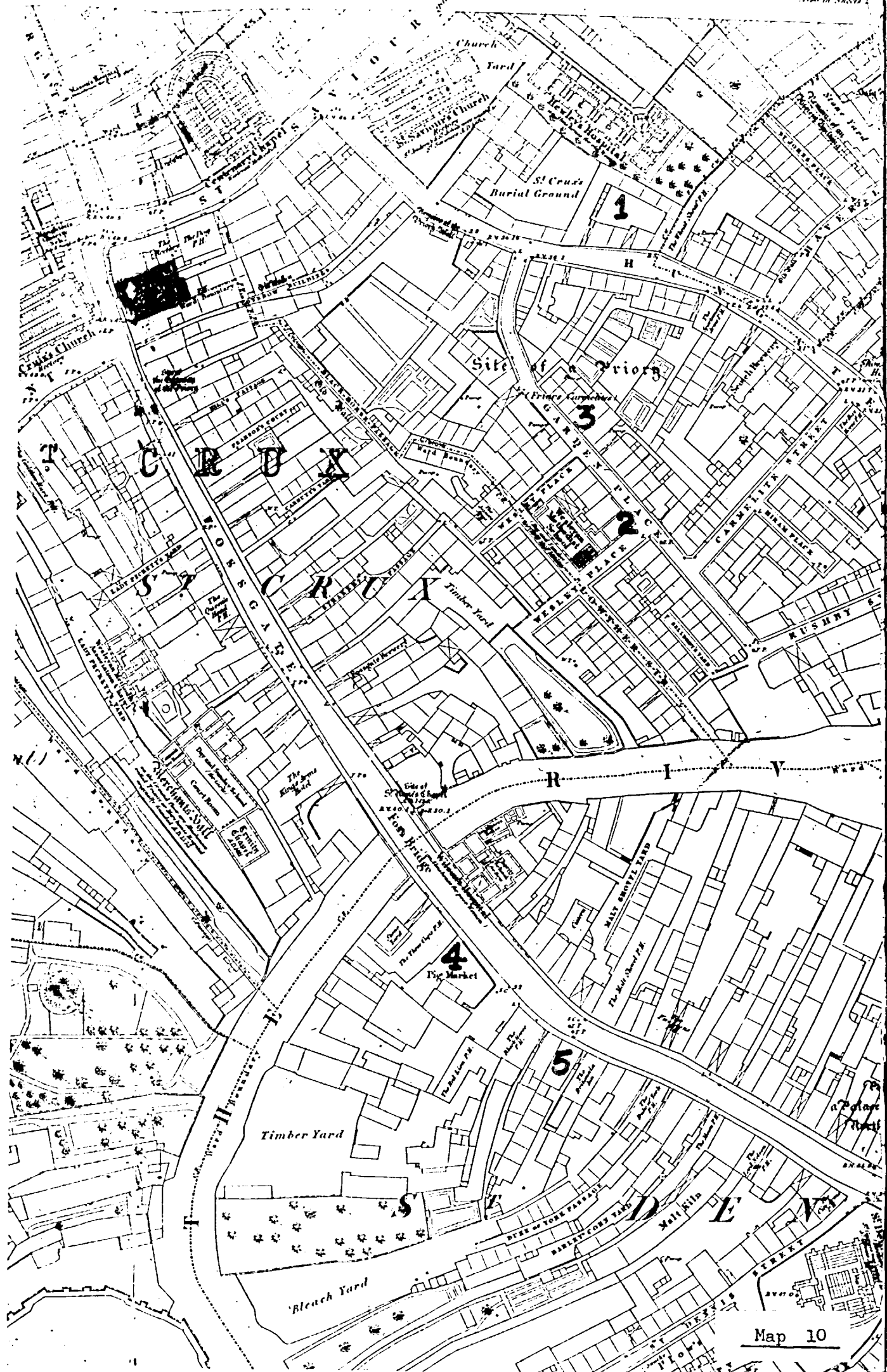
(18)

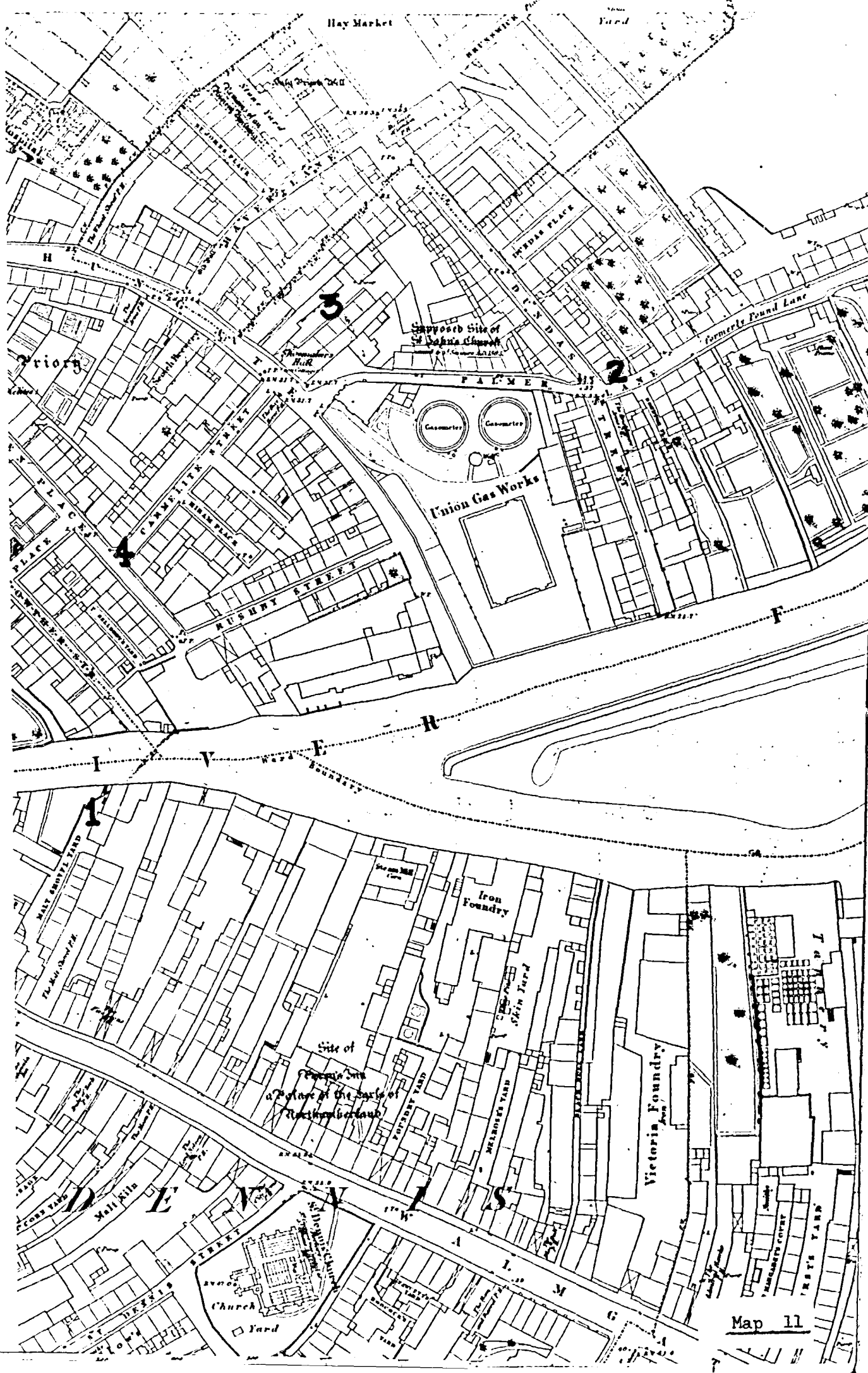


The following "six inch" Ordnance map of the Walmgate and Hungate areas was compiled by Irish surveyors (see pp. 224-6) and published in 1852. Map 10, showing the western part of the Hungate area illustrates the congestion already present in the early years of Irish settlement. The figures on the map indicate the location of Bradley's Buildings, Hungate (Fig. 1, photographs 7-10), Wesley Place (Fig. 2, photographs 14, 17 and 18) and Garden Place (Fig. 3, photograph 27). The numerous yards and public houses off Fossgate and the upper portion of Walmgate such as Shaftoe's Yard (Fig. 5, photograph 4) are already evident, as are several of the manufactories and the pig market near Foss Bridge (Fig. 4).

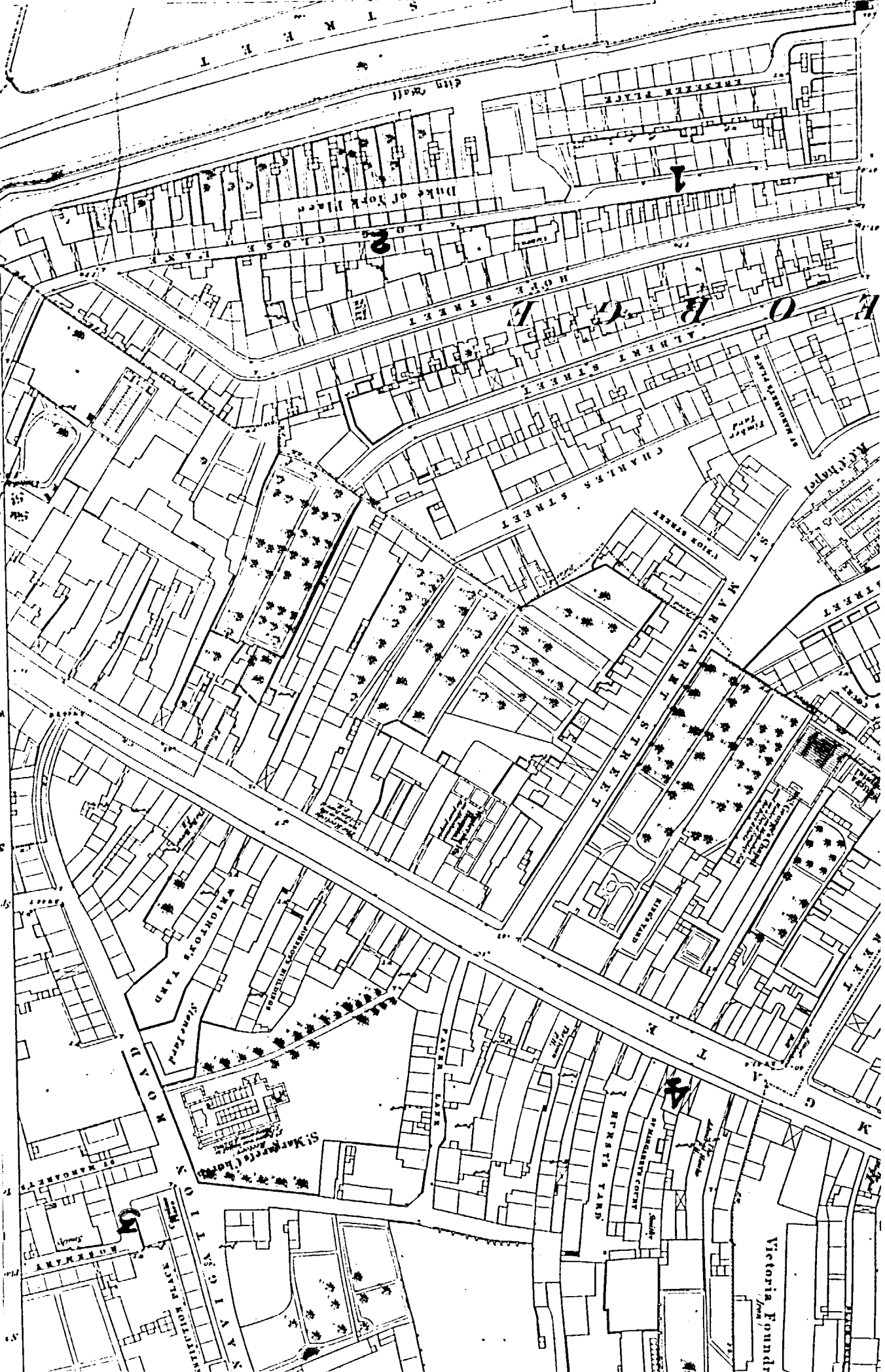
Map 11 shows the eastern portion of Hungate sloping down to the river Foss, and the central part of Walmgate. Again, both the congestion and the numerous industrial premises of the districts are clearly indicated - notably the gas works, the iron foundries and the tannery and skin yards. More of the Walmgate public houses and the narrow yards frequently occupied by the Irish can be seen, such as Malt Shovel Yard (Fig. 1) referred to on page 294. Fig. 2 shows the location of photograph 13, and Fig. 3 shows Wide Yard, Hungate (photograph 11). Fig. 4 indicates Carmelite Street, though comparison with photograph 12 shows that the street was only partially built at this time.

Map 12 details the lower part of the Walmgate area. Hope Street and Long Close Lane are clearly shown, some of the houses in Smith's Buildings, however (see pp. 166 and 168) being incorrectly marked as through dwellings (Fig. 1). Fig. 2, Long Close Lane, is the location of photograph 24; Fig. 3 the location of the Catholic creche and the "hovels" in photograph 6; and Fig. 4 indicates St. Margaret's Court - or the notorious Butcher Yard - later displaced by the Victoria Iron Works. Much of the area was subject to further infilling and congestion by the end of the period.





Map 11



ST MARGARET'S HOSPITAL  
 VICTORIA FOUNDRY  
 ST. LAWRENCE RIVER  
 DUK OF YORK PLACE  
 ALBERT STREET  
 CHARLES STREET  
 MARGARET STREET  
 ST. LAWRENCE

ST. LAWRENCE  
 DUK OF YORK PLACE  
 ALBERT STREET  
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ST. LAWRENCE  
 DUK OF YORK PLACE  
 ALBERT STREET  
 CHARLES STREET  
 MARGARET STREET  
 ST. LAWRENCE

## The Bedern.

The parish in York with the largest proportion of its total population being Irish was Minster Yard with Bedern - from 1851 onwards the post-Famine immigrants never accounting for less than one third of the total number of inhabitants. The Irish were housed almost exclusively in one street, the Bedern, and its back yard, the filthy, insanitary and overcrowded condition of which, together with a reputation for lawlessness and disorder, soon became synonymous with the immigrant community.

Laycock, describing the street in 1844 stated that the poorer classes

"principally occupy the larger houses and their outbuildings, formerly the mansions of the wealthy, and now sub-let as apartments. Houses of this kind abound in various parts of the town; very few have sewers. Beddern (or as it was formerly called Beddern College) a cluster of buildings originally occupied by ecclesiastics attached to the Cathedral, and once a fashionable quarter, is now sub-let in this manner. Of 98 families living there, 67 have only one room for all purposes, 18 two rooms, and 13 three rooms or more. One entire building is let off in single rooms. The stair-case windows are so made that they cannot open, the rooms are low and confined, the light of day almost excluded, and the walls and ground damp and undrained. The building is occupied by 16 families, two abominably filthy privies being appropriated to all, and situate, with their accompanying "ash-hole" or "bog-hole", in a little back court. As might be expected, the smell in rooms of this kind is most disgusting and oppressive. Against the back wall of a cottage there is sometimes a dung-hill, the fluid from which soaks into the house. Indeed, this circumstance is repeatedly complained of by poor people."<sup>1</sup>

This description shows clearly that the Bedern, like parts of Walmgate and Hungate, was already a notorious slum in the early part of the nineteenth century and that the large numbers of Irish who colonized the place after 1847 merely aggravated already appalling conditions. The evidence relating to the Bedern supplied by Mr. Thomas, surgeon to the York Poor Law Union has already been quoted in full in

<sup>1</sup>Laycock, op. cit., pp.8-9.

Chapter III. In his report in 1850 he noted that:

"there are many houses which are totally unfit for human habitations; they are occupied by the poor Irish and they are not fit even for pigsties."<sup>1</sup>

Given the fact that so many of the Irish were agricultural labourers - particularly those living in the Bedern - and as such were employed daily at a considerable distance from the city, it might be wondered why they were prepared to live in such conditions so inconveniently far from their place of work. Why they lived in dwellings unfit even for pigs in York, rather than in equivalent rural accommodation which would at least have had the advantage of being near their employment. From casual observations in the weekly reports of the Guildhall proceedings (some already quoted) it is clear that many Irish farm labourers worked as far afield as Tollerton, Barnby Moor, Stockton on Forest and Wheldrake, villages which would have imposed a daily tramp of up to about 20 miles. The reason given by J. L. Foster was the "want of cottage accommodation" in the villages in relation to the increasing demand for agricultural labour.<sup>2</sup> According to Rose, however, this shortage of labourers' housing in the countryside was part of a deliberate policy on the part of many rural landlords, who, it was argued, were reluctant to let their workers acquire settlement or irremovability - and consequently a claim to poor relief in the parish.<sup>3</sup>

"Labourers were thus prevented from living near the farms on which they were employed and were forced to find accommodation in 'open' villages ... or in adjacent market towns. This involved many of them having to walk

<sup>1</sup>J. Smith, op. cit., p.11.

<sup>2</sup>J. Lancelot Foster, The Poor Laws; The Evils of Settlement and Removal, York, 1864. p.5.

<sup>3</sup>The question of settlement is discussed more fully in Chapter VIII.

several miles each day to and from their work to the detriment of their health and their efficiency as workers."<sup>1</sup>

Further, the casual and seasonal nature of their employment, hired in gangs which included women as well as men, and often on a piece work basis, was hardly the kind which would encourage landlords and farmers to offer them tied accommodation.

Since many Irish agricultural labourers, therefore, were compelled to live in the city, whether or not they wished to do so, their choice of accommodation was obviously limited by their poverty. Not only were they forced to live in houses at the lowest possible rent - which inevitably meant the worst accommodation available, but their desperation led to their being exploited, and consequently to extreme overcrowding. As Mr. Thomas observed:

"They are so anxious to get a little shelter anywhere to keep them from the weather, that in some places the rate of charge is most enormous."<sup>2</sup>

As the Tables show, the extent of overcrowding in the Bedern, as in Irish areas generally, diminished after the worst years of the early 1850's and conditions in the street were consequently improved. Throughout the period it continued to be densely populated, however, and it remained an insanitary, impoverished and disturbed locality.

A report to the City Council from the Inspector of Nuisances in January 1852 described the condition of the yards and outhouses in Back Bedern as follows:

"The wide passage leading into Back Bedern is in a filthy and unwholesome condition, a privy situate in Back Bedern belonging to Mrs. Jane Jackson, is in a foul and offensive state, two privies situate in Back

<sup>1</sup>M. E. Rose, Settlement, Removal and the Poor Law, in D. Fraser (ed.), The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century, London, 1976, p.33.

<sup>2</sup>Smith, op. cit., p.11.

Bedern are in a foul and offensive condition. The average number of persons using the above places is nearly 300 of both sexes, and I am of the opinion that the present privies are insufficient for their accommodation."<sup>1</sup>

By 1864 a further inspection stated that Wide Yard, Back Bedern now contained four privies used by only 100 persons. Nevertheless, the inspector complained that the conditions in the yard were offensive and dangerous to the health of the inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> Occasional references in the Council Minute Books and newspapers indicate that pigs added to the squalor of Back Bedern, Irishman Miles Barnical, for example, being the subject of a complaint in this respect in 1851.<sup>3</sup> Further references to the Bedern occur throughout this thesis, particularly in Chapter IX with regard to crime in the street. Since most of the properties there were cleared before the beginnings of municipal slum clearance schemes, however, schedules and photographs of the tenements are not available and a detailed description of the kind used in the Walmgate Case Studies is impossible.

### The Water Lanes.

A general discussion of this area is provided in the Chapter on Prostitution, the Water Lanes being the centre of the activity in York throughout the period. Little comment, therefore, is required at this point, further than to indicate that in settling here the Irish once again occupied one of the worst (and in this case most notorious) slums in the city.

Like the Bedern, the properties in these three narrow lanes

<sup>1</sup>York Council Minute Books, 27 January 1852.

<sup>2</sup>York Council Minute Books, 11 July 1864.

<sup>3</sup>York Council Minute Books, 8 September 1851.



running from Castlegate to the river were, by the beginning of the period of this study, rookeries containing an indiscernible number of tenements and dwellings into which the once more fashionable houses had been sub-divided. Also like the Bedern, most of the area was cleared too early for detailed evidence of the kind used for the Walmgate Area to have survived in the municipal records. Describing Friargate (Far Water Lane) in 1844, Laycock observed:

"The inhabitants of this district are subject to much inconvenience and disadvantage from 1. Insufficient drainage. 2. Want of privies. 3. Having water to fetch from the river. 4. The inadequate breathing space in many of the rooms and 5. The narrow alleys or close yards in which the houses are placed."

Cross Alley, containing only three houses in which by 1851 at least 55 Irish persons were living was:

"From 2ft. 6ins. to 4ft. wide, and runs about 80ft. in length. No drain; an open channel runs along it, receiving much offensive matter, particularly the oozings from the offices on the east side as well as from the common privy which is a filthy place. There is an open receptacle for all the refuse of more than 30 inhabitants."<sup>1</sup>

He reported that he was informed by one of the owners of the properties in the area that "he thought the place pretty healthy" but that "many bairns dies of scarlet and typhus fever."

A description of the Lanes in 1875 by the vicar of St. Mary Castlegate, Rev. Lawrence, indicates that in 30 years, little improvement had taken place - in fact it was probably more overcrowded then than it had been in Laycock's time.

"There is a real want of light, air and ventilation. Some of the houses are supported by beams, others have huge cracks and holes in the walls. The lanes, courts and alleys, are close and narrow ... the drainage is

<sup>1</sup>T. Laycock, op. cit., p.41.

defective, the paving consists mostly of large cobble stones, the surface either soaks in or stands in pools, the ashpits are foul beyond description; in some cases there are gratings immediately in front of the door or beneath the windows from which ascends sewerage gas."<sup>1</sup>

Aspects of crime, prostitution and brothel-keeping in these Lanes, together with details of the inhabitants, are discussed below in Chapter X.

.....

One area which, surprisingly, the Irish failed to occupy in significant numbers was the traditionally poor and unhealthy location of Skeldergate on the opposite side of the river Ouse to the Water Lanes. Several of them, however, settled in one yard off the street - Beedham's Court, or as it was traditionally called, Hag Worm's Nest. Six Irish individuals were recorded here in 1841, 11 in 1851, 30 in 1861 and 29 in 1871. It was in this court, according to Laycock "the habitat of the pestilences of 1551 and 1604" that cholera first appeared in September 1831. Smith reported that the 1848 outbreak of the disease also originated in the same yard, and mentioned a room where:

"many Irish lodgers were crowded together, and which I perceived derived air only from a window immediately above a soil hole, whereon it was said, the ejecta of the sick were thrown."<sup>2</sup>

Two rare photographs of this court and a tenement in it (Cundall's Buildings) closed in 1903, illustrate the confined situation and

<sup>1</sup>Herald, 21 August 1875.

<sup>2</sup>Smith, op. cit., p.36.



(19)

Entrance to Beedham's Court off Skeldergate, 1903, "the habitat of the pestilences of 1551 and 1604" and the yard, known as Hagworm's Nest, where cholera first appeared in 1831 and 1838.



(20)

Cundall's Buildings, a tenement in Beedham's Court, 1903. Closed in that year by Magistrate's Order. "The gas lamp was fixed to a room situated over six trough closets flushed thrice a week."

the height of this traditionally bad slum property, which was, however, occupied principally by the non-Irish poor.

.....

This description of the location and housing of the Irish in York during the period has been largely limited to Walmgate and Hungate (including Long Close Lane and Navigation Road) the Bedern and the Water Lanes, where even in recent years the descendants of the immigrants were chiefly to be found. In 1849, as the second cholera epidemic declined, the Gazette published the following editorial on these districts of Irish settlement in the city:

"The respectable classes in this city can have no conception of the condition of certain localities. Take Bedern for instance and what do you find - filth, misery, drunkenness, disease and crime. Let those who doubt the proof of this assertion examine (if they have the courage) for themselves and they will find that no language can describe the feelings excited by observing the swarms of human beings hoarding together, without the slightest regard to the decencies of life. Let them, for a short time inhale the close and pestilential atmosphere of these abodes of filth, and contemplate if they can without horror man in his lowest state displaying a brutal unconsciousness of his degradation. We need not tell our readers that Bedern is not the only locality in which these scenes of wretchedness abound. Medical men could inform the sceptical of other localities presenting scenes equally disgusting and disgraceful; they can tell of the fetid swarms who crowd the low lodging houses of Long Close Lane, Walmgate, the Water Lanes, etc.<sup>1</sup>

... Men, women and children without regard to age or sex sleeping in one apartment much more filthy and of not much greater dimensions than some persons have for the accommodation of their pigs. One medical man has informed us of a fact of not very rare occurrence - that in a low filthy apartment five yards by four, he found

<sup>1</sup>Of the 282 Lodging houses in York in 1856, 254 were kept by Irish persons. York Council Minute Book, 10 March 1856.

thirteen human beings sleeping; and what added horror to his disgust, in the same room in the midst of these apathetic sleepers, lay the corpse of one who had died only a few hours previously of Typhus fever."<sup>1</sup>

.....

Most of York's immigrants came from the mountainous shores of Western Ireland and had lived amidst some of the most beautiful scenery in the world. Starvation, disease and eviction had forced them to leave their homeland, and their scattered rural cabins - primitive though they were - must in such magnificent surroundings have seemed preferable to the foul tenements and closely packed cottages of back-street York. Their tragedy was that here too, many of them died of starvation and disease, but now in a strange, ugly and hostile environment.<sup>2</sup> Given the well known nostalgia the Irish felt for the land they had left, it is difficult to imagine that they crowded into such appalling urban slums from choice, or that they were, in fact, "brutally unconscious" either of their "degradation" or their loss.

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 27 October 1849.

<sup>2</sup>See below and Chapter VIII for the numerous Irish applications to the Poor Law Guardians for funeral expenses or relief because of sickness. Apart from the early post-Famine deaths in the city already referred to, see page 392 for deaths from starvation and disease at the end of the period.

### Locational Case Studies.

For a fuller understanding of the changing conditions in which the Irish lived in York, detailed studies have been made of two different but typical concentrations of Irish settlement in the city. Various aspects of Irish life in these locations have been examined.

Locational Case Study No. 1.

Britannia Yard (later Alexandra Yard) Walmgate.

(c.1810)

Britannia Yard or Place in the parish of St. Peter le Willows was the second of the 33 yards on the right-hand side of Walmgate proceeding from Walmgate Bar to Foss Bridge. The first yard, Waterhouse (later Hill's Yard) was built under the city walls and contained only eight houses; the top end of Britannia Yard, therefore was in the shadow of the walls. In 1851 the yard comprised a continuous row of 16 "one-up one-down" houses, 11 of which backed on to similar houses and outbuildings in the third yard in Walmgate, McQuade's Yard. None of the houses in Britannia Yard, even those which did not back on to other buildings, were ever through dwellings, each house therefore, as photograph 21 shows, contained only one door and two windows. The 1852 Ordnance Survey map failed to show the back-to-back construction of the first five cottages in the yard, which thus appear to be double their actual size. The other halves of these five houses were in fact entered from and looked out into McQuade's Yard, as all the census enumerators' notebooks, photographs, later Ordnance Survey and slum clearance maps and schedules clearly show. By 1891 a timber yard had been established at the top end of Hill's Yard and McQuade's Yard had undergone some infilling adding to the existing congestion of the area. Some time at the turn of the century the first three houses in Britannia Yard (by then re-named Alexandra Yard) were demolished, so that by the time the court was cleared in 1933, only 13 houses remained.



There were slight variations but the average size of each individual house was about 12 feet square, the two rooms in each dwelling being less than 8 feet high.<sup>1</sup> The houses stretched the entire length of the yard, which varied in width between about 10 to 12 feet and was entered from Walmgate by a narrow, covered passage. Laycock, described the yard in 1844 as:

"Dirty; no drain; bad smells; 4 privies opposite the houses; soil thrown before them."<sup>2</sup>

and the minutes of the Health Committee for March 1852 contain a report from the city surveyor stating that Mr. John Clark's houses in Britannia Yard were

"without sufficient water-closets or privies and ash-pits furnished with proper doors and coverings."

Two months' later the surveyor was directed to construct privies in the yard forthwith, and in October that year the privies were again reported as being in a very filthy state - the court only having a top drain.<sup>3</sup>

It is very unlikely that these privies would have been converted to water-closets before the end of our period; even when the yard was finally closed in 1933, however, there were only six water-closets for the whole of the inhabitants. Also by 1933 there was still neither an internal water supply nor even a sink in any of the houses, and only 3 stand taps were situated in the yard. No facilities for washing clothes were provided and none of the houses contained a pantry.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The smallest of the houses was 10 ft. 10 ins. wide and the largest 12 ft. 9 ins.

<sup>2</sup>T. Laycock, *op. cit.* p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>York Council Minute Books, 8 March 1852, 15 May 1852 and 11 October 1852.

<sup>4</sup>Details from Alexandra Yard Slum Clearance Area Scheme, 1933.

Britannia Yard (Alexandra Yard) Walmgate, 1933.  
The 16 two-roomed cottages in this yard housed  
171 individuals in 1851, 154 of them being  
Irish. At no time did any of these houses  
contain sinks or food stores, and common taps  
and privies were situated in the yard.



(21)

Given that in the 1850's well under half the houses in York were supplied with piped water it may be doubted that the inhabitants of Britannia Yard were among the fortunate few. Had they been so, however, it is improbable that more than one tap would have been provided by the end of our period.

These details mean little unless they are related to the number of persons inhabiting the yard. Evidence suggests that the Irish began to monopolize it in about 1847, although in 1841 one of the houses had already been occupied by nine Irish individuals. By 1851 however, 15 of the 16 houses were Irish-occupied. These contained 154 Irish people together with 10 non-Irish lodgers - a further seven non-Irish persons living in the remaining house. In all, therefore, 171 individuals lived in the yard. Incredible as it may seem, several of these two-roomed cottages were common lodging-houses, Irish heads of households occasionally being charged with unlawfully receiving more lodgers than they were entitled to do. Only four of the houses contained less than eight individuals and two housed 18 persons. The numbers recorded in each of the Irish-occupied houses at this census was as follows:

Table 13

	<u>Number of houses</u>	<u>Persons per house</u>
	1	3
	1	5
	1	6
	1	7
	2	8
	1	9
	1	11
	1	12
	1	13
	1	14
	1	15
	1	17
	2	18
Total	<u>15</u>	<u>164</u>

Bearing in mind Laycock's description written only seven years' earlier, this averages almost 43 persons per privy if the non-Irish inhabitants of No. 4 are included. Irish occupants averaged 11 persons per house. At this census the residents of the yard were almost entirely returned as labourers, only three, a joiner, a dressmaker and an agricultural labourer being otherwise employed.

By 1861 the population of Britannia Yard had fallen to 132, 120 of whom were Irish, none of whom shared their accommodation with non-Irish individuals. Their occupations were hardly more varied than in the previous census, apart from labourers there being only three bricklayers' labourers, four agricultural labourers and one glassmaker.

The number of inhabitants of Britannia Yard in 1871 had dropped to 91. All the houses were by this time occupied by the immigrants, and only one of these - No. 5 - contained two non-Irish lodgers. The degree of overcrowding had greatly diminished, only one house in the yard contained nine individuals, three contained eight, two contained seven and the remaining 11 houses averaged 4.4 persons per house. Labouring was still the main occupation at this census, though with greater variety within this employment than had previously been the case. Eight of the occupants were agricultural labourers, three were bricklayers' labourers, one a mason's labourer, one a foundry labourer, 13 were outdoor servants, four were laundresses,<sup>1</sup> one was a hawker and one a dressmaker.

The Irish community in Britannia Yard displayed the same instability as the Irish population in York in general.<sup>2</sup> Of the 154 Irish individuals recorded as living there in the 1851 census, not only were none of these still present in the Yard in 1861, but only five of them were to be found elsewhere in the city.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, of the 120 Irish persons comprising the entirely new population of Britannia Yard in 1861, none were living in the Yard at the following census and only eight were present elsewhere in York.<sup>4</sup>

From the late 1840's Britannia Yard was recognised as being one

<sup>1</sup>Presumably not on their own premises.

<sup>2</sup>The turn-over of the Irish population in the city is examined in detail in Chapter XI.

<sup>3</sup>These were the four Rouans who moved to Lawrence Row and remained in York throughout the period, together with their lodger James Rouan, who in 1861 was living in Rosemary Place, Navigation Road. See page 404-5.

<sup>4</sup>Of these, two had moved to neighbouring McQuade's Yard, four now lived in Speculation Street about 50 feet away from the top end of Britannia Yard and two had moved around the corner to 47 Walmgate.

of the most intensive areas of Irish settlement in the city. We have seen that Butcher Yard, where in 1847 the outbreak of typhus first appeared amongst the Irish, was re-named and taken over by certain individuals in St. Margaret's parish who "put the court into tolerable repair, and let the houses to a more respectable class of people."<sup>1</sup> An item in the Herald in November 1850 reveals where those Irish who were displaced re-settled themselves. Reporting on a disturbance in Britannia Yard involving a "furious mob" of about 40 to 50 Irish residents, the Herald observed:

"Walmgate, for some years was famed for its containing what was termed 'a colony of wild Irish' which was situated in Butcher Yard about the centre of the street; and on account of the repeated disturbances which ensued, the colony was removed. It seems, however, to have re-established itself with greater vigour in Britannia Yard near to Walmgate Bar to the annoyance of the peaceable inhabitants who have been subjected to assaults and disturbances."<sup>2</sup>

To state that the Irish were removed "on account of the repeated disturbances which ensued" was entirely misleading and displays some prejudice on the part of the comparatively liberal Herald. Both the Poor Law Guardians (Tuke, Goldie, Laycock and Gray) who first inspected the yard in 1847, and Mr. Thomas, surgeon to the Poor Law Union, made it clear that the Irish were removed and the yard repaired and cleansed because of its insanitary and overcrowded condition. The Poor Law Records and Thomas's evidence in Smith's Report to the Board of Health in 1850 state categorically that it was a combination of fear of the spread of the disease and a desire to reduce parochial poor law expenditure (which the sick and destitute Irish undoubtedly inflated) which was in fact the reason for their removal to the adjacent

<sup>1</sup>Smith, op. cit., p.9.

<sup>2</sup>Herald, 9 November 1850. See also Gazette.

parish of St. Peter le Willows, and their settlement in a neighbouring yard already partly occupied by their fellow immigrants.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, by the end of the period Britannia Yard had featured frequently enough in the newspapers for its inhabitants to have acquired a similar reputation to that retrospectively applied to those of Butcher Yard. Apart from the occasional infringement of lodging-house regulations,<sup>2</sup> there were occasional disturbances, the most serious in the period being the one referred to, involving 40 or 50 individuals. "Another Irish row" took place in the yard (nicknamed by the press "Hibernia Yard") on Christmas night 1850, when an Irishman named Coleman and other occupants of the court were alleged to have dug up the cobble stones with their chicory tools and thrown them through a Michael Kilmartin's window. As proof of the attack Kilmartin, together with "a host of witnesses" appeared in court with the stones in a basket. His brother James declared he saw Coleman digging up the paving stones, one of which he swore - "hit me and kilt me." On behalf of the accused, however, Peter Floy said that he was with him all night and that he "never broke a whinder at all at all." The Bench, reported the Herald, could not believe either side, and each party had to pay his own expenses.<sup>3</sup>

In November 1856 another disturbance involving two of the Kilmartin family was reported, when two policemen were attacked with stones and their hats knocked off.<sup>4</sup> Assaults by the inhabitants of Britannia Yard, especially on one another, seem to have been fairly

<sup>1</sup>York Board of Guardians' Minute Book, 1846-47. p.255-7.

<sup>2</sup>See for example Gazette, 13 October 1852, 21 January 1854, 13 May 1854, 19 May 1855, 24 July 1869 and 12 November 1870.

<sup>3</sup>Herald, 11 January 1851.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 15 November 1856.

frequent and appear to have involved whole families. The Kilmartins, for example, were involved in another affray in the Yard in July 1861. "Three sons of the Emerald Isle", James and Patrick Kilmartin and James Craine were charged with assaulting Owen McKay at a "wake" in one of the houses, in which he was struck with a poker and fire tongs. Fourteen squares of glass, the front door, a sash and the window shutters of the house were broken, the damage being estimated at £2. by the landlord, Mr. Clark of Walmgate.

"A regular melee took place, the scene being most disgraceful, chamber utensils and half bricks were thrown through the windows."<sup>1</sup>

In November 1862, labourer Patrick Rowan, drunk, entered the house of his neighbour in the yard, Bridget Scott, and "without the slightest provocation, struck her on the head with a spade."<sup>2</sup> Four years' later, Tom Rooney was charged with assaulting his neighbour Patrick Varley, who in turn was charged with knocking down Rooney's wife and kicking her.<sup>3</sup> Various other outbreaks of disorderly behaviour were reported throughout the period, ranging from family rows to fights involving several sets of neighbours.<sup>4</sup> There were no references either to prostitution occurring or to prostitutes living in Britannia Yard in the period, in spite of the undoubted poverty of its inhabitants.

The destitution of the occupants of Britannia Yard and their vulnerability to disease is indicated by the frequency of and reasons given for their applications for poor relief, most of these being either for sickness or funeral expenses. In 1850/51, for example,

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 27 July 1861.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 16 November 1862.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 19 May 1866.

<sup>4</sup>See for example, Herald 19 February 1853 and 27 August 1853. Gazette, 24 October 1863, 27 March 1869 and 19 August 1871.



when Irish applications were comparatively low,<sup>1</sup> William Kelly, a 45 year old destitute Irish labourer required relief in consequence of severe diarrhoea. Barbara Quilken, Larry and Bridget Timlin, Michael and Ellen Martin, Frank and Catherine Conway and Thomas and Julia Martin all applied in the same year for a grant towards the funeral expenses of their children. Other applicants from the yard required relief because of unemployment, confinement or from destitution caused by being crippled or otherwise not able-bodied.

The reasons for applications in the March Quarter, 1861, were much the same. John Riley, applying because of sickness was subsequently given a pauper's funeral, and Thomas and Catherine Kaife and their two infants, who were also sick, were sent to the workhouse. Ann Wallace (a non-Irish resident) 41 years' old and a widow suffering from erysipelas applied three times in the quarter on behalf of herself and her three children, one of whom was recorded as a nine week old bastard. Again, the other applications were because of sickness and confinements. Requests for relief in 1871 were for similar reasons though there were fewer in number. The house of one non-Irish resident (not living in the Yard at the taking of the census) - a tinker, Emmanuel Wainwright was described in the Application and Report Book as "a lair of dirt and filth."<sup>2</sup> A further indication of the poverty of the inhabitants of Britannia Yard were the various charges brought against some of the women, who were in the habit of "milking cows without leave." In March 1867, for example, Mary Laughrin,

<sup>1</sup>Poor Relief, and the changing pattern of Irish applications in York is discussed more fully in Chapter VIII.

<sup>2</sup>Application and Report Books 1850-51, 1861 and 1871, as listed.



(22)

The two yards on either side of Britannia Yard, Walmgate, 1933. Hill's or Waterhouse Yard (above) and McQuade's Yard (right) The six two-roomed houses in Hill's Yard, though not of back-to-back construction, lacked through ventilation, and the rooms were less than 8ft. high. 13 Irish persons lived in the yard in 1871. McQuade's Yard contained seven two-roomed cottages in 1871, these backed on to the houses in Britannia Yard, and were occupied by 31 Irish persons in that year. Towards the end of the century four of the houses were demolished to make room for the Irish National League Club. On the right is the "trough-closet with three compartments. One is used by the members of the Irish National League Club; the other two are used by the tenants of McQuade's Yard and No. 164 Walmgate... I consider the properties (in all three yards) unfit for human habitation." - Medical Officer of Health, York, October 1933.



(23)

Margaret O'Brien, Mary Hughes, Mary Rohan and Mary Gill were all reprimanded for stealing milk from cows outside Walmgate Bar, but were dismissed because they were the mothers of large families.<sup>1</sup>

.....

The cottages in Britannia Yard, built to house the poor, were slum properties for more than a century. Consequently, as we have seen, misery and filth abounded until they were eventually demolished in 1933, when the Clearance Schedules described them as being infested with bugs, cockroaches, mice and fleas. At no time, however, were the meagre amenities of the Yard so hopelessly inadequate as they had been in the early 1850's, when up to 18 Irish individuals in separate families were crowded together in two small rooms, and 171 persons shared the four foul privies in the narrow yard. Bad and overcrowded as the sanitary conditions were, however, they were far from being the worst in the city. Though Britannia Yard was uncomfortably near the nuisance arising from the cattle pens stretching along the outside of the city walls, it at least had the advantage of being free from the slaughter-houses, piggeries and stables which so frequently were situated in or abutted on to other yards in the area. Instead, by the turn of the century, six of the houses in what by then had been re-named Alexandra Yard, backed on to the new Irish National League Club - appropriately situated in McQuade's Yard, next door.

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 30 March 1867.

Locational Case Study No. 2.

Long Close Lane, off Walmgate.

(c.1811-1840)

Long Close Lane was one of the longest of the streets in the Walmgate area (excluding Walmgate itself) and in parts at least, the narrowest. It was situated mainly in the parish of St. George, with the Walmgate end (in the first two censuses in the period) lying in St. Peter le Willows.<sup>1</sup> The street ran parallel to the city wall from Fishergate Postern, George Street almost to Walmgate Bar. The site, formerly a large field in which cattle for York fairs were exhibited was, according to Hargrove, parcelled off for building land in about 1811, when a row of brick dwellings were built on one side of the lane.<sup>2</sup> Bellerby's map of 1829 shows that by that date further building had taken place on both sides of the road, the twelve houses in the terrace block Duke of York Place, and houses later numbered 53 to 67 Long Close Lane (see photograph) already evident. Smith's Buildings, however, the most insanitary of the houses and the ones most heavily settled by the Irish, had yet to be built. These 20 grim cottages were first referred to by Laycock who described them in 1844 as:

"The new houses at the end of Long Close Lane ... built back-to-back; in front is the street full of mud, and covered with ashes and refuse from the dwellings; road

<sup>1</sup>Since after the census of 1851, the small stretch of Long Close Lane situated in the parish of St. Peter le Willows was separated and re-named Willow Street, its Irish inhabitants, 6 in 1841 and 4 in 1851, have been excluded throughout for the purpose of this Case Study.

<sup>2</sup>W. Hargrove, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp.312-3.

almost impassable."<sup>1</sup>

Duke of York Place, on the other hand, nearer to Walmgate Bar, contained larger superior houses with a tiny space in front and small narrow gardens stretching to the city walls at the rear. The houses at the George Street end of Long Close Lane contained no gardens, the space between the block of one-up one-down cottages of Smith's Buildings and the city walls having been infilled with an additional terrace in the 1830's, Ebenezer Place. Thus ten of the houses in Smith's Buildings faced on to Long Close Lane and ten faced the back yards of Ebenezer Place, which in 1844 Laycock described as containing pigsties and privies. These ten houses were sometimes referred to as "Back Yard", Long Close Lane.

Opposite Duke of York Place was an irregular terrace of 11 houses which contained (see photograph 24) the covered passage leading into the back yard of the Brown Cow public house in Hope Street. This long and densely populated street, also containing many of the Irish immigrants, was, like adjacent Albert Street and Charles (later Richard) Street behind that, roughly parallel to Long Close Lane.

By 1851 Long Close Lane contained 60 houses including the ten rear cottages in Smith's Buildings.<sup>2</sup> Though these houses and their insanitary conditions were much deplored even in the 1840's and 50's, most remained inhabited until the 1930's, the first of them not being cleared until 1928 and 1929. About half the houses in the street contained only two rooms and the rest four, those in Duke of York

<sup>1</sup>T. Laycock, op. cit., p.43.

<sup>2</sup>According to the 1889 Ordnance Survey map, by that date the Lane contained 69 houses, some slight infilling having taken place in the Square and Compass Yard and next to Smith's Buildings.



(24)

View of Long Close Lane, late 1920's, looking towards Walmgate. On the right hand side are the small front gardens of Duke of York Place. On the left is the rear entrance to the yard of the Brown Cow Inn, Hope Street, and Nos. 16 to 28 Long Close Lane. The 69 houses in this street contained 519 persons in 1851, 370 of whom were Irish. (See Map 12)

Place measuring about 18 ft. by 12 ft. and those in Smith's Buildings about 12 ft. square. The width of the Lane varied between 9 ft. for most of its length and 18 ft., and it was approximately 250 yds. long.

Long Close Lane, like Britannia Yard, the Bedern, the Water Lanes and other classic areas of Irish settlement in the city were well-established slums some years before the arrival of the post-Famine immigrants. The necessity for the poverty-stricken Irish to overcrowd their scanty accommodation merely made the situation worse. Laycock's early description of the Lane indicates that even when new it was already a slum, largely because of the inadequacy or absence of sanitary provisions.

"Long Close Lane, undrained and unpaved; no drain at back; complaints of bad smell. No. 3, though new, swarms with bugs; and filth is thrown in front, etc."<sup>1</sup>

In addition, several of the houses faced the unhealthy and overcrowded back yards of Hope Street, containing:

"Pigsties in almost every yard; dung-heap etc. in backyard of No. 17 ... hen roost, cow house and overflowing privies."<sup>2</sup>

With the arrival of the Irish, three years' later, the exploitation of the poor in this location was so great as to subsequently arouse critical comment by Mr. Thomas, surgeon to the Poor Law Union. He stated in his evidence to Mr. James Smith in 1850 that the Irish were so desperate for accommodation that landlords charged "most enormous" rents, and in this connection referred particularly to Smith's Buildings Long Close Lane.

"There are 20 houses, there, I believe, and the original

<sup>1</sup>T. Laycock, op. cit., p.43-44.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. Hope Street contained large numbers of Irish, the small settlement of 20 in 1841 increasing to 68 in 1851 and 322 in 1861. By 1871 this had fallen to 282; but during that decade these two densely populated streets together housed between one fifth and one sixth of the total Irish population in the city.



(25)

Hope Street, looking towards Walmgate. The properties in the foreground on the same side of the street as the Brown Cow public house were demolished in 1928. These were back-to-back and some contained only two rooms. The houses on the left were demolished in 1929 and 1931, and though these were through dwellings and contained four rooms, many even then were overcrowded, due to sub-letting. Last tenants' names such as Galpin, Loftus, Riley, Fannon, Durkin, Flannagan and Flannery indicate that the Irish occupied the street for almost a century. (See Map 12)



rent was fixed at the rate of 1/6d. and in no case did it exceed 1/9d. per week. He let the houses to the Irish; he charged an extra rent, which got to 2/- and 2/6d. I believe 9 of the houses have been taken off his hands, and instead of charging 1/6d. as he did originally, he is now, with 11 houses, charging 4/- a week whereby he receives as much rent from them as he did formerly from the 20 houses."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the period the filthy habits and living conditions of the Irish were criticised as being a menace to public health. The exploitation of the immigrants, however, and the consequent overcrowding which led to their squalor and disease were rarely questioned. In 1849, for example, Mr. John Smith, owner of the above Buildings in Long Close Lane was summoned because of the filthy condition of the two privies which were shared by between 130 to 140 persons. The overseers stated that:

"The insides of the houses were nearly as bad as the privies. From 25 to 30 of the Irish lived in each house, which contained only two rooms, and by their dirty habits the health of the neighbourhood was in jeopardy."<sup>2</sup>

Thus it was the dirty habits of the Irish rather than the gross inadequacy of their accommodation and sanitary provision - for which they were paying highly inflated rents - which were condemned. Even so, 70 persons sharing a privy and 15 persons per small room (though they were Irish) was obviously regarded as undesirable, even in a Walmgate slum. The warning given by Alderman Husband to the city council in 1845 that sanitary regulations and improvements in York should be carried out:

"because fever engendered in the midst of filth might extend to the houses of the rich"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Smith, op. cit., p.10-11.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 4 August 1849.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 10 May 1845.

was echoed in the Gazette's editorial of October 1849 (already quoted, page 148. The statement that the "low lodging houses of Long Close Lane" were not only disgusting but "nurseries of disease" must have been peculiarly alarming in that, a cholera year. In spite of this, however, no action appears to have been taken in Long Close Lane, a surveyor's report to the local Board of Health Committee in September 1852 simply stating the Smith's Buildings, now belonging to James Walker, were still without sufficient sanitary provisions.<sup>1</sup>

The only improvement that apparently occurred was that between 1849 and the 1851 census, there was a reduction in the average number of Irish persons per house in Long Close Lane. Whereas there had been "25-30 of the Irish" in each of the 20 two-roomed dwellings in Smith's Buildings, there were, by 1851, no houses in the Lane containing more than 21 persons. The average number of persons per house in that year was 12.9, in Irish-occupied houses. In all, 370 Irish individuals lived in the Lane, occupying 29 houses - three of which were shared with a total of five non-Irish persons.<sup>2</sup> 144 other non-Irish people occupied the remainder of the houses, non-Irish individuals therefore averaging 4.6 persons per house. The numbers recorded in each of the Irish-occupied houses were as follows:

<sup>1</sup>York Council Minute Book, 13 September 1852.

<sup>2</sup>In 1841 there were 16 Irish persons in Long Close Lane, occupying four houses.

Table 14

	<u>Number of Houses</u>	<u>Persons per House</u>
	1	2
	1	3
	3	4
	2	6
	2	7
	1	8
	2	10
	2	11
	1	12
	1	14
	2	15
	1	17
	2	19
	2	20
	6	21
Total	<u>29</u>	<u>370</u>

By 1861 the number of Irish inhabitants in the Lane had dropped to 244. These occupied a total of 34 houses, one of which was shared with five non-Irish persons. There were in addition, 173 non-Irish residents of the Lane. The average number of Irish persons per house in this census was considerably lower than had been the case in the first waves of Irish settlement. Having dropped from 25 to 30 in at least 20 of the houses in 1849, to 12.9 in 1851, the average was now 7.1 persons per house with non-Irish inhabitants averaging 6.7. There were now only three houses with more than ten occupants, two containing 11 persons and the other, 15. The Irish, however, were

still living in conditions far more overcrowded than the non-Irish inhabitants of Long Close Lane, since they occupied the two-roomed cottages (including Smith's Buildings) rather than those houses in the Lane containing four rooms.

By 1871 there were only 222 Irish residents in Long Close Lane but the number of houses they now occupied had risen to 38. In five of these houses there was a total of nine non-Irish individuals. In addition, the Lane contained a further 164 non-Irish residents. The average number of Irish persons per house had fallen to 6.1, the two most overcrowded houses now containing 14 and 11 individuals respectively. The average number of non-Irish occupants per house, on the other hand, had risen to 7.5. Again, since about half the houses in the Lane contained only two rooms there was still considerable overcrowding, but this had fallen dramatically during the period. Since the census enumerators failed to consistently number individual houses in Long Close Lane it is possible to identify only the ten rear houses in Smiths' Buildings, described as "Back Yard, Long Close Lane." By 1871, the average number of Irish persons in this block was only 5.6, per house, compared with 25 to 30 in 1849.

The dominant occupation of the Irish living in Long Close Lane, especially in the first two post-Famine censuses, was agricultural and field labouring. 113 Irish individuals were returned as such in 1851, the next largest single occupations being glass-making and nursing, each, however, only employing four individuals. Other Irish persons were employed as charwomen, bricklayers, labourers, servants, tailors, a blacksmith, a seamstress and a hawker. In 1861 there were 79 Irish agricultural labourers in the Lane, the next largest group being gravel diggers, numbering six. Again, other occupations included largely unskilled work such as peddling, labouring,

fortune-telling and fiddling, the only skilled workers being two glass-makers. In line with the Irish community in the city as a whole, however,<sup>1</sup> by 1871 Irish persons in Long Close Lane were employed in a greater variety of occupations than had been the case in the two previous censuses, agricultural labourers now totalling only 38. There was a corresponding increase in the number and variety of other types of labourers, factory workers, foundry and bricklayers' labourers and other unskilled occupations together being almost equal to the number of farm workers.

Of the 370 Irish persons living in Long Close Lane in 1851, only 35 were still present in York at the next census. Sixteen of these were again recorded in Long Close Lane itself, and the other 19 had moved into the neighbouring streets Hope Street and Wenlock Street, and Blythe's and Clancy's Yards, Walmgate. Only 16 of the original Irish inhabitants of the Lane in 1851 remained in the city for 20 years. In 1871 four were still living in Long Close Lane and the others were living nearby in Hope Street and its yards, Moyser Yard and Baynton Row.

The 1861 Irish population of the Lane seems to have been much more stable than that in the city generally or than that in Britannia Yard. Of the 244 Irish residents at this census, 228 were recorded for the first time in the city. Including the 16 surviving from 1851, 67 were still present in York in 1871, and 40 of these were still living in Long Close Lane itself, though some of these had changed their addresses in the street. With the exception of the Cox family<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter VII.

<sup>2</sup>See below page 176.

who moved to St. Margaret's Terrace, Navigation Road, the rest were all living in Hope Street.

Although Long Close Lane does not figure prominently in the location of crimes in the city,<sup>1</sup> it nevertheless seems to have housed various disorderly and in a few notable instances, habitually drunken and violent individuals. Since many of their offences took place in the inter-censal years, however, and were not committed in the Lane itself, a great number of these do not appear in Tables 57 to 61 (Chapter IX.) From time to time there were occasional disturbances in the Lane involving large numbers of Irish people, as in August 1855, for example, when a mob of about 150 to 200 of them rescued James Flannegan from the custody of a policeman.<sup>2</sup> A similar episode occurred in the following year when again the inhabitants of the Lane attacked a police officer who tried to arrest one of their fellow-countrymen, this time a George Lofthouse. Amid the general disturbance and fighting the officer, pursued by "a great number" of Irishmen, was forced to seek refuge in one of the houses. An Irishman named Martin came to his assistance, knocking down four or five of his fellow immigrants and allowing the policeman to escape.<sup>3</sup> Other smaller outbreaks of disorder occurred in the Lane sporadically throughout the period, the most serious being that resulting in the manslaughter of James Flannery, described in Chapter IX.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter IX, page. 296.

<sup>2</sup>Herald and Gazette, 25 August 1855.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 20 November 1856.

<sup>4</sup>See pages 317-18.

Much more damaging to the reputation of the Lane's Irish population, however, were the frequent reports of incidents involving a limited number of its residents, namely James Flannigan, Michael Brannan and the Langan family, who were regularly engaged in fights and disturbances with their antagonists the Battles.

James Flannigan, already referred to above, was first reported as causing a disruption in Long Close Lane in April 1851.<sup>1</sup> In June 1855 he was charged with the same offence in the Lane, and with assaulting a police officer, and as we have seen, two months' later he was involved in a similar incident.<sup>2</sup> Within a few weeks he was charged with a third assault on a policeman, and in December 1859 was convicted, together with the Brannans and the Langans, of a "furious attack" on the house of a neighbour.<sup>3</sup> He was again charged with assaulting a police officer in June 1864,<sup>4</sup> and finally in June 1868 the Gazette reported that he had been sentenced to five years' penal servitude for his part in suspected Fenian intimidation, when he, together with John Langan and Brannan assaulted two members of the Battle family.<sup>5</sup>

Michael Brannan, with a continuous history of 20 years of drunken, violent and disorderly behaviour was probably the most delinquent Irishman in York in the period, and like his neighbours James Flannigan, the Langans and the Battle brothers, did much to blacken the reputation of the entire Irish population of the city. He was first charged with creating a disturbance with Battle

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 19 April 1851.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 16 June 1855 and 13 October 1855.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 3 December 1859.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 4 June 1864.

<sup>5</sup>Gazette, 13 June 1868. For Fenianism in York see Chapter XI.

in 1852,<sup>1</sup> and six months' later Battle violently assaulted him in Long Close Lane.<sup>2</sup> Brannan's last appearance before the magistrates during the period was in July 1875, for what was said to be his 33rd conviction.<sup>3</sup> Charges against him included various kinds of assault, as in June 1855, for example, when he was seen on the Hull Road brandishing a hoe in pursuit of other Irishmen, and striking anyone in his way. Finally, having attacked a man with a large paving stone, he was sentenced to two months' imprisonment.<sup>4</sup> On another occasion, having bitten Anthony Battle "severely on the lower lip", he was fined five pounds;<sup>5</sup> and in November 1864 his disorderly behaviour collected a crowd of about 200 people in Walmgate.<sup>6</sup> His usual offence, however, was drunken and disorderly conduct - either in Long Close Lane itself or in the streets nearby.

The third most notorious inhabitant of Long Close Lane was John Langan, who, like his friends Flannigan and Brannan apparently had some sort of feud with the Battle family. He and his father, also John Langan, and his brother Thomas were frequently before the magistrates for assaulting policemen, fighting and disorderly behaviour, as in October 1859 when in a great disturbance in Long Close Lane "broken heads, cuts and bruises were plentiful", and in the following May when the whole family, including the womenfolk, were involved in another fracas in the street.<sup>7</sup>

As we have seen, Anthony Battle and his family were also frequently involved in disturbances in Long Close Lane and in incidents

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 26 June 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 4 December 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 11 July 1875.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 30 June 1855.

<sup>5</sup>Gazette, 2 May 1863.

<sup>6</sup>Gazette, 19 November 1864.

<sup>7</sup>Gazette, 22 October 1859 and 5 May 1860.



with the more violent members of the Irish community living there, though for much of the period the Battles lived in neighbouring Hope Street. Apart from those already referred to, Anthony Battle was severely assaulted in Long Close Lane in November 1851,<sup>1</sup> was charged with assaulting a police officer there in May 1860 and in the following July was sentenced (in his absence) to six months' imprisonment for his assault on Hannah Cox, his neighbour. His conduct was so violent on this occasion - having kicked, struck and dragged Mrs. Cox about by the hair - that Father Geary the Roman Catholic Priest complained of Battle's character to the Lord Mayor.<sup>2</sup> Again in May 1864 he was charged with assaulting Irishman Michael Brogan of the Bay Horse, Walmgate, the magistrates refusing bail as Brogan was so severely injured.<sup>3</sup> By the following July, however, he was once again in court, this time for attacking his old adversary Michael Brannan, who in turn was charged with assaulting Battle's wife Mary.<sup>4</sup>

All these characters who lived in Long Close Lane, and who were frequently involved in fights and disturbances in it and the surrounding area, helped create the street's reputation for lawlessness, which was, on the whole, undeserved by the bulk of the Irish community.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 29 November 1851.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 14 July 1860 and 5 May 1860.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 24 May 1864.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 29 July 1865.

<sup>5</sup>The Irish contribution to crime in the city throughout the period is examined in detail in Chapter IX.

Unlike Britannia Yard, which contained no brothels and apparently had no prostitutes living in it during the period, Long Close Lane was recorded in six instances as being the address of five individual prostitutes. Two of these women were identified as being Irish.<sup>1</sup> The first reference occurred in June 1860 when Ruth Winn, prostitute of No. 1 Long Close Lane applied to the Guardians for poor relief. She was 18 years' old, single, and described as sick and suffering from venereal disease.<sup>2</sup> Ezra Thorpe, in whose house she lived, was charged four years' later with robbery and described as a thief and brothel-keeper.<sup>3</sup> The second prostitute referred to was Elizabeth Thompson, who in 1869 had been charged with keeping a house of ill fame (containing abandoned females) in Wesley Place, Hungate.<sup>4</sup> In the following year, now living in Long Close Lane, she was charged with indecency, an offence invariably associated with prostitution.<sup>5</sup> The third non-Irish prostitute who lived in the Lane was Mary Jane Mosley who in December 1871 was admitted to the workhouse. The Application and Report Book records that she was a prostitute, aged 20, not able bodied, unmarried, suffering from gonorrhoea and pregnant.<sup>6</sup>

The first of the Irish prostitutes recorded as living in Long Close Lane was Mary Jane Kelly, who was fined 5/- for indecency in March 1871.<sup>7</sup> From the census taken a few weeks' later we learn

<sup>1</sup>Prostitution in York in the period and the Irish contribution to the activity is discussed in Chapter X.

<sup>2</sup>Application and Report Book, June, 1860.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 17 December 1864.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 6 November 1869.

<sup>5</sup>Gazette, 30 July 1870.

<sup>6</sup>Application and Report Book, December 1871.

<sup>7</sup>Gazette, 11 March 1871.

that she was 21 years of age and was living in No. 16 Long Close Lane (see photograph No. 24) with her widowed mother, a greengrocer; her aunt, a seamstress; and her 13 year old brother Peter, a foundry labourer. Like many prostitutes Mary Kelly's occupation on the census was listed as servant, and she was an unmarried mother - her daughter Margaret being four years of age. The whole Kelly family including Mary Jane's older sister Ellen, their father Patrick - a sawyer's labourer - and their grandparents who were agricultural labourers, had been present in York at the 1861 census, at that time living in Church Lane, Walmgate.

The second of the Irish prostitutes was Mary Flannagan, sentenced to 14 days for indecency in March 1873,<sup>1</sup> and described as a prostitute and imprisoned for one month for the same offence in January 1874.<sup>2</sup> On both occasions her address was recorded as Long Close Lane. Further information about her emerged from the 1871 census. She was then aged 36, and lived at number 3 Back Yard (Smith's Buildings) with her two children Michael and Annie aged five and three years. Together with two other persons they were the lodgers of American-born Joseph Austin, and in the absence of her husband, Mary Flannagan worked as a scullery woman.

With possibly one exception the circumstances of these women indicate both their desperation and their poverty, which may well have driven them to resort to prostitution. As with Britannia Yard another indication of the poverty of the inhabitants of Long Close

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 29 March 1873.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 10 January 1874.

Lane is the number of applications for poor relief from both Irish and non-Irish families, 67 of whom applied for relief in the 1850-51 censal year, 17 in the March quarter. Almost all the applications were because of confinement, sickness and destitution, two exceptions to this (from non-Irish applicants) arising from the imprisonment of the husband. Only three applications in the March quarter came from families identifiably Irish.<sup>1</sup> For the 1861 censal year only the March quarter could be analysed,<sup>2</sup> and in this three month period there were 29 applications, 22 of which were from Irish families. Of the 29, 22 were for various forms of sickness including dysentery, bronchitis, chickenpox, skin diseases, etc. Two of the families, Bartholomew and Bridget Narey and their children, and Mary Igo, widow, had already applied for relief in 1851. In the 1871 March quarter there were 14 applications of which 11 were from Irish families. These were for a variety of reasons including funeral expenses, sickness, desertion and old age.

.....

Long Close Lane, like Britannia Yard and neighbouring Hope Street was a classic slum, built in the nineteenth century and occupied for more than a hundred years. Reports of 25 to 30 individuals sharing one small living room and one small bedroom in many of its houses, and 70 persons using the same foul privy give some indication of the deprivation and poverty of the area when conditions were at their

<sup>1</sup>Reasons for the low number of Irish applications in 1851 are discussed in Chapter VIII.

<sup>2</sup>See page 277.

worst, but the real amount of misery, humiliation and suffering experienced during the century of the Lane's existence can never be known. As we have seen, conditions undoubtedly improved after the immediate post-Famine period, but this was only because the pressure of numbers on the houses in the Lane diminished. The houses themselves, cramped, of poor quality and like those in Britannia Yard, disgracefully lacking in amenities, remained virtually unaltered until they were demolished; and the area in which they stood as congested as it had ever been.

The Irish continued to live in the area until its slums were finally cleared. The Hope Street Unhealthy Area Scheme of 1928 and the 1930 Selection List of tenants to be rehoused in Tuke Avenue from Long Close Lane and Hope Street, contain many of the Irish names to be found in the 1851, 1861 and 1871 census enumerators' notebooks. Names such as Sweeney, Flynn, Calpin, Riley, Fannon, Raftery, Grogan, Flannaghan, Loftus and O'Harra. Details of their incomes and rents reveal that most of the area's inhabitants, whether or not they were of Irish descent, were still suffering from poverty comparable to that described by Rowntree at the turn of the century and apparent throughout the period of this study. Most were unskilled workers - usually labourers or agricultural labourers. Many were unemployed, and many, like their predecessors, were in receipt of weekly relief from the Guardians.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>York Municipal Slum Clearance Scheme. Hope Street Area 1928, and Selection List of Council House Tenants, 1930.

## CHAPTER VI

### DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The purpose of this Chapter is to analysis the demographic characteristics of the post-Famine Irish population in York and to compare them with those already presented for the Irish community living in the city in 1841. For 1851, 1861 and 1871 the following features of the York Irish community have been examined; birthplaces, civil condition, the extent of mixed marriages, age and sex structure and household and family sizes. Unfortunately it is impossible to distinguish the birth and death rates of the Irish community in the city from those of the total population in York. However, some generalizations in this respect can be made, and these, together with the reasons for an absence of more precise data, are to be found in the conclusion of this Chapter.

#### Birthplaces.

As already mentioned in Chapter I, for the purpose of this thesis, the Irish population is defined as consisting of all persons of Irish birth, their children, whether or not they were born in Ireland, and non-Irish individuals married to Irish partners. The latter, relatively few in number, have been included since generally speaking they appear to have been absorbed into the main Irish community.

1851

The Irish community in York in 1851 numbered 2,618 - 7.2% of the total population in the city.<sup>1</sup> Of these, 1,963 (75%) were Irish-born, 355 (13.5%) were born in York, 131 (5%) were born in Yorkshire and 123 (4.7%) were born elsewhere in England. 46 (1.7%) were born somewhere other than Ireland or England.

Although in 1851 and subsequently the enumerator was supposed to record the respondent's county of birth, as has already been observed, for most of the Irish in York this information was omitted and only the country of origin was returned. Of the 1,963 Irish-born individuals, therefore, only 780 (39.7%) had their county of birth recorded. The great bulk of these - almost 80 percent - came from the following six counties, with Mayo being overwhelmingly the principal source of immigrants.

Table 15

Principal Counties of Birth of Irish Immigrants in York.

<u>County</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Mayo	318	40.8
Sligo	90	11.5
Roscommon	71	9.1
Dublin	60	7.7
Galway	59	7.6
Cork	24	3.0

Assuming that the 780 whose counties of birth were recorded are a

<sup>1</sup>This being 36,303.

reasonably unbiased sample, then the actual number of Mayo immigrants in the city was probably approaching 800, and it is clear that the vast majority of the total came from the west of Ireland.<sup>1</sup>

The 655 non Irish-born individuals included in the Irish community were divided as follows: 518 were children living with Irish-born parents, 80 were non-Irish females married to Irish males and 51 were non-Irish males married to Irish females. The remaining six were individuals living with Irish-born relatives.

### 1861

The total population in York in 1861 was 40,433, of whom 3,248 (8.0%) formed the Irish community. The total number of these actually born in Ireland was 1,918 (59% of the Irish community), 1,012 (31.2%) were born in York, 141 (4.3%) were born in Yorkshire and 133 (4.1%) were born in other parts of England. 44 (1.3%) were born elsewhere.

Again, but to an even greater extent, many Irish-born persons had no county of birth recorded, this information being supplied for only 230 individuals or 12% of all those born in Ireland. With the exception of Dublin which had an increased proportion, the distribution of counties of birth was very similar to that displayed in 1851, the same counties accounting for 70.8%.

<sup>1</sup>A fact already observed by Samuel Tuke in 1847, see page 109. Local Erris, neighbouring Achill Island and other Mayo names (from areas visited by James Hack Tuke in 1847 and subsequently) were amongst those most commonly found in York's Irish population. These included Henigan and Sweeney from Belmullet, Lavelle, McLachlan, McHale and Sherridan from Achill, and Igo, Calpin and Mellody from North Mayo. I am grateful for the above to Father John Mulhearn, curate of Belmullet, who informed me that until the 1960's some of his parishioners were still performing seasonal work in York and the surrounding area; and Gyril Gray of Dugort, Achill who taught in York in 1916.



Table 16

Principal Counties of Birth of Irish Immigrants in York.

<u>County</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Mayo	74	32.2
Dublin	30	13.0
Galway	17	7.4
Roscommon	17	7.4
Sligo	14	6.1
Cork	11	4.7

The 1,330 non Irish-born individuals who formed part of the Irish community were divided as follows: 1,188 were children living with Irish-born parents, 86 were non-Irish females married to Irish males, 49 were non-Irish males married to Irish females and seven were others, living with Irish relatives.

1871.

By 1871 the total population of York had increased to 43,796, of whom 3,380<sup>1</sup> were identified from the census as being part of the Irish community. Obviously, since by this time children born in England to post-Famine Irish immigrants would have been old enough to have left the parental home and formed their own households, their identification from the census is impossible, and this figure is therefore probably an underestimate of the total Irish community in the city. Of the 3,380, 1,596 (47.2%) were born in Ireland, 1,402 (41.5%) were born in York, 167 (4.9%) were born in Yorkshire, 164 (4.8%) were born elsewhere in England and 51 (1.5%) were either

<sup>1</sup>(7.7%)

born outside England and Ireland or had no birthplace listed.

For only 308 Irish-born individuals (19.3%) was a county of birth recorded, a similar pattern as in previous censuses emerging, except that County Clare had replaced County Cork as the sixth largest recorded contributor to Irish immigration to York. The following seven counties accounted for 77.6% of those for whom the information was supplied - showing that throughout the post-Famine period, the immigrants originated largely from the west of Ireland.

Table 17

Principal Counties of Birth of Irish Immigrants in York.

<u>County</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Mayo	85	27.6
Dublin	43	14.0
Galway	39	12.7
Roscommon	28	9.1
Sligo	21	6.8
Clare	13	4.2
Cork	10	3.2



(25)

Group of men and boys and the priest of Aran More posing for James Hack Tuke in the 1870's. Living on the west coast of Ireland in one of the distressed areas with which Tuke was concerned, some of these might well have made their way to York.

Of the 1,402 non Irish-born individuals included in the Irish community, 1,215 were children living with Irish-born parents, 99 were non-Irish females married to Irish males, 76 were non-Irish males married to Irish females and 12 were relatives other than children, of the Irish persons with whom they lived.

When the above information for the successive censuses is compared, the following changes in the birthplaces of the York Irish community can be seen. Firstly, the percentage of Irish-born individuals rose sharply between 1841 and 1851 from 55% to 75%. The figure then dropped to 59% in 1861 and to 47.2% in 1871. The percentage of York-born Irish persons, on the other hand, rose from 13.5% in 1851 to 31.2% in 1861 and 41.5% in 1871. Since York was not distinguished from Yorkshire in 1841, the number of individuals born in the city in that year is unknown. However, the number of Yorkshire-born Irish can be compared for all four censuses. In 1841 they accounted for 32.1%, in 1851 for 18.5%, in 1861 for 35.5% and in 1871 for 46.3%. This means that by 1871 less than half of the Irish community in York had actually been born in Ireland, though as will be seen in Chapter XI, even in that year, the majority of non-Irish-born individuals were in fact the children of recently arrived Irish-born parents.

The question of mixed marriages between Irish and non-Irish partners, and the implications regarding assimilation, will be discussed below. However, after 1841, when the percentage of Irish married individuals involved in such unions had been 31.4%, the figure dropped to and remained at less than half this level for the remainder of the period, indicating a low degree of assimilation.

Civil Condition.

Unlike the 1841 census, the printed abstracts for 1851, 1861 and 1871 provide information which enables comparison to be made between the civil condition of the Irish and the host population in York. The following Tables show the distribution of the marital status of both populations in the three post-Famine censuses.

Table 18

Civil Condition in York in 1851.

<u>Marital State</u>	<u>Percentage of Irish Population</u>	<u>Percentage of Host Pop. (exc. Irish)</u>
Married people	35.8	58.7
Widows	2.7	7.4
Widowers	1.3	3.3
Single	59.4	30.5
Not Known	0.9	Not given

Table 19

Civil Condition in York in 1861.

<u>Marital State</u>	<u>Percentage of Irish Population</u>	<u>Percentage of Host Pop. (exc. Irish)</u>
Married people	40.0	52.5
Widows	3.4	6.3
Widowers	1.3	2.7
Single	54.9	38.5
Not Known	0.4	Not given

Table 20

Civil Condition in York in 1871.

<u>Marital State</u>	<u>Percentage of Irish Population</u>	<u>Percentage of Host Pop. (exc. Irish)</u>
Married people	35.1	52.3
Widows	4.5	6.3
Widowers	1.6	2.7
Single	58.7	38.6
Not Known	0.08	Not given

The above Tables show a considerable difference in the proportions of married and single Irish individuals compared with those of the host population.<sup>1</sup> Given the circumstances which led to the arrival of large numbers of Irish immigrants, the low proportion married, compared with the host population is understandable. What is interesting, however, is the fact that by 1871 this proportion was even lower than it had been in the immediate post-Famine census. This, together with the evidence advanced in Chapter XI on assimilation, indicates that the York Irish population was constantly being replaced by fresh immigrants, who, having either experienced the Famine itself, or its continuing effects at home (such as wholesale evictions) would be less likely to be married than those immigrants arriving in the late 1840's or early 1850's. Many of the latter would already have been married before the catastrophe, with its depressing effect on the marriage rate, took place.

<sup>1</sup>The proportion of married Irish persons in 1841 and 1851 was identical. Meaningful comparison between the pre-Famine and post-Famine Irish population in this respect, however, is impossible, because of the unknown marital status of 18.4% of the Irish respondents in York in 1841. See page 40.

### Mixed Marriages.

As has already been pointed out in the section on Birthplaces, there was a marked and sustained fall in the number of mixed marriages after 1841, when the percentage of all married persons in the Irish community involved in such unions was 31.4%. In 1851 this fell to 14.2% and in 1861 it fell further, to 11.0%, rising to 15.4% in 1871. For comparative purposes the figures already referred to are reproduced in the following Table, which shows that most mixed marriages took place between Irish men and non-Irish women.

Table 21

#### Mixed Marriages in the Irish Community.<sup>1</sup>

	<u>1841</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1871</u>
Irish males married to non-Irish females.	59	81	89	105
Irish females married to non-Irish males.	29	52	54	78

Where the birthplace of the partner of an Irish individual is unknown, of course, the situation in this respect is indeterminate, this being the case for the following number of marriages at each census, when either a spouse was absent on census night, or, more rarely, had failed to have this piece of information recorded.

	<u>1841</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1871</u>
Spouse's birthplace unknown.	12	114	90	74

<sup>1</sup>This Table relates to persons in marriages in which both partners were present at the taking of the census.

The number of men absent on census night was slightly in excess of the number of women not present in 1851 and 1871, the reverse applying in 1841 and 1861. The figures were as follows:

Spouses of Irish Partners Absent on Census Night.

	<u>1841</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1871</u>
Husband absent	3	63	43	41
Wife absent	5	51	46	22

The distribution of the married members of the Irish community between mixed and unmixed marriages at each of the censuses is set out below, showing that after 1841, marriages between Irish and non-Irish partners never accounted for more than 15.4%.

Table 22

Percentage of Persons in the Irish Community  
in Mixed and Unmixed Marriages.

	<u>1841</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1871</u>
Unmixed <sup>1</sup>	64.3	73.6	82.1	78.4
Mixed	31.4	14.2	11.0	15.4
Unknown (spouse absent)	4.3	12.2	6.9	6.2

<sup>1</sup>The first category also includes very small numbers (10 in 1841, 6 in 1851, 7 in 1861 and 12 in 1871) of individuals who, though both partners were English-born, have been counted as Irish since they lived in the household of their Irish parents.



As has been shown in the previous Chapter, the Irish population in York was heavily concentrated in a limited number of parishes in the city, within areas which could well be described as Irish ghettos or quarters. The majority of Irish persons living elsewhere in York, especially after the Great Famine, were fairly untypical of the immigrant community as a whole, and it was in general amongst these that most of the mixed marriages occurred, indicating that they were assimilating to a greater extent than the ghetto Irish. The degree to which mixed marriages were unevenly distributed throughout the Irish population in the city is illustrated by the numbers and proportions occurring in the principal parishes of Irish settlement. In 1851 the number of Irish-born persons in mixed marriages in St. Dennis, St. George, St. Margaret, St. Mary Castlegate, Minster Yard with Bedern and St. Peter le Willows - which together contained 62.0% of the Irish population in the city, was only 39 or 29.7% of all mixed marriages. In the same parishes in 1861, which together contained 68.1% of the Irish community, Irish-born persons who had formed mixed marriages totalled only 51, or 37.7%. In 1871 these parishes combined accounted for 60.9% of the York Irish, but still the number of Irish-born persons in mixed marriages was only 55, or 31.4% of all immigrants in such unions. Furthermore, where a street or yard was wholly or almost entirely colonized by the Irish, mixed marriages hardly occurred at all. In Gill's Yard, Aldwark, for example (St. Helen on the Walls parish) which was settled by the Irish in the late 1850's, there were 64 Irish residents in 1861 and 83 in 1871, with a complete absence of mixed marriages. In Cross Alley (St. Mary Castlegate) only enumerated properly in 1851,<sup>1</sup> all 55 occupants were Irish, and again, none had

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter X.

married persons other than of Irish birth. The Bedern, containing 372 Irish occupants in 1851, 368 in 1861 and 244 in 1871 accounted for only three, two and three Irish persons in mixed marriages at each respective census. Finally, Britannia Yard (St. Peter le Willows) which, as has already been observed in the previous Chapter, was almost totally Irish throughout the period, contained 154 Irish individuals in 1851, 120 in 1861 and 89 in 1871. The number of Irish persons who had formed mixed marriages here however, was only two, both appearing on the 1871 census.

It is evident therefore, as might be expected, that the greater the degree of Irish concentration, the smaller the degree of inter-marriage which occurred; indicating both a low level and unequal distribution of assimilation within the Irish community.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Further and more detailed aspects of assimilation are discussed in Chapter XI.

### Age and Sex Structure.

As already presented in Chapter II for the Irish population in York in 1841, the following Tables and Graphs provide an analysis of the age and sex structure of the post-Famine Irish community in the city from 1851 to 1871. For each census the population has been divided into five yearly age groups for each sex and a comparison made between York's host and Irish populations. The information is presented in both absolute terms (Tables 23, 25 and 27) and in percentages (Tables 24, 26 and 28 and Graphs 4, 5 and 6.)

Comparison between the two communities in 1851 reveals few differences in the early age ranges, but a higher concentration of Irish than non-Irish between the ages of 20 and 35. The proportion of the Irish community in all subsequent age groups was slightly less than that of the host community in York.

Tables 25 and 26 and Graph 5 show that in 1861 there was a much larger proportion of the Irish population concentrated in the age groups 0-5 and 5-10 compared both with the host population and with the Irish population at the previous census. As had been the case in 1851, there was also a noticeable concentration of Irish persons in the 25-35 age groups, compared with the non-Irish community. Between the two censuses the numbers in the age groups 10-20 in the Irish population, however, had declined.

Table 23

Age and Sex Structure in York.  
1851

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Host Population (excluding Irish).</u>		<u>Irish Population</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
0-5	2,017	1,933	149	155
5-10	1,715	1,749	146	118
10-15	1,662	1,696	154	127
15-20	1,461	1,888	149	127
20-25	1,325	1,839	191	171
25-30	1,298	1,632	156	124
30-35	1,192	1,356	134	101
35-40	1,076	1,179	64	72
40-45	959	1,066	83	67
45-50	792	854	53	46
50-55	620	780	54	45
55-60	404	546	21	11
60-65	401	523	28	27
65-70	296	390	9	9
70-75	181	311	8	7
75-80	102	216	4	4
80-85	53	107	1	2
85-90	15	39	0	1
90-95	0	0	0	0
Total	<u>15,573</u>	<u>18,112</u>	<u>1,404</u>	<u>1,214</u>

Table 24

Age and Sex Structure in York.  
1851

Age Group	Host Population (excluding Irish) % in each age group		Irish Population % in each age group	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-5	12.9	10.7	10.6	12.8
5-10	11.0	9.6	10.4	9.7
10-15	10.7	9.4	11.0	10.5
15-20	9.4	10.4	10.6	10.5
20-25	8.5	10.2	13.6	14.1
25-30	8.3	9.0	11.1	10.2
30-35	7.6	7.5	9.5	8.3
35-40	6.9	6.5	4.6	5.9
40-45	6.1	5.9	5.9	5.5
45-50	5.1	4.7	3.8	3.8
50-55	4.0	4.3	3.8	3.8
55-60	2.6	2.9	1.5	0.9
60-65	2.6	2.9	2.0	2.2
65-70	1.9	2.1	0.6	0.7
70-75	1.2	1.7	0.6	0.6
75-80	0.7	1.2	0.3	0.3
80-85	0.3	0.6	0.07	0.2
85-90	0.1	0.2	0	0.08

Age and Sex Structure of York Population, 1851.

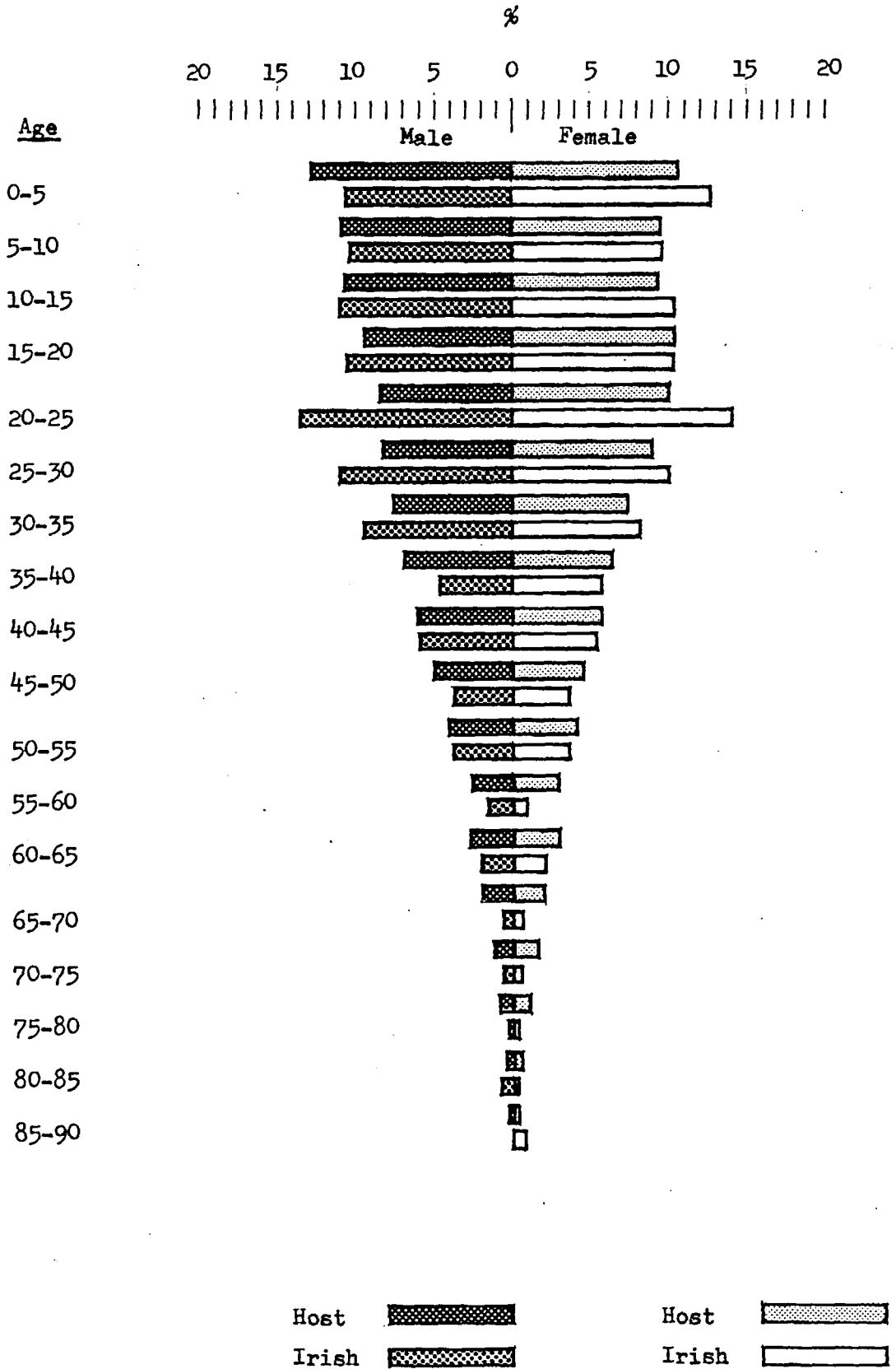


Table 25

Age and Sex Structure in York.  
1861

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Host Population (excluding Irish).</u>		<u>Irish Population</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
0-5	2,372	2,288	290	262
5-10	2,008	2,083	222	199
10-15	1,734	1,887	131	103
15-20	1,653	1,953	131	102
20-25	1,496	1,886	138	154
25-30	1,411	1,673	152	174
30-35	1,196	1,384	165	149
35-40	1,154	1,207	95	87
40-45	1,089	1,147	94	97
45-50	885	992	82	71
50-55	825	913	69	63
55-60	592	646	36	37
60-65	419	558	41	36
65-70	266	409	8	8
70-75	207	333	15	11
75-80	105	197	8	5
80-85	44	93	6	1
85-90	22	40	1	1
90-95	5	12	2	0
95-100	1	0	1	1
100+	0	1	0	0
Total	<u>17,484</u>	<u>19,701</u>	<u>1,687</u>	<u>1,561</u>

Table 26

Age and Sex Structure in York.  
1861

Age Group	Host Population (excluding Irish) % in each age group		Irish Population % in each age group	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-5	13.6	11.6	17.2	16.8
5-10	11.5	10.6	13.2	12.7
10-15	9.9	9.6	7.8	6.6
15-20	9.5	9.9	7.8	6.5
20-25	8.5	9.6	8.2	9.9
25-30	8.1	8.5	9.0	11.1
30-35	6.8	7.0	9.8	9.5
35-40	6.6	6.1	5.6	5.6
40-45	6.2	5.8	5.6	6.2
45-50	5.1	5.0	4.9	4.5
50-55	4.7	4.6	4.1	4.0
55-60	3.4	3.3	2.1	2.4
60-65	2.4	2.8	2.4	2.3
65-70	1.5	2.1	0.5	0.5
70-75	1.2	1.7	0.9	0.7
75-80	0.6	1.0	0.5	0.3
80-85	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.06
85-90	0.1	0.2	0.05	0.06
90-95	0.02	0.06	0.1	0
95-100	0	0	0.05	0.06



Age and Sex Structure of York Population, 1861.

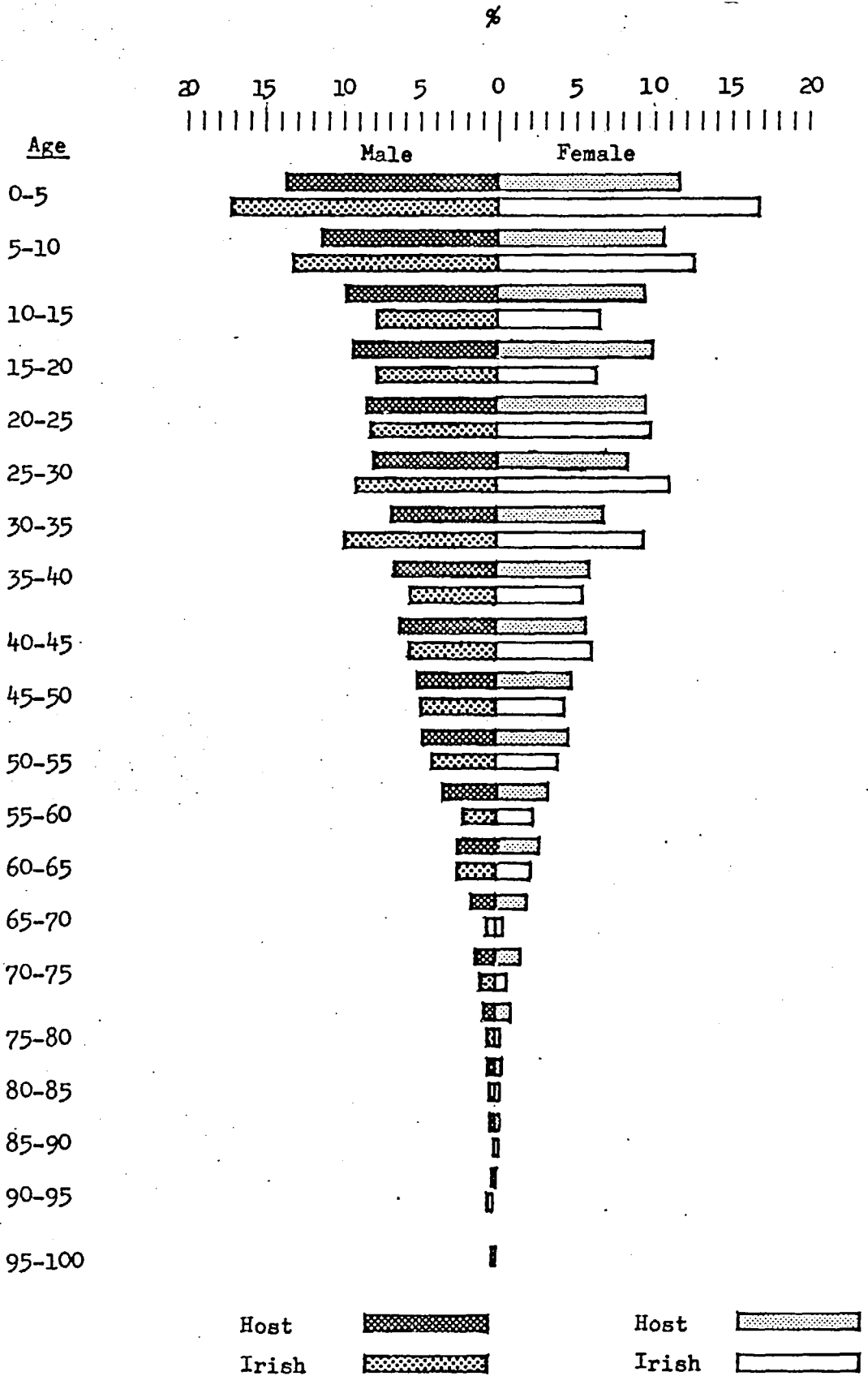


Table 27

Age and Sex Structure in York.  
1871

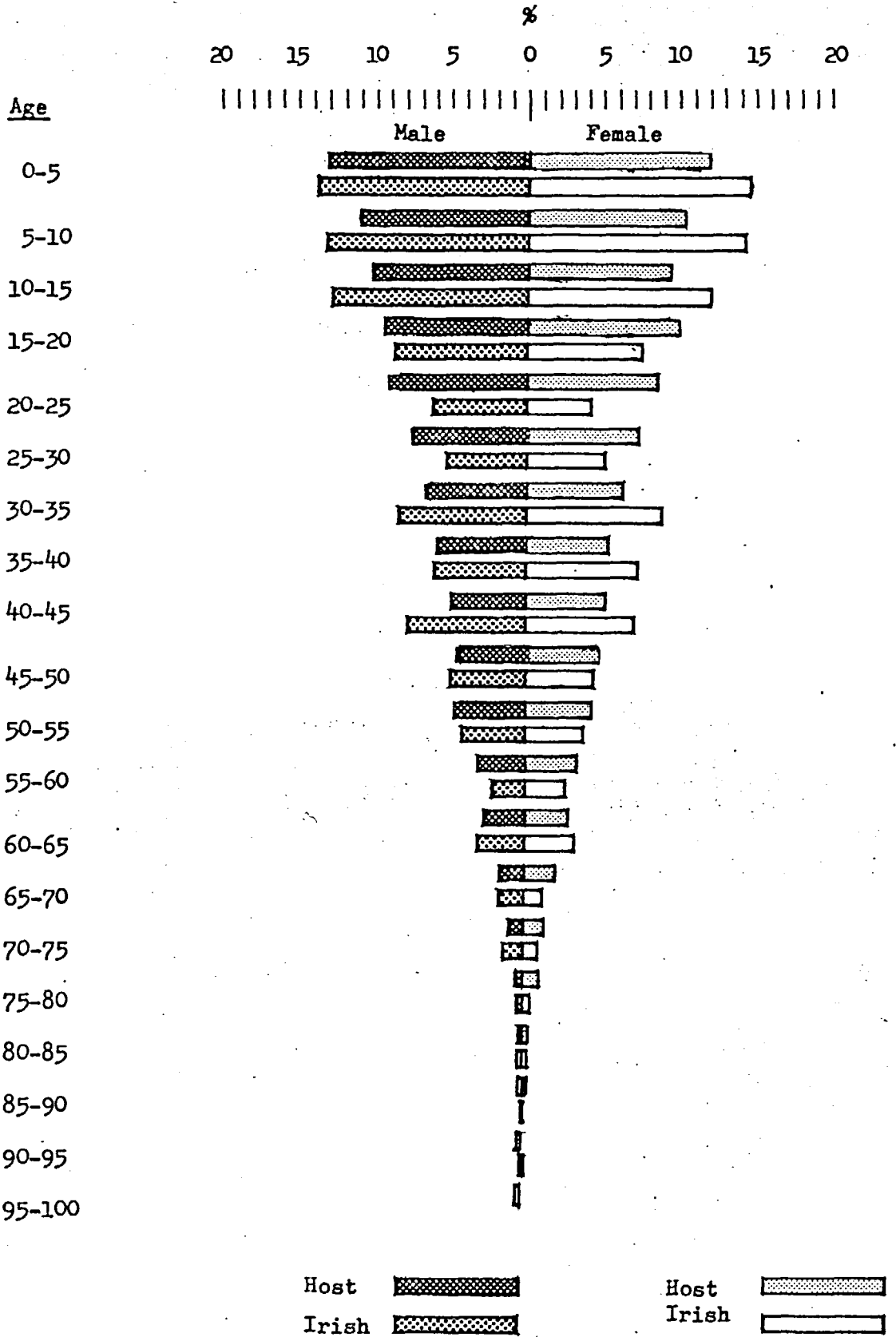
<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Host Population (excluding Irish)</u>		<u>Irish Population</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
0-5	2,559	2,545	235	244
5-10	2,189	2,260	225	241
10-15	2,111	2,077	219	201
15-20	1,910	2,128	149	127
20-25	1,755	1,980	106	71
25-30	1,500	1,693	89	93
30-35	1,295	1,461	144	149
35-40	1,133	1,271	103	126
40-45	1,034	1,190	131	121
45-50	892	1,043	84	77
50-55	879	986	71	65
55-60	670	789	38	45
60-65	562	635	54	56
65-70	358	467	29	21
70-75	214	333	22	17
75-80	85	204	6	10
80-85	62	82	2	7
85-90	13	35	0	1
90-95	6	6	0	1
95-100	2	2	0	0
Total	<u>19,229</u>	<u>21,187</u>	<u>1,707</u>	<u>1,673</u>

Table 28

Age and Sex Structure in York.  
1871

Age Group	Host Population (excluding Irish) % in each age group		Irish Population % in each age group	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-5	13.3	12.0	13.8	14.6
5-10	11.3	10.7	13.2	14.4
10-15	10.9	9.8	12.8	12.0
15-20	9.9	10.0	8.7	7.6
20-25	9.1	9.3	6.2	4.2
25-30	7.8	8.0	5.2	5.6
30-35	6.7	6.9	8.4	8.9
35-40	5.9	6.0	6.0	7.5
40-45	5.4	5.6	7.7	7.2
45-50	4.6	4.9	4.9	4.6
50-55	4.6	4.6	4.2	3.9
55-60	3.5	3.7	2.2	2.7
60-65	2.9	3.0	3.2	3.3
65-70	1.8	2.2	1.7	1.3
70-75	1.1	1.6	1.3	1.0
75-80	0.4	1.0	0.4	0.6
80-85	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.4
85-90	0.06	0.2	0	0.06
90-95	0.02	0.02	0	0.06
95-100	0.009	0	0	0

Age and Sex Structure of York Population, 1871.



Tables 27 and 28 show that by 1871, though the proportions had not increased during the decade, the disparity between the two communities in the 0-10 age groups was still as marked as in the previous census, and had extended into the age-group 10-15. Between the ages of 15 and 30, however, the proportion of the Irish community was now lower than that of the host population, but higher than it in the age range 30-45. This pattern can be readily observed in Graph 6.

So far, no account has been taken of the proportion of males to females in each age group, either in the Irish or host population. As might be expected, given the circumstances of their leaving their home country, there was a surplus of males in the Irish community, especially in the immediate post-Famine census - though as the following Tables show, this was not very marked. Compared with the host community, however, the proportion of Irish males to females is particularly high after 1841. The significance of this relative shortage of Irish women in what was, as has been shown, a close-knit community is difficult to determine, however it probably helps to account for the greater number of Irish men than women taking part in mixed marriages. It might also partially explain the relatively small numbers of Irish women who became prostitutes, since they had a much greater chance of marriage within their own group than did women of marriageable age in the host community, who outnumbered males in almost every age group, throughout the period. The above information is also presented in Graphs 7, 8 and 9.

Table 29

Percentage of Males in Each Age Group.  
1851

Age Group	Host Pop. (exc. Irish) %	Irish %	Irish + or -
0-5	51.0	49.0	- 2.0
5-10	49.5	55.3	+ 5.8
10-15	49.5	54.8	+ 5.3
15-20	43.6	54.0	+10.4
20-25	41.9	52.8	+10.9
25-30	44.3	55.7	+11.4
30-35	46.8	57.0	+10.2
35-40	47.7	47.0	- 0.7
40-45	47.3	55.3	+ 8.0
45-50	48.1	53.5	+ 5.4
50-55	44.3	54.5	+10.2
55-60	42.5	65.6	+24.1
60-65	43.4	50.9	+ 7.5
65-70	43.1	50.0	+ 6.9
70-75	36.8	55.3	+ 8.5
75-80	32.1	50.0	+17.9
80-85	33.1	33.3	+ 0.2
85-90	27.8	-	-

Percentage of York Males in Each Age Group, 1851.

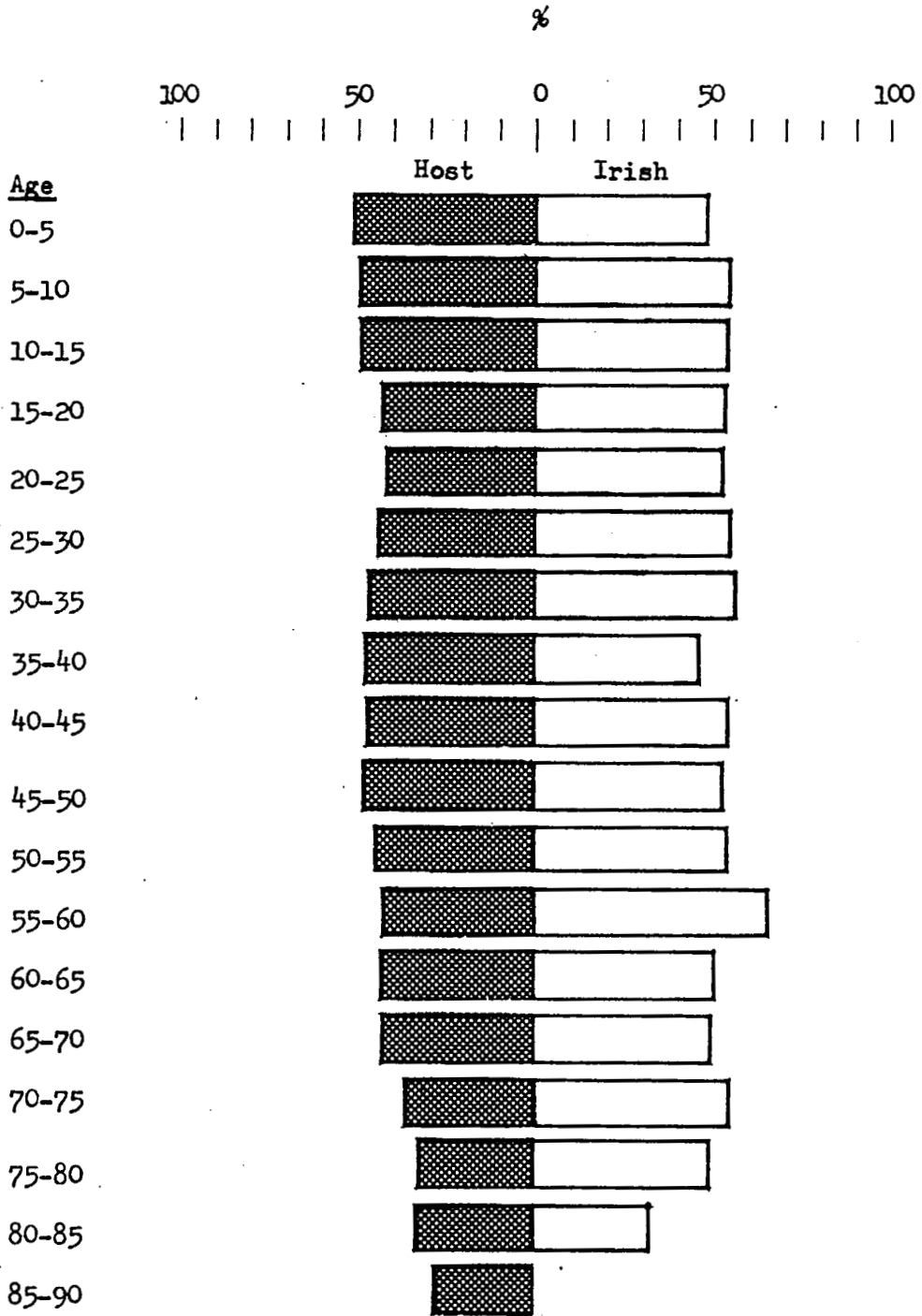


Table 30

Percentage of Males in Each Age Group.  
1861

Age Group	Host Pop. (exc. Irish) %	Irish %	Irish + or -
0-5	50.9	52.5	+ 1.6
5-10	49.1	52.7	+ 3.6
10-15	48.4	56.0	+ 7.6
15-20	45.8	56.2	+10.4
20-25	44.5	47.3	+ 2.8
25-30	45.8	46.6	+ 0.8
30-35	46.3	52.5	+ 6.2
35-40	48.8	52.2	+ 3.4
40-45	48.7	49.2	+ 0.5
45-50	47.1	53.6	+ 6.5
50-55	47.5	52.3	+ 4.8
55-60	47.8	49.3	+ 1.5
60-65	43.6	55.4	+11.8
65-70	39.4	50.0	+10.6
70-75	38.3	57.7	+19.4
75-80	34.8	61.5	+26.7
80-85	32.1	85.7	+53.6
85-90	35.5	50.0	+14.5
90-95	29.4	100.0	+70.6



Percentage of York Males in Each Age Group, 1861.

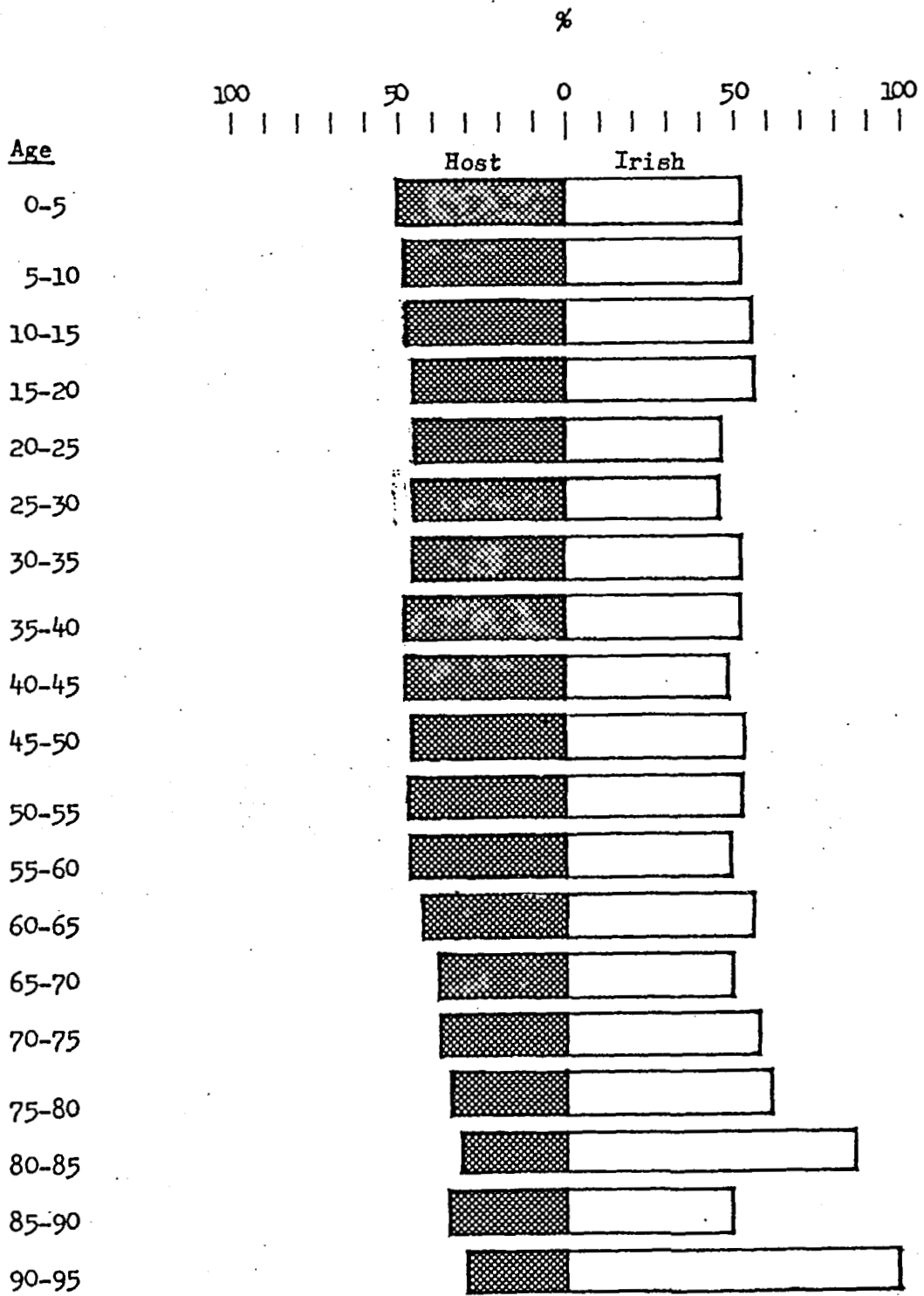


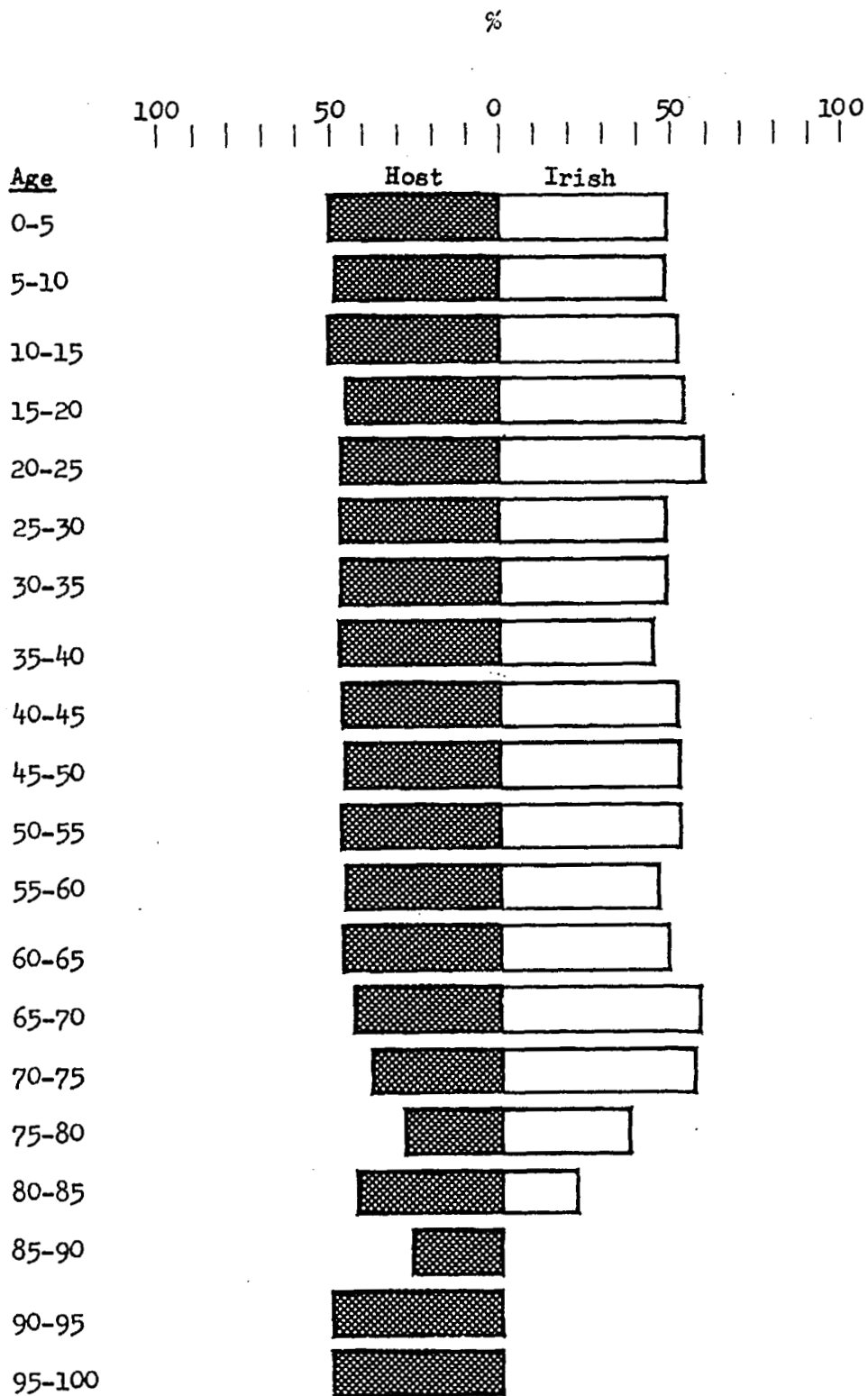
Table 31

Percentage of Males in Each Age Group.  
1871

Age Group	Host Pop. (exc. Irish) %	Irish %	Irish + or -
0-5	50.1	49.1	- 1.0
5-10	49.2	48.3	- 0.9
10-15	50.4	52.1	+ 1.7
15-20	45.6	54.0	+ 8.4
20-25	47.0	59.9	+12.9
25-30	47.0	48.9	+11.9
30-35	47.0	49.1	+12.1
35-40	47.1	45.0	- 2.1
40-45	46.5	52.0	+ 5.5
45-50	46.1	52.2	+ 6.1
50-55	47.1	52.2	+ 5.1
55-60	45.9	45.8	- 0.1
60-65	47.0	49.1	+ 2.1
65-70	43.4	58.0	+14.6
70-75	39.1	56.4	+17.3
75-80	29.4	37.5	+ 8.1
80-85	43.0	22.2	-20.8
85-90	27.1	-	-27.1
90-95	50.0	-	-50.0
95-100	50.0	-	-50.0

Graph 9

Percentage of York Males in Each Age Group, 1871.



### Family Size.

It was observed in Chapter II that for 1841, using Armstrong's sample of the whole population of York, Irish family sizes were in general larger than that of the host community. The same observation can be made for 1851 (the last census for which such evidence of a comparable nature is available) when 17% of the Irish in York were living in families of more than six persons, compared with only 8.3% for the whole population of the city.<sup>1</sup> It is likely that this disparity continued, since, although the figure dropped to 12.6% in 1861, the percentage of the Irish community living in families of more than six persons rose by 1871 to 27.7%. Similarly, the much smaller percentage of the Irish population living in two or three persons families than that of the host population, already noted for 1841, continued in 1851.

The distribution of family sizes in the Irish community in York in the three post-Famine censuses is set out in the following Table. Comparison between the three censuses indicates that the percentage of one person families in the Irish community fell sharply after 1851, and to a lesser extent there was a decline in the percentage of persons living in two and three person families. The proportion of Irish individuals in five, six and eight person families, on the other hand, rose significantly in the period.

<sup>1</sup>Armstrong, op. cit., p.176.

Table 32

Distribution of Irish Family Sizes in York, 1851-1871.

<u>Persons in Family</u>	<u>1851</u>		<u>1861</u>		<u>1871</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
1	498	19.0	347	10.7	326	9.6
2	302	11.5	350	10.8	294	8.7
3	393	15.0	417	12.8	309	9.1
4	404	15.4	544	16.7	472	14.0
5	275	10.5	675	20.8	520	15.4
6	306	11.7	504	15.5	522	15.4
7	224	8.6	224	6.9	358	10.6
8	80	3.0	128	3.9	359	10.6
9	72	2.8	36	1.1	99	2.9
10	50	1.9	20	0.6	40	1.2
11	0	0	0	0	44	1.3
12	0	0	0	0	24	0.7
13	13	0.5	0	0	13	0.4

### Household Size.

Whereas for 1841 an analysis was made of address sizes, this has been omitted for the three post-Famine censuses because of the departure by some enumerators, from the conventions which they were instructed to use for distinguishing between different addresses. This confusion is particularly evident in areas like the Bedern, or Water Lanes, where large houses had been converted and sub-let into several different dwellings - making an accurate measurement of address sizes, or even a calculation as to the number of dwellings in such areas, impossible. The frequent absence of house numbers was experienced throughout the initial stages of collecting the data from the censuses, however, at least it was the case in areas containing long rows of working-class terraces like Hope Street or Long Close Lane that the enumerator distinguished between separate houses by indicating the fact appropriately. In the multi-occupied tenements in areas like the Bedern or Water Lanes, however, especially in 1861, this convention, understandably perhaps, was not always followed, presumably because the enumerator found himself unable to apply it. Large numbers of people are thus apparently living in single houses, though since these were usually "buildings" it is impossible in the absence of properly applied enumeration procedures, to determine either the number of dwellings or how their occupants were distributed between them.

Similar difficulties do not apply to an analysis of household sizes, however, since, though the enumerators sometimes failed to indicate separate dwellings, individual households can always be identified. Table 33 and Graph 10 give the distribution of the Irish community in York by household sizes between 1841 and 1871. Individuals in institutions such as the Workhouse, the House of

Correction, the County Hospital, York Castle and boarding schools, together with those soldiers in the barracks not living in married quarters have been totalled and appear in the Table and Graph, though obviously they cannot be regarded as members of households.

It is clear that the early post-Famine immigrants lived to a much lesser extent in small households than did the Irish in the city in 1841 or in the two later censuses. The proportion living in two, three and four person households dropped from 20.6% in 1841 to 15.6% in 1851, then rose to 27.9% in 1861 and fell slightly to 26.6% in 1871. Similarly, the proportion living in five and six person households fell from 25% in 1841 to 14% in 1851, rising to 35.6% in 1861 and dropping to 29.8% in 1871. For the larger households, however, the reverse applied, a greater proportion of the Irish population living in households containing between 10 and 15 individuals in 1851 than in any other of the censal years - 16.5% in 1841, 23.9% in 1851, 6.3% in 1861 and 7% in 1871.

It is apparent, therefore, from the evidence already presented in the previous Chapter on the type of accommodation inhabited by the bulk of the Irish community, that the early post-Famine immigrants in York at least, lived in acutely overcrowded conditions. This was partly the result, as will be shown on page 217, of the unusually high number of lodgers recorded in the 1851 census.

Table 33

## Irish Household Sizes, 1841-1871.

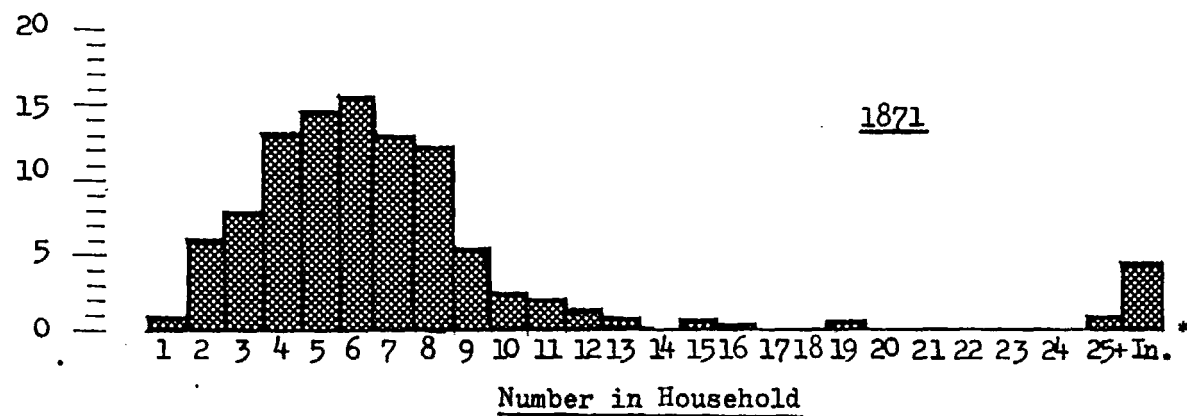
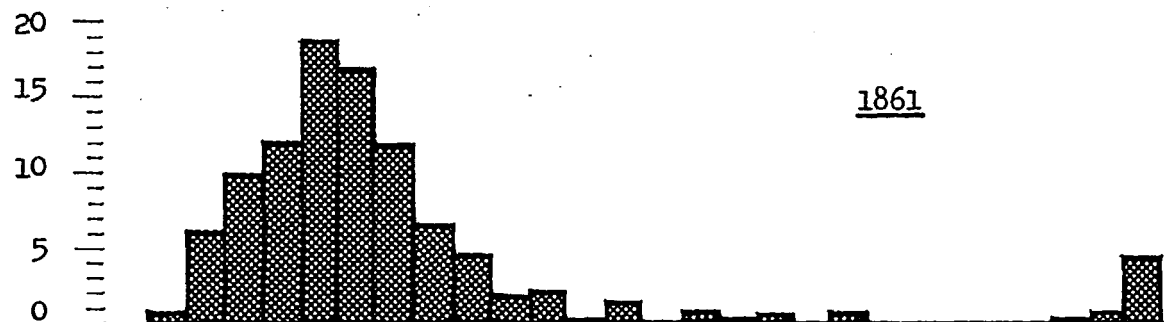
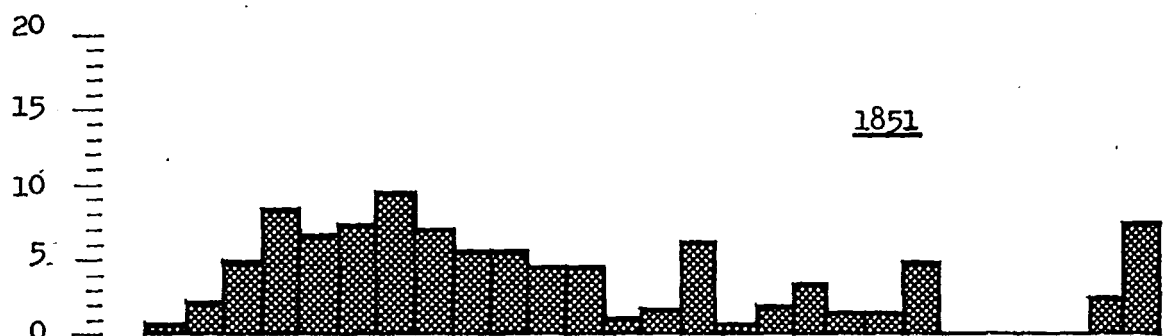
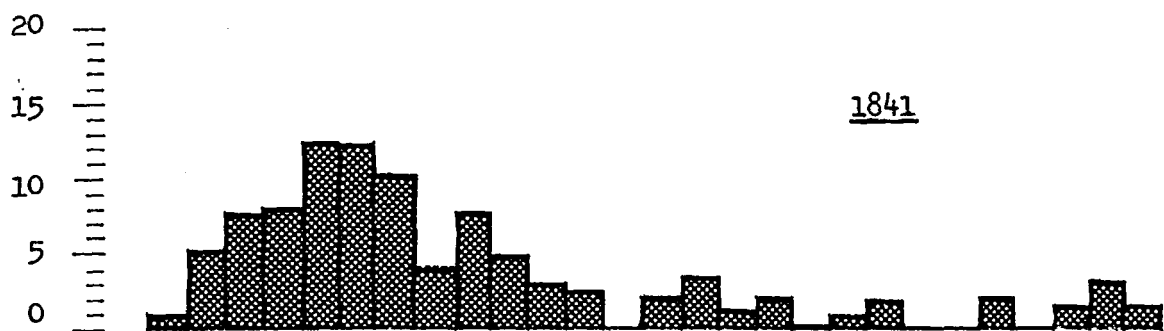
<u>Number in Household</u>	<u>% of Pop. 1841</u>	<u>% of Pop. 1851</u>	<u>% of Pop. 1861</u>	<u>% of Pop. 1871</u>
1	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.8
2	5.2	2.3	6.0	5.9
3	7.5	4.9	9.9	7.7
4	7.9	8.4	12.0	13.0
5	12.5	6.7	18.8	14.4
6	12.4	7.3	16.8	15.4
7	10.2	9.5	11.9	12.8
8	4.0	7.0	6.5	12.1
9	7.7	5.6	4.6	5.3
10	4.9	5.7	1.8	2.4
11	3.1	4.6	2.1	2.1
12	2.6	4.6	0.3	1.3
13	-	1.1	1.4	0.7
14	2.2	1.7	-	-
15	3.7	6.2	0.7	0.5
16	1.3	0.7	0.3	0.3
17	2.2	1.9	0.5	-
18	0.1	3.4	-	-
19	0.9	1.5	0.6	0.4
20	2.0	1.5	-	-
21	-	4.8	-	-
22	-	-	-	-
23	2.2	-	-	-
24	-	-	-	-
25	1.5	-	0.03	-
25+	3.3	2.5	0.8	0.8
Institutions <sup>1</sup>	1.6	7.5	4.3	4.5

<sup>1</sup>Bar Convent, Barracks, Boarding Schools, House of Correction, Hospitals, Workhouse, York Castle.



Irish Household Sizes, 1841-1871.

% of Irish Population



\*Institutions.

## Lodgers.

One indication of social mobility is the proportion of a community who were either lodgers, or who needed to take in lodgers, and the extent to which these proportions changed over time.<sup>1</sup> Table 34 divides the post-Famine Irish population in York into percentages who were lodgers, people not lodgers themselves but living in households containing lodgers (i.e. families of, and household heads with lodgers), individuals in institutions (see above) and "visitors". Relationship to head of household was not provided in the 1841 census, so comparable information in this respect is unavailable for that year.

Table 34

### Proportions of Irish Lodgers in York, 1851-1871.

	<u>Lodgers</u>	<u>Households With Lodgers</u>	<u>Households Without Lodgers</u>	<u>Institutions</u>	<u>Visitors</u>
1851	25.8	24.2	40.8	7.5	1.7
1861	8.5	18.1	68.0	4.3	1.2
1871	4.5	12.6	77.9	4.5	0.6

The above Table, showing the falling proportion of both lodgers and individuals in households containing lodgers on the one hand, and the increasing number of members of households without lodgers on the other, suggests that in this respect at least, a slight improvement in the situation of the successive Irish communities in York took

<sup>1</sup>Another indication, occupational mobility, is discussed in Chapter XI.

place in the 20 year period. The reduction in the number of persons classified as lodgers, however, did not necessarily result in a general diminution of overcrowding, since, as was seen in the previous Chapter, it was still the case in 1861 and 1871 that many of the small houses in streets like Long Close Lane and Hope Street, or the Walmgate Yards, continued to be occupied by more than one family - though each might have been classified as a separate household.

Thus, in 1861 for example, three separate households, none with lodgers, were occupying one of the small four roomed cottages in Hope Street, two families containing five and one containing six individuals. Other houses in the street, some with only two rooms, contained 10, 11 and 14 individuals split up into separate households, but not including lodgers. In Long Close Lane there were houses containing 15 and 11 individuals, and several of the two roomed cottages in Barley Corn Passage and Malt Shovel Yard (only 13 feet square) accommodated three, four or five households, totalling in one case, 20 individuals. In Wide Yard, Hungate, too, there were houses in this census containing 19 and 20 individuals. The situation had improved by 1871 but even in this census there were frequent instances of obvious overcrowding and multi-family occupation.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the reduction in the number of lodgers after 1851, therefore, and the consequent decrease in the size of many households, it was still the case in the later censuses that large numbers of persons, though in smaller individual households and with fewer lodgers than formerly, shared the same overcrowded dwelling.

<sup>1</sup>The city Health Department Records show that in some houses this continued to be the case (though to a lesser extent) until the properties were cleared in the 1920's and 30's.

## Birth, Marriage and Death Rates.

The vital characteristics of any community are, of course, its rates of fertility and mortality and the changes over time which occur in these. It has already been observed in Chapter I, however, that it is not possible to measure these for the Irish community in York, since the Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths do not distinguish between the Irish and the rest of the population. In theory it would, of course, be possible, as has been done with the Poor Law records and evidence from the newspapers, to attempt to identify individuals named in the above records as Irish, by comparing them in each of the censal years with the Irish population extracted from the enumerators' notebooks. In practice, however, such an analysis, involving an examination of approximately 9,000 entries for births and deaths alone (with a search fee of 75P. for each entry) would be prohibitive both financially and in terms of the time and effort involved.

An alternative source of information might have been found in the records of the Roman Catholic Church in York - the most relevant being those for St. George's Church. As already observed, however, these cannot be used since they are seriously incomplete. The Baptismal records extend back only as far as November 1857 (thus ruling out an analysis of the first two censal years) and addresses were not included in the series.<sup>1</sup> The Marriage Registers have been preserved only since 1858, and in these too, for most of the period

<sup>1</sup>The absence of addresses, together with other evidence permitting identification such as occupation, names and ages of other children in the family, etc., poses particular difficulties in the analysis of a community in which so many individuals and even couples, have the same names.

of this study, addresses were not included. The Burial Registers however, are even less complete and exist for only one censal year, 1871. An additional minor objection to the use of these records is the fact that the Baptismal Registers are, of course, records of baptism rather than birth, and it follows therefore, particularly in a community in which a high infant mortality rate could be expected, that the birth rate might well have been higher than these registers would indicate.<sup>1</sup> A further objection arises from the fact that Irish individuals need not necessarily have been Catholics, and as such would have been excluded from these records; on the other hand, of course, non-Irish Catholics would be included.

In spite of the absence of statistical data on fertility and mortality rates specific to the Irish population in York, however, it is reasonable to conclude, given the reasons for their departure from Ireland, their continued deprivation and poverty and the fact that they mainly lived in the poorest, most insanitary and overcrowded quarters of the city, that their mortality rate at least, would be higher than that of the host population.

.....

This Chapter has been an analysis of the measurable demographic characteristics of the Irish community in York taken from the ~~census~~ enumerators' notebooks over the 30 year period. The changes in these have been examined and where possible, a comparison has been made with relevant information for that of the host population. In one instance an indication of social mobility

<sup>1</sup>This discrepancy would to some extent be offset by the Catholic practice of early baptism.

was apparent in the change over time in the proportion of lodgers and of households without them. A further aspect of social mobility will be examined in the following Chapter, concerned with the changing occupational and social structure of the Irish community in York.

## CHAPTER VII

### OCCUPATIONS OF THE POST-FAMINE IRISH COMMUNITY

1851

Of the total 1,404 male members of the York Irish community recorded on the 1851 census, 994 (70.8%) were occupied and 410 (29.2%) were unoccupied. The latter may be divided as follows: 238 (17.0% of total Irish males) were under sixteen years of age and had no occupation; 156 (11.0%) were scholars; and 15 (1.1%) were over the age of sixteen with no occupation.

Occupied Irish males were engaged in 130 different categories of employment, but of these, only the 14 occupations in the following Table accounted respectively for 1% or more of the total of those occupied. In accordance with the section on pre-famine Irish occupations in 1841 (Chapter II) Column 4 compares those occupations accounting for more than 2% of the male Irish labour force (first six categories) with the total number engaged in these employments in York. Column 5 shows Irish males as a percentage of that total. In all, Table 35 accounts for 76.6% of occupied Irish males, 64.8% of them being concentrated in occupations containing more than 2% of their number.

Table 35

Occupations Accounting for more than 1% of  
Total Occupied Irish Males in York in 1851.

	1	2	3	4
	Number	% of Occupied Irish Males	York Total in Occupation (Males)	Irish % of Total
Farm worker & Field lab.	335	33.7	668	50.1
Labourer	178	17.9	684	26.0
Army*	91	9.1	119	76.5
Ordnance Survey	29	2.9	-	-
Glass Blower	29	2.9	162	17.9
Bricklayers lab.	26	2.6	-	-
Hawker	19	1.9		
Shoemaker	18	1.8		
Prisoner	13	1.3		
Messenger	12	1.2		
Pensioner	11	1.1		
Pauper	11	1.1		
Servant	10	1.0		

\*This includes 11 army personnel attached to the Ordnance Survey.



It will be seen that farm workers and labourers together accounted for more than half of the total Irish male labour force, and that Irish farm workers represented slightly more than half the total agricultural workers in the city. With regard to army personnel, in order to ensure comparability with the printed abstracts, all ranks have been grouped together - though of course they have been divided below (page 236) between officers and non-commissioned ranks for the purpose of social classification. Irish army personnel accounted for 76.5% of the males stationed at the York Barracks together with those attached to the Ordnance Survey (the largest percentage of any occupation) and this proportion increases in subsequent censuses. The only other group requiring comment is that listed under the Ordnance Survey. This group, like the soldiers in the Barracks, is completely distinct from the main community of post-Famine Irish immigrants. From the Marriage Registers of St. George's Roman Catholic Church, it is evident that there was a certain amount of intermarriage between Irish girls from York and Irish soldiers from the Barracks. The area of York containing the highest concentration of public houses and beershops was that of Walmgate<sup>1</sup> - in whose neighbourhood the majority of Irish persons in York lived, and through which soldiers from the Barracks (on the eastern side of the city) would pass on their way to the city centre, or to the newly erected Catholic Church off Walmgate, in the heart of the Irish area. Therefore, although the Irish community in the Barracks was quite distinct from that in the city - the soldiers not having settled in York as a result

<sup>1</sup>See page 290.

of post-Famine emigration (though many do doubt were caused to join up for that reason) and not arriving as the Famine immigrants did, destitute, half-starved and without work, there was obviously a certain amount of permanent contact between the two groups.

The Ordnance Survey workers, however, all of whom were Irish, were quite different, and do not appear to have mixed in any permanent way either with the pre-Famine Irish community, the Irish community in the Barracks (several of the soldiers having their Irish wives and families with them) or with the main Irish community of post-Famine immigrants. Since they appear only on the 1851 census, they will be discussed at this point. The community attached to the Ordnance Survey was much larger than the above Table implies, since in that category only Ordnance Surveyors and their assistants are included, their numbers being more than one percent of total occupied Irish males. Other employees of that department, however, included Civil Engineers, Ordnance Survey Clerks, draftsmen, an Accountant, messengers and female cleaners, as well as the various army personnel living and working with them who were quite separate from the soldiers in the Barracks. All the employees of the Ordnance Survey Department, together with the soldiers with them were Irish born, not one English person being recorded in that occupation. It is evident from the birthplaces of the younger children in their families that the community had, previous to its arrival in York been working on the Survey in Preston, and before that in Liverpool, and that it had been stationed in York for about 3 years. Apparently none of them settled in the city, there being no record of them on subsequent censuses. The community - the survey workers, the army personnel and their respective families - totalled 177

individuals, and was almost entirely concentrated in the parish of St. Mary Bishophill Junior, only 29 of their number living in the neighbouring parish of St. Mary Bishophill Senior. Unlike their fellow countrymen who fled to York as a result of the Famine, they were housed in superior artizans' dwellings such as those in the terraces off Holgate Road - Lowther, Oxford and Cambridge Streets, and in those off Nunnery Lane such as Dove, Swann and Dale Streets. Many of their non-Irish neighbours were either the early Railway Carriage workers or employed in other skilled occupations. Of the 177 individuals in this compact Irish community, 50 were actually employed by the Department, nine of these had their sons working with them and four members of the group had single lodgers also attached to the survey. None, however, had lodgers other than those employed in the Department. In all cases household size was equal to address size, averaging 6.1 persons per house.

Nine of the male employees lodged with neighbouring non-Irish families who were not, apparently, connected with the Ordnance Department. Since they were separated both physically and socially from the bulk of the Irish population in the city, with whom they do not appear to have mixed, the Ordnance Survey workers may be regarded as a completely distinct community.

Of the 1,214 total females in the York Irish community in 1851, 382 (31.5%) were occupied, the remaining 832 (68.5%) being accounted for as follows: 249 (20.5% of total Irish females) were under 16 years with no occupation; 138 (11.4%) were scholars; 63 (5.2%) were over 16 years and without an occupation; and 382 (31.5%) were unemployed wives or widows.

The 382 occupied females were engaged in 30 different types of employment, of these, however, only the 17 occupations in Table 36 accounted respectively for 1% or more of the total of those occupied. As in the case of males, a comparison has been made (where possible) for those occupations accounting for more than 2% of occupied Irish females with the total number in that occupation in York. In all, Table 36 accounts for 92.4% of occupied Irish females, 80.7% of them being concentrated in occupations which contained more than 2% of their number.

Table 36 (below) shows that as with the males, though to a lesser extent, agricultural workers and labourers were by far the largest groups of occupied females in the Irish community, together in this case with servants. In contrast with the latter, however, Irish female agricultural workers accounted for all women thus occupied in York, and Irish women represented 78.3% of the city's female labourers. In the case of servants, on the other hand, the 65 Irish females employed as such represented only 3.5% of the total number in the occupation in the city - an indication both of the importance of domestic service in York, and the general reluctance of the servant-keeping class to employ Irish domestics in their houses.

Table 36

Occupations Accounting for more than 1% of  
Total Occupied Irish Females in York in 1851.

	1	2	3	4
	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Occupied Irish Females</u>	<u>York Total in Occupation (Females)</u>	<u>Irish % of Total</u>
Farm worker <sup>1</sup> & Field lab.	107	28.0	102	100+
Labourer	65	17.0	83	78.3
Servant	65	17.0	1,859	3.5
Charwoman	17	4.5	-	-
Hawker	16	4.2	39	41.0
Nun	10	2.6	-	-
Pauper	10	2.6	-	-
Beggar	9	2.4	-	-
Dressmaker	8	2.0	-	-
Fundholder	8	2.0	-	-
Laundress etc.	<u>7</u>	<u>1.8</u>		
Seamstress	7	1.8		
Staymaker	7	1.8		
Nurse	6	1.6		
Teacher	5	1.3		
Milliner	5	1.3		
Housekeeper	5	1.3		

<sup>1</sup>As will be seen, the total number of Irish women engaged in agriculture (101 farm workers and 6 field labourers) is in fact larger than the number returned for the whole of York in the printed census, that being only 102.

York's total 107 female agricultural labourers (including 6 field labourers) was high in comparison with other Yorkshire towns, several of which, as mentioned in Chapter III, had an Irish immigrant community proportionately as large as that of York, and also a sizable male agricultural labour force. Leeds, for example, with an Irish-born population of 4.9% (compared with York's 5.3%) had an agricultural labour force of 1,170 (compared with York's 767) only 19 of whom, however, were female. Sheffield with 3.3% Irish-born persons had 626 agricultural labourers, only 12 of whom were female; Bradford with 8.9% Irish born persons contained 437 agricultural labourers only 1 of whom was female; and Wakefield, out of a total of 462, recorded only 10 female agricultural workers. Halifax, with 27 female agricultural labourers out of a total of 258 (Irish-born persons being 6.2% of the total population) contained the highest number amongst other principal Yorkshire towns, though this too was significantly lower than the total employed in York. In Huddersfield, out of a total of 148 agricultural labourers only 1 was female (Irish community 5.1%) and in Hull, whose Irish-born population was 3.5% of the total, again only 1 female was recorded in that occupation, out of a total of 117.

Irish occupations in the 3 post-Famine censuses have been further examined in two ways, firstly to show the way in which major occupations were distributed parochially throughout York, and secondly to show how, in parishes of major Irish concentration<sup>1</sup> the occupations of the immigrants were apportioned. The major occupations

<sup>1</sup>These are the 8 or so at each census which contained more than 4% of the total Irish population in the city.

examined according to parochial distribution in 1851 are farm workers, labourers, servants, soldiers, hawkers, glass-blowers and bricklayers' labourers. It will be seen from Table 37 that the majority of farm workers were concentrated in three of the most heavily Irish populated parishes - Bedern, St. George and to a lesser extent, St. Dennis; but that almost 90% of the labourers were to be found in three separate Irish parishes - St. Peter le Willows, St. Margaret and St. Mary Castlegate. Servants, as might be expected, were scattered throughout various parishes (those in the "Irish" parishes living mainly with their own families rather than their employers); and soldiers concentrated in the Barracks and St. Mary Bishophill Junior with the workers on the Ordnance Survey. The majority of individuals in other occupations were to be found in general in those parishes such as St. George and St. Margaret, containing the highest concentration of Irish settlement.

Table 37

Parochial Distribution of Major Irish Occupations, 1851.<sup>1</sup>Farm Workers (443)

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Irish in Occupation</u>
Minster Yard with Bedern	206	46.5
St. George	133	30.0
St. Dennis	71	16.0
St. Michael Spurriergate	15	3.4
St. Lawrence	5	1.1
Holy Trinity Goodramgate	4	0.9
St. Margaret	4	0.9

Labourers (243)

St. Peter le Willows	103	42.4
St. Margaret	74	30.5
St. Mary Castlegate	30	12.3
St. Dennis	6	2.5
St. Peter the Little	3	1.2
St. Maurice	3	1.2
St. Mary Bishophill Junior	3	1.2

Servants (75)

St. George	8	10.7
St. Margaret	8	10.7
St. Mary Bishophill Junior	6	8.0
Minster Yard with Bedern	6	8.0
York Barracks	6	8.0
Holy Trinity Goodramgate	5	6.7
St. Wilfred	5	6.7
St. Maurice	4	5.3
St. Michael le Belfrey	4	5.3
St. Michael Spurriergate	4	5.3
St. Mary Castlegate	3	4.0



Soldiers (90)

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Irish in Occupation</u>
York Barracks	72	80.0
St. Mary Bishophill Junior	10	11.1

Hawkers (35)

St. Margaret	11	31.5
St. George	7	20.0
St. Saviour	7	20.0

Glass Blowers (29)

St. George	14	48.3
St. Olave	5	17.2
St. Dennis	4	13.8

Bricklayers' Labourers (26)

St. Dennis	10	38.4
St. Saviour	5	19.2
St. George	4	15.4
Minster Yard with Bedern	4	15.4

<sup>1</sup>Parishes containing less than 3 individuals for respective occupations have been excluded from this Table.

Table 38

1851 Occupational Distribution  
in Parishes of Major Irish Settlement.

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St. George (18.8% of Total Irish Population)

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Occupied Irish in Parish</u>
Farmworker	133	60.5
Glass Blower	14	6.4
Charwoman	9	4.1
Servant	8	3.6
Messenger	7	3.2
Hawker	7	3.2
Nurse	5	2.3
Bricklayers' labourer	4	1.8
Tailor	4	1.8

Minster Yard with Bedern (14.3%)

Farm worker	206	89.2
Servant	6	2.6
Bricklayers' Labourer	4	1.7

St. Margaret (8.9%)

Labourer	74	54.8
Hawker	11	8.1
Servant	8	5.9
Shoemaker	4	3.0
Farmworker	4	3.0
Drover	3	2.2
Glass Cutters' Apprentice	3	2.2

St. Dennis (8.8%)

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Occupied Irish in Parish</u>
Farm Worker	71	63.4
Bricklayers' Labourer	10	8.9
Labourer	6	5.4
Glass Blower	4	3.6

St. Mary Bishophill Junior (8.6%)

Ordnance Survey Assistant	17	19.3
Ordnance Surveyor	8	9.1
Soldier	10	11.4
Servant	6	6.8
Fundholder	3	3.4
Staymaker	3	3.4
Ordnance Survey Clerk	3	3.4
Railway Engine Fitter	3	3.4
Labourer	3	3.4

St. Peter le Willows (6.5%)

Labourer	103	93.6
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York Barracks (5.1%)

Soldier	50	61.7
Servant	6	7.4
Sergeant	5	6.2

St. Mary Castlegate (5.0%)

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Occupied Irish in Parish</u>
Labourer	39	45.9
Beggar	16	18.8
Pauper	16	18.8
Servant	3	3.5

It is apparent from the above Table that certain occupations tended to be concentrated in particular parishes - the occupied Irish in St. Peter le Willows, for example, being almost entirely labourers. Further concentration within parishes occurred, as is evident in the Chapter on location, the whole Irish population in this case (170) living just inside Walmgate Bar, 154 of them being crowded into the narrow court officially called Britannia (later Alexandra) Yard, but dubbed Hibernia Place by the newspapers.<sup>1</sup> Farm workers accounted for almost 90% of the occupied Irish in the Bedern, and about 60% of the Irish labour force of St. Dennis and St. George. Labourers accounted for approximately half the total occupied Irish in the parishes of St. Margaret and St. Mary Castlegate; while professional and skilled occupations (mainly the Ordnance Survey group) were to be found in the better class area of St. Mary Bishophill Junior. St. Mary Castlegate had a high proportion of beggars and paupers, due no doubt to the many lodging houses in the Water Lanes and Cross Alley, and the transient nature of residence there.

<sup>1</sup>See Britannia Yard Locational Case Study.

The social classification of the occupied Irish in York in 1851 was as follows:

<u>Social Class</u>	<u>Number in Class</u>	<u>% of Occupied Irish</u>
I	48	3.4
II	39	2.8
III	327	23.4
IV	550	40.2
V	443	29.8

Obviously Social Class I is swollen in this census by Ordnance Surveyors and commissioned army officers, who together account for 38 of the total. Also included are clergymen, doctors, a solicitor, a tax inspector and a naval commander. Almost 30% of the total occupied Irish were engaged in skilled or professional employment, Class IV being the largest single Class because of the inclusion in it of agricultural labourers. Comparison of social classification over the four censuses will be carried out below (page 265).

This completes the analysis of Irish occupations from the 1851 census. Comparison with the previous and two subsequent censuses will be carried out after they too have been examined.

1861

Male members of the York Irish community in 1861 totalled 1,687, of whom 1,050 (62.2% of total Irish males) were occupied and 637 (37.8%) were unoccupied. Of the unoccupied, 492 (25.4% of total Irish males) were under 16 with no occupation, 186 (11.1%) were scholars and 22 (1.3%) were over 16 with no occupation.

Irish males were engaged in 161 different categories of employment, but as in the previous two censuses, relatively few (10 in this case) accounted for more than 1% of the total occupied. Those listed in the following Table contained 72.3% of the total Irish male labour force, 64.9% being concentrated in only 5 occupations of more than 2%. These, in accordance with Tables 35 and 36, are compared with the total numbers in such occupations in York.

Comparison with the 1851 census shows that the number of Irish farm workers and their proportion of the total hardly changed over the ten year period, and that the figures for labourers too remained virtually unaltered. There were changes, however. Apart from the absence of Ordnance Survey workers, numbers of army personnel dropped slightly as did those for glass blowers, though there was actually an increase in the total number of Irish males engaged in the industry as a whole. Numbers of bricklayers' labourers increased substantially, as did those of hawkers, Irish males by 1861 practically dominating the activity.

Table 39

Occupations Accounting for more than 1% of  
Total Occupied Irish Males in York in 1861.

	1	2	3	4
	Number	% of Occupied Irish males.	York Total in Occupation (Males)	Irish % of Total
Farm worker	346	33.0	610	56.7
Labourer	165	15.7	739	22.3
Bricklayers labourer	87	8.3	-	-
Army	65	6.1	80	81.2
Hawker	37	3.5	51	72.5
Shoemaker	19	1.8		
Glass blower	18	1.7		
Glass cutter's apprentice	16	1.5		
Tailor	15	1.4		
Drover	11	1.05		

Irish females in 1861 totalled 1,561, 393 (25.1%) of whom were occupied and 1,168 (74.9%) were unoccupied. These were divided as follows: 409 (26.2% of total Irish females) were under 16 with no occupation, 163 (10.4%) were scholars, 53 (3.4%) were over 16 with no occupation and 543 (34.8%) were wives or widows without employment. The 393 occupied Irish females were engaged in 40 various categories of employment, only the 13 in Table 40 however, representing occupations containing 1% or more of total occupied Irish females. 89.5% of the total female labour force in the Irish community are represented in the Table below, the first 9 categories (containing 2% or more respectively) accounting for 82.1% of their number. Unfortunately overall York totals for 6 of these occupations are unobtainable, comparison between the two groups being possible only for farm workers, servants and labourers. It will be seen that between 1851 and 1861 the number of Irish female farm workers increased, as did their proportion of the female labour force; however they no longer accounted for 100% of women employed as such in agriculture - non-Irish females now contributing almost 15% to the activity. The number and proportion of Irish servants decreased slightly between the two censuses, indicating further the disinclination of York householders to employ Irish women as domestic servants, or possibly the general reluctance of Irish females to engage in the principal occupation in the city. Irish female labourers, as in the case of farm workers in the previous census, accounted for the total employed as such in York.



Table 40

Occupations Accounting for more than 1% of  
Total Occupied Irish Females in York in 1861.

	1	2	3	4
	Number	% of Occupied Irish Females	York Total in Occupation (Females)	Irish % of Total
Farm worker & Field lab.	143	36.3	184	77.7
Servant	60	15.3	1,771	3.4
Labourer	30	7.6	29	100 +
Laundress etc.	21	5.3	-	-
Housekeeper	18	4.6	-	-
Dressmaker	15	3.8	-	-
Farm Servant	15	3.8	-	-
Cook	11	2.8	-	-
Charwoman	10	2.5	-	-
Nun	7	1.8		
Nurse	7	1.8		
Hawker	6	1.5		
Fundholder	5	1.3		

In accordance with the 1851 occupational breakdown, major Irish occupations in 1861 were examined according to parochial distribution. In this case, however, glass blowers, no longer accounting for more than 2% of those occupied, have been excluded, though they were still mainly concentrated in the parish of St. George.

Table 41

Parochial Distribution of Major Irish Occupations in 1861<sup>1</sup>

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Farm Workers (490)</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Irish in Occupation</u>
St. George	199	40.6
Minster Yard with Bedern	117	23.9
St. Dennis	51	10.4
St. Margaret	51	10.4
St. Mary Castlegate	18	3.8
St. Helen on the Wall	17	3.5
St. Peter le Willows	11	2.2
St. Cuthbert	10	2.0
St. Michael le Belfrey	3	0.6
St. Olave	3	0.6

Bricklayers Labourers (87)

St. George	26	29.9
St. Dennis	21	24.1
St. Margaret	11	12.6
St. Helen on the Wall	7	8.0
Minster Yard with Bedern	4	4.6
St. Lawrence	3	3.4
St. Peter le Willows	3	3.4

<sup>1</sup>Those parishes containing less than 3 individuals for respective occupations have been excluded.

Labourers (195)

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Irish in Occupation</u>
St. Peter le Willows	64	32.9
St. Margaret	41	21.0
St. Dennis	19	9.7
St. Helen on the Walls	15	7.7
St. Lawrence	8	4.1
St. John Micklegate	6	3.1
St. Saviour	6	3.1
St. George	6	3.1
St. Michael Spurriergate	4	2.1
Holy Trinity Goodramgate	3	1.5

Soldiers (68)

York Barracks	60	88.2
Holy Trinity Goodramgate	3	4.4

Servants (64)

St. Margaret	7	10.9
St. George	6	9.4
St. Helen on the Walls	6	9.4
St. Michael le Belfrey	5	7.8
St. Crux	4	6.3
St. Lawrence	4	6.3
St. Olave	4	6.3
Holy Trinity Micklegate	3	4.7
St. Martin cum Gregory	3	4.7
St. Peter le Willows	3	4.7

Hawkers (43)

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Irish in Occupation</u>
St. Margaret	9	20.9
St. Dennis	6	14.0
St. George	6	14.0
St. Andrew	5	11.6
St. Lawrence	3	7.0
Minster Yard with Bedern	3	7.0

Comparison with the same Table for 1851 (page 231) shows that farm workers were still mainly concentrated in the parishes of St. George and Minster Yard with Bedern (though the number in the latter was almost halved in the ten year period) and that agricultural workers in St. Margaret increased from only 4 to 51. Unspecified labourers, though decreasing between the two censuses remained the second largest occupation, still being mainly concentrated in St. Peter le Willows and St. Margaret. Bricklayers' labourers were centred around the Walmgate area in St. George, St. Dennis and St. Margaret; and servants, as in 1851, were scattered throughout the city, appearing (with the inclusion of the smaller numbers) in almost every parish in York.

Table 42 shows the parishes of major Irish settlement in 1861, the occupations of the immigrants being as follows:

Table 42

1861 Occupational Distribution  
in Parishes of Major Irish Settlement.

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St. George (21.5% of Total Irish Population.)

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Occupied Irish in Parish</u>
Farm worker	199	60.8
Bricklayers' labourer	26	8.0
Glass Cutters' Apprentice	11	3.4
Glass Blower	10	3.1
Labourer	6	1.8
Hawker	6	1.8
Gravel Digger	6	1.8
Servant	6	1.8
Foundry Labourer	5	1.5
Charwoman	3	0.9
Cattle Dealer	3	0.9
Laundress	3	0.9

St. Margaret (14.2%)

Farm worker	51	28.4
Labourer	41	22.9
Bricklayers' Labourer	11	6.1
Hawker	9	5.0
Servant	7	3.9
Glass Cutters' Apprentice	6	3.4
Tailor	5	2.8
Glass Blower	4	2.2
Drover	4	2.2
Washerwoman	4	2.2

St. Dennis (12.3%)

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Occupied Irish in Parish</u>
Farm Worker	51	32.1
Bricklayers' Labourer	21	13.2
Labourer	19	11.9
Farm servant	15	9.4
Hawker	6	3.8
Drover	4	2.5

Minster Yard with Bedern (11.5)

Farm Worker	117	74.5
House keeper	12	7.6
Bricklayers' labourer	4	2.5
Hawker	3	1.9

St. Peter le Willows (5.1)

Labourer	64	74.4
Farm Worker	11	12.8
Bricklayers' Labourer	3	3.4
Servant	3	3.4

It will be apparent on comparison with the same Table for 1851 that the number of parishes containing more than 4% of the Irish community dropped in the ten year period from 8 to 5, St. Mary Castlegate, St. Mary Bishophill Junior and York Barracks no longer being included. St. Mary Bishophill Junior, of course, lost the Irish Ordnance Survey workers, and the number of Irish in St. Mary Castlegate was reduced because Cross Alley in the Water Lanes was for some reason apparently not enumerated (see page 350). By 1861 farm workers formed the largest group in every major Irish

parish with the exception of St. Peter le Willows, which as in the previous census, contained the highest number of unspecified labourers in the city.

Social classification of the occupied Irish in York in 1861 differed little from that of 1851, with the exception of Class I, reduced through the absence of the Ordnance Surveyors.

<u>Social Class</u>	<u>Number in Class</u>	<u>% of Occupied Irish</u>
I	22	1.5
II	42	2.9
III	337	23.4
IV	647	44.9
V	382	26.5

Class V too, is slightly reduced compared with 1851, in Class IV, however, the total is slightly greater.

Of the total 1,707 male members of the Irish community in York in 1871, 1,062 (62.2%) were occupied, while 645 (37.8%) were unoccupied. The latter were divided as follows: 295 (17.3% of total Irish males) were under 16 with no occupation, 337 were scholars (19.7%), and 13 (0.8%) were over 16 with no occupation.

Occupied Irish males were engaged in 147 different categories of employment, only the 14 occupations in Table 43, however, contained respectively more than 1% of the total occupied. This Table accounts for 68.8% of occupied Irish males, 57.7% of them being concentrated in occupations of more than 2% of their total. Comparison with 1861, when the figures were 72.3% and 64.9% respectively, indicates a decrease in occupational concentration. As in the previous census, comparison with the totals for York in those occupations above 2% has been limited due to omissions in the printed abstracts. In this census the printed abstract of occupations refers only to males and females over the age of 20. Occupied Irish persons under that age have therefore been deducted in column 3 in order to make a proper comparison. This should be borne in mind when comparing this Table with those for previous censuses.



Table 43

Occupations Accounting for more than 1% of  
Total Occupied Irish Males in York in 1871.

Occupation	1 Number	2 % of Occupied Irish Males.	3 Irish Over 20 Years	4 Total in York Over 20 Years.	5 % Irish
Farm worker & Field lab.	261	24.6	221	319	69.2
Labourer	140	13.2	118	762	15.5
Bricklayer's labourer	94	8.9	-	-	-
Army	83	7.8	75	79	95.0
Foundry lab.	37	3.5	-	-	-
Glassblower	25	2.4	-	-	-
Hawker	18	1.7			
Shoemaker	15	1.4			
Pedlar	15	1.4			
Railway lab.	14	1.3			
Tailor	13	1.2			
Glasscutter's apprentice	11	1.0			
Pensioner	11	1.0			
Prisoner	10	1.0			

Comparison with the 1861 Table shows that the number of Irish farm workers and unspecified labourers dropped, as did their percentage of the total Irish male labour force, but that two new categories of labourers, foundry and railway labourers had appeared by 1871. Apart from the inclusion in this Table of pensioners and prisoners there is little other difference between the two Tables, pedlars and hawkers in 1871 being almost equal in number to hawkers a decade earlier.

The number of females in the Irish community in York in 1871 was 1,673, 393 (23.5%) of whom were occupied, and 1,280 (76.5%) were unoccupied. Of the latter, 327 (19.5% of total Irish females) were under 16 with no occupation, 549 (32.8%) were unemployed wives or widows, 358 (21.4%) were scholars and 46 (2.7%) were over 16 with no occupation. Occupied Irish females were engaged in 44 different categories of employment (an increase over the previous 3 censuses) of which, however, only the 15 in Table 44 accounted for more than 1% of their numbers. 83.9% were concentrated in the occupations below, 75.8% being in those categories containing more than 2%. As with Irish males, a decrease in occupational concentration is indicated over the ten year period, the figures for 1861 being 89.5% and 82.1% respectively.

Table 44

Occupations Accounting for more than 1% of  
Total Occupied Irish Females in York in 1871.

Occupation	1 Number	2 % of Occupied Irish Females	3 Irish Over 20 Years	4 Total in York Over 20 Years	5 % Irish
Farm worker & Field lab.	122	31.0	90	112	80.3
Servant	54	13.7	28	812	3.4
Charwoman	31	7.9	27	208	13.0
Dressmaker	29	7.4	22	681	3.2
Laundress, etc.	20	5.1	-	-	-
Hawker	14	3.6	12	7	
Hair weaver & Hair Factory hand	10	2.5			
Match factory Worker	9	2.3			
Outdoor servant	9	2.3			
Nun	7	1.8			
Housekeeper	7	1.8			
Fundholder	6	1.5			
Seamstress	4	1.0			
Labourer	4	1.0			
Rag dealer	4	1.0			

The most obvious difference between Irish female occupations in 1861 and 1871 is the sharp decrease in the number of labourers, only 4 being recorded above, as opposed to 40 in 1861. Two new categories, hair weavers and match factory workers are included in Table 44, both of these occupations being situated in the Walmgate area. With reference to the match factory, St. George's Roman Catholic school authorities were complaining in the 1870's of the absence of pupils who were engaged in this employment rather than attending school.<sup>1</sup> In all, there were 17 match factory hands recorded on the 1871 census list of Irish individuals, all but one of them living in the Walmgate parishes. Those employed in the hair weaving industry were all young girls aged between 12 and 20, all living in the Walmgate area with the exception of two who lived in Rusby Place, off Hungate. References to Irishmen engaged in collecting horse and cow hair (presumably for this activity) occur in the newspapers in both 1850 and 1874. In the first instance John Ward and Thomas Robinson were charged with cutting off hair from horses' tails, and having already sold "great quantities" of the material,<sup>2</sup> and in 1874 Irishman Anthony Walsh was charged with a similar offence.<sup>3</sup>

The parochial distribution of the major Irish occupations in York in 1871 was as follows:

<sup>1</sup>See page 394.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 8 June 1850.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 28 February, 1874.

Table 45

Parochial Distribution of Major Irish Occupations, 1871.<sup>1</sup>

<u>Farm Workers (388)</u>		
<u>Parish</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Irish in Occupation</u>
St. George	116	29.9
Minster Yard with Bedern	91	23.5
St. Margaret	74	19.1
St. Dennis	32	8.2
St. Peter le Willows	25	6.4
St. Mary Castlegate	9	2.3
St. Helen on the Walls	8	2.1
St. Lawrence	5	1.3
Holy Trinity King's Court	5	1.3
St. Saviour	5	1.3
St. John del Pike	4	1.0
<u>Labourers (144)</u>		
St. Dennis	42	29.3
St. Margaret	19	13.2
St. Cuthbert	11	7.6
St. Lawrence	9	6.3
St. Mary Castlegate	9	6.3
St. Helen on the Walls	8	5.6
St. George	5	3.5
St. John Micklegate	5	3.5
St. Saviour	5	3.5
St. Mary Bishophill Junior	4	2.8
St. Michael le Belfrey	4	2.6
St. Crux	3	2.1
Holy Trintiy Goodramgate	3	2.1
Holy Trinity Micklegate	3	2.1
St. Maurice	3	2.1
Minster Yard with Bedern	3	2.1

<sup>1</sup>Those parishes containing less than 3 individuals for respective occupations have been excluded.

Bricklayers Labourers (94)

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Irish in Occupation</u>
St. Margaret	23	24.5
St. George	21	22.3
St. Helen on the Walls	10	10.6
St. Dennis	9	9.6
St. Mary Castlegate	7	7.4
St. Peter le Willows	6	6.4
Minster Yard with Bedern	4	4.3
St. John Micklegate	3	3.2

Soldiers (86)

York Barracks	83	96.5
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Servants (59)

St. Giles	6	10.2
St. George	5	8.5
Minster Yard with Bedern	5	8.5
St. Peter le Willows	5	8.5
St. Cuthbert	4	6.8
St. Dennis	4	6.8
Holy Trinity Micklegate	4	6.8
St. John Micklegate	3	5.1
St. Mary Bishophill Junior	3	5.1

Foundry Labourer (37)

St. George	25	67.6
St. Dennis	3	8.1
St. Peter le Willows	3	8.1

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Hawker (32)</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Irish in Occupation</u>
St. Mary Castlegate	5	15.6
Minster Yard with Bedern	5	15.6
St. George	4	12.5
St. Margaret	4	12.5
Holy Trinity Goodramgate	3	9.4

<u>Charwomen (29)</u>		
St. Dennis	16	55.2

<u>Dressmaker (29)</u>		
St. Saviour	5	17.2
St. Mary Bishophill Junior	4	13.8
St. Mary Castlegate	3	10.3
St. Maurice	3	10.3

Comparison of the above Table with that for 1861 shows that there was a substantial decrease in the number of farm workers between the two censuses in all major Irish parishes with the exception of St. Margaret. The number of unspecified labourers too, had decreased by 1871, the most noticeable change being the absence of St. Peter le Willows on the above Table, the parish having contained 64 labourers in 1861 and only 1 in 1871. The changed occupations of the Irish inhabitants of that parish (or more particularly of Britannia Yard where almost all of them lived) will be listed in Table 46. The three other occupations requiring comment are those which appear for the first time in

this set of Tables in 1871 - foundry labourers, centred in the Walmgate parishes containing the various foundries mentioned in Chapter V, charwomen, living mainly in the same area, though in St. Dennis parish, and dressmakers, scattered throughout the city and not concentrated in any particularly Irish quarter. The number of Irish dressmakers in York had risen from 8 in 1851 to 15 in 1861 and 29 in 1871. Occasionally, however, women describing themselves as such in the census were in fact prostitutes. Irish woman Catherine White, for example, was charged in September 1855 with robbery in a "house of ill fame."<sup>1</sup> In February of the following year, described as a prostitute she was charged with theft in a brothel in Middle Water Lane (a notorious centre of the trade)<sup>2</sup> and in April 1860, referred to as a "girl of ruined character" she was sent to the House of Correction for "wandering abroad".<sup>3</sup> In the 1861 census, however, living at 13 Middle Water Lane, single and aged 22, she described herself as a dressmaker. Five years' later an entry in the Poor Law Guardians' Application and Report Book records an item of 37/6d. for the funeral expenses of Catherine White of Water Lane, a prostitute.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, another Irish woman self-styled on different occasions as Rose, Rose Ann, Rosanne, Rose Harriet or Harriet McDermott concealed her real occupation by describing herself to the census enumerator as a dressmaker. Appearing for the first time in 1867 in the Application and Report Books she was described as a single pregnant prostitute and admitted to the Workhouse in June.<sup>5</sup> Three months later a further entry records an allowance to her of 34/- towards the funeral

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 1 September 1855.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 23 February 1856.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 21 April, 1860.

<sup>4</sup>Poor Law Guardians' Application & Report Book, 20. September 1866.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. 20. September 1867.



expenses of her six weeks' old twins, Lucy and Harriet.<sup>1</sup> She was re-admitted to the Workhouse in October because of illness,<sup>2</sup> but within 5 months had sufficiently recovered to have left both the Workhouse and her former address in Finkle Street and moved to Garden Place, another centre of prostitution. She appears in the Police Reports in February 1868 as a prostitute charged with wandering abroad and being indecent,<sup>3</sup> but by 1869 she had obviously graduated to rank of brothel keeper. Described as a "common lodging-house keeper" of Cross Alley, (Water Lanes) she was fined 10/- for failing to register lodgers and having "3 abandoned girls and a man in 2 rooms"<sup>4</sup> and in May the following year she was fined a further £2. 0. 0. for allowing persons of both sexes to sleep in the same room.<sup>5</sup> In the 1871 census, however, still living in Cross Alley, aged 28, unmarried and with a daughter of two years she was recorded as a dressmaker, in which occupation she is included in Table 44.

The distribution of the occupations of the Irish within their major parishes of settlement in 1871 is given in Table 46. St. Helen on the Walls is included in this Table for containing for the first time in 1871 more than 4% of the Irish population - almost all of them living in a cluster of cottages in Gill's Yard, a narrow court off Aldwark, almost opposite the recently opened back entrance to the Bedern.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Application & Report Book.      December 1867.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 29 February 1868.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 21 August 1869

<sup>5</sup>Gazette, 14 May 1870.

<sup>6</sup>See page 362.

Table 46

1871 Occupational Distribution  
in Parishes of Major Irish Settlement.

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St. George (18.3% of Total Irish Population.)

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Occupied Irish in Parish</u>
Farm worker	116	40.9
Foundry labourer	25	8.8
Bricklayers' labourer	21	7.4
Glass blower	14	4.9
Match factory worker	11	3.9
Railway labourer	6	2.1
Gardeners' labourer	5	1.8
Labourer	5	1.8
Tailor	5	1.8
Hawker	4	1.4
Iron moulder	4	1.4
Hair weaver	4	1.4
Factory labourer	3	1.1
Seamstress	3	1.1

St. Margaret (15.4%)

Farm worker	74	40.2
Bricklayers' labourer	23	12.5
Labourer	19	10.3
Pedlar	8	4.3
Servant	5	2.7
Glass blower	4	2.2
Drainer	4	2.2
Hawker	4	2.2
Plasterer	4	2.2

St. Dennis (10.0%)

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Occupied Irish in Parish</u>
Labourer	42	28.5
Farm worker	32	21.8
Charwomen	16	10.9
Bricklayers' labourer	9	6.1
Servant	4	2.7
Foundry labourer	3	2.0
Bricklayer	3	2.0

Minster Yard with Bedern (8.3%)

Farm worker	91	70.0
Servant	5	3.8
Hawker	5	3.8
Bricklayers' labourer	4	3.1
Labourer	3	2.3

St. Peter le Willows (5.6%)

Farm worker	25	33.8
Outdoor servant	15	20.3
Bricklayers' labourer	6	8.1
Laundress	5	6.8
Servant	5	5.8
Foundry labourer	3	4.0

St. Helen on the Walls (4.5%)

Bricklayers' labourer	10	20.4
Labourer	8	16.3
Farm worker	7	14.3
Rag dealer	3	6.1

York Barracks (4.4%)

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Occupied Irish in Parish</u>
Soldier	54	60.7
Sergeant	10	11.2
Corporal	8	9.0
Captain	4	4.5

As has already been shown, the number of Irish farm workers dropped between 1861 and 1871, however the group remained the largest single occupation in all the major Irish parishes with the exception of St. Helen on the Walls and York Barracks. Comparison with the two earlier censuses indicates that by 1871 the Irish were engaging in a greater variety of occupations than had previously been the case, St. George, for example, containing 14 occupations in the above Table and only 9 in 1851. In general however, the types of employment altered very little over the 20 year period, the major occupations in these the most heavily concentrated Irish parishes still being farm workers and various kinds of labourers. The above analysis, however, including as it does only the parishes of major Irish settlement which were also amongst the poorest in the city, reflects mainly the lower grades of occupation pursued by the immigrants. The social classification of the total Irish population in York, when all the parishes are included, presents a slightly different picture. For comparative purposes, the social classification of all 4 censuses is included in Table 47.

Table 47

Social Classification at Each Census.\*

<u>Social Class.</u>	<u>Number of Irish.</u>			
	<u>1841</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1871</u>
I	9	48	22	27
II	21	39	42	44
III	167	327	337	404
IV	42	550	647	531
V	91	440	382	409

\*The numbers here are slightly less than the total occupied at each census, since they exclude those whose occupations are illegible.

	<u>% of Occupied Irish</u>			
I	2.7	3.4	1.5	1.9
II	6.2	2.8	2.9	3.0
III	49.5	23.4	23.4	27.8
IV	12.5	40.2	44.9	36.5
V	27.0	29.8	26.5	28.1

It is clear from this Table that the greatest change took place in the social structure of the Irish population in York between 1841 and 1851, but that after the arrival of the post-Famine immigrants little fundamental change occurred. Allowing for the departure of the Ordnance Survey workers after 1851, Class I increased only slightly throughout the period, as did Class II, III and Class V, only Class IV showing a decrease between 1861 and 1871 - the result of a reduction in the number of Irish agricultural labourers. Comparison with the social class of the host population is only possible given the existing evidence, for 1851. However, such a comparison would not be very meaningful since it would be

based on Armstrong's sample of 753 household heads in the city, whereas the occupations of all the Irish have been analysed, irrespective of household status. Naturally the high proportion of lodgers amongst them in that year, would be likely to swell the percentages found in the lower social classes. Nevertheless, with this important reservation in mind, Armstrong's analysis of the social classes of his sample of York household heads in 1851 shows the following distribution compared with that of all occupied persons in the Irish population.

<u>1851.</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Non-Irish %</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>Irish %</u>
	I	7.8	3.4
	II	14.2	2.8
	III	51.3	23.4
	IV	13.7	40.2
	V	13.0	29.8

The inference to be drawn from this limited comparison is similar to that made by R. D. Lobban in his study The Irish Community in Greenock in the Nineteenth Century,<sup>2</sup> that:

"Clearly the Irish migrants in Greenock in the nineteenth century had a very much lower occupational status than that secured by the local born."

Again, however, a precise comparison is not in order because of the different system of classification used by Lobban, and the fact that his conclusions relate only to male workers. Other studies of Irish communities in Britain in the period, such as Werley's study of The Irish in Manchester 1832-49, Richardson's The Irish in Victorian

<sup>1</sup>Armstrong, op. cit. Stability and Change p.181.

<sup>2</sup>Irish Geography. Vol. VI. No. 3. 1971. p.275.

Bradford, Lawton's The Irish Community in Liverpool in 1851,  
Lynn Lee's Irish Slum Communities and Anderson's passing references  
to the Irish in his study Family Structure in 19th Century Lancashire,  
do not contain sufficient and relevant information to make comparisons  
between York and other Irish communities possible.

Finally, the occupations of the Irish in York have been  
analysed according to age-structure. The following four Tables show  
at each census the numbers of occupied Irish in five-yearly age groups  
(Column 1), the total number of Irish in these age groups (Column 2),  
the occupied Irish as a percentage of that total in each age group  
(Column 3) and lastly the occupied in each age group as a percentage  
of the total occupied Irish in York (Column 4).

In the case of children under the age of 14 and adults over the  
age of 65, employment of individuals in these age groups being of  
particular interest, the actual occupations and numbers employed in  
them have been listed in an additional Table.

It is not possible to compare these Tables either with the host  
population in York or with Irish communities elsewhere, since  
comparable analysis does not appear to have been undertaken. In  
general throughout the period, however, there was a considerable  
concentration of occupied persons between the ages of 20 and 44 years  
of age. In 1841 and 1871 just under two thirds of the total occupied  
fell within this age group, and in 1851 and 1861 the percentages were  
59.4 and 60.1 respectively. With regard to children occupied under  
the age of 15, in 1841 the figure was only 2.3%. In 1851 this,  
probably indicating a measure of the desperate circumstances of the  
post-Famine immigrants, increased to 6.9%. Although this fell to  
3.6% in 1861 it rose again to 6.0% in 1871.

Table 48

## Age Structure of Occupied Irish

Age Group	1841 (total 344)			
	1 <u>Number Occupied</u>	2 <u>Total in Age Group</u>	3 <u>1 as a % of 2</u>	4 <u>1 as a % of all occupied Irish</u>
0-4	0	113	0	0
5-9	0	72	0	0
10-14	8	58	13.8	2.3
15-19	33	59	55.9	9.6
20-24	57	90	63.3	16.6
25-29	43	69	62.3	12.5
30-34	61	90	67.8	17.7
35-39	24	48	50.0	7.0
40-44	41	61	67.2	11.9
45-49	22	31	71.0	6.4
50-54	13	22	59.1	3.8
55-59	9	16	56.3	2.6
60-64	20	28	71.4	5.8
65-69	3	11	27.3	0.9
70-74	7	7	100	2.0
75-79	3	4	75.0	0.9
80-84	-	1	-	-
85-89	1	1	100	0.3
90-94	-	-	-	-
95-99	-	-	-	-



Table 49

## Age Structure of Occupied Irish

Age Group	1851		(total 1,376)	
	1 Number Occupied	2 Total in Age Group	3 1 as a % of 2	4 1 as a % of all Occupied Irish
0-4	14	304	4.6	1.0
5-9	12	264	4.5	0.8
10-14	71	281	25.3	5.1
15-19	208	276	75.4	14.9
20-24	271	362	74.9	19.4
25-29	201	280	71.8	14.4
30-34	171	235	72.8	12.2
35-39	80	136	58.8	5.7
40-44	108	150	72.0	7.7
45-49	74	99	74.7	5.3
50-54	70	99	70.7	5.0
55-59	26	32	81.3	1.9
60-64	39	55	70.9	2.8
65-69	12	18	66.6	0.9
70-74	11	15	73.3	0.8
75-79	6	8	75.0	.4
80-84	2	3	66.6	.1
85-89	0	1	0	0
90-94	0	1	0	0
95-99	0	0	0	0

Table 50

Age Structure of Occupied Irish

Age Group	1861		(total 1,442)	
	<u>1</u> Number Occupied	<u>2</u> Total in Age Group	<u>3</u> 1 as a % of 2	<u>4</u> 1 as a % of all Occupied Irish
0-4	2	552	.4	.1
5-9	7	421	1.7	.5
10-14	43	234	18.4	3.0
15-19	169	233	72.5	11.7
20-24	206	292	70.5	14.3
25-29	206	326	63.2	14.3
30-34	205	314	65.3	14.2
35-39	120	182	65.9	8.3
40-45	130	191	68.1	9.0
45-49	109	153	71.2	7.6
50-54	94	132	71.2	6.5
55-59	51	73	69.9	3.5
60-64	54	77	70.1	3.7
65-69	9	16	56.3	.6
70-74	17	26	65.4	1.2
75-79	10	13	76.9	0.7
80-84	7	7	100	0.5
85-89	1	2	50.0	.06
90-94	1	2	50.0	.06
95-99	1	2	50.0	.06

Table 51

## Age Structure of Occupied Irish

Age Group	1871 (total 1,454)			
	1 Number Occupied	2 Total in Age Group	3 1 as a % of 2	4 1 as a % of all Occupied Irish
0-4	1	479	-	-
5-9	6	466	1.3	0.4
10-14	81	420	19.3	5.6
15-19	215	276	77.9	14.8
20-24	132	177	74.6	9.1
25-29	121	182	66.5	8.3
30-34	189	293	64.5	13.0
35-39	139	229	60.7	9.6
40-44	173	252	68.7	11.9
45-49	111	161	68.9	7.5
50-54	91	136	66.9	6.3
55-59	53	83	63.9	3.6
60-64	74	110	67.3	5.1
65-69	38	50	76.0	2.6
70-74	24	39	61.5	1.6
75-79	5	16	31.3	.3
80-84	2	9	22.2	.1
85-89	-	1	-	-
90-94	-	1	-	-
95-99	-	-	-	-

Table 52

Occupations of Irish Children Under the Age of 15.

1841

0-4 years. (total 113)

none occupied

5-9 years. (total 72)

none occupied

10-14 years. (total 58)

Factory labourer	3
Spinster	2
Labourer	2
Apprentice Joiner	1

Total 8 = 13.8% of  
agegroup.

1851

0-4 years. (total 304)

Labourer	4
Farm worker	3
Beggar	3
Class Cutter's Appren.	1
Seamstress	1
Pauper	1

Total 13 = 4.3% of  
agegroup.

5-9 years (total 264)

Pauper	3
Beggar	3
Hawker	3
Messenger	1
Iron Mqulder	1
Labourer	1

Total 12 = 4.5% of  
agegroup.

Occupations of Irish Children Under the Age of 15.

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1851

10-14 years. (total 281)

Labourer	16
Farm worker	15
Glass blower/cutter's apprentice	9
Messenger	8
Servant/farm servant	6
Confectioner/Provision shop assistant	2
Pauper	2
Hawker	2
Assistant on the Ordnance Survey	2
Beggar	2
Spinster	1
Carter	1
Stone Mason	1
Nurse	1
Painter	1
Combmaker	1
Tinner's apprentice	1

Total 71 = 25.3% of  
age group.

1861

0-4 years (total 552)

Farm worker	1
Prisoner	1

Total 2 = 0.4% of  
age group.

Occupations of Irish Children Under the Age of 15

---

1861

5-9 years (total 421)

Farm worker	3
Labourer	3
Hawker	1

Total 7 = 1.7% of  
age group

10-14 years (total 234)

Farm worker/field lab.	11
Glass Blower/Cutters' apprentice	7
Messenger	6
Servant	6
Labourer	5
Iron Moulders' apprentice Foundry labourer, iron founder	3
Groom	1
Dressmaker	1
Gas fitter	1
Band maker	1
Illegible	1

Total 43 = 18.4% of  
age group.

1871

0-4 years (total 479)

none occupied.

5-9 years (total 466)

Outdoor servant/servant	4
Labourer	2

Total 6 = 1.3% of  
age group.

Occupations of Irish Children Under the Age of 15

1871

10-14 years (total 420)

Farm worker/Field labourer	19
Servant/outdoor servant	11
Glass blower/cutter's apprentice	8
Messenger	7
Match factory worker	7
Foundry labourer	4
Hair weaver	4
Labourer	4
Rope maker	3
Grocer/confectioner	2
Pupil teacher	2
Charwoman	1
Soldier	1
Clerk	1
Sawyer's labourer	1
Dressmaker	1
Linen weaver	1
Factory labourer	1
Iron founder	1
Painter	1
Hawker	1

Total 81 = 19.3% of  
age group.

Table 53

Occupations of Irish Adults Over the Age of 65

1841

65-69 years (total 11)

Clothes Cleaner	1
Fundholder	1
Carpenter	1

Total 3 = 27.2% of  
age group.

70-74 years (total 7)

Bricklayer's labourer	1
Bricklayer	1
Pensioner	1
Hawker	1
Soldier	1
Gunsmith	1
Illegible	1

Total 7 = 100% of  
age group.

75-79 years (total 4)

Fundholder	1
Labourer	2

Total 3 = 75.0% of  
age group.

80-84 years

none occupied

85-89 years (total 1)

Nun	1
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Total 1 = 100% of  
age group.



Occupations of Irish Adults Over the Age of 65

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1851

65-69 years (total 18)

Farm worker	4
Nun	2
Cap maker	1
Seamstress	1
Bricklayer's labourer	1
Nurse	1
Servant	1
Tax inspector	1
Pensioner	1
Drover	1

Total 14 = 77.7% of  
age group.

70-74 years (total 15)

Labourer (including 1 woman)	5
Nun	1
Hawker	1
Fundholder	1
Sawyer	1
Farmworker	1
Pauper	1

Total 11 = 73.3% of  
age group.

75-79 years (total 8)

Pauper	2
Baker	1
Servant	1
Hawker	1
Labourer	1
Pensioner	1

Total 7 = 87.5% of  
age group.

Occupations of Irish Adults Over the Age of 65

1851

80-84 years (total 3)

Charwoman	1
Farmer	1

Total 2 = 66% of  
age group.

1861

65-69 years (total 16)

Hawker	2
Farm worker	1
Lodging house keeper	1
Confectioner	1
Musician	1
Washerwoman	1
Nailer	1
Commission agent	1

Total 9 = 56.2% of  
age group.

70-74 years (total 26)

Farm worker (including 2 women)	3
Labourer	3
Shoemaker	3
Hawker	2
Shoebinder	1
Prisoner	1
Pedlar	1
Tailor	1
Cordwainer	1
Rag dealer	1

Total 17 = 65.4% of  
age group.

Occupations of Irish Adults Over the Age of 65

1861

75-79 years (total 13)

Labourer	2
Hawker	2
Farmworker	1
Nun	1
Recruiting Sgt. Major	1
Fundholder	1
Tax inspector	1
Stone mason	1

Total 10 = 77% of  
age group.

80-84 years (total 7)

Labourer	2
Farm worker	2
Hatter	1
Needlewoman	1
Illegible	1

Total 7 = 100% of  
age group.

85-89 years (total 2)

Labourer	1
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Total 1 = 50% of  
age group.

90-94 years (total 2)

Hawker	1
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Total 1 = 50% of  
age group.

95-99 years (total 2)

Farm worker	1
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Total 1 = 50% of  
age group.

Occupations of Irish Adults Over the Age of 65.

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1871

65-69 years (total 50)

Farmworker	9
Hawker	5
Labourer	3
Tailor	2
Beast jobber	1
Farmer	1
Verger	1
Laundress	1
Shoemaker	1
Spinster	1
Bricklayer's labourer	1
Pensioner	1
Joiner	1
Dressmaker	1
Housekeeper	1
Match factory worker	1
Plasterer	1
Telegraph clerk	1
Knife grinder	1
Fundholder	1
Cattle dealer	1
Midwife	1
Railway porter	1

Total 38 = 76% of  
age group

Occupations of Irish Adults Over the Age of 65

1871

70-74 years (total 39)

Farm worker	7	
Labourer	4	
Pedlar	2	
Prisoner	1	
Fundholder	1	
Bookbinder	1	
Cattle dealer	1	
Sawyer	1	
Bricklayer's labourer	1	
Pensioner	1	
Tailor	1	
General dealer	1	
Nun	1	Total 24 = 61.5% of age group
Illegible	1	

75-79 years (total 16)

Farm worker	1	
Servant	1	
Laundress	1	
Spinster	1	
Pensioner	1	Total 5 = 31.2% of age group

80-84 years (total 9)

Hawker	1	
Shoemaker	1	Total 2 = 22.2% of age group

80-84 years (total 1) not occupied

90-94 years (total 1) not occupied

## CHAPTER VIII

### POOR RELIEF

It has been seen in Chapter II that of the total 1,674 applications for poor relief between October 1840 and September 1841, 46 (2.7%) were identified as coming from Irish individuals. Since the Irish population in York at that time was itself 2.7% of the total, it is clear that the pre-Famine Irish community did not impose a strain on Poor Law expenditure which was disproportionate to their numbers. The influx of large numbers of post-Famine Irish immigrants into the city, however, altered this situation, particularly in the early months of their arrival, when, as we have seen, many of them were both destitute and diseased. Both a vagrant office and fever hospital had to be hastily established, and normal seasonal measures for relieving the "necessitous poor" such as the opening of charitable soup kitchens were intensified and prolonged.

In order to establish the extent of the continuing strain the Irish community placed on the Poor Law Guardians throughout the period, and to compare this with the situation in 1841, the following method of analysis of poor law material was adopted. The Poor Law Guardians' Application and Report Books which provide details of the applicant's name, address, occupation, marital status, dependants (if any) physical condition, reasons for application and in most cases amount or type of relief given, were examined for each of the four censal years in the period. As has already been observed, however,

these were found to be incomplete in 1861 and 1871, three of the volumes being missing, making an analysis of all applications during the six months on either side of the census date in every censal year impossible. The volumes covering the period January to March in all four censal years, however, are intact, enabling a comparison to be made in the quarter immediately preceeding the taking of the census. Further, since the records for 1840/1841 and 1850/1851 are complete, an analysis was able to be made in their case of all evidence dating six months either side of the taking of the census, and a twelve month comparison between the pre-Famine Irish contribution to poor law expenditure, and that exercised by the early post-Famine Irish community was made for these years.

Having extracted from the Application and Report Books details of all applications for poor relief made between October 1840 and September 1841, October 1850 and September 1851, and January and March 1861 and 1871, this material was checked against all information on Irish individuals taken from the censuses in these years. In effect, in order to establish the degree of Irish reliance on poor relief, details of the 8,034 applications made in the above periods were compared with information relating to the 10,027 persons identified between the 1841 and 1871 censuses as being Irish. It should be emphasised that in this analysis information from the Application and Report Books relates to the number of individuals on whose behalf application was made, each of whom is counted as a separate applicant. The larger the size of the family requiring relief, therefore, the greater the number of applicants.

In the 1851 censal year the number of applications for poor relief rose to 2,843 between October 1850 and September 1851. Of these,

258 (8.3%) were identified as coming from Irish individuals, reflecting the large increase in the numbers of immigrants then present in the city. The Irish proportion of the total population in this census was 7.2% - Irish applications for relief therefore being slightly in excess of their number.

A comparison of the quarter immediately preceding the taking of the census (January to March) for 1841, 1851, 1861 and 1871 is presented below.

Table 54 .

Poor Relief: January to March Quarter.  
Numbers of Applicants and their Dependants.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Non-Irish Applications</u>	<u>Irish Applications</u>	<u>% Irish</u>	<u>Irish as % of total pop.</u>
1841	369	1	0.3	2.7
1851	779	53	6.8	7.2
1861	1,300	690	34.7	8.0
1871	718	551	43.4	7.7



It might have been expected that the number of Irish applications for poor relief in 1851 would have been higher than at any other time in the period. Admittedly, the immigrants in York were constantly being replaced by fresh refugees from Irish distress and evictions, who perpetuated the poverty of their community.<sup>1</sup> As late as 1869 (also in the March quarter) Sister Christiana, headmistress of St. George's Catholic Poor School near Walmgate, wrote in her Day Book that the population from which her pupils were drawn consisted:

"exclusively of the poorest of the poor ... In the winter months the congregation is reduced to the lowest ebb of misery and starvation with their consequent fevers. Deaths from want of food have occurred daily during the past few months."<sup>2</sup>

Even at the turn of the century Rowntree recognised that the inhabitants of the Walmgate/Hungate area - many of whom he observed to be Irish - were the most deprived and undernourished group in the city. Nevertheless it remains the case that in the late 1840's and early 1850's when emergency measures to cope with starvation and disease were hurriedly enforced, and Famine victims were reported as actually dying in the streets from want, the degree of distress amongst the Irish in the city was both more extensive and more acute than at any other time.

The above Table, however, shows that although in the March quarter the number of Irish applications for relief in the first two censal years rose from 1 to 53, the major increase took place in the two subsequent decades. By 1871 Irish applications accounted for over 43% of the total and were greatly disproportionate to their numbers.

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter XI.

<sup>2</sup>Bar Convent Archives, V.45. St. George's School Day Book, 1863-1875. March, 1869.

Further, although non-Irish applications too rose considerably in 1861, these subsequently fell to below their 1851 level. Those from Irish individuals, on the other hand, though fewer in 1871 than in 1861, were still ten times greater than they had been immediately after the Famine.

An attempt to explain the movements of applications for relief in the city during the period, particularly of the Irish community, must first consider reasons for applications being made. These are analysed in the following Table, from which 1841 is excluded since there was only one Irish application in the March quarter in that year. Table 55 lists the main reasons for applications, these being divided between Irish and non-Irish. The numbers relating to each reason for relief are expressed as a percentage of the total number of applications made by each community in the March quarter of the census year. The numbers in brackets refer to those individuals on whose behalf application was made for the reason given. Thus for example, it can be seen that between January and March 1861, 16.1% of all Irish applications for Poor Relief were because of pregnancy or confinement. This does not mean, however, that 111 Irish women in that quarter required relief because of pregnancy or confinement, but rather that there were 111 individuals in Irish families where the pregnancy of the wife or mother was the cause of the application, and on whose behalf relief was being sought.

Table 55

Applications for Poor Relief  
% of Reasons Given

	<u>March Quarter</u>					
	1851		1861		1871	
	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Non-Irish</u>	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Non-Irish</u>	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Non-Irish</u>
Sickness <sup>1</sup>	5.6 (3)	6.4 (50)	60.0 (414)	53.8 (708)	43.7 (241)	49.7 (357)
Unemployed <sup>2</sup>	26.4 (14)	20.1 (156)	8.7 (60)	9.0 (119)	4.7 (26)	14.7 (106)
Infirmity <sup>3</sup>	26.4 (14)	22.4 (174)	4.8 (33)	11.8 (156)	6.4 (35)	4.7 (34)
Pregnancy or Confinement	28.3 (15)	7.9 (61)	16.1 (111)	8.0 (106)	42.3 (233)	13.8 (99)
Desertion <sup>4</sup>	0	4.3 (33)	0.1 (1)	0.9 (12)	0	3.8 (27)
Destitution	0	11.3 (88)	1.0 (7)	2.5 (33)	0.5 (3)	2.8 (20)
Funeral expenses	13.2 (7)	9.3 (72)	7.5 (52)	7.5 (99)	0.7 (4)	2.9 (21)
Widowed	0	1.8 (14)	0	2.1 (28)	0	2.2 (16)
Old Age	0	0.2 (2)	0	0.2 (3)	0.7 (4)	0.9 (7)
Absence <sup>5</sup> of Husband	0	11.2 (87)	0	1.4 (19)	0	0.7 (5)
Orphan	0	0	0	0.5 (7)	0	0.1 (1)
Bastardy	0	0.4 (3)	0	0.1 (1)	0	0
Not Known	0	4.6 (36)	1.7 (12)	1.9 (26)	0.9 (5)	3.5 (25)
Total	<u>(53)</u>	<u>(776)</u>	<u>(690)</u>	<u>(1,317)</u>	<u>(551)</u>	<u>(718)</u>

<sup>1</sup>Includes 5 Irish applications for "accident", 1861.

<sup>2</sup>17 Irish and 8 non-Irish reasons for application in this category in 1861 were because of "the storm".

<sup>3</sup>Includes "not able bodied" and "lame".

<sup>4</sup>Includes 1 case of neglect in 1861.

<sup>5</sup>Includes "husband in prison".

The infrequency with which the Irish applied for relief on the grounds of desertion of the wife or children,<sup>1</sup> widowhood, old age, husband absent or orphanhood, is perhaps an indication of the often observed generosity which the Irish displayed towards cases of need greater than their own. These cases, unlike pregnancy, sickness and unemployment were likely to be permanent or long-term conditions, for which the ultimate penalty was either removal to parish of origin, or, more usually, residence in the workhouse. The infrequency of applications relating to bastardy might either be a reflection of the reputed chastity of Irish women,<sup>2</sup> or a further indication of the community's concern for its own, since of all persons most likely to be removed to their parish of settlement, unmarried mothers were amongst the most vulnerable.

The unexpectedly low number of Irish applications for poor relief in 1851, followed by an enormous increase (together with non-Irish applications) a decade later, still requires some explanation. Since most of the applications were related either to sickness or pregnancy then it is these, rather than applications from unemployment or other reasons, which require comment.

The higher proportion of married persons in the Irish community in 1861 compared with 1851 would to some extent help to account for the increase in the number of these applications, since, as has already been pointed out, they related to the dependents of the applicants as well as to the applicants themselves. Many of the married immigrants appearing on the 1851 census seem to have initially at least, left their wives and families in Ireland, and this

<sup>1</sup>See page 109 for Samuel Tuke's comment on the strength of Irish family ties.

<sup>2</sup>See below, page 380.

of course, would have reduced the number of applications in that year on the grounds of pregnancy. However, since this factor can hardly have been as relevant for the non-Irish community, who nevertheless also experienced an increase in applications as a result both of pregnancy and sickness, an additional explanation must be sought, and seems likely to be associated with the change in the period in the laws of settlement.

In 1851 it was still the case that applicants for relief, together with their families, could be removed to their place of settlement if they had not been resident for five years in the parish to which they applied. Bearing in mind the reasons why they left Ireland in the first place, and the continuing state of distress there, such a removal would be particularly disastrous for the Irish; especially since, as Irish M.P.s and others protested, "these wretched people were being indiscriminately dumped at ports of entry and left to find their way back to their native parish as best they could."<sup>1</sup>

Though there is, in fact, no evidence to suggest that this happened in more than a couple of instances in York,<sup>2</sup> it was undoubtedly the case that the Irish immigrants in the city would have been made well aware of their position in regard to the laws of settlement, and that this would have been enough to discourage many prospective applicants from seeking relief. As a London Relieving Officer observed,

"Sometimes I beat off Irish applicants for a good while

<sup>1</sup>M. E. Rose, op. cit., 39.

<sup>2</sup>See for example Gazette, 24 November 1849, when Andrew McDonald and his five children, who had lived in St. Margaret's parish "but had never taken a house for a year" were removed to their place of legal settlement in Ireland. He had been in the workhouse since August, and according to the clerk to the Poor Law Union, "generally contrived to get there at the beginning of the winter."

... They have universally a great dread of being sent back to Ireland."<sup>1</sup>

Having passed through Liverpool on their way to York, the immigrants would, in any case, have been left in no doubt about their position with regard to the law, since 15,000 of their countrymen had been removed back to Ireland in 1848 from that city alone.

The circumstances of their leaving Ireland and the conditions in which they lived would obviously be unfavourable to their fulfilling a residence qualification of five years in order to gain settlement, and it was also alleged to be the case that pressure was sometimes put on the immigrants to move on before they had fulfilled the residence requirements which would otherwise have entitled them to claim relief. Whatever the truth or extent of this practice in York, however, in 1851 few Irish immigrants would have lived in the city long enough to have become irremovable, since the first great influx of Famine victims began to arrive only in 1847. In addition, as will be seen in Chapter XI, remarkably few of the Irish who had been present in York in 1841 were still present at the following census. Similarly, non-Irish prospective applicants, many of whom had come to the city from the surrounding Yorkshire countryside, would have been deterred from seeking relief since the laws of settlement applied equally to them, and they too could have faced removal. It seems clear, therefore, that the existing law of settlement was the main reason for the low number of applications for poor relief in 1851, especially amongst the Irish, who were probably more distressed then than at any other time in the period.

<sup>1</sup>M. E. Rose, *ibid.*

In 1861 the period of residence to acquire settlement was reduced to three years, which would have had the effect of increasing the number of immigrants who could qualify for relief - though as will be seen in Chapter XI, the high rate of turn-over amongst the Irish in the city suggests that little long-term settlement was in fact taking place. However, since by that time such a high proportion of the reasons for application were for temporary relief only (due to sickness or confinement) it may well have been the case that the York Guardians, faced with the alternative of incurring the cost of transporting removable paupers to Ireland, might have preferred to give them temporary relief, at the same time avoiding the charges of inhumanity and ruthlessness made against poor law authorities elsewhere.

The period of settlement was further reduced in 1865 to one year, so that by this time the earlier harshness of the law had lost much of its deterrent effect, and Irish immigrants in need of relief, no longer feared removal to the country from which they had so recently been forced to flee.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE IRISH CONTRIBUTION TO CRIME IN YORK

Probably the main characteristic traditionally associated with the Irish community in York (as elsewhere) has been its general lawlessness and disorderly behaviour, and above all, its propensity to drunken brawling. This impression derives not only from comments already quoted referring to early post-Famine immigrants, or from newspaper coverage continuing throughout the period of this study, of incidents involving Irish persons. It is a characteristic ascribed to the Irish community right up to the time of its virtual dispersal in the 1930's, when, with the eventual enforcement of the municipal slum clearance schemes, most of the cottages in the Long Close Lane, Walmgate, Navigation and Hungate areas were demolished and their occupants rehoused in council estates at Tang Hall and Acomb. At the mere mention of either the Irish in the city prior to that date or any of those four neighbouring areas, scenes of turmoil, fighting and drunkenness are recalled and stories told of policemen patrolling the district in pairs, or of Catholic Priests being the only persons capable of breaking up the fights. Though apparently always brawling amongst themselves, however, the Irish are remembered, almost nostalgically, as being "very clannish", and, loyal in the face



of interference from the police or other outside groups, they would close their ranks to look after their own. They ruled supreme in the district, and the whole area was so notorious that no decent female from another part of the city would care to walk unaccompanied, even down its main streets. Those outsiders foolish enough to penetrate beyond the main streets into the courts and yards behind, and especially those off Navigation Road or Hope Street, appear to have done so at their own risk.

This image of the lawless Irish community and the rough area in which it lived endured, therefore, from their arrival in the late 1840's until well after their dispersal in the 1930's. How far present day impressions are merely survivals of a reputation established much earlier is impossible to ascertain since the Irish living in the area up until its demolition can no longer be identified. Even were the census enumerators' returns available for the 1920's and 30's it would by that time be impossible to arrive at an accurate estimate of the Irish population, since birthplace would no longer be very relevant, very few of the members of the Irish community being in fact "Irish born". However, even if the reputation of the area in the 1920's is not an exaggeration, the extent of the Irish contribution to its notoriety must be qualified for even during the period of this study, and at the height of Irish colonisation of the district, they never averaged more than 13% of the total populations of the relevant parishes<sup>1</sup>; and with regard to crimes committed there,

<sup>1</sup>St. George, St. Margaret, St. Dennis, St. Peter le Willow (Walmgate) and St. Saviour, St. Crux and All Saints Peaseholme, (Hungate).

the numbers of Irish persons charged, though high in proportion to their total, dropped from 41.9% of all charges in 1851 to 30.6% in 1871.<sup>1</sup> These statistics, therefore, hardly support the popular impression of the domination of the Walmgate/Hungate area in the 1920's by the Irish, and their virtual monopoly of crime, drunkenness and disorder in a district where, though concentrated, they have nevertheless always been greatly outnumbered by the non-Irish, and were by 1871 responsible for less than one third of offences committed in the district.

Obviously this area was one of the worst in York and its reputation for violence and drunkenness well merited; however, this had been the case before the arrival of the Irish immigrants (see Laycock's physical description of the area in 1844, pages 135, 152, 166 and references to pre-Irish disorder in the district in Chapter II.) it being then, as later, a condition of the poverty and deprivation of its inhabitants rather than the racial characteristics of any single group within it. This aspect of the area is vividly described by Rowntree at the turn of the century: when the district was clearly the most poverty stricken in the city.

"This (Walmgate inside the Bar with Hungate) is the poorest large district in the city. It contains ... 6,803 persons ... of this population no less than 4,737 or 69.3% of the whole are living in poverty ("primary or secondary") ... All classes of workers are represented in this area; there are many casual and unskilled, and, on the other hand, a number of artizans, many of whom would be living in better districts but for their unsteady habits. The population also includes a large contingent of Irish. A few of the women work in the fields during the summer time, whilst many of the

<sup>1</sup>These figures represent, of course, Irish persons charged with committing offences in the area. The proportion of Irish charges for crimes committed in the whole of York in 1851 and 1871 are 26.3% and 16.5% respectively.

young persons, both girls and boys, are employed in factories. The district is situated in the old part of the city, and lies entirely within the walls. It comprises some typical slum areas. A broad thoroughfare (Walmgate) runs through one portion of it. Some of the houses and shops in this and in a few of the other streets are of considerable size, and are inhabited by comparatively well to do people; but a number of narrow and often sunless courts and alleys branch from these larger streets, and it is here that the poverty is chiefly found.

... There are 39 public houses in the district, or one for every 174 of the population."

For the purpose of examining the area housing "the middle-class of labour", Rowntree grouped together parts of the Groves, Nunnery Lane and the Leeman Road areas, also containing slum property and 37% of whose population were living either in primary or secondary poverty. In this district, however, there were only nine public houses, or one to every 1,105 inhabitants. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the surviving notorious reputation of the Walmgate area in the 1920's is due in part at least to the very high proportion of public houses in the district, most of which, as Rowntree observes, dated back to the time when York was an important coaching centre.<sup>1</sup> As the statistics of the earlier period will show, fighting, drunkenness and disorderly behaviour were indeed prominent characteristics of this, the poorest quarter of the city; but were characteristics common to both the Irish and the non-Irish inhabitants of the area, as well as to those who, living elsewhere, were commonly charged with committing offences in the "Irish" part of the city.

<sup>1</sup>B. Seebohm Rowntree. Poverty A Study of Town Life. (London 1903) pp.199-202. Also p.309

The actual extent of Irish criminality in York between 1841 and 1871 can be measured for each census year by checking the names and where possible addresses of all persons charged, with the lists containing the Irish population at each census. Obviously, since there may have been some Irish offenders who for one reason or another escaped being recorded on census night, the statistics below may slightly underestimate the numbers of Irish persons charged. However, by basing the analysis on the examination of all crimes committed for six months on either side of the census date, as accurate a picture as possible has been obtained. Table 56, a list of offences committed between October 1850 and September 1851, shows that the Irish were responsible for 26.3% of total crimes in York, compared with only 3.4% in 1841. It will be seen that these offences were largely limited to assault, drunkenness and disorderly behaviour, and theft. Glass breaking and milking cows without leave (already referred to in Chapter V) are indications of the poverty of the offenders, the former, especially, being merely a desperate measure to gain admittance to the Vagrant Office for a night's food and shelter. Four Irish women who, after being refused admission, broke the windows of that establishment in November, 1850, however, were committed to the House of Correction for seven days, each to be on the "lowest possible scale of diet."<sup>1</sup>

The 21 cases of assault and fighting were usually incidents involving the Irish fighting amongst themselves, and often resisting the consequent attempts of the police to intervene. In one case a prisoner, apprehended in this way was actually rescued

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 30 November 1850.

Crimes in York, October 1850-September 1851.

<u>Offence</u>	<u>Numbers of persons charged.</u>		
	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Non-Irish</u>	<u>Total</u>
Absconding apprentice	0	1	1
Assault	16	46	62
Assaulting Police Constable	13	21	34
Attempted murder	1	0	1
Attempted suicide	0	1	1
Begging	6	11	17
Breaking Glass	14	23	37
Burglary	0	1	1
Concealment of birth and aiding	0	2	2
Desertion	0	1	1
Destruction of clothing	0	2	2
Dog Stealing	1	0	1
Disorderly	23	22	45
Drunk	13	48	61
Escape from prison	0	1	1
False pretences	0	2	2
Fighting	5	13	18
Gambling, etc.	1	5	6
Hawking without licence	0	2	2
Indecent exposure	0	1	1
Milking cows	4	0	4
Night soil offences	0	1	1
Non payment of rates	1	0	1
Obstruction	2	9	11
Passing Bad money	1	3	4
Pickpocket	0	18	18
Poaching	0	1	1
Refusal to maintain wife	0	1	1
Rescue from police	1	2	3
Sunday trading	0	1	1
Suspicious character	2	24	26
Theft	34	115	149
Travelling without ticket	0	2	2
Unlicensed plays	2	0	2
Vagrancy	0	7	7
Willful Damage	0	5	5
Totals	<u>140</u>	<u>392</u>	<u>532</u>

Irish % of total = 26.3%

from a constable called to quell "a furious mob of about 40 or 50 Irish in Britannia Yard, Walmgate"<sup>1</sup>, though as can be seen in the table, two other cases of rescue from the police occurred, both of which involved non-Irish offenders. The most common Irish offence in 1850-51 was theft, usually of a very petty nature as illustrated in the following seven charges which are fairly representative of the total.

In November 1851 Bridget Welsh, Irish woman was charged with stealing a piece of bacon<sup>2</sup>, and in December Joseph Lyon was found guilty of stealing a pair of sugar tongs from the house of the Governor of the Jail where he was already serving a sentence.<sup>3</sup> Also in that month three Irish boys, all under eight years old were charged with stealing some keys and three towels from some houses in Holgate Terrace, for which offence two of them were committed to the House of Correction for one month, "although it was saddling the city with the expense of their maintenance."<sup>4</sup> In February 1851 Edward Hunt, an Irish lad of fifteen was charged with stealing a shirt<sup>5</sup>, and in April that year John White, aged 13 was sent to prison for a month's hard labour for stealing a passage mat.<sup>6</sup> Finally, also in April, Thomas Barnicle, of Bedern was brought up for dog stealing, but the case was dismissed; and a "miserable looking Irishman", William Jones was committed for trial at the next sessions for breaking a window and stealing a 20 lb.ham.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 9 November 1850. See page 158. <sup>6</sup>Gazette, 19 April 1851.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 22 November 1851.

<sup>7</sup>Gazette, 19 April 1851.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette 13 December 1851.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette 6 December 1851.

<sup>5</sup>Gazette, 15 February 1851.

The offence involving the largest number of Irish persons (not all of them however, being charged) was that of disorderly behaviour, the same offenders often being faced with the additional charge of assault. The question of riots and disturbances and their effect on the Irish reputation for lawlessness, however, will be more properly discussed below, after the evidence for the whole period has been examined.

The above table, of course, represents offences, rather than criminals, and for the non-Irish as well as the Irish population the numbers are swollen by the continued appearances before the bench of certain "old offenders". One such, Michael Brannan crops up thirtyfour times during the period, and others too, such as Anthony Foy, Anthony Battle and Catherine McGrail seem to have been habitual offenders. These all appear in cases involving drunk and disorderly behaviour, and assault; indeed as is clear from the table, Irish criminality was confined to a fairly limited variety of offences, in this as the other three censal years.

One charge occurring in November 1850 which was an interesting and unusual case was that of performing "unlicensed plays" - a pathetic attempt to provide harmless amusement which was immediately stamped out by those in authority. Two Irish youths, Francis White and John Havigan began performing plays in a hayloft in Malt Shovel Yard, Walmgate.

"'The Theatre', received a due share of public patronage, being attended chiefly by juveniles of both sexes, who obtain a living by begging or any other means of questionable shape in the streets of the city during the day time. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood soon found that the theatre was a nuisance for it brought together all the unwashed urchins in Walmgate and consequently great uproar and disturbance was experienced during each evening's performance."

A complaint was made and the police sent a young man who was charged a halfpenny admittance for a performance of "Prince of the Robbers":- the Irish boys accordingly being brought before the magistrates for having, without a licence, opened a theatre for profit.<sup>1</sup>

Table 57 lists the offences committed in the 1850/51 censal year according to location. It will be seen that the most criminal area of York (this being the case for all 4 censuses) was the central markets area, comprising the busiest part of the city. Walmgate (also for all 4 censuses) contained the second highest number of offences, though this was a much smaller area including only the main thoroughfares of Fossgate and Walmgate with their immediate yards and passages. The Hungate, Navigation and Long Close Lane areas are listed separately. It is apparent that even in this, the censal year containing the highest proportion of Irish contribution to total crime in York, they were responsible for less than half the total crimes in Walmgate, none of the crimes in the two Hungate areas and for only one offence in the Water Lanes. In the other two areas of Irish settlement, however, Bedern and Long Close Lane, they were responsible for over 70% of offences, 13 out of 18. It is clear that with the exception of the central area Irish offences were largely limited to Irish districts - the only other significant numbers occurring in the neighbouring areas of Goodramgate (which in 1851 contained the only entrance to the Bedern) and the Lawrence Street area (adjoining the Walmgate parishes.)

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 16 November 1850.



Table 57

Location of Crimes in York October 1850-September 1851

<u>Area</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Persons charged.</u>	
		<u>Non-Irish</u>	<u>Irish</u>
Central (markets, etc.)	189	147	42
Walmgate*	66	35	31
Not Known	55	48	7
Ousegate	39	35	4
Micklegate/Station	27	23	4
Goodramgate/Minster	23	6	17
Lawrence Street/Hull Road	18	7	11
Bedern*	14	4	10
Gillygate/Groves	14	13	1
St. Andrewgate/Aldwark	12	11	1
Water Lanes*	9	8	1
Fishergate	8	6	2
Peaseholm Green	8	6	2
Blossom Street/Holgate Road	7	6	1
Upper Hungate (Haver Lane, Palmer Lane, etc.)	6	6	0
Skeldergate/Bishophill	6	6	0
Nunnery Lane/Clementhorpe	5	5	0
North Street	5	5	0
Monk Stray	5	2	3
Long Close Lane/Hope Street*	4	1	3
Castlegate	4	4	0
Knavesmire	4	4	0
Bootham/St. Leonards Place	2	2	0
Lower Hungate (Hungate, Wesley Place & Garden Place, etc.)	2	2	0
	<u>532</u>	<u>392</u>	<u>140</u>
Totals			

\* indicates areas of Irish settlement at this census.

More detailed descriptions of these locations will be found in the following Chapter.

Comparison of Table 57 with Table 58 shows that the Irish percentage of total crimes committed in York in 1861 had fallen in the ten year period from 26.3% to 21.1%. As in the previous table the types of crimes committed by Irish persons were limited largely to those of assault, disorderly behaviour, drunkenness and theft, again, usually of a petty kind, including pickpocketing. Breaking glass, reduced from 16 offences in 1851 to only one in this year, no longer relates to desperate attempts to gain admittance to the Vagrant Office but refers to an Irishman smashing the window of the Full Moon Inn in Walmgate.<sup>1</sup> The two cases of desertion involve Irishmen Barnard Flaherty and Richard Igo, both of Long Close Lane, charged not with neglect of their families, but with desertion from the army.<sup>2</sup> Gaming amongst the Irish invariably refers to 'pitch and toss', a fairly common offence throughout the period, sometimes involving up to 40 persons. It was usually played in the Bedern or Walmgate areas and was punished with greater severity if the offence was committed on the Sabbath.<sup>3</sup>

The locations of Irish crimes in 1860/61 (Table 59) were similar to those of the previous decade, once again more than half of those occurring in the Walmgate area being charged against non-Irish offenders, as were all of those in the Hungate areas, Navigation Road area and the newly settled Irish colony in Aldwark. Only in the Bedern were all five offences committed by Irish individuals.

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 8 June 1861.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 2 February 1861 and 22 December 1860.

<sup>3</sup>See for example, the Gazette, 6 April 1861 and 22 June 1861.

Table 58

Crimes in York, October 1860-September 1861

<u>Offence</u>	<u>Numbers of persons charged.</u>		
	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Non-Irish</u>	<u>Total</u>
Absconding apprentice	0	6	6
Allowing boy up chimney	0	1	1
Assault	21	39	60
Assaulting Police Constable	5	14	19
Bad food (sale of)	0	1	1
Beerhouse offences	0	9	9
Breaking glass	1	4	5
Child murder	0	1	1
Counterfeit and embezzlement	1	3	4
Cruelty to animals	0	3	3
Damage to property	0	1	1
Defective weights	0	1	1
Disorderly & disturbance	6	26	32
Desertion	2	1	3
Drunk	4	11	15
Failure to pay wages	1	0	1
False declaration	0	1	1
False pretences	0	1	1
Fighting	2	0	2
Furious driving	0	1	1
Gaming	4	1	5
Ill treatment of child	0	1	1
Ill treatment of wife (& desertion)	0	3	3
Night soil offences	0	1	1
Obstruction	0	7	7
Pickpocket	4	11	15
Prostitution	0	2	2
Suspicious character	1	11	12
Theft	14	85	99
Threatening language	2	1	3
Unlawful pawning	0	2	2
Wandering abraod	0	3	3
Indecency	0	2	2
Totals	<u>68</u>	<u>254</u>	<u>322</u>

Irish % of total = 21.1%

Location of Crimes in York October 1860-Septmeber 1861.

<u>Area</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Persons charged</u>	
		<u>Non-Irish</u>	<u>Irish</u>
Central (Markets, etc.)	79	69	10
Walmgate*	49	20	29
Not Known	31	28	3
Water Lanes*	23	18	5
Micklegate/Station	17	15	2
Ousegate	17	15	2
Fishergate	13	10	3
Blossom Street/Holgate Road	13	10	3
Skeldergate/Bishophill	11	11	0
St. Andrewgate/Aldwark*	9	9	0
North Street	8	7	1
Lower Hungate (Hungate, Wesley Place & Garden Plance, etc.)	8	8	0
Gillygate/Groves	7	7	0
Peaseholme Green	7	6	1
Long Close Lane, Hope Street*	7	4	3
Nunnery Lane/Clementhorpe	5	4	1
Bedern*	5	0	5
Bootham/St. Leonards Place	4	4	0
Goodramgate/Minster	4	4	0
Navigation Road	2	2	0
Upper Hungate (Haver Lane, Palmer Lane, etc.)	1	1	0
Lawrence Street, Hull Road	1	1	0
Knavesmire	1	1	0
	<u>322</u>	<u>254</u>	<u>68</u>
Total			

\* indicates areas of Irish settlement at this census.

The total number of offences in this censal year is surprisingly low being only 322 compared with 532 for 1850/51 and 869 for 1870/71. However, since all offences mentioned in both the Herald's and the Gazette's coverage of the weekly magistrates' courts were carefully listed and checked, and neither paper's policy of reporting seems to change over the period, it can only be assumed that there was a local reduction in the incidence of crime. This would fit in with the national pattern in which the total number of crimes committed in that year was lower than at any time since 1822.<sup>1</sup>

Table 60 shows that in 1870/71 there was a marked increase both in the total number of crimes committed, and in those crimes most often committed by Irish persons in the previous two decades, with the exception of theft, which in 1870/71 was still considerably lower than the 1850/51 total. Cases of assault (often associated with disturbances) increased substantially, but the most significant development was the enormous increase in the charges of disorderly behaviour (45 for 1851 and 32 for 1861 as opposed to 196 for 1871) and drunkenness (61 for 1851, 15 for 1861 and 231 for 1871.) The parallel movement of these two offences reflects the fact that they were usually associated, one individual often being charged with both at once. The proportion of Irish persons charged with assault, drunkenness and disorderly behaviour, however, actually declines between the two later censal years.

Irish beer and lodging house offences occur for the first time on the 1870/71 table, though there are earlier instances of

<sup>1</sup>V. A. C. Gatrell and T. B. Hadden, *Criminal Statistics & Their Interpretation*, in Nineteenth Century Society ed. E. A. Wrigley. Cambridge 1972. pp.372-5.

Table 60

Crimes in York, October 1870-September, 1871.

<u>Offence</u>	<u>Numbers of persons charged.</u>		
	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Non-Irish</u>	<u>Total</u>
Absconding apprentice	0	3	3
Absent from service	0	1	1
Assault	20	88	108
Assaulting police constable	8	26	34
Bad language	0	3	3
Beerhouse offence	7	23	30
Begging	2	14	16
Bigamy	0	1	1
Boy up chimney	0	1	1
Breaking Glass	1	4	5
Breach of cab regulations	0	8	8
Breach of lodging regulations	4	4	8
Breach of contract	0	1	1
Cruelty to animals	2	17	19
Disorderly	35	161	196
Dog biting*	0	1	1
Drunk	39	192	231
Embezzlement	0	2	2
Evading rent	0	1	1
Failure to vaccinate	0	1	1
False pretences	0	2	2
Fighting	1	7	8
Fraud	0	1	1
Furious driving	0	6	6
Gambling	14	4	18
Gun without a license	0	2	2
Harbouring deserter	0	1	1
Hawking without license	0	4	4
Illegal pawning	0	1	1
Indecency (male)	0	3	3
Indecent exposure (male)	0	2	2

\*Gazette, 2 September 1871. William Leetal, shopkeeper of Winterscale Street, Fishergate, charged with biting dog.

Crimes in York, October 1870-September, 1871.

<u>Offence</u>	<u>Numbers of persons charged.</u>		
	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Non-Irish</u>	<u>Total</u>
Night soil offences	0	2	2
Obstruction	0	21	21
Offences against Bye Laws	0	1	1
Pickpocket	0	2	2
Receiving	0	1	1
Rescue from police	0	1	1
Setting dog on	0	1	1
Short weight	0	5	5
Slander	1	0	1
Suspicious character	0	2	2
Theft	6	72	78
Unfit food for sale	0	2	2
Wandering abroad and indecent	3	29	32
Wilful damage	0	2	2
	—	—	—
Totals	143	726	869
	—	—	—

Irish % of total = 16.5%

both in the inter-censal years. For example, in March 1854 Martin Dowd of Barley Corn Passage, Walmgate, was charged with having lodgers without license - 8 men and women having been found "huddled in one room with scarcely any covering",<sup>1</sup> and in the same year in Britannia Yard, Walmgate, six keepers of common lodging houses were all charged on the same day with having too many lodgers.<sup>2</sup> The precise dimensions and amenities of this Yard and its houses were detailed in the Slum Clearance Schedule of 1933 and were examined fully in Chapter V. However, as an indication of the extent of overcrowding existing in the nineteenth century, it is sufficient at this point to note that each house contained only one room on the ground and one on the first floor. At the 1851 census, of the 16 houses (all but one of which were occupied by Irish persons) one contained 17 Irish individuals, two contained 18 and one contained 15. A photograph of the Yard appears on page 153.

The four cases of lodging house offences on the 1870/71 table were all for similar breaches of the regulations and all occurred in the Water Lanes. One offender, Francis Dunlavy, however, was brought up for the 12th time,<sup>3</sup> and another, Harriet McDermott, faced the additional charge of allowing persons of both sexes to sleep in the same room.<sup>4</sup> (Such a regulation was obviously not enforceable in the early 1850's during the first waves of concentrated post-Famine settlement.) The above charge was usually

<sup>1</sup>Herald, 18 March 1854.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 21 January 1854. The penalties for this offence were mild - usually 2/6 and costs, and clearly had little deterrent effect judging by the repeated appearances of the same offenders during the periodic bursts of enforcement of the regulations.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 13 May 1871.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 21 August 1869.



preferred against brothel keepers, and it is likely that Harriet McDermott's 'lodging house' (situated in Cross Alley) was in fact one of the few Irish brothels in the city, she having already been charged in 1869 with allowing "three abandoned girls and one man" to sleep in the same room.<sup>1</sup> (see Chapter VII)

Beerhouse offences occur mainly in the later period - an indication, perhaps, of a slightly improved status enjoyed by a few of the Irish immigrants. In 1857 Miles Barnical (a familiar character, formerly of Bedern) now a beershop keeper in Goodramgate was summoned for allowing 60 people to be drinking at five o'clock in the morning, in spite of a police caution,<sup>2</sup> and in August 1864 Anthony Lovell, keeper of a beerhouse in Church Lane Walmgate was charged with a similar offence.<sup>3</sup> Three of the offences on the 1870/71 table were committed by Anthony Hennigan of George Street, Walmgate, firstly for allowing drunkenness in his premises, secondly for selling out of hours and keeping a disorderly house and thirdly for being drunk himself.<sup>4</sup>

The charge of wandering abroad and indecent behaviour relates to prostitution, and as such will be dealt with in the next chapter.

With regard to the location of crimes charged against Irish persons in 1871, Table 61 shows that while the number of crimes committed in the Walmgate area rose, the Irish contribution to crime there nevertheless fell considerably (from 59% to 32%). Secondly, the number of Irish crimes in the central markets area was reduced even further than the 1861 level, in spite of a more than

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 21 August 1869

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 18 April, 1857.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 20 August 1864.

<sup>4</sup>These charges took place on 8 July 1871, 15 July 1871 and 9 September 1871. Gazette.

100% increase in total crimes. As in the previous two censuses the area of Irish settlement containing the highest proportion of Irish offenders was the Bedern; Long Close Lane and Aldwarke also being fairly high, the Water Lanes and Hungate areas, however, again being consistently low.

Table 61

Location of Crimes in York October 1870-September 1871

<u>Area</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Persons charged</u>	
		<u>Non-Irish</u>	<u>Irish</u>
Central (markets, etc.)	163	157	6
Walmgate*	161	109	52
Not known	59	57	2
Skeldergate/Bishophill	46	42	4
Ousegate	38	34	4
Peaseholme Green	37	34	3
Upper Hungate (Haver Lane, Palmer Lane, etc.)*	35	33	2
Fishergate	34	22	12
Gillygate/Groves	34	33	1
Long Close Lane, Hope Street*	32	13	19
Water Lanes*	31	28	3
Micklegate/Station	31	29	2
Lawrence Street/Hull Road*	24	21	3
Bedern*	19	7	12
Nunnery Lane/Clementhorpe	19	16	3
Bootham/St. Leonards Place	17	17	0
Blossom Street/Holgate Road	16	14	2
St. Andrewgate/Aldwark*	14	6	8
Goodramgate/Minster	13	12	1
Navigation Road*	11	10	1
Lower Hungate (Hungate, Wesley Place, etc.)	9	7	2
Castlegate	9	8	1
Knavesmire	9	9	0
North Street	7	7	0
Monk Stray	1	1	0
	<u>869</u>	<u>726</u>	<u>143</u>

\* indicates areas of Irish settlement at this census.

The offence which, more than any other, gave the Irish such a bad reputation in the city was that of disorderly behaviour, usually coupled with drunkenness and fighting, and on occasions developing into what appear to have been small-scale riots. For the four censal years however, the only ones in which a reasonably accurate estimate of the actual numbers of Irish offenders can be made, the statistics show that even in this, their most common and notorious crime, they were not as numerous as non-Irish offenders, or as the impression given in the weekly Guildhall reports would lead one to expect. Since even in the inter-censal years, every incident involving persons described as Irish by the newspapers has been collected, it is apparent that the numbers of such cases are exaggerated by the use of such remarks as "Another Irish Disturbance," "More Disturbances amongst the Irish" or "Another Bedern Riot." Nevertheless, there were throughout the period, outbreaks of disorderly behaviour amongst the Irish which do not seem to have been indulged in either with the same frequency or in such large numbers, by the non-Irish population; and it was this type of behaviour, presenting as it did a very real threat to law and order in the city, which was most often and most bitterly complained of by the York magistrates. The crime statistics, of course, show only the numbers of persons actually charged, and in the case of a large-scale disturbance are hardly a real indication of the number of individuals involved. In September, 1850, for example, in "Another Bedern

Riot", John Callaghan was charged with rescuing a prisoner from police officer Reynolds in the Bedern. The officer stated that at about one o'clock on Sunday morning:

"one of those scenes which so often occur in Bedern took place. There were not less than 150 Irish people collected together and he was very roughly handled by them."

He took one of them into custody, the prisoner being immediately rescued by Callaghan, the only one to eventually face a charge.<sup>1</sup> It seems apparent, therefore, that in the case of "riots" like the one above, in which large numbers of people were said to be involved yet few of them brought before the magistrates, the statistics, based on charges, underestimate the numbers of actual offenders. Having made this point, however, it should be qualified in two ways. Firstly, from very careful examination of all such incidents throughout the period, it is clear that in very few of the so called riots, large numbers of people were, in fact, actively engaged in disorderly behaviour, but seem instead to have been merely spectators congregating around the core of the disturbance. Secondly, the number of instances when such outbreaks occur is not, on examination, as frequent as appears from the general tenor of the newspaper accounts. In all throughout the period there were 40 cases of disturbance involving Irish individuals numbering from between about 20 and 300-400 people, most of them taking place, as one might expect, in the first decade of Irish post-Famine settlement in the city. These were variously described in the newspaper reports as "riots", "furious mobs", "fracas", etc., the majority of them involving about 30-50 people amongst whom fighting (often through drunkenness) arose.

<sup>1</sup>Herald, 21 September, 1850.

Typical of these smaller disturbances were "Another Irish Riot" in the Bedern in 1852<sup>1</sup>, "A great muster of the Irish" in Walmgate in 1853<sup>2</sup>, and an "Irish Riot" in Walmgate in 1849<sup>3</sup>, though clearly such incidents were not in fact "riots" in the normally accepted sense of the term, but rather, disturbances arising from petty squabbles and fights between Irish individuals often culminating in assault and resistance of police intervention. Usually the incident was the result of a very trivial affair. Trouble arose in the Bedern in 1853, for example, over a minor matter, though eventually a crowd of about 100 Irishmen were reported as being involved - not one of them being charged with disorderly behaviour however. The parish constable, Matthew Cowton (see below) had taken an Irish boy into custody for playing ball on Sunday - "a common practice in this locality on the Sabbath." They were followed to the Station House by a crowd of about 100 Irishmen, two of whom, Michael Keelan and Andrew O'Dowd rescued the boy from the constable, for which they each received 7 days at the House of Correction.<sup>4</sup>

The incident involving the largest number of Irish persons occurred in June, 1851. Owen O'Donnell, taken into custody after beating up the landlord of the Fat Ox public House in the Cattle Market, assaulted the police constable and made his escape. He was pursued into Long Close Lane, where the officer "found between 300 and 400 Irish fighting among themselves with various kinds of weapons."<sup>5</sup> Another serious incident occurred

<sup>1</sup>Herald, 6 November 1862.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 15 December, 1849.

<sup>5</sup>Gazette, 28 June, 1851.

<sup>2</sup>Herald, June 4 1853.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 17 December 1853.

in November the following year when "some 40 or 50 Irish were hunting after soldiers" from the West York Militia, who had apparently begun searching Miles Barnical's lodging house in the Bedern after the Irish had stripped them of their epaulettes. A man called Lyons attacked the two policemen who arrived, and on his being taken into custody his sister Catherine armed with a poker, threw sticks and stones at the officers, and attempted to rescue him. The Lord Mayor committed her to the House of Correction for one month and remarked "what a violent set of people the Irish were, and he expected they would be committing murder one of these days."<sup>1</sup> A similar incident had occurred in Walmgate in August, when, following a disturbance among a large number of Irishmen congregated there, Hugh Dorkin and Michael Judge were charged with having rescued from the police a prisoner named Kilmartin. The Lord Mayor declared that the magistrates were determined to do all within their power to put a stop to outrages of this description, which were a disgrace to the city, or York would be "as bad as any Irish town in her Majesty's dominions."<sup>2</sup>

Such disturbances, occurring with greatest frequency between 1847 and 1858, continued into the 1860's, when they died down for a period, flaring up again in the early 70's. As the analysis for Irish criminality in the censal years shows, Irish offences were largely limited to those associated with the above incidents - assault, rescue from police, drunkenness and disorderly behaviour - any combination of which could result in a disturbance eventually involving large numbers of people. The magistrates

<sup>1</sup>Herald and Gazette, 6 November 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Herald and Gazette, 30 August 1850.

were naturally concerned to stamp out such scenes of violence and turmoil, however, given the repeated appearances of certain individual offenders, the usual 7 or 14 days imprisonment seems to have had little deterrent effect, and the imposition of fines, even less. In October 1865, Irishman Peter Harrison, involved in "disgraceful scenes on the Sabbath" was charged with fighting and pursuing a man called Rohan with a poker. The chief constable asked the magistrates to send the defendant to prison rather than fine him, which would be no punishment "as the Irish club together and soon raise the amount required by subscriptions of a few pence each."<sup>1</sup>

Some of the incidents, as was the case in the one quoted earlier involving Matthew Cowton, parish constable of Bedern, obviously resulted in much ill feeling on both sides, and seem to have arisen out of a sense of injustice amongst the Irish over particular police action concerning a relatively minor offence. In May 1864, for example, an ugly incident occurred when Ellen Duncan, refusing to move on in Walmgate, or to give her name or address to the police, was taken into custody. En route to the police station she and the two officers were followed by a crowd of Irish people, three of whom (two women and a man) knocked down, scratched and struck the constables. The chief constable asked the Bench to decide the case without inflicting a fine:

"inasmuch as the Irish in Walmgate were so excited by the disturbance that they were almost in arms against the police, and on Sunday night it was unsafe for them to go into the street unless in a company of five or six."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 28. October. 1865.

<sup>2</sup>Herald & Gazette, 14 May 1864.



The three women were each sentenced to fourteen days' hard labour, and the man to one month.

A more spectacular incident, however, occurred in the Bedern in 1857, obviously the result of events simmering for some time, and culminating in the suicide of the parish constable, Matthew Cowton. As has been seen above, page 309, he had already incurred the wrath of the inhabitants of the street by arresting an Irish boy for playing ball on a Sunday, and in the following year (February 1854) during a Bedern "uproar" he was threatened with a knife.<sup>1</sup> Eight months later he was attacked and kicked in a dark passage off the street, following a disturbance involving 80 or 100 Irishmen.<sup>2</sup> In March the following year he was "furiously assaulted" by Irishman Michael Langan, when conveying him into custody<sup>3</sup>, and five months after that he was "nearly choked" by Martin McCarty, resisting arrest.<sup>4</sup> In November 1857, however, he finally exceeded his unenviable duties as parish constable of that "nursery of crime" and apparently chose (perhaps wisely) to do away with himself, rather than face the consequences. The newspapers of 7th November 1857 give the following detailed account of the episode, in which Thomas and Mary Lyons<sup>5</sup> were charged with being drunk and disorderly and assaulting the police; they however, brought and proved serious charges against the city

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 11 February, 1854.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette & Herald, 21 October 1854.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 3 March 1855.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 11 August, 1855.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas Lyon, "one of the especial pests of the neighbourhood" was convicted of being drunk and disorderly in Bedern in October, 1853. His wife was charged in 1856 with assaulting Patrick Carney, and in the previous month, Edward and Helen Muldowny had been charged with threatening to murder her. Gazette, 29 October, 1853, and 5 Jan. and 23 Feb. 1856.

police force, and in particular the parish constable of Bedern, Matthew Cowton.<sup>1</sup>

At 5.30 p.m. on the previous Tuesday, Mr. Westland, coach builder of Goodramgate saw a man in Bedern brandishing a knife and accordingly called Matthew Cowton to quell the disturbance. There was, however, no evidence as to what then occurred, "Cowton having since committed suicide." Police Officer Holmes, however, testified that Cowton then asked for his assistance, in trying to arrest Thomas Lyons for drunkenness, who resisted and escaped. The two constables then went to Lyons' house where they found him with his wife, both of whom again resisted arrest, armed with a poker, a fender and a knife. According to Holmes' testimony:

"Lyons then siezed a pan and struck him three times on the head. He then spoke some words in Irish to his wife, who took up a pan containing hot water and threw it at the officer. Holmes and Cowton were then compelled to retreat and procure assistance. Several policemen shortly afterwards arrived and they attempted to procure an entrance into Lyons' house by breaking the door open, but were unable to do so for some time. In the meanwhile the Reverend J. O'Geary arrived, and he requested the police to desist while he asked Lyons to allow the police to enter his house. The police immediately desisted and Mr. O'Geary told Lyons he was there, hoping thereby to get him pacified. Lyons, according to Holmes' account on hearing that gentleman speak, attempted to strike him through the window, exclaiming, 'Blood an' 'ounds to F<sup>r</sup>ather O'Geary'."

<sup>1</sup>Four months earlier the Lord Mayor had had to adjourn a case involving a disturbance in the Bedern because of the "improper" conduct of Cowton, who had "made it up" with a prisoner who had been given into his custody (Irishman Thomas Durkin) and was not in court to press the matter further.

Yorkshireman, 4 July, 1857.

An indication of Cowton's circumstances is to be found in his own application for Poor Relief in the spring of 1851. At that time he was a 42 year old labourer living in the Bedern with his wife and 6 children. (Application and Report Book, 1851)

The police broke in and were met by Thomas Lyons, who was armed with a rolling pin and a pan, and his wife who had a knife in her hand. They were soon overpowered and taken into custody, but the female prisoner was very much injured and they were discharged.

"It was evident from the injuries they had to show that that the defendants had been very severely hurt, especially the woman, whereas the police had not any injury scarcely to show"

and in the opinion of the Lord Mayor the defendants were more assaulted than assaulting. Charges of assault and wilful damage were then preferred against nine police officers, including Matthew Cowton (which was withdrawn owing to his suicide.) Lyons denied completely the evidence given by the police. He stated that he worked for Knapton & Son, Ironfounders, and after leaving work at 5.30 went straight home. He washed himself and went outside to call for his eldest daughter to nurse his youngest child who was asleep in the room. While shouting, Cowton came by and told him to go in. He refused, but his wife, returning home at that moment told him to go in, which he did, no disturbance taking place. Cowton returned with another policeman to arrest him for being drunk (which he denied, having only had 4 glasses of ale all day) and he denied striking or using abusive language to the priest, whom he did not even see. Mary Lyons corroborated her husband's evidence, saying Holmes struck the first blow, and police constable Duke struck her three times on the head, breaking his staff, and then punched her on the breast with it. Holmes dragged her through the streets in a most shameful way.

"Other witnesses corroborated this, and Father O'Geary said that when the door was broken down 'he saw Lyons in the custody of two police and his wife supplicating them not to murder him. One of the police told her to hold her noise and hit her on the head with his hand' ... The surgeon found her suffering from three wounds

on her head and injury to her breast."

Police Officer Holmes was fined £2. 0. 0. for assaulting Maria (sic) Lyons, it being considered that he had "exceeded his duty." All the other defendants (police) were discharged.<sup>1</sup>

A further incident of police brutality against an Irish woman occurred in October 1862, when two constables were charged with assaulting Bridget O'Hara and wounding her in her home in Croshaw's Passage, Stonegate, where they had gone to look for her son. They were fined 2/6 and costs, the Lord Mayor stating that such conduct by the police could not be tolerated.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that the constant appearance of certain Irish individuals before the magistrates, as well as particular crimes such as disturbances, boosted the proportion of Irish offences and gave the community such a bad reputation, has already been mentioned - though this was presumably true of the host population too. Prostitutes in particular, being habitual offenders and largely non-Irish, must to some extent have cancelled out the statistical effects of characters like Anthony Battle,<sup>3</sup> surely the most belligerent Irishman in the city, Anthony Foy,<sup>4</sup> Michael Brannan<sup>5</sup> making his 43th appearance before the magistrates in February 1873, and Michael Morgan, drunk and disorderly for the 24th time as early as September 1852.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Gazette & Herald, 7 November 1857.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette & Herald, 4 October 1862.

<sup>3</sup>He and his brother first appear in 1851 and are still appearing in March (14) 1874. (assaulting P.C.)

<sup>4</sup>Father or grandfather of the Anthony Foy who, though rarely sober himself, is remembered by several Irish people who have talked to me of life in York in the 20's and 30's, as the conveyor of drunken bodies in his barrow at closing time - for which he received a few pence. This one, cropping up for the first time in 1865

(continued over)

The violence involved in some of the cases must certainly have caught the attention of the public, confirming the impressions already conveyed by the newspapers of the brutality inherent in the Irish race. Irishmen are reported as "arming themselves with large stones by tearing up the pavement", and attacking one another with a variety of weapons varying from loaded whipstocks or pokers to cobblestones and fenders. The detailed reporting of such incidents is even more gruesome, though this of course is not limited to offences involving Irish individuals, the writers seeming to delight in making the most of a "horrible happening" or "shocking occurrence". In May 1861 two Irishmen Patrick Allan and John Dowd engaged in a fight, turned their attention to the two unfortunate policemen who tried to interfere, kicking one and attempting to gouge out his eye, and kicking the other in the face. Both officers were unfit for duty for some time.<sup>1</sup> In June 1857 in a fight in Walmgate, Anthony Lovell was siezed by the nose by Francis White and bitten on the cheek,<sup>2</sup> and in May, 1862 Michael McDermot, Irish labourer, was charged with assaulting a policeman and attempting "to bite the constable's legs, and failing in that act, succeeded in biting two pieces from his thumb."<sup>3</sup> Anthony Lovell, already referred to above (page 304) was charged in addition

for breaking the door of the Edinburgh Arms in Fishergate, makes his final appearance during the period of this study in January 1874 for assaulting his father. Gazette 30 September 1865 and 3 Jan. 74.

<sup>5</sup>Gazette, 8 February, 1873.

<sup>6</sup>Gazette, 11 September 1852.

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 26 May, 1861.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 27 June, 1857.

<sup>3</sup>Herald, 10 May, 1862.

to his various beerhouse offences, with assaulting another Irishman James Broderick in August 1864. Lovell "siezed Broderick by the collar and stooped down his head, bit a piece of flesh out of his lip and struck him over the head."<sup>1</sup>

Violence was fairly common too amongst the women, though this was by no means limited to the Irish population. In an Irish brawl in Walmgate, for example, Mary Donougoe of Walmgate was charged with assaulting Mary McNicholl, splitting her nose and knocking her teeth out; also in May 1862 in an "Irish Row in the Bedern" Mary Muldowny attacked Margaret Smith on the head with a hammer.<sup>2</sup> Other cases occurred on average about once a year during the period, the last one being in April, 1875 when

"a quarrel arose amongst some of the Irish residing in the Bedern and blows were exchanged ... the women enjoying the pastime of tearing each other's hair."<sup>3</sup>

Two cases of manslaughter amongst the Irish occurred in the period. The first was in April, 1851 when James Flannery,

("or Flannely, for as we may here observe, such is the depth of the ignorance of these people that the members of the family were not able to speak at the inquest with any degree of certainty as to the spelling of their own name.")

a 52 year old widower and the father of eight children, died as the result of a fractured skull.<sup>4</sup> He and his children, together with his son-in-law Patrick Jordan lived in Smith's Buildings, Long Close Lane (referred to by Richard Thomas in his report to Chadwick's Commission, see page 166) in a house "where above 30 Irish live." The trouble arose on the previous day when Jordan and his wife

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 27 June 1857.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 31 May 1862.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 24 April 1875.

<sup>4</sup>An entry in the Poor Law Application and Report Book for that quarter (April 1851) shows that he was accorded a pauper's funeral.

with the three Donallin brothers, James, Henry and Michael were returning home from work in the chicory fields. Jordan accused James Donnalin of having impugned the virtue of his wife (daughter of the deceased). After an inevitable row, two of the brothers took the matter further the next morning, arriving in the Yard and challenging the family to a fight. Only Mrs. Jordan appears to have responded to the invitation by going out of the house "and standing at the passage end" no doubt repeating her threats of the previous day and provoking one of the Donallins to hit her in the face. Her father (described as "an old man" though in fact he was only "about 52") ran out to help her and was attacked by the brothers with a broom and a poker, receiving injuries from which he died. An interesting aspect of this case is the close-knit relationship between the parties involved. All lived in Long Close Lane and worked together,\* and all originated from Sligo, where they had known one another for ten years - the Donallins having in fact formerly lodged with the Flannery family. The brothers were sentenced to 6 months' imprisonment and on their release in October further disturbances broke out, the police reporting that much ill-feeling about the affair existed amongst the Irish who branded the brothers as "murderers".<sup>1</sup>

The second case of manslaughter occurred in April 1860 when John Mullen was charged with fatally stabbing Patrick Durkin. The Lord Mayor refused bail because the number of rows amongst the Irish were becoming so frequent that he was determined to send the offenders to prison "more often than hitherto",<sup>2</sup> though such complaints about the Walmgate area, where the offence took place, were by no means new.

\*James Flannery was also, apparently, an orange hawker.

<sup>1</sup>Gazette & Herald, 26 April, 1851. <sup>2</sup>Gazette, 23 April 1860.  
see also 25 October 1851.

In August 1846, for example, rather too early for all the offenders to have been Irish, Mr. Walker, Ironfounder, complained of the disgraceful proceedings in Walmgate, which was in "such a disorderly state that no respectable person can live in the neighbourhood."<sup>1</sup>

The final illustration of "Another serious Irish Riot in York" (August 1851) is an example of one of the most serious disturbances of the period, involving large numbers of people and coupled with violence and brutality. The authorities were naturally outraged, the Lord Mayor promising that "he would see whether the law or the Irish were the strongest" and giving orders to prohibit all gatherings of Irish in the streets. Witnesses having testified to a mob of at least 200 strong, he declared that he would not suffer these assemblies and was determined to put them down. The newspaper report was as follows:

"On Sunday evening the Irish population who occupy Bedern were in a state of great disorder and excitement and the adjoining street of Goodramgate was completely obstructed with the drunken and excited Irishmen who were there assembled."

At about eight o'clock a police officer tried to take one of them into custody but:

"The Irish war-cry was raised and the officer was surrounded with a brutal and savage body of Irishmen, and the women were active in bringing to them sticks and other weapons ... (the officer) was grasped by the throat by this man (his prisoner) until he was nearly strangled, several others beat him most unmercifully, and when he was thrown down they bunched him with brutal violence over the head. In the end his cries of "murder" induced several respectable citizens to go to his assistance and thus his life was preserved."

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 29 August 1846.



Unfortunately it is not stated whether the officer was parish constable Cowton. The Lord Mayor declared that the police would be given instructions and an increased force procured to assist them to clear the streets of all congregations of the Irish.

At this:

"The crowd of Irish who had congregated in the hall immediately made off. And although several witnesses were called by the defendants (who all positively denied being at all present during the affray) not one of them ventured to answer, lest they should be identified as participators in the riot."<sup>1</sup>

A similar magisterial outburst occurred in the following year, though for less reason, when Patrick Morris, Irishman, was charged with obstructing the footpath in Walmgate. The Lord Mayor gave

"Strict orders to the police to persevere in compelling the Irish to disperse and thus put an end to the most intolerable nuisance which they create by congregating in large numbers at the ends of lanes and alleys in Walmgate and some other parts of the city, almost to the terror of many of the more respectable inhabitants."<sup>2</sup>

The statistics for the censal years, together with the above illustrations make it very clear that disturbances involving fighting and assault were by far the most common offences amongst the Irish population, and that these justifiably created a most damaging impression leading to an increase of hostility. Other types of crime, however, more common amongst the non-Irish, were fairly limited. Throughout the period cases of cruelty or neglect occur very rarely in spite of the destitution of many of the immigrants.<sup>3</sup> In June 1847 there was a report of two children

<sup>1</sup>Gazette & Herald. 9 August 1851.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 19 June 1852.

<sup>3</sup>In May 1851 Irish woman Mrs. Conder left the workhouse and gave birth in the street. In need of relief but unwilling to return to the house, her baby died. She was charged with neglect but was dismissed. Gazette, 21 June 1851.

in a thin and emaciated condition discovered in the coalhole of their aunt, a woman named Duffy, living in Plow's Rectory Buildings, near St. Dennis Church, Walmgate. Their aunt was married to an Irishman, and "the house is the resort of a number of Irishmen every night."<sup>1</sup> In September 1854 an Irish woman Mary Ann Loughran, of Walmgate, was charged with the neglect of a 12 month old child, which she left from 5 or 6 in the morning until late in the evening alone,<sup>2</sup> and in September 1867, Mary Smith, Irishwoman of no fixed address and in search of her husband was charged with being drunk and trying to throw her child into the river. She stated she was the mother of 13 children and had treated them all well, and was discharged on promising to leave the city.<sup>3</sup> Finally, in June 1874 Ann Moran, who appeared in the 1871 census as a single Irishwoman, was charged with being drunk and disorderly. She had been seen by the York Union Relieving Officer:

"At half past ten at night ... she had a baby in her arms and carried another child between two and three years of age ... she was in the habit of sitting in the streets and nipping her children to make them cry so as to excite sympathy."<sup>4</sup>

Three others of her children were already in the care of the Guardians and it is obvious that in this as in the two previous cases, cruelty and neglect were coupled with, if not the result of, poverty and desperation.

Crimes connected with sexual offences were virtually absent

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 5 June 1847.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 9 September 1854.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 14 September 1867.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 19 June, 1874.

amongst the Irish community<sup>1</sup> - only three occurring in the period one of which, listed as improper exposure, being apparently quite harmless. In July 1849 John Hennegan was charged by Mr. Edwin Thompson, Iron founder (a gentleman frequently drawing the attention of the magistrates to the wrong doings of the Irish in the neighbourhood) with having improperly exposed himself on the previous evening. The Irishman had been attempting to wash his clothes at Castle Mills Bridge, and "being almost in a state of nudity at the time had exposed himself to the gaze of many passers by."<sup>2</sup> However, in June 1852, Irishman John Ormsby was charged with being drunk and disorderly and "siezing a respectable young woman and disarranging her wearing apparel;"<sup>3</sup> and in June 1875, John Finn, Irish labourer of the Bedern, only two weeks in York, was sentenced to three months imprisonment for the exposure of his person. He had had 16 previous convictions.<sup>4</sup>

Finally in this chapter on the extent and nature of Irish criminality in York, a number of incidents have been chosen to illustrate both the petty nature (usually arising from desperation) of many of the thefts for which the Irish were convicted, and the severity of the punishment imposed.

In May 1854 Patrick Quilkin, a youth of 11 years was charged with stealing some brazil nuts. He had been eleven times before the magistrates, and was sentenced to three months imprisonment and to be severely whipped once.<sup>5</sup> Thomas Burke, an

<sup>1</sup>excepting prostitution, discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 28 July 1849.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 19 June 1852.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 13 June 1875.

<sup>5</sup>Gazette, 20 May 1854.

Irish boy, charged with stealing a loaf of bread from a shop was committed to the House of Correction for 14 days in October 1857,<sup>1</sup> and Patrick McLarty, alias McNulty, just out of prison, was given three months hard labour in November 1855 for breaking a shop window and stealing some ham.<sup>2</sup> Thomas Oliver who stole some cheese in December 1863 was imprisoned for one month,<sup>3</sup> and an old Irish woman, Mary Clark, who pleaded guilty to stealing an old pair of boots in the same year was dealt with "leniently", - "as she had probably committed the theft through want." The Bench committed her to prison for 14 days.<sup>4</sup> Mary McCombe, on the other hand, a fourteen year old girl from Belfast, was sentenced to two months hard labour in the house of correction, for breaking a shop window.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, an account of one of the various exchanges between the Lord Mayor and what the Herald describes in this instance as "a hungry Irishman." Charles Steward was charged in February 1851 with breaking a shop window in Walmgate and stealing a loaf.

"The prisoner stated he could not find work and was starving with hunger.

Lord Mayor. 'We will find you some work'.

Prisoner. 'Well, I should be very much obliged to you, sir.' (laughter)

Lord Mayor. He could not respond that he was obliged to him for destroying property belonging to the inhabitants of this city. He regretted he could not punish the offender more severely ... In London the Law had been altered and they now flogged people for doing similar acts."

He was sentenced to seven days at the House of Correction, on the lowest scale of diet.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 10 October 1857.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 19 December 1863.

<sup>5</sup>Gazette, 5 March 1853.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 24 November 1855

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 7 March 1863

<sup>6</sup>Gazette, 15 February, 1851.

This Chapter has attempted to illustrate the type and extent of Irish criminality in York between the late 1840's and 1875. It is clear that the most common offences were those associated with disturbances, and that the other crime in which the Irish were most often involved - theft - was usually of a trivial kind, even in the later period being mainly the result of poverty and desperation. Other types of offence were very limited amongst the Irish, and their reputation for being responsible for more than half the crimes in the city (untrue even in 1851) rests mainly on their outbreaks of disorderly behaviour. These as has been seen, were limited almost entirely to their own areas of settlement in the city - the Bedern, Walmgate and Long Close Lane districts, yet as the statistics for the censal years show, disturbances in these areas were by no means confined to Irish offenders. Illustrations chosen from the inter-censal years reveal the violence and brutality involved in many of the disturbances, and in some measure explain the hostility of the host population towards the Irish community. However, such illustrations, dealing only with offences in which Irish persons were involved, present an unfavourable impression of the extent of Irish criminality. Non-Irish crimes, however, though unrepresented here for the inter-censal years, could not have escaped the attention of contemporary observers, for though not generally given as much publicity as were incidents involving Irish offenders, they were, nevertheless, reported in detail in the weekly newspapers.

The exaggerated account of Irish criminality in York, therefore, both in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries,

cannot be explained solely in terms of the violence and frequency of outbreaks of disorder.

As has been observed, there existed in addition to the justifiable anxiety and indignation such behaviour must have occasioned, an underlying element of prejudice which had been present even before the arrival of the immigrants. Anti-social behaviour on their part, therefore, whatever the cause, often merely had the effect of strengthening preconceived notions regarding the criminality of the Celt.

Table 62 gives Irish crimes as a percentage of total crimes in York, and Irish population as a percentage of the whole, for each of the four censal years.

Table 62

Irish Percentage of Crimes at Each Censal Year

<u>Censal Year</u>	<u>Irish crimes as % of total crimes.</u>	<u>Irish population as % of total York population.</u>
1841	3.4	2.7
1851	26.3	7.2
1861	21.1	8.0
1871	16.5	7.7

In 1841 the extent of Irish criminality was only slightly disproportionate to the size of the Irish community, though the situation changed dramatically, as might be expected, in

1851. The post-Famine Irish contribution to crime, however, though disproportionate, nevertheless diminished considerably over the three censuses, and was in fact never as high as was popularly supposed, even in the period immediately following the first waves of Irish settlement.

In that early period, few took into account, as did Samuel Tuke, the fact that even among "Saxons", "in times of distress the proportion of criminal committments to the population in England increases very greatly."

What might be considered surprising, given the depths of misery and desperation into which the majority of the Irish refugees from the Famine had, through no fault of their own been plunged, is that the Irish community, more distressed than any, did not make an even greater contribution to total crime in the city.

## CHAPTER X

### PROSTITUTION

An aspect of crime in the period which attracted a great deal of contemporary criticism and comment in York was prostitution, which observers complained was becoming an increasing nuisance together with offences associated with it. In May 1848, for example, the Gazette observed that:

"The business of the police courts in the last few weeks has shown that the number of prostitutes at present in York is much greater than has scarcely ever been known to be the case at any former period."<sup>1</sup>

and in August 1856 both the Gazette and Herald commented on the disorderly state of the city's streets, the latter reporting that:

"Numerous complaints have been made of late to the police respecting the great number of prostitutes who infest the streets of this city. Those complaints having been forwarded to the Lord Mayor his Lordship issued orders to the latter part of last week to the police to take into custody any girls who come under the title of "unfortunate" who are found wandering about the York streets."<sup>2</sup>

As an indication of concern about the problem two "refuges" had been established in the city, designed to give such "unfortunate females an opportunity of turning from their sinful course of life" and to reclaim those "poor outcasts" with whom the streets of the

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 20 May 1848.

<sup>2</sup>Herald, 16 August 1856.



city swarmed each night. The first, the York Female Penitentiary founded in 1842 was established in 1846 in Skeldergate and the second, the Home for the Friendless and Fallen was set up in Trinity Lane apparently in the 1860's, the Lord Mayor stating in 1856 that there were "few places where an institution like the Penitentiary was more urgently required than in this city."<sup>1</sup> At the annual meeting of the Penitentiary Society in 1857 Alderman Rowntree declared that the extent to which the evil prevailed in the city was fearful, and he and Mr. Watson complained of the large amount of female depravity in York, unhappy young creatures walking the streets four or five abreast.<sup>2</sup> Three years later the Lord Mayor declared he had every sympathy with the society's endeavour

"to reclaim these poor unfortunate girls with whom the streets of our city swarm in the night time ... almost every day some of these poor outcasts were brought before him at the Guildhall charged with disorderly conduct during the previous night. From 11 o'clock at night until 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning these unhappy females prowled about the streets and being affected with liquor they conducted themselves in a riotous and disorderly manner, and committed acts which were disgraceful to human nature."<sup>3</sup>

Other complaints were recorded throughout the period, both of prostitution and of the numerous brothels and disorderly houses in the city. In 1843, for example, four brothels were listed in St. Andrewgate where girls were reported to be "exposing themselves in a most indecent manner"<sup>4</sup>; in July 1851 the Bench was asked to suppress brothels in St. George's Parish<sup>5</sup> and in May 1858 the court received a complaint about the state of the Water Lanes, which were described as "the receptacle of the most abandoned characters, and from one end to the other were scarcely anything to be found but brothels and beerhouses."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 7 February 1856.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 7 February 1857.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 11 February 1860.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 14 January 1843.

<sup>5</sup>Herald, 12 July 1851.

<sup>6</sup>Gazette, 1 May 1858.

North Street too was the subject of repeated petitions especially throughout the latter part of the period, as in April 1860 when a deputation of "respectable" inhabitants of the parishes of All Saints North Street and St. John Micklegate laid information against ten keepers of houses of ill fame - the street being described as "infested with these dens of infamy" and the scene of frequent disturbances.<sup>1</sup> Other notorious brothel areas were the Hungate district and parts of the Walmgate area. By 1871 there were, according to police estimates, 60 known brothels and houses of ill fame in the city, and 3 others thought to be such.<sup>2</sup>

In view of the alleged increase in the problem, the purpose of this Chapter is to examine the extent of the Irish contribution to the "social evil" in the city, firstly bearing in mind their reputation for criminality generally, secondly because of their obvious poverty and lastly because, with the exception of North Street, prostitutes mainly lived and brothels were largely located in the principal areas of Irish concentration.

In order to identify all recorded prostitutes or brothel keepers throughout the thirty-five year period of this study, all those alleged to be such, whether in the newspaper weekly police reports or the Poor Law Guardians' Application and Report Books have been analysed both for the censal and intercensal years. Their names and where possible their ages and addresses were then checked against the Irish population extracted from the census enumerators' notebooks in order to establish whether or not they were Irish.

It is important to point out that this Chapter can deal only

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 21 April 1860.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 14 October 1871.

with those prostitutes recorded either in the newspapers or in the Poor Law Records and as such cannot be regarded as an analysis of the total number of prostitutes in the city, or of the total number of charges against them. The information available relates only to street walkers who were arrested for the reasons examined below,<sup>1</sup> to prostitutes charged with theft taking place in brothels, or on the other hand, to those so destitute as to have to apply for Poor Relief. It seems reasonable to assume that York, as a county and Garrison town and important social centre would have provided too, establishments of a superior kind, staffed by girls rarely, if ever, brought before the Bench by the police. In addition to the probability that there were both brothels and prostitutes not the object of police attention, it is clear that even those women brought before the Bench did not always appear in the newspapers, or if reported were sometimes not identified, as in December 1857 for example, when the Gazette merely stated that in the previous week 14 females had been charged with being Common Prostitutes.<sup>2</sup> The histories of several individual prostitutes illustrate this problem of under-reporting. Margaret Barrett, for example, received 3 months' imprisonment for indecency on 21st June 1873 on what was described as her 45th appearance since February 1860.<sup>3</sup> However, only 18 of these charges were actually reported in the newspapers. Similarly Martha Stephenson "an old offender" appears apparently for the first time in the period in January 1865 for what was said to be her 13th offence, and in October 1870 after only 10 newspaper reports, was brought before the bench allegedly for the 36th time.<sup>4</sup> Other cases, though less

<sup>1</sup>Page 369.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 12 December 1857.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 21 June 1873.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 29 October 1870.

spectacular commonly occur, leaving no doubt that the total of prostitutes and their offences reported in the newspapers is an underestimate of their real number. Finally occasional reports indicate that the police themselves were not above accepting favours from "women on the town" who might otherwise have been arrested. In November 1856 a case occurred of prostitutes buying drinks for the police,<sup>1</sup> and Watch Committee Reports of the period record instances of policemen being reprimanded for keeping company with prostitutes instead of attending to their duty.

Although in the Poor Law Application and Report Books prostitutes were always described as such, they were variously referred to in the newspapers. To illustrate from Margaret Barrett again she was on different occasions described as a common prostitute, prostitute, abandoned female and girl of ruined reputation. Other terms used to describe the "frail sisterhood" were unfortunate female, an unfortunate, courtesan, girl of bad or ruined reputation, disreputable female, female of bad or ill repute, woman of ill fame, fallen female, woman of loose reputation, woman of easy virtue or girl on the town.

As already mentioned in Chapter VII however, prostitutes did not describe themselves as such in any of the four censuses. Since this thesis is concerned with the Irish in York, occupational information from the census in this respect has been examined only for Irish prostitutes and these described themselves variously as widows, unoccupied wives, dressmakers, agricultural labourers or servants. In spite of the fact that prostitution did not appear in the occupational returns for the censuses, however, it was nevertheless a significant female occupation in the city. Even bearing in mind the above

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 22 November 1856.

qualifications regarding under-representation there were between 1840 and 1875 no less than 619 specific prostitutes named in the two sources referred to, and a further 139 references to brothels. As will be seen below, the age range of the total 304 women for whom ages were recorded was between 15 and 55 years and it is therefore only with this section of the female community that an attempt to estimate the extent of the Irish contribution to prostitution in York is concerned. In 1841 the proportion of Irish to non-Irish women in this age range was 2.7%, in 1851 it was 7.1%, in 1861 8.4% and in 1871 it was 7.1%. A precise comparison with these percentages is impossible since the total of 619 prostitutes relates to the whole period while the above percentages are taken at four points in time. Of the 619 individual prostitutes identified throughout the period however, only 3.7% (23) were Irish - a figure which, in the light of the above percentages, indicates that their contribution to prostitution in York was disproportionately low to their actual numbers.

Even if, in order to make allowances for the mobility of the Irish population in the inter-censal years, the same procedures are applied to prostitutes and brothel keepers, as were applied to poor law applicants and criminal offenders generally, the proportion of Irish individuals involved in the activity remains very low. References to all named brothel keepers and prostitutes in each of the censal years (for six months on either side of the taking of the census) were checked against the appropriate listing of the Irish community with the following results.

In 1840/41, out of six references to prostitutes, none were identified as being Irish. In 1850/51, only two out of 20 references to named prostitutes were found to be Irish and only one out of seven brothel keepers. Twenty-four prostitutes either appeared in the

magistrates' court or applied for Poor Relief in the period covering the 1861 censal year, none of these, however, could be identified as being Irish. There were no references to brothel keepers. In 1870/71 there were 42 references to prostitutes, of whom only two were Irish, together with one reference to a non-Irish brothel keeper.

Since many of the prostitutes were either habitual offenders or applied for Poor Relief on more than one occasion, various women like Margaret Barrett or Martha Stephenson occur in the records several times. The total number of references to the 619 prostitutes is therefore considerably higher than the number of prostitutes themselves, being 1,051, of which 49 references (4.7%) relate to Irish women. With regard to brothels, of the 139 references in the newspapers and Application and Report Books, 16 (11.5%) related to houses kept by Irish individuals, though as will be seen below, most brothels were located in the Irish quarters of the city.

Of the two sources in which the prostitutes occur, the Poor Law Application and Report Books provide the most detailed and consistent information. In almost all cases the applicant's name, age, address, marital status, occupation and physical condition is supplied, together with the names and ages of dependents (if any) the reason for the application and in many cases the nature or amount of relief given. The newspaper reports, on the other hand, though occurring in weekly rather than quarterly intervals generally provide much less and rather inconsistent information, though sometimes additional comments or remarks about the individual are provided. Thus the only information we have about Sarah Pepper is that she was charged with the theft of 2/6d. from a man "too ashamed to appear" in June 1862, and that she was a "female of ruined reputation whose progress in the paths of

vice has detracted from her personal appearance."<sup>1</sup> Similarly little information was provided regarding Margaret Reece in May 1870, except that she was fined 2/6d. for indecency and stated that

"she was going to the railway station to meet the early trains, her object being to pick up any gentleman whom she could prevail upon to go home with her."<sup>2</sup>

As in these cases, the age of the prostitute rarely if ever appeared in the police reports, her marital status was invariably omitted and quite frequently her address too was not recorded. Since the information related to a charge, however, the nature of the offence was always given, together with the sentence passed and occasionally the location where the offence occurred. Those prostitutes appearing in both the Poor Law Records and newspapers however (especially if on more than one occasion) are fairly well documented, and if, as in the case of those who were identified as being Irish, this is combined with evidence obtained from the census, a considerable amount of information about them is available.

The advantages of record linking can be well illustrated by the case history of prostitute Maria Nettleton and her daughters. Far from being obscured by the systematic use of large amounts of data, she is one of the poor whose miserable circumstances and hopeless life have been brought to light by this method. She first appears in the Poor Law Application and Report books early in 1851, living in Fetter Lane off Skeldergate. At that time she was 19 years old and married to 22 year old Joseph Nettleton, a labourer who made the application on the grounds of unemployment. Their baby, Harriet, was

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 21 June 1862.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 28 May 1870.

one month old. Two months' later a second application records that they had moved a short distance to Hodgson's Buildings in North Street - in other words from a notorious slum area to a street renowned for its brothels. The family was by this time destitute and Joseph no longer able-bodied. Within a month, however, he had recovered sufficiently to abscond, and Maria and Harriet were once again living in Fetter Lane, from which address they made their third application for relief, this time on the grounds of desertion.<sup>1</sup>

Maria Nettleton next appeared (this time as a prostitute) in 1855, when the Gazette reported that she had been charged with the theft of £300 from farmer John West, who accompanied her to a brothel in Middle Water Lane, where the robbery was alleged to have taken place.<sup>2</sup> Nine months later she again made application for Poor Relief, her address at this time being the Water Lanes. She was in labour and was committed to the workhouse.<sup>3</sup> Within two months she faced a charge of soliciting (wandering abroad) - the newspapers describing her as an "unfortunate".<sup>4</sup> By September 1860 she had returned to her former address at Hodgson's Yard, North Street. Now 28 years' old and ill, she again applied for Poor Relief, this time on behalf of herself, Harriet, now aged ten, Thomas aged eight, Elizabeth (born in the workhouse in 1856) aged five, Hannah aged three and Emma aged 18 months.<sup>5</sup> Though no other reference to Maria Nettleton emerged, the full extent of the misery and wretchedness of this family's circumstances was revealed as the records were examined further. The

<sup>1</sup>Application and Report Books, 1851.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 29 September 1855. For details of this case see pages 352-3.

<sup>3</sup>Application and Report Book, 1856.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 23 August 1856.

<sup>5</sup>Application and Report Book, 1860.

The ages of the members of this family are accurately recorded over a period of 24 years.



1875 Poor Law Application and Report Books record that three of her daughters were in turn driven to the workhouse in that year. Each was a prostitute and each was suffering from venereal disease. The entries are as follows:

March 1875. Emma Nettleton, Prostitute, aged 15. Address, Little Shambles (Mr. Thompson's.) Single, destitute, not able bodied. Gonorrhoea. To workhouse.

June 1875. Hannah Nettleton, Prostitute, aged 18. Address, Feasegate. Single, not able bodied, Syphilis. To house.

June 1875. Elizabeth Nettleton, Prostitute, aged 19. Address, Finkle Street. Single, not able bodied. Venereal disease. To house.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Application and Report Book, 1875.

Information from the Application and Report Books.

Between 1840 and 1875 the above Poor Law Records contained 304 entries relating to applications for relief from 252 prostitutes. Since 36 of these women applied for relief on more than one occasion (26 women twice, 7 women 3 times and three women 5 times) information regarding the ages of prostitutes is calculated on all 304 entries rather than on the 252 applicants, only 216 of whom had a fixed age. Similarly, in the case of addresses, reasons for relief and numbers applying for relief in 5 yearly intervals, the following Tables represent numbers of applications rather than actual applicants.

Table 63 gives the ages of applicants between 1840 and 1875 who were described as Prostitutes, and relates to 288 entries, 16 of the total 304 having no age listed. Column 4 gives the number who were identified from the census as being Irish - none of them actually being described as such in the Report Books. In all only 5 of the applications came from Irish women, one of whom had no age listed. Since this represents only 1.6% of the total, Irish prostitutes cannot be said to have been excessively burdensome to the Poor Law authorities in the period.

Table 63

Ages of Prostitutes Applying for Poor Relief.

<u>1</u> Age	<u>2</u> Number (including Irish)	<u>3</u> % of Total (288)	<u>4</u> Number Irish
15	5	1.7	
16	15	5.2	
17	23	8.0	
18	49	17.0	
19	43	14.9	
20	31	10.8	
21	20	6.9	1
22	22	7.6	
23	16	5.6	1
24	15	5.2	1
25	4	1.4	
26	7	2.4	
27	7	2.4	
30	13	4.5	1
31	2	0.7	
32	2	0.7	
34	3	1.0	
35	3	1.0	
37	1	0.3	
40	1	0.3	
41	1	0.3	
44	1	0.3	
46	1	0.3	
50	2	0.7	
55	1	0.3	
Total	<u>288</u>		Total Irish <u>4</u>

The most obvious comment to be made about this Table is the extreme youth of most of the applicants, 46.8% of whom were under twenty years of age and almost 83% of whom were under 25 years.<sup>1</sup> As with the census enumerators' notebooks there are obvious discrepancies in the ages recorded, conflicting evidence often occurring either when two sources are linked, or when more than one piece of information from the same source relates to a single individual. Irish woman Catherine White, for example, appearing on the 1861 census as a single dress-maker of Middle Water Lane recorded her age as being 22 years. Five years later, Catherine White of the same address, a single prostitute (deceased and allowed 37/6d. funeral expenses) was still only recorded as 24 years of age though her first appearance before the Bench for robbery in a brothel occurred eleven years before in September 1855.<sup>2</sup> Young as most of the "unfortunates" were, it is unlikely that she would have been so established in her career at the age of 13. Martha Stephenson, too, a non-Irish prostitute, seemed to have rather confused notions about her date of birth. In the Application and Report Books alone, she is recorded as being 22 years old in 1864, 30 in 1867, 27 six months' later and 30 in 1872.<sup>3</sup> Even allowing for such discrepancies, however, it is obvious that most prostitutes in York did not survive in their occupation beyond the age of about 24, the main reasons for this being apparent in Table 64 which lists the causes for prostitutes' applications for relief.

<sup>1</sup>See the report of the York Female Penitentiary Society's Annual Meeting in February 1863 (Gazette, 7th February) at which the Lord Mayor stated that young girls brought before the magistrates for wandering about the streets were "generally from 15 to 16 and 17 years of age, and had left their homes and parents to walk the streets."

<sup>2</sup>Application and Report Book, September 1866. Gazette, 1 September 1855.

<sup>3</sup>Application and Report Books, as given.

Table 64

## Reasons for Prostitutes' Applications for Relief 1840-1875

Reason	Number (including Irish)	Percent	Number Irish
Venereal Disease	143	46.1	1
Ill	47	15.3	1
Destitute	34	11.1	
Not able bodied	28	9.1	
Pregnant/confined	25	8.1	1
Dead	10	3.3	1
Tuberculosis	5	1.6	
Unsound mind	5	1.6	
Smallpox	4	1.3	
Funeral expenses for child	4	1.3	1
Want of employment	2	.7	
Delirium Tremens	1	.3	
Child ill	1	.3	
	Total	<u>309</u> *	Irish 5

\*Since two of the women suffering from Venereal Disease were also pregnant, and another two coupled applications on the grounds of confinement with a request for funeral expenses for the child, the reasons for relief are slightly in excess of applications.

Bearing in mind the low age of the vast majority of prostitutes applying for Poor Relief in York in the period, the high proportion of them suffering from Venereal Disease is significant. Since over 75% of them (excluding those who died) were suffering from some form of ill health, and another 11% were destitute, the scarcity of prostitutes over the age of 25 years is not surprising.

Applications for Relief are divided into 5 yearly intervals in Table 65 and it will be seen that the numbers gradually increased over the period until 1870, when they dropped by almost 6% compared with the previous five years. No Irish prostitutes applied for Relief until the last decade of the period.

Table 65

Applications for Poor Relief by Prostitutes  
in 5 Yearly Intervals.

<u>Years</u>	<u>Number (including Irish)</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number Irish</u>
1840-44	1	0.3	
1845-49	19	6.3	
1850-54	24	7.9	
1855-59	42	13.8	
1860-64	71	23.3	
1865-69	83	27.3	4
1870-75	64	21.0	1
Total	<u>304</u>		Irish <u>5</u>

Information from the Newspapers.

Newspaper reports of charges brought against prostitutes have also been divided into five yearly groups, and it is apparent from the Table below that here too there was a gradual increase in numbers throughout the period until the 1870's, when again there was a drop of about five percent. Whether the increase was in fact due to an actual rise in the number of prostitutes, as was generally believed to be the case both locally and nationally, or whether it was merely due to greater police vigilance in response to public demand in this respect is difficult to establish. The fact that more individual prostitutes were appearing before the magistrates more often than formerly is not necessarily conclusive. In the 1860's for example, the numerous deputations and complaints of the "respectable" inhabitants of certain areas might well have had some effect, especially since it will be remembered that crime generally in that period was unusually low in York (as in the country as a whole) and the police might well have had more time to "clean up the streets" as they were instructed to do. Further, the problem of under-reporting by the newspapers must again be emphasised, though this seems to have taken place in the 60's - when charges against prostitutes were highest - as much as at any time. The increasing numbers of charges are not, therefore, necessarily conclusive but would nevertheless seem to substantiate the view held by many contemporary observers - that the problem was definitely growing worse.<sup>1</sup> The increasing numbers of applications for Poor Relief in the period of course, also suggests that this was in fact the case.

<sup>1</sup>See for example, W. Logan, The Great Social Evil, London, 1871, and W. Acton, Prostitution, Considered in its Moral, Social and Sanitary Aspects, 2nd Edition, London, 1870.

Table 66

Charges Against Prostitutes. 5 Yearly Intervals.

<u>Years</u>	<u>Non-Irish</u>	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
1840-44	32	4	36	4.8
1845-49	22	-	22	2.9
1850-54	33	5	38	5.0
1855-59	118	16	134	17.8
1860-64	152	6	158	21.0
1865-69	191	11	202	26.8
1870-75	155	9	164	21.7
Totals	<u>703</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>754</u>	

Charges against brothel keepers, some of whom were referred to on separate occasions as prostitutes, have also been classified over time, though here a slightly different pattern emerges - the early 60's containing the highest number which then dropped sharply and rose again at the end of the period. 51 brothel keepers are referred to in the Poor Law Records but as these are only in connection with the prostitutes' application (the brothel keeper's name and address being listed as the place from which she had come) these will be discussed below.



Table 67

Charges Against Brothel Keepers. 5 Yearly Intervals.

<u>Years</u>	<u>Non-Irish</u>	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
1840-44	5	1	6	7.3
1845-49	3	-	3	3.6
1850-54	9	1	10	12.2
1855-59	12	-	12	14.6
1860-64	24	3	27	33.0
1865-69	9	1	10	12.2
1870-75	13	1	14	17.0
Totals	<u>75</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>82</u>	

Charges against Irish brothel keepers during the period account for 8.5% of the total - representing the highest proportion of Irish involvement in the activity.

Having looked at the extent to which prostitution and its various aspects appeared to be increasing during the period - or at least to be the object of increasing attention - where possible the location of prostitutes' addresses, brothels and offences associated with the activity will now be discussed. Many of the prostitutes, of course, lived in the brothels in which they were employed, the Application and Report Books providing explicit information in this respect. In December 1859, for example, two unmarried pregnant prostitutes, Emma Turner and Mary Ann Cotton aged 16 were both admitted to the Workhouse. Both had been admitted from "Stone's" of Coppergate.<sup>1</sup> Similarly in June 1857 and March 1863 Sarah Barker

<sup>1</sup>Application and Report Book, December 1859.

a single prostitute suffering from venereal disease, and Elizabeth Turnham, a 20 year old destitute prostitute were admitted to the Workhouse from "McHale's" of Water Lane, a notorious brothel kept by Irishman John McHale and his wife Bridget.<sup>1</sup> Occasionally, if the brothel was also a beer house or public house, the name of the establishment itself such as the "Green Tree" in the Water Lanes was recorded. Usually however the name of the brothel keeper (mostly female) was listed, the previous addresses of prostitutes entering the Workhouse being casually referred to as "Big Helen's", Cross Alley, or "Miss Walkington's", Cross Alley and so on.

Tables 68 and 69 list the addresses of prostitutes referred to in both the newspapers and Application and Report Books and the location of actual brothels in the city respectively. Although not surprisingly many prostitutes changed addresses fairly frequently, they nevertheless appear to have kept to those areas of the city which were noted for prostitution. Margaret Barrett, for example, first appeared in the police records (1867) living in Walmgate. Subsequently however, her addresses were as follows: Elmwood Street in June 1868, Walmgate a month later, the Water Lanes in February 1869 and Walmgate in the following November. Two years' later in her application for Poor Relief her address was Kilby's Yard, the Water Lanes, but later that month the newspaper police report described her as having no fixed abode. In May 1872 she was back at Elmwood Street but in the following year her address was once again Walmgate.<sup>2</sup> In spite of similar changes of addresses by other

<sup>1</sup>See below.

<sup>2</sup>Mrs. Barrett's case was an extreme one, her instability obviously largely due to the fact that she had, according to the Gazette served 36 months and 17 days in prison between her first offence in February 1860 and her 45 appearance before the bench in June 1873, when she was sentenced to 3 months for indecency. Gazette, 21 June 1873.

prostitutes, however, the following Tables show very clearly the general concentrations of the activity, 54 percent of prostitutes with recorded addresses living in the first three Irish areas in the city.

Table 68

Location of References to Prostitutes' Addresses  
from Poor Law Records and Newspapers, 1840-1875.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Non-Irish</u>	<u>Irish</u>
*Water Lanes	165	159	6
*Hungate area	129	121	8
*Walmgate area	67	63	4
North Street	50	50	-
Finkle Street	43	40	3
Skeldergate	30	30	-
No home/fixed abode	29	28	1
Other towns	21	21	-
Peter Lane	19	17	2
Trinity Lane	16	16	-
*Aldwark/St. Andrewgate	15	15	-
Fishergate	13	13	-
Petergate area	13	13	-
Toft Green/Queen Street	12	10	2
Layerthorpe	10	10	-
Grape Lane	10	10	-
Feasegate/Coppergate	10	10	-
*Bedern	7	7	-
Institutions	6	6	-
Elsewhere in York	38	34	4
No address given	348	328	20
Totals	<u>1,051</u>	<u>1,001</u>	<u>50</u>

\* represents areas of Irish settlement

Table 69

Location of References to Brothels  
from Poor Law Records and Newspapers, 1840-1875.

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<u>Location</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Non-Irish</u>	<u>Irish</u>
*Water Lanes	50	43	7
North Street	17	14	3
*Hungate area	16	15	1
*Walmgate area	14	14	-
Finkle Street	8	8	-
*Aldwark/St. Andrewgate	5	5	-
Swinegate	4	4	-
Grape Lane	4	2	2
*Bedern	4	2	2
Fetter Lane/Albion Street	3	2	1
Little Shambles	2	2	1
Others	12	12	-
Totals	<u>139</u>	<u>123</u>	<u>16</u>

\*represents areas of Irish settlement.

58 percent of the brothels referred to in this Table were located in the first three areas of Irish concentration.

Locations of prostitution which occurred within areas of Irish settlement during the period are asterisked, and it is apparent that the Water Lanes, Hungate and Walmgate districts, as well as being the main centres of the activity were also parts of the city colonized by the Irish. It is particularly noticeable in Table 68 however, that in spite of the fact that the Irish population in York was largely concentrated around the three main areas associated with prostitution, the contribution of the immigrants themselves was very small. In the Walmgate and Hungate districts for example, areas which by the end of the period contained the bulk of the Irish immigrants, only 12 references, out of a total of 196 related to prostitutes identified as being Irish. North Street, the other main centre however, was never at any time an area of Irish settlement, even though like neighbouring Skeldergate, it was traditionally a poor part of the city. Unlike the other three main centres of the activity it consisted of only one small street, and as such was probably the most concentrated location of prostitution in the city. Since it contained few Irish inhabitants, however, it will not be examined further. Other areas, containing both high proportions of Irish settlers and significant numbers of prostitutes and brothels, on the other hand, will be looked at in some detail.

#### The Water Lanes.

In all throughout the period there were 165 references to named prostitutes living in the Water Lanes, 6 of which related to Irish women. 125 of these concerned prostitutes living in the 3 narrow Water Lanes running from Castlegate down to the river. 19 related to Cross Alley - a tiny passage connecting the First and Middle Water Lane halfway between the river and Castlegate and containing only three "lodging houses"; and 16 to Friargate and

Kings Staith fronting the river. Three references were to Castlegate itself, which like Ousegate was a respectable neighbouring thoroughfare in which prostitutes from the Lanes (and North Street) could conveniently solicit clients and take them back to the area already described above as containing little but brothels and beerhouses, and as the Table shows, the highest number of references to prostitutes in the city. All evidence suggests that this was without doubt the very worst area in York, however it did contain a number of lodging house/brothels, and it was to these that many Irish immigrants flocked on arrival in the city. Though there were only 6 references to Irish prostitutes and 7 to Irish brothel keepers in the area throughout the whole period, it is difficult to imagine how large numbers of destitute immigrants lodging in such a notorious yet confined part of York could have remained unaffected, especially in view of the gross overcrowding which occurred. In 1851 according to the census 167 Irish persons lived in the Water Lanes area, some of them in houses containing 39, 29, 22, 16 and 12 individuals. The 3 lodging houses in Cross Alley (often throughout the period referred to as brothels) housed 26, 17 and 12 individuals respectively in that year, all of whom were Irish.<sup>1</sup> In 1861 13 Irish people were living in a house in Middle Water Lane which contained 55 individuals, and others in houses occupied by 21 and 19 persons, as was also the case in 1871.

Although the above two Tables relate to references to brothel keepers and prostitutes rather than actual numbers of individuals, it seems clear that the Water Lanes area contained the highest number of brothels in the city, throughout the period. Mention has already been made of Irishman John McHale's house, which like non-Irish

<sup>1</sup>See below

<sup>2</sup>Sometimes spelt McCale.

brothels such as Mrs. Gibsons, Ezra Thorp's, Ellen Eastgate's and others in the district furnished the Workhouse with diseased, destitute and pregnant prostitutes. Others, being the centres of robberies and disturbances, featured regularly in the police reports in the newspapers. Apart from that kept by McHale, however, only two were run by identifiably Irish individuals, Rose McDermott being one<sup>1</sup> and Thomas O'Garra, the other. The latter, according to the 1851 census a general labourer in Friargate, Water Lanes, was by 1855 keeping a brothel in Grape Lane from which Clara Garnett, an 18 year old diseased prostitute was admitted to the Workhouse.<sup>2</sup> Four years' later Ann Muldowney a 16 year old prostitute, also with venereal disease made an application for poor relief.<sup>3</sup> Her address was recorded as "O'Garra's", King Street, Water Lanes, and three years later she was charged (her 16th appearance before the Bench) with theft in the brothel.<sup>4</sup>

Cross Alley, being of particular interest since its 3 houses were inhabited solely by Irish individuals in 1851 will be looked at in detail, though it did not appear on the census after that date. In spite of this omission, referred to below, the yard seems to have contained brothels throughout the latter part of the period. Ann Render was recorded as keeping a house of ill fame there in 1858,<sup>5</sup> John McCabe in 1861, Ellen O'Brien in 1862 and James Hudson in 1863.<sup>6</sup> He incidentally was charged with assaulting one of the prostitutes in his house, a Mary Ann Cole, 23 years' old, who 6 years previously

<sup>1</sup>See pages 255-6.

<sup>2</sup>Application and Report Book, June 1855.

<sup>3</sup>Application and Report Book, September 1859.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 18 April 1863.

<sup>5</sup>Gazette, 24 July 1858, also 7 April 1866.

<sup>6</sup>Application and Report Book, December 1861. Gazette, 18 October 1862 and 18 July 1863.

had been admitted to the Workhouse with venereal disease.<sup>1</sup> In 1866 William Burke, brothel keeper of Cross Alley was sentenced to a year's imprisonment for assault and robbery,<sup>2</sup> and two years' later John Steward, lodging house and brothel keeper was brought before the magistrates twice for assaulting policemen.<sup>3</sup> Irish prostitute/brothel keeper Harriet McDermott faced brothel charges in 1869 and 1870<sup>4</sup> and in 1871 a Miss Walkington's establishment in Cross Alley provided the Workhouse with two more "abandoned" inmates - one with smallpox and the other with venereal disease.<sup>5</sup> In February 1873 John Mosley of Cross Alley was charged with having too many lodgers and described as the keeper of a "notorious house", and in September of that year his brothel furnished the Workhouse with another diseased prostitute, 18 year old Lily Maud.<sup>6</sup> The above of course are references only to the brothel keepers in the Alley, the number of prostitutes referred to, both in the Application and Report Books or the newspapers, as actually living in Cross Alley or committing offences there is very much greater.

The Water Lanes were split into two parishes, St. Mary Castlegate containing most of the area, and St. Michael Spurriergate which included the First Water Lane or Kingstreet. The enumerator for St. Mary Castlegate in 1851 appears to have encountered some difficulty by the time he reached Cross Alley in the Middle Water Lane. Whether he found the 55 recently arrived Irish inhabitants of the place incomprehensible or hostile (as was the case in the Bedern) or whether he was by that time suffering from some mild disorder brought

<sup>1</sup>Application and Report Book, September 1857.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 10 February 1866.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 1 August and 26 September 1868.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 21 August 1869 and 14 May 1870.

5 & 6 see over



about by having interviewed many of the inhabitants of the brothels and beerhouses in the vicinity we will never know. Certainly the place had the most notorious reputation for violence of any in the city. Whatever the cause, the entries at this point are confused and some almost illegible, and Cross Alley was not fully enumerated again either in 1861 or 1871, even though as is evident from the selected illustrations above, people continued to reside there. In 1851 Cross Alley was totally inhabited by Irish persons. If other Irish individuals afterwards moved there (and the high proportion of lodging house/brothels made this the most transient part of the city) but were not enumerated in 1861 and 1871, then some of those Cross Alley brothel keepers and prostitutes subsequently referred to in the newspapers and Poor Law Records might well have been Irish, but cannot be identified as such since they do not appear on the census. Thus Ellen O'Brien, John McCabe and William Burke, Cross Alley brothel keepers referred to above, have suspiciously Irish sounding names and lived in an Alley which in the previous decade was totally occupied by Irish persons. Since it was not subject to censal procedures after 1851, however, they have escaped identification.

The occupations of the Irish inhabitants of Cross Alley in 1851 might have provided some clue as to their contribution to prostitution, and the rather strange entries in this respect, in this the only censal year when the information was recorded, are unfortunate. For what it is worth, however, their occupational breakdown was as follows: paupers 16, labourers 15, beggars 15, children under 15 years with no occupation 5, wives with no occupation

<sup>5</sup>Application and Report Books, December 1871.

<sup>6</sup>Application and Report Book, September 1873.

2 and lodging house keeper 1. Of the beggars, however, 1 was aged only 13 years, 1 was aged 10, 1 was aged 8, 1 was aged 7 and another was only 5 years of age. One was aged only 4, and 2 others were listed as being 2 years of age. Several of the paupers too were infants, their parents apparently being in receipt of poor relief since the word "Workhouse" has been scribbled in across the pages in different handwriting, and 1 of the labourers was aged 8. The sudden almost illegibility of the entries recorded at this point, together with the information itself, clearly indicates the confusion of the enumerator. However, if his entries were correct, then Cross Alley can be said to have contained the very lowest section of the Irish population in the city.

The Water Lanes contained several beerhouses, some of which were obviously used for immoral purposes. Mary Megginson, keeper of one of these places in the King's Staith, Water Lanes, was charged in March 1858 with allowing disreputable persons on the premises, in the following month with keeping a disorderly house containing 5 abandoned girls, and in 1860 with allowing the place to be used by prostitutes and thieves.<sup>1</sup> As will be seen in Table 68 more brothel thefts were committed in this area than in any other part of York, an interesting case, but a rather unusual one in view of the large amount of money stolen, occurring in September 1855, indicating incidentally the brothel keeper's share of the prostitute's earnings. Two prostitutes Maria Nettleton<sup>2</sup> and Sarah Ann Hall, together with John McLoughlin, printer (identified as Irish on the 1861 census) and John Hague, oysterman were charged with stealing £300. 0. 0. from a Mr. James West, innkeeper and farmer from Thorpe Arch. He had apparently met Nettleton

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 20 March 1858, 10 April 1858 and 28 January 1860.

<sup>2</sup>See pages 333-5.

on Ouse Bridge and accompanied her to a "house of ill fame" in Middle Water Lane kept by a Mrs. Prince. After spending some time with the above assembled company he retired with Nettleton, "gave her 2 sovereigns, one of which she gave to Mrs. Prince", went to bed with her and awoke to find his money missing.<sup>1</sup> Undeterred by this experience, however, he was robbed of a further £20. 0. 0. in December 1862, when he accompanied prostitute Harriet Mottley to her "brothel" in North Street. On that occasion he claimed to have been upstairs with her, but she, maintaining that there was no upstairs in the house was supported by the chief constable - who said he knew the house well, there being only two rooms one of which was entered by going downstairs.<sup>2</sup>

As well as being the main centre of vice in the city, the Water Lanes must also have contained some of the worst slums. In 1875 the Herald published a letter from the Reverend Frederick Lawrence, vicar of St. Mary Castlegate, in which he complained of the deplorable sanitary condition of the Lanes and the dilapidated state of the buildings, one of which had just collapsed. He, however, seems to have viewed the inhabitants of the district through rosy coloured clerical spectacles. Appealing on their behalf he declared in all

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 29 September 1855. For Nettleton, see above pages 333-5.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 20 December 1862.

With regard to the probability referred to above (page 329) that many prostitutes were operating in York who never found themselves in court, it is interesting that Miss Mottley, though she and her house were obviously well known to the chief constable who actually gave evidence bringing about her dismissal, had not faced previous charges. Nor did she appear again (or at least she was not reported as doing so in the newspapers) throughout the period. The term "brothel" is loosely applied by the newspapers and refers both to large establishments employing several prostitutes and smaller houses of "ill fame" such as the one above, a two roomed dwelling, one of which was apparently a cellar or basement, which was the prostitute's home.

sincerity but in contrast to the available evidence:

"At the outset I desire to speak strongly in their favour. A return from the Police Office ... states that since January 31st there have been in this parish only 5 convictions; secondly there is not one resident woman of ill fame. That intemperance exists to a lamentable extent there can be no doubt, but this is, I believe, gradually diminishing ... that a large number of children seldom or never go to any day school is only too true ... a considerable number of the inhabitants are respectable working men and working women, widows with families, old men and woman receiving parish relief, hard working Irish people, artizans who from the very great scarcity of cottages which prevails throughout the city, are obliged to take refuge in such places as they can get, watermen, coal-heayers, charwomen, matchmakers, seampstresses and others."<sup>1</sup>

There seems little doubt that in fact the Water Lanes were, if anything, more notorious in the 1870's than they were in 1844, when Laycock, commenting on the area observed:

"The scum of the country here come and sleep, and there is no discrimination of sexes."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Herald, 21 August 1875.

<sup>2</sup> Laycock, op. cit., p.42.

### Hungate and Walmgate Areas.

The two other main centres of prostitution in York, Hungate and Walmgate, were of course, apart from the Bedern, the major areas of Irish settlement. Unlike the Water Lanes however, which was a much smaller, concentrated area containing apparently little but beerhouses, brothels or lodging houses and obviously the most transient portion of the community, these two areas provided opportunities for a more normal way of life. Apart from the fact that there were less brothels and fewer prostitutes living or being charged with offences in both these highly populated, neighbouring areas combined, than was the case in the Water Lanes, the type of accommodation these locations contained, though poor, offered some degree of separateness. This was especially so by the 1860's when the Irish were no longer living in such overcrowded conditions. Existing in a dilapidated and overcrowded lodging house which in all probability served as a brothel too - one of many in the very narrow Water Lanes, which also contained beerhouses recognized as the haunt of prostitutes and thieves from all over the city - an immigrant driven to the place by poverty could hardly isolate him or herself from such surroundings even if wishing to do so. This was not the case in the much more extensive Hungate and Walmgate areas. Here many of the houses were of relatively recent origin and were built in regular rows for working-class occupation, unlike those in the other, more central brothel areas which contained either tiny medieval dwellings (as in North Street) or large multi-occupied houses unsuitable for use as and inadequately converted to family accommodation. Though the Hungate and Walmgate districts too contained a few buildings of the latter type, these were situated mainly along the principal streets and only a small proportion of the Irish community lived in them. Most of the references to prostitutes

and brothels in the area, however, related to these large houses. As mentioned in Chapter V, some of the Irish immigrants lived in the cottages crammed into the yards and passages off Hungate and Walmgate, but the vast majority occupied the small working-class terraces such as Margaret's Terrace, Rosemary Terrace or Constitution Place, the long rows of cottages built in the early nineteenth century such as Hope Street or Long Close Lane, or the blocks of back-to-back houses crowded into the large areas stretching away from the main streets.

Of the 129 references to prostitutes living in the Hungate district, 45 (including 4 Irish) related to Wesley Place - a group of back-to-back cottages each containing 2 rooms not much more than 10 feet square, 34 to Hungate itself and 18 and 16 to Palmer Lane and Garden Place respectively, which were main streets with some through houses. The remaining 16 references related to addresses scattered throughout the area. The 16 "brothels" were distributed similarly, though since the majority were references to Wesley Place, it is obvious that these were houses of "ill fame" in which one or two prostitutes lived, rather than extensive establishments.

In the Walmgate area, of the 67 references to prostitutes (4 of them Irish) 37 related to Walmgate and its yards, 16 to the area around St. Dennis Church, 6 to Long Close Lane and the other 18 were scattered throughout the district. The brothels here were mainly in and around Walmgate, and in Church Lane, St. Dennis parish.

Since prostitutes and brothels in these two localities were spread over such a wide area, therefore, in spite of the fact that the districts were noted for being both "Irish" and parts of them at least, centres of prostitution, the large amount of cottage accommodation available, overcrowded and inadequate as it undoubtedly



(27)

Garden Place, Hungate, late 1920's - looking towards St. Saviour's Church. Less than half the houses in this street were through dwellings. The cottages on the right (Nos. 12, 14 and 16) contained two rooms and were back-to-back, as were the two slightly bigger cottages (Nos. 13 and 15) on the right. The large house at the end of the street had been converted to tenements in the nineteenth century and its gardens completely infilled. The building now backed onto stables, disused pigsties, stores, a stonemason's shed and two other cottages. On the left, in the foreground, are the gates of a slaughter house. (See Map 10)

Garden Place, like Wesley Place, which branched off the lower end of this street, was a notorious brothel area in the later part of the period - clients being picked up in the Walmgate public houses and accompanying the prostitutes to their homes via the narrow twisting passages linking the two areas. These dimly lit alleys were themselves frequently the scene of "acts of indecency", assault and robbery - the most common charge brought against prostitutes from this area.

was, afforded most of the immigrants an opportunity to remain uninvolved in that particular form of vice - an opportunity which they appear to have taken. Although infrequent, newspaper information giving the location of offences committed by prostitutes, indicates that the Walmgate area in particular figured prominently. This, of course, was because of the high concentration of public and beerhouses in the area, attracting both prostitutes and their clients to that quarter of the city.

#### Other Areas Associated with Prostitution.

A few other areas in the city require some comment, in particular the Bedern, since it was almost totally occupied by the Irish throughout the post-Famine period, and is listed in the above Tables as being associated with prostitution. The general condition of the Bedern with its large, once fashionable houses which by the late 1840's were being let off to dozens of Irish families and their lodgers in one-room dwellings has been referred to in Chapter V. Contemporary observers from Laycock onwards who, even before the arrival of the Irish immigrants described it as one of the worst places in the city, were in general agreement as to its overcrowded, insanitary and dilapidated condition. We have seen too, that it was acknowledged to contain one of the most disorderly sections of the city's community, who were at times disposed to outbursts of violent, drunken and other anti-social behaviour. However, whatever complaints were made about the Bedern in the post-Famine period (and since at that time it was almost totally occupied by Irish individuals, such complaints in effect could only have related to them) no-one at that time suggested that it was a centre of prostitution. There were, in fact, in the 28 year period after Irish colonization, no general references



to the problem of prostitution in the street, and few to either brothels or specific prostitutes living there, most of them relating to the period before 1847. An absence of brothels had not always been the case, however, since shortly before the influx of the Irish the Bedern had had a notorious reputation in this respect, and it would seem that the immigrants' arrival had the effect of largely clearing the area of the activity.

As late as July 1844 in a petition to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England and Wales (who owned the properties) several of the inhabitants of the Liberty of Minster Yard with Bedern complained that:

"The place called Bedern was the College of the Vicars' Choral, and more or less their residence; and by the ancient Statutes, they ought to reside there, and close the gates every evening at 8 o'clock to keep women out - that they have since leased the property out to various individuals and that in consequence of houses having been erected in the suburbs of the city ... nearly all the respectable part of the inhabitants, have left their residences and gone there.

That their late residences have all been let off in single rooms, many of them filled with whores, thieves, street-walkers, etc., thereby bringing great incumbrances upon the said Liberty, besides great disgrace and scandal upon the Church of England by the Lessors continuing still to lease the said property after knowing the condition of the place, and that there is no remedy for the evil except by a complete renovation of the place ...

Your petitioners three years ago, in order to get the whores out of it, prosecuted one at great expense to the said Liberty, and with difficulty got evidence and a conviction for one month's imprisonment in the House of Correction - at the expiration of which time she went back in a Cab or Fly, preceded by a band of music and her associates flocked back double in number. The place is in that state that, if crime be committed, the inmates of it dare not give evidence for fear of their lives or property being injured by it."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Petition to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England and Wales, July 1844. Vicars' Choral Documents. York Minster Library Archives.

The petitioners further complained that the place was so notorious that "persons with any character will not go into it unless compelled on business," and evidence from the police reports substantiates their claim. In June 1840 Sarah Heaton was bound over for keeping a disorderly house in the Bedern,<sup>1</sup> and 5 months later two other "girls on the town" Mary Ann Walton and Sarah Dawson (alias Poppleton) were charged with robbing a "Jew hawker" of jewellery, who, when invited into a house of ill fame in the street was "flocked around by 4 or 5 females who rifled his jewellery box."<sup>2</sup> This suggests that these were much larger brothels employing more prostitutes than those described in the Hungate district. In May 1841 magistrates instructed the police to counter "the evil effects produced by crowds of men and especially disorderly women standing at the top of Bedern"<sup>3</sup> and in November 1843 Mary Connor, prostitute from the Bedern was charged with stealing a client's hat.<sup>4</sup> In May 1844 Mary French, prostitute, was charged with causing a disturbance in the Bedern<sup>5</sup> and in October 1846 Mary Ann Debnam was charged with the theft of money from a sailor who accompanied her to a brothel in the street. The final reference to a brothel in the Bedern before the place was taken over by the Irish occurs in July 1847. At the York City Sessions, Jane Dixon was accused of stealing 3 sovereigns from a William West who had gone with her to a Bedern house of ill fame.<sup>6</sup>

After the arrival of the Irish there are few references to prostitutes in the street. One, however, a manuscript dated about

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 20 June, 1840.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 28 November 1840.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 8th May, 1841.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 11 November 1843.

<sup>5</sup>Gazette, 4 May 1844. Three years' later she died in the Workhouse,

<sup>6</sup>Gazette, 3 July 1847.

1851 amongst the Vicars' Choral Documents is interesting since it concerns the "Mansion House in Bedern" leased to Mr. Amos Harton, constable of the Township of Minster Yard with Bedern. The entry reads: "House clean but cellar let to a female of ill fame."

Mr. Amos Harton was one of the 9 petitioners who, 7 years previously had complained to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners that they leased their property to individuals who sublet it to "whores, thieves and street walkers."

The one Irish brothel in the Bedern in the period, representing both entries in Table 69 was that kept by Henry Ashbrook and his successive wives Ann and Mary. On the 1851 census he described himself as a 34 year old painter of Milner's Buildings, Bedern, where he lived with his York-born, unnamed wife aged 30, and 2 young children. In April of that year, within a few days of the taking of the census he was described differently at court. Under the heading, "The Result of a Night's Debauch" the Gazette reported that John Inglis had been charged with stealing some ornaments from Henry Ashbrook, keeper of a brothel in the Bedern, who stated that the prisoner came to his house at about 2 o'clock in the morning "in a state of intoxication and stayed in the house along with a female for 3 hours." He then left taking the articles (candle snuffers according to the Herald) with him. When Ashbrook at this point refused to press charges, the Lord Mayor asked:

"I suppose this man keeps a bad house."

Mr. Chalk, inspector of nuisances replied, "Yes sir, a very bad house."<sup>1</sup> In October the following year Ashbrook himself was involved in a robbery in a Bedern "house of ill fame" which was

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 19 April 1851. Also Herald.

presumably his own.<sup>1</sup>

He and his first wife Ann - "Two notorious characters who have figured frequently before the magistrates" were charged in March 1855 with being involved in a disturbance in the Bedern, the constable being unable to arrest them without assistance.<sup>2</sup> By the following year he appears to have had a new wife, Mary or Maria, listed as being only 23 years old in 1861 and of Irish birth. She also appeared before the bench on several occasions, and obviously combined the duties of brothel keeper with prostitute. In February 1856 she was charged with theft from a man who accompanied her to a brothel,<sup>3</sup> and in July of the same year she was involved in the garotte robbery of a youth whom she and another prostitute had taken to a brothel in St. Andrewgate.<sup>4</sup> In October 1856 and January 1857 she was charged with wandering abroad and theft, and on all these occasions she was in company with another notorious York whore, Catherine Ennis.<sup>4</sup>

After 1853 the Bedern was made a through way by opening the closed end of it into St. Andrewgate. Though this street, coupled with Aldwark, has been asterisked in Table 68, only one small portion of it - Gill's Yard, Aldwark - contained significant numbers of Irish individuals, and this not until the 1871 census. It had traditionally been associated with prostitution, Hargrove observing in 1818 that the remains of the church of St. Andrew (in St. Andrewgate) had at one time been used as a common brothel.<sup>5</sup> As will be seen, however, it was no longer an important centre of prostitution

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 23 October 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 24 March 1855.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 2 February 1856.

<sup>4</sup>Herald, 5 July 1856.

<sup>5</sup>William Hargrove, History of York, York, 1818. Vol.II. p.361.

and the Irish who lived there made no contribution whatsoever to the activity.

Like North Street, other less important areas associated with prostitution in York did not contain significant numbers of Irish inhabitants and as such need no comment. Grape Lane, Finkle Street and Swinegate, however, three adjoining narrow lanes in the heart of the city together still played an important part in an activity of which, in earlier times they had been the centre.

According to Drake, writing in 1736 Grape Lane:

"whose name tending not a little to obscenity as it is wrote very plain in some ancient writings ... (when) we well know our ancestors used to call a spade a spade; but custom has prevailed upon their descendants to be more modest in expression whatever they are in action"

had been of old a licensed brothel, and had formerly been referred to as "Grapecunt Lane."<sup>1</sup> In the 19th century as Tables 68 and 69 indicate, the lane continued to be associated with prostitution, one of the brothels referred to being kept by Irishman James O'Garra.<sup>2</sup> Finkle Street was popularly known in the early 19th century as Murky or Mucky Pegg Lane - "Pegg Lane" according to Hargrove, because of some female resident and "Murky", "from the tint of her complexion or from the darkness of the lane which is extremely narrow."<sup>3</sup> Throughout the latter part of our period, the Bickerdikes, mother and daughter who kept a brothel in this lane were a constant source of annoyance to the police and it was largely through their activities that "Mucky Pegg Lane" acquired the same reputation then as Grape Lane had enjoyed in earlier years. Both women "the most disorderly persons in the city" were frequently charged with indecency, disorderly

<sup>1</sup>Francis Drake, Eboracum, London, 1736. p.346 and Appendix p.lxii.

<sup>2</sup>Application and Report Books, June and September 1855. See above page

<sup>3</sup>William Hargrove, History of York, York, 1818. Vol.II. p.401



(28)

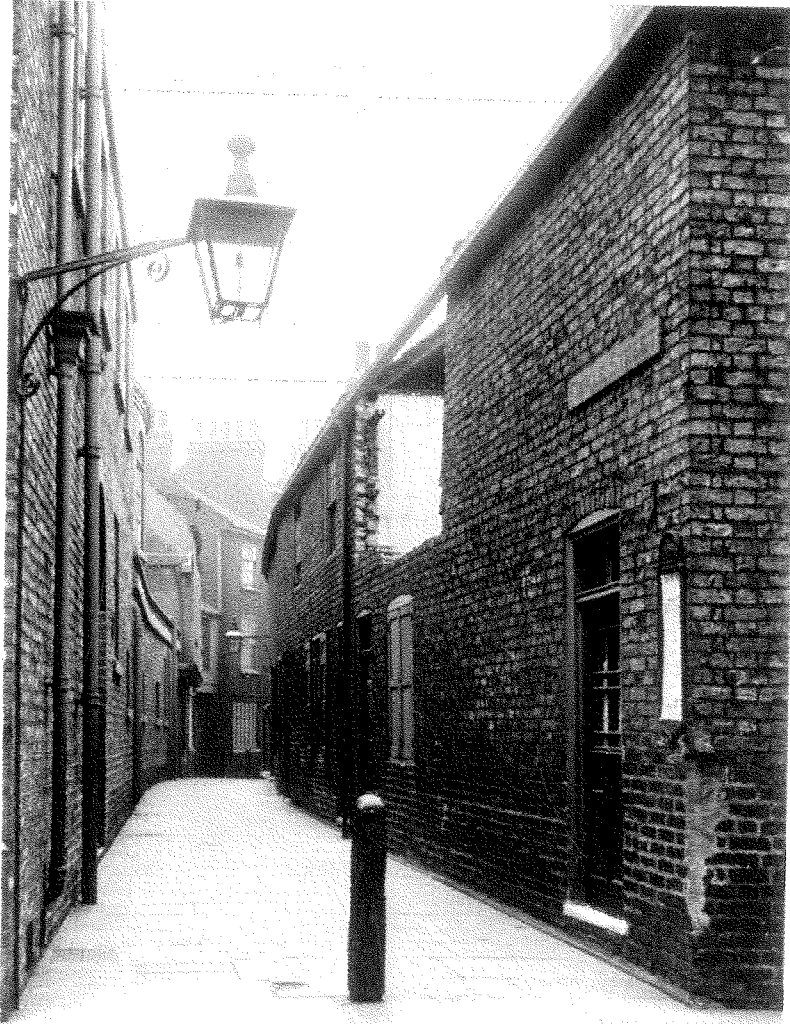
An Edwardian view of Grape Lane, whose name and activities had since the Middle Ages tended "not a little to obscenity". According to Drake the place had been of old a licensed brothel, and early examples of "Grapelayne" prostitutes were Joan Abbot, Katherine Lancastr' and Cecilia Egleston, all involved in cases of fornication in 1437. (Dean and Chapter of York Court Book, Folio 89.)

One of the several brothel keepers operating in the Lane in the 1850's was Irishman James O'Garra.



(29)

An artist's impression of Finkle Street (Mucky Peg Lane) in the early nineteenth century. Throughout the period the Lane contained several brothels, the most notorious being that kept by the Bickerdikes - "the most disorderly, abandoned and disgusting women in the city". Only three of the forty-three references to prostitutes from the Lane related to Irish women.



(30)

Finkle Street, May 1911.



behaviour and theft, the mother Elizabeth being described in 1870 as "one of the most abandoned and disgusting women in the city."<sup>1</sup> The street also contained other houses of ill fame, in May 1862 for example a fight broke out between Henry Dalby and his wife Susannah and Thomas Bean, keepers of rival brothels in the lane. Other prostitutes too were recorded as living there, but of the total 43 references, only 3 related to identifiable Irish women.

Swinegate, leading out of Grape Lane and into Finkle Street was notorious in the period largely because of its beerhouses - The Ploughboy's Rest, a disorderly establishment frequently referred to in the newspapers as a haunt of prostitutes and thieves, Mr. Gill's dramshop, which was also a brothel, and the Crystal Palace, kept by Henry Thornton who allowed "persons of a notorious character to assemble there." Charged on one occasion (February 1857) with the fact that a policeman had found a dozen prostitutes congregated there Mr. Thornton replied that had the officer arrived half an hour earlier, he would have found 24.<sup>2</sup>

#### Location of Offences, and Types of Crimes Committed by Prostitutes.

Having examined the location of prostitutes' addresses and brothels, the areas in which offences were committed in connection with the activity needs some comment since these too often occurred in areas of Irish settlement. Although the nature of the offence was always given in the Guildhall reports, the location was frequently omitted. Of those available, however, as might be expected since most prostitutes were brought up either for wandering abroad (and

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 30 April. 1870.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 14 February 1857.

soliciting) or for theft, most offences occurred either in the main thoroughfares near the brothel areas, or in the brothels themselves. The Water Lanes area was the individual location accounting for most offences, almost all of which were thefts in "houses of ill fame". Charges of wandering abroad or soliciting rarely occurred here since these activities took place in Ousegate or Castlegate, and once in the Lanes, gentlemen were invariably already clients. In the Walmgate district, on the other hand, charges of theft were almost equalled by charges connected with soliciting, for here, as well as the brothels in which thefts took place, was the street containing the highest number of public houses in the city - an obvious hunting-ground for street walkers. Pockets were more frequently picked in this area by prostitutes than in any other location, clients sometimes not even visiting brothels but finding their watches or wallets missing after "being enticed into a narrow yard or lane off Walmgate" by one or even two of the street walkers. Frequently too, such incidents resulted in a charge of indecency, though the client (unlike the prostitute) was rarely named.

The Hungate area and North Street, like the Water Lanes contained brothels rather than important thoroughfares in which to solicit, and as such were places in which thefts rather than offences concerned with 'wandering abroad' took place. Ousegate, Cusebridge, Castlegate, Petergate and other main streets in the central areas, however, were naturally important as areas in which to pick up clients, and it was here that most of the offences associated with prostitution (with the exception of theft) took place.

Table 70 categorizes charges brought against prostitutes in the period.

Table 70

Charges Brought Against Prostitutes in York, 1840-1875.

<u>Charge.</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Wandering abroad, indecent, stopping or annoying gentlemen, etc.	409	54.2
Theft, robbery and pickpocketing	200	26.5
Drunk/drunken and disorderly	57	7.6
Disorderly	39	5.2
Prostitution*	13	1.7
Fighting	9	1.2
Breaking glass	5	.7
Attempted suicide	4	.5
Assaulting Police Constable	4	.5
Vagrancy	3	.4
Passing bad money	3	.4
Assault	3	.4
Hiding deserter	2	.3
Procuring	2	.3
Total	<u>753</u>	

\*Prostitutes were rarely charged as such.

It is clear that the charge of 'wandering abroad and indecent' (soliciting) accounted for over half, and theft for over one quarter of charges made, the remainder being mainly for drunk and disorderly behaviour. The type of theft which occurred was usually petty, involving a client's watch, wallet, articles or clothing or small amounts of money, though sometimes, as in the case of the unfortunate but careless Mr. West, very large amounts of money were stolen. Occasionally too, prostitutes were charged with theft, not from their clients but from their employers. In February 1855, for example, a "girl of lost character", Elizabeth Rathmell was charged by a woman named Mountain with having robbed her of a gown, shawl and other articles. Rathmell had been lodging with Mrs. Mountain, of Gill's Yard Aldwark for the previous five months, Mountain having undertaken to "feed and clothe her for the earnings of her prostitution, but she had very indifferently fulfilled her contract." Eventually the prisoner was discharged - "a decision which elicited applause from the bystanders", not to appear in the records again.<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Mountain, however, continued her activities into the 1860's, a 17 year old diseased prostitute, Jane Sawdon being admitted to the Workhouse in September 1864 from her establishment, by that time in North Street. Within 3 years Mrs. Mountain was herself applying for Poor Relief, and we learn that she was then a 50 year old widow, suffering from congestion of the liver.<sup>2</sup> Ellen Varley, who made her 20th appearance before the magistrates in 1865 had first been before the bench in 1850 when she was "under 16 years of age." She was sentenced at that time for 14 days' imprisonment for stealing a

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 24 February 1855.

<sup>2</sup>Application and Report Books, September 1864 and March 1867.

blanket and sheet which she had been sent to pledge by Mrs. Morton, keeper of a brothel in Rusby Place (Hungate). Other charges against the girl included annoyance, disorderly behaviour, uttering counterfeit notes and various thefts in brothels, including one which took place in a house of ill fame in Hungate, kept by her mother.<sup>1</sup>

A few prostitutes succeeded in their trade sufficiently to become brothel keepers. As we have seen Rose or Harriet McDermott an Irish prostitute, survived illness, pregnancy, the death of twins and brief periods in the Workhouse in 1867, only to appear 2 years' later as a Cross Alley brothel and lodging house keeper.<sup>2</sup> Mary Ann Cole and Elizabeth Harrison were two other prostitutes who improved their circumstances. The former, a 17 year old was admitted to the Workhouse in September 1857 from Irish woman Bridget Grady's brothel in Stone Bow Lane. Six years later she was assaulted by James Hudson the keeper of the Water Lane brothel in which she lived.<sup>3</sup> Within 2 months, however, she herself was described in the Guildhall Reports as the keeper of a house of ill fame in the Water Lanes.<sup>4</sup> Similarly Elizabeth Harrison who applied for Poor Relief in December 1862 was at that time both destitute and diseased. Two years later she was keeping a brothel in Kilby's Yard in which she employed prostitute Elizabeth Hough.<sup>5</sup>

Others were less fortunate. Sarah Johnson, of McCabe's brothel in Cross Alley was suffering from venereal disease by the time she was 17 and when she was 18 was destitute and sent to the Workhouse. She was sentenced to 7 days imprisonment in 1862 for assaulting a policeman and in the following year, when she was 19 was re-admitted

<sup>1</sup>Several references, including Gazette, 14 December 1850 and 7 August 1858.

<sup>2</sup>See above pages 255-6.

<sup>3</sup>See above page 349.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 19 December 1863.

<sup>5</sup>Application and Report Book, June 1864.

to the House. Fifteen months later she was charged with attempted suicide by drowning, and in 1865, when still only 21, again entered the Workhouse because of venereal disease.<sup>1</sup> Another unfortunate was Mary French. First convicted in 1843 as a common prostitute she faced various charges of drunkenness, indecency, disorderly behaviour and vagrancy. In March 1847 at the age of 26 she was given a pauper's funeral at the Workhouse.<sup>2</sup>

### Irish Prostitutes.

In all throughout the period, 23 prostitutes (including the 3 below who combined their occupations with brothel keeping) could be identified from the census as Irish. This represents 3.7% of the total 619 named prostitutes in the city. As mentioned on page 332 however, references to them totalled 49 - 4.6% of total references to all prostitutes.

As we have seen one Irish prostitute, Rose McDermott, eventually kept her own establishment and others, like Bridget McCale and Mary Ashbrook were married to brothel keepers and combined the two occupations. Like non-Irish prostitutes, however, most of the Irish women in the occupation suffered the worst of its effects. Catherine Connelly, for example was admitted to the Workhouse at 21 years of age with syphilis, and "scarcely able to walk."<sup>3</sup> Another Irish girl, Catherine White, first appeared before the bench when she was 16, charged with a brothel robbery with the McCales. Eleven years and several charges later an entry in the Application and Report Book

<sup>1</sup>Application and Report Books, December 1861, March 1862 and March 1863. Gazette, July 1862 and May 1863.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, September 1843, and Application & Report Book, March 1847.

<sup>3</sup>Application and Report Book, June 1874.

records that the sum of 37/6d. was allowed for her funeral expenses.<sup>1</sup>

Catherine O'Brien, who at the time of the 1861 census was living in Middle Water Lane with her husband and 2 year old child, was sent to prison for the 16th time in December 1869 and immediately on her release made her 16 appearance before the bench for indecency.<sup>2</sup> On that occasion she was discharged after promising to move to Leeds. Other Irish prostitutes, in common with many non-Irish women were obviously driven to the activity by necessity - often having to support children. Mary Flannagan, recorded in the 1871 census as a 36 year old servant living in one of the back-to-back houses in Long Close Lane was supporting her 2 children aged 5 and 3 in the absence of her husband. Two years later, still living in the same house she was charged with indecency, and the following year saw her sentenced to one month's imprisonment for prostitution.<sup>3</sup> Many of the non Irish prostitutes who applied for Poor Relief were recorded as being unmarried mothers - often pregnant and already supporting one or two children. With the exception of Harriet McDermott, this was not the case with the Irish prostitutes, whose marital status and family connections (if any) could, of course, be examined from the census. Several of them, however, were widows. Sarah Bishop, for example, who was charged with various offences in connection with prostitution throughout the 1850's was recorded on the 1861 census as a 40 year old widow employed as an agricultural labourer and living alone.<sup>4</sup> Similarly

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 1 September 1855. Application and Report Book, September 1866.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 18 December 1869 and 29 January 1870.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 29 March 1873 and 10 January 1874.

<sup>4</sup>Gazette, 30 November 1850, 15 August 1856, 7 November 1857.

Elizabeth Rooke was recorded in 1861 as living with her husband James, an agricultural labourer and her child aged 2, at 33 Middle Water Lane. She was 35 years of age. In the following census she was listed as a 45 year old widow, had moved to Garden Place Hungate and was a charwoman. In the meantime, still based in either Cross Alley, the Water Lanes or Wesley Place in Hungate, she had served several terms of imprisonment for indecency.<sup>1</sup>

### Irish Brothel Keepers.

Eight brothel keepers during the period were identified as being Irish, some of them, of course, being referred to in the records on more than one occasion. Of these, the 2 husband and wife teams, the Ashbrooks of the Bedern (already discussed) and the McCales (or McHales) of the Water Lanes were the most notorious. Michael McCale, a 30 year old agricultural labourer and Bridget his wife, aged 29 were recorded as living with their 3 year old son at 27 Middle Water Lane in the 1861 census. They first appeared in the police records in March 1855 when prostitute Caroline Smith was charged with seizing a rug from a man walking Castlegate. She, however, stated that she had wanted 5/- from the man who had previously accompanied her to her lodgings in Middle Water Lane. She called as witnesses Michael and Bridget McCale, with whom she lodged, who swore that the prisoner and the man had entered the house and "were in company for half an hour." The prostitute was committed for trial on bail of £20. 0. 0.<sup>2</sup> Five months' later the Gazette reported an alleged robbery at a house of ill fame. Catherine White, the Irish

<sup>1</sup>for example, Gazette, 6 February 1869, 13 November 1869, 4 June 1870, 27 August 1870, etc.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 31 March 1855.



prostitute referred to above) was charged with the McCales with stealing a watch and some money from a Michael Booth, who had met the girl on Ouse Bridge, accompanied her to McCale's house, fallen asleep and later found that he had been robbed. The prisoners were discharged through lack of evidence.<sup>1</sup> Five weeks' after this, Bridget McCale was involved in another robbery, this time from a farm labourer from Ripon who had met with Mrs. McCale in Skeldergate, and been taken by her "to a brothel she keeps in Fetter Lane." He then went to bed with one of the prostitutes there who robbed him of £3. 0. 0., handed the money to Mrs. McCale and she took it to her sister's house in Middle Water Lane - presumably their other brothel. In 1857 and 1863 prostitutes from this house were admitted to the Workhouse, and in 1863 the couple were involved in another robbery in their brothel.<sup>2</sup>

Very few Irishmen in the period were reported as having been involved in incidents with prostitutes. Only one Irishman, an unnamed Irish fruit dealer was reported as having been robbed; James Quinn a Walmgate glassblower was accused of theft in a Cross Alley brothel in December 1864, and as mentioned above, John McLoughlin, an Irish printer was involved in the theft of £300. 0. 0. from John West in a Water Lane brothel. Occasionally cattle dealers or drovers were reported as having been robbed by prostitutes, but these were not described as Irish, and need not necessarily have been such. Finally in October 1870 the young Lord Marcus Beresford, later sporting companion and equerry to the Prince of Wales was fined 20/- for being disorderly in the early hours of the morning in

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 1 September 1855.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 6 October 1855. 19 September 1863.

Application and Report Books, June 1857 and March 1863.

company with William Hope-Johnson and two (unnamed) prostitutes.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup>  
Beresford, Irish-born and therefore picked up on the 1871 census, was, like his companion, an officer in the 7th Hussars stationed at York Barracks.

.....

It is apparent from the statistics used (which undoubtedly underestimate the real extent of the activity) and from the selected number of illustrations given, that the problem of prostitution in York, together with associated offences, was one of increasing seriousness. Apart from spasmodic bursts of police or magisterial activity, however, when all those labouring under the title of "unfortunate" were dragged in off the streets, and punished with greater severity and frequency than usual - generally in response to public demand - little was done to cope with the situation. The records show that most of the numerous brothels or houses of ill fame in the city were tolerated and referred to in familiar terms - as for example in the Application and Report Books, when prostitutes' addresses were merely given as "Green Tree" Water Lane (obviously an extensive establishment) or "Big Helen's," Cross Alley. The clients of these establishments too, were very rarely referred to in critical terms, but on the contrary were presented to the public as at worst rather foolish (in allowing themselves to be robbed) but more often as men of sound character. Thus in May 1847 "a respectable gentleman named John Barnett was robbed of a £10. 0. 0. note and 8 sovereigns" after accompanying 2 girls to a Walmgate brothel. Only the prostitutes

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 29 October 1870.

<sup>2</sup>In 1898 his brother, Lord Charles Beresford, became the Conservative M.P. for York.

themselves were the object of moral censure.

Mention has already been made of the 2 "refuges" in the city, the very names of which indicate the spirit in which they were founded - The York Female Penitentiary Society, and the Home for the Friendless and Fallen. There are few references to the latter, which apparently was established only towards the end of the period. The Penitentiary Society, however, judging by its annual meetings reported in the press and the activities of some of its former inmates, seems to have met with little success. At the annual meeting of the society in 1850 the following report was given:

"Four of the inmates who had lived two years each in the refuge and whose behaviour had been very satisfactory have during the past year been recommended to very respectable situations, where they have appeared to have given satisfaction. Two of the number have since been obliged to leave their places from very severe illness. ... A painful account remains to be given of three others, who made their escape. They returned to their 'vicious courses' ... one was driven by illness to the Workhouse; where she died three days afterwards, another of the inmates has been confined several months to her bed and is fast declining in a consumption. She came to the refuge an orphan in 1848 ... apparently in robust health, but a few months afterwards her health gave way when her mind became awakened to her sinful state."<sup>1</sup>

In the following year it was admitted that it might be a matter of surprise "that so few should enter within our walls" (only 5 had wished to be admitted in the past year) - a cry echoed 9 years later when the Lord Mayor, commenting on the large number of "this unfortunate class of beings" in the city, thought it "strange that so few accepted the comfortable home which was offered to them in the refuge, and renounced their wicked lives."<sup>2</sup> In 1853 there were only 11 inmates, and of the nine

<sup>1</sup>Yorkshireman, 9 February 1850.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 7 February 1863.

who had left, two were placed in respectable situations, one became insane and was removed, two were dismissed for insubordinate conduct, and four "left without permission."<sup>1</sup> The mental and physical prospects for a reclaimed prostitute, once her mind had become "awakened to her sinful state" were clearly not very healthy, and the methods used to bring about this awakening were hardly inviting.

"The discipline of the institution with active industrial employment, restraint so far as possible of improper conversation and strife, and daily scriptural instruction are the means employed to improve the habits of the inmates."<sup>2</sup>

Not surprisingly many of the women returned to their "vicious courses". In December 1851 Elizabeth Thompson, a 21 year old servant from the Penitentiary was admitted to the Workhouse - insane.<sup>3</sup> In March 1865 Jane Myton, of Water Lane, an 18 year old prostitute with venereal disease entered the Workhouse, the fact that she was "formerly of the penitentiary" obviously not having reformed her since in the following year she was sentenced to 14 days for soliciting and annoying gentlemen. Also in March 1865 a 15 year old prostitute, Hannah Fawcett left the Penitentiary for the Workhouse,<sup>4</sup> and 2 years later 2 more "servants" from the institution were charged with stealing the society's shirts and selling them - they had obviously left wearing them. For this offence they were each sentenced to one month's hard labour, and on her release one of them, 18 year old prostitute, Isabella Smith, "no home" was subsequently admitted to the Workhouse.<sup>5</sup> In 1869 the Gazette reported that a female had applied for admission

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 8 February 1851.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 12 February, 1853.

<sup>3</sup>Application and Report Book, December 1851.

<sup>4</sup>Application and Report Book, March 1865.

<sup>5</sup>Gazette, 30 November 1867, and Application and Report Book, December 1868.

to the Female Home and stolen a cap and bonnet,<sup>1</sup> and in the same year Mary Jane Clarke, a 17 year old prostitute from the penitentiary applied for Poor Relief because of "want of employment."<sup>2</sup>

It would appear that the severity of the Penitentiary and its emphasis on the sinful state of its inmates did little to reduce the problem in the city. Many of the reclaimed prostitutes apparently preferred to return to their "wicked lives" or even to seek the harsh shelter of the Workhouse, rather than remain in the Home.

.....

In order to assess the Irish contribution to prostitution in York the problem in the city has had to be examined as a whole and in some detail, since no study of this kind appears to have been made which would have enabled comparison. In view of the poverty of the majority of the immigrants, their reputation for criminality generally and the fact that they were forced to live in those areas which were already the main centres of prostitution in the city, it might have been expected that the apparent increase in the problem was due in part at least to their arrival. The statistical evidence shows very clearly, however, that this was not the case. Further, at no time was it ever suggested, even by the most prejudiced anti-Irish observers that the Irish were in any way to blame.<sup>3</sup> Even those prostitutes and brothel keepers identified as Irish from the censuses were never referred to as such in the newspaper reports of court proceedings. In the light of the prejudice displayed in other

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 24 July 1869.

<sup>2</sup>Application and Report Book, March 1869.

<sup>3</sup>In contrast to prejudice towards Jews or negroes, who were frequently held to be responsible for the activity, in other societies at other times.

directions and already discussed, there can be little doubt that had there been greater cause for complaint, the newspapers and other commentators would have taken advantage of it.

It would seem that what had been the case in Ireland before the Famine, where it had been observed that women of the "lower order" were unusually chaste, continued to apply in spite of their altered circumstances, in their new place of settlement. As K. H. Connell observed, the chastity of women in pre-Famine Ireland was a matter for contemporary comment, a French writer remarking that natural children were rare and adultery almost unknown in the country, and Michael Thomas Sadler declaring in 1828 that whatever the national failings of the Irish:

"Promiscuous connexion between the sexes is not one of them; there is, probably, less of improper intercourse before marriage, and more fidelity afterwards, than in any other part of the Empire, or of the world."<sup>1</sup>

A similar comment after the Famine was made by Sir John Forbes, physician to Her Majesty's Household:

"It is another tribute justly due to the young women of Ireland, to record their singular decorum and modesty of demeanour and their general propriety of conduct. I do not hesitate, for a moment, in giving to them decidedly the palm in these particulars over the rustic damsels of both England and Scotland. Unmarried mothers are, I believe, quite a rarity in Ireland - a thing which I fear, cannot be said of any other portion of the three kingdoms."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>K. H. Connell, The Population of Ireland 1750-1845. Oxford, 1950. p.48.

<sup>2</sup>Memorandums of a Tour in Ireland, London, 1853. p.103.

## CHAPTER XI

### ASSIMILATION

Having discussed the immediate impact of the post-Famine Irish immigrants and their main characteristics during the period in which they became a sizeable part of York's population, it remains to consider to what extent they merged into the life of the city, and the reasons working for or against such assimilation. As has already been observed in the Chapter on prejudice, the attitudes of the poorer working-classes in York - who were themselves very much the object of middle-class disapproval - with whom the Irish inevitably associated most and whose acceptance was more immediately relevant to their assimilation, were rarely if ever recorded. Elsewhere, however, it was observed that in general they were considered, "even by the lower classes of the English population to occupy a still lower grade in the social system than themselves."<sup>1</sup> The only evidence we have of attitudes towards the Irish is that bequeathed by those who, occupying a superior station in life, would doubtless have displayed little enthusiasm for assimilation with the slum-dwellers of Walmgate or the Water Lanes, whatever their religion or race. Obviously, by the end of the period, the Irish immigrants like the rest of the poor in the city were accepted by their social superiors as an unpleasant and rather troublesome fact of life.

<sup>1</sup>K. S. Inglis, Churches and the Working-Classes in Victorian England. London, 1963. p.120.

It was no longer the case in the late 1860's that members of the Board of Guardians were reported as announcing that the Irish were the "most beastly set of men on the face of the earth" and suggesting that they be carried away in river vessels. To this extent they can be said to have become accepted, if not actually assimilated. However, other indications suggest that little real integration took place even between the Irish and their social equals, though clearly the responsibility for this may have been shared by both nationalities.

Two important factors in this respect are the extent to which mixed marriages were formed between the two communities and the changing degree of Irish concentration into particular areas in the city. As we have seen, the proportion of mixed marriages fell by more than 50% after post-Famine immigration, and from 1851 never accounted for more than 14.7% of all married Irish individuals, a situation in which religious differences were obviously important. Further, most of the mixed marriages which did occur in the period involved Irish individuals living outside the main areas of Irish concentration, suggesting either that immigrants forming such unions were already detached from the main Irish community or became so after their marriage.

Similarly, there was little fundamental change in the pattern of Irish settlement. By 1871 the traditional major Irish parishes still contained the bulk of the immigrants and any movement away had been largely to the fringes of neighbouring parishes such as those in the Hungate area, and St. Lawrence and St. Nicholas outside Walmgate Bar. It was also the case that the Irish continued to monopolise particular streets, courts and alleys, such as the Bedern,



Long Close Lane, Hope Street, and many of the Walmgate Yards such as Clancy's, Butcher's, Britannia and Malt Shovel Yard - some of which they took over completely, and continued to occupy until the areas were finally cleared in the 1920's and 1930's. Only then were these and other similar Irish communities in the city eventually dispersed. Further, whereas in 1841 there had been a significant amount of mixed Irish/non-Irish occupation of individual houses, this had been considerably reduced by the end of the period, when it was largely the case that all occupants of formerly mixed accommodation were now Irish.

Analysis of the occupational structure of the Irish community in the city showed that there was little diversification of employment in the period and that consequently after the arrival of the post-Famine immigrants little change occurred in the distribution of the community's social classes. Had the major type of employment of the Irish involved them in factory or workshop conditions, increasing their degree of contact with non-Irish workers, then a greater and quicker degree of assimilation might have been expected to occur. As it was, however, the city offered few opportunities in this respect, especially for the immigrants, about a third of whom were forced to seek employment as agricultural labourers elsewhere. As such they were hired in gangs or tramped the countryside daily in search of work, mixing rarely with the rural population and even less with that in York, from which they were absent from dawn until dusk. The only other numerically significant group of workers in the Irish community was the general labourers, and it may be doubted, given the circumstances of their employment, hired on a casual basis wherever the opportunity presented itself, that these conditions made either for stability or

integration. In addition, the consistently low proportion of Irish women employed as domestic servants in the city, falling throughout the period, is a further indication of a lack of assimilation suggesting either the reluctance of the servant employing classes in York to engage Irish females as domestics, or the unwillingness of the immigrants themselves to become part of what was the largest source of female employment in the city.

#### Religion and Education.

Two obvious reasons working against the assimilation of the Irish community were religion and in turn its effect on education. In addition to limiting the number of marriages between the Irish and non-Irish population, the fact that the immigrant community overwhelmingly belonged to the Roman Catholic faith was, as we have seen, prejudicial to their being accepted in a city which was one of the principal centres of Protestantism in the country. The Catholicism of the immigrants could not be ignored, for if the Irish Catholics in York behaved with the same "unexampled religious fidelity"<sup>2</sup> as did the Irish immigrants in the country as a whole, then far from neglecting their faith in their new surroundings, in contrast to the working-classes generally they were regular in their attendance at church. To cope with the sudden increase in the number of Catholics in York a new Roman Catholic Church - St. George's - was built in George Street, just off Walmgate, supplementing the by now inadequate accommodation provided in St. Wilfred's Chapel, near the Minster. It was opened in September 1850, the enthronement there of Dr. John Briggs as Bishop of Beverley five months' later provoking an outburst of anti-Catholic comment in the Gazette,<sup>1</sup> and a petition by the York

<sup>1</sup>See page 12.

<sup>2</sup>K. S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England. London, 1963, p.121.

City Council in protest to the Queen. By the early 1860's this too had become insufficient for the large Catholic congregation in the city and the old Chapel of St. Wilfred was replaced by the much larger present church of that name. By virtue of its location, however, St. George's continued to be the place of worship attended by the poorer sections of the Irish community.

The immigrants' religion undoubtedly had an adverse effect on the assimilation of the younger generation, for had their children been sent to schools attended by non-Irish pupils this might well have been an important, though not immediate factor working towards integration. This however was hardly the case. Before the arrival of the post-Famine Irish there were two Catholic Day Schools in York, the first was at St. Mary's or the Bar Convent, Blossom Street, founded in 1686. This was a boarding school for young ladies but also housed a free day school for girls and infants. Though in 1818 this was described as catering for the children of poor Roman Catholics,<sup>1</sup> by the middle of the century at least, it was attended only by "the respectable Catholic children of the city."<sup>2</sup> An equivalent school for boys (later known as St. Patrick's) was established in Ogleforth, near the Minster, in 1796.<sup>3</sup> As might be expected, both these schools were relatively small, in 1833 about 50 pupils were attending St. Mary's Day School, while three years' later there were 85 boys attending the Ogleforth school.<sup>4</sup> Even in May 1847, by which time Irish refugees from the Famine had already begun to arrive in the

<sup>1</sup>Hargrove, *ibid*, Vol.II, p.503.

<sup>2</sup>Bar Convent Archives, V.44. Day School Journal, 1867-1890. Section headed "Summary of Changes in the Day School."

<sup>3</sup>Victoria County History, *ibid*, p.455.

<sup>4</sup>Victoria County History, *ibid*, p.442 and p.455.

city, a return to Bishop Griffith estimating the number of York Catholic children of a fit age to attend school put the figure at only 300 - though in fact the number of scholars was considerably less.<sup>1</sup>

Within the next few years this number obviously increased so rapidly that new provision for the education of Catholic children in the city had to be made. There is some confusion as to the precise date of the opening of the third Catholic Day School in the city, St. George's, built in the heart of the Walmgate area, and like the newly erected neighbouring Catholic Church of the same name, catering almost entirely for the recent influx of Irish immigrants. According to the Victoria County History the school was opened sometime in 1851,<sup>2</sup> newspaper evidence, however, puts the opening earlier. On 13th September 1851 the Herald reported on the first anniversary of the opening of the school, which had apparently been run on an informal basis prior to the completion of the school buildings. These were described as being large enough to accommodate 500 children, the boys' and girls' schools being placed on separate floors and needy children fed in the cellar during winter months.

Analysis of the census enumerators' notebooks shows that by 1851 there were 545 children in the Irish community between the ages of 5 and 15, only 294 or 53.9% of whom, however, were recorded as scholars. In 1861 there were 655 Irish children in York in the above age group, and by 1871 this number had increased to 886. Those recorded as scholars, however, numbered only 349 (53.3%) and 695 (78.4%) respectively. The number of these, including non-Irish

<sup>1</sup>Leeds Diocesan Archives. Manuscript Return to Bishop Griffith, 7 May 1847.

<sup>2</sup>Victoria County History, *ibid*, p.452.

children who were attending Catholic Day Schools in the city is listed precisely for 1868. In July of the year the Catholic Missions of St. Wilfred's and St. George's in York were required to furnish information regarding the number of pupils attending Poor Schools in the city, in connection with the impending Education Act. In the St. Wildred's Mission there were 70 children on the books of St. Patrick's School, with an average attendance of 46. The Day School of St. Mary's Convent had 109 children on its books and an average attendance of 72. In addition there were 25 Catholic children in Protestant schools. In St. George's Mission there were 205 boys on the books of St. George's Poor School with an average attendance of 134, and 389 on the books of the girls' school with an average attendance of 189. There were 8 Catholic children in the Military School and 8 in Protestant schools. In all then, 835 Catholic children in that year were on the school registers<sup>1</sup> - some of these, of course, as was indicated from the pre-Famine Return,<sup>2</sup> were not Irish.

The censal figures show that the number of Irish children returned as scholars rose from just under 54% in 1851 to 78.4% in 1871. However, the information on Catholic Educational Statistics in York prepared in 1868 shows a discrepancy of 41% between the 835 Catholic children recorded as being "on the books" and the average 493 who regularly attended school. In the light of these figures it seems unlikely that the education of the children in the Irish community would have contributed much towards their assimilation.

<sup>1</sup>Leeds Diocesan Archives, Catholic Educational Statistics, 7th July 1868. St. Wilfred's and St. George's Missions.

<sup>2</sup>Made immediately before the first main influx of immigrants in 1847.

Firstly, the proportion of immigrants' children recorded as scholars, just over half in 1851 and 1861 was still only 78% in 1871. Secondly, many of these attended so irregularly as to imperil the future of the schools (particularly St. George's) which depended on regular daily registrations in order to qualify for the government grant.<sup>1</sup> Absenteeism clearly fluctuated seasonally, children working in the fields in the late summer and autumn, or being required to stay at home to care for younger brothers and sisters while their parents did so. In addition, as will be seen below, Fair and Race days, other forms of employment and poor health were further reasons for non-attendance. Children not described as scholars in the census, and who worked only seasonally or not at all, presumably spent most of their time at home or playing in the streets of their Irish neighbourhood - none of which activities would have helped towards their assimilation with the non-Irish community in York. Thirdly, however regularly Irish children attended school, they were still not mixing outside their own group. The Catholic schools, particularly St. George's, were dominated by the Irish and information supplied to the Bishop in 1868 indicated that little religious integration too, took place. Only 29 Catholic children in the city attended Protestant schools and 16 Protestants attended Catholic schools, the attendance at St. George's being totally Catholic.

In January 1852 the nuns from the Bar Convent began teaching in the girls' department of St. George's School, Walmgate, travelling daily to the parish containing:

"The poorest and most squalid quarters of York, its

<sup>1</sup>Payment by Results, introduced by Lowe in the Revised Code of 1862.

Catholic population being almost exclusively Irish and of the humblest ranks of life."<sup>1</sup>

Writing in the St. George's School Day Book in 1866, Sister Christiana, for 22 years the Irish nun in charge of the school recalled her first encounter with the children of the Irish Famine:

"On the first day of general admissions January 1852 only two out of 50 or 60 girls from 8-13 years old who presented themselves, could spell a few words of three letters, these same children too, were the only possessors of shoes or bonnets, the others were enveloped from head to floor in their mothers' old gowns or in a large shawl, or had the skirt of their own frocks turned up over their heads, and few or none out of the whole assembly could boast of even any pretensions to cleanliness. Their hair nearly stood on end or was so matted as to defy the power of brush or comb. This state of semi-barbarism may be judged from the following, for they appeared not to comprehend what was said and had no notion of control. Their favourite seats (and on which they shelved themselves if the sister's eye was withdrawn a minute) was the large projecting chimneypiece, while their feet hung dangling over the fire. Others who could not find room as above seated themselves on the stone fender round the fire, but as close to it as they could thrust themselves. A third party consisting of the greater number who could not get even a peep at the fire perched themselves in Turkish posture on the writing desks, not one having the least idea of sitting on a form or stool, although the room was well supplied with both.

Three or four times an attempt was made to classify them, but no sooner were they divided and placed in separate parts of the room, than with a simultaneous rush they scampered off and in less than a minute were were again in their original places.

As words were unavailing the influence of music was tried and proved most effectual. The sister taught them a hymn to the Blessed Virgin and they seemed completely softened down. They were then well exercised in marching to time and in less than a week they were models of order."<sup>2</sup>

An important indication of the almost complete absence of assimilation of the post-Famine immigrants, not only with the children

<sup>1</sup>H. J. Coleridge (ed.) St. Mary's Convent, Micklegate Bar, York. London, 1887. p.357.

<sup>2</sup>Bar Convent Archives, V.45. St. George's School Day Book, 1863-1875. 26 October 1866.

of the host-population who were non-Catholic but with those of them who were their co-religionists (some of whom, as the 1841 census shows, would have been Irish) is illustrated by the following episode. Until 1850 the Day pupils at the Bar Convent had attended the "Poor" school on the premises without charge. In that year the Reverend Provost Render, Vicar General of the Diocese of Beverley,<sup>1</sup> persuaded the Reverend Mother - against her better judgment - to consent to the arrangement of a school fee of 2d. or 3d. per week. This had the effect of causing the withdrawal of some of the "better-class" children, whose parents looked on it "as lowering the position of the school."<sup>2</sup> In 1852 Render effected another, much more serious change in the Convent Day School, which was again consented to with reluctance by the Reverend Mother, and which had disastrous results. He caused all the "Poor" scholars to be transferred to the newly erected congregational school of St. George's in Walmgate, reserving the whole of the premises at the Convent for the young ladies.<sup>3</sup> These "Poor" scholars continued to pay fees and were taught separately from the Charity children described above by Sister Christiana. In spite of the segregation, however, the stigma of association with the Irish children of the Walmgate slums was so great that the venture was a complete failure. Within two years the numbers of "respectable" scholars had

<sup>1</sup>The Catholic Church found it advisable to name the diocese Beverley rather than York, although the Bishop and Vicar General lived in the city, and Bishop Briggs (see page 12) was enthroned in St. George's, Walmgate. This church, until the new St. Wilfred's was built, was the pro-Cathedral of the diocese.

<sup>2</sup>Bar Convent Archives, V.44, Day School Journal 1867-1890. Section headed "Summary of Changes in the Day School." No doubt many of these scholars were the children of the Irish Ordnance Survey workers who lived in the neighbouring parish of St. Mary Bishophill Junior at this time.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



dwindled to such an extent that the Day school was removed back to the Bar Convent, though the parents of many of these children were permanently alienated.

Details of this change and its implications were subsequently described by the headmistress, Sister Christiana. The Free or Charity School was housed in the basement, whereas:

"The Upper or principal room was set apart for the more respectable children of the Walmgate locality, together with the Pupils of St. Mary's Convent Poor School, which at the request of the Very Rev. Provost Render was transferred to St. George's, in order to afford children of the middle class of society the opportunity of attending a Convent Day School, which, not succeeding the late pupils of the Convent Poor School, were allowed to return to St. Mary's as before. This change took place in 1854 ... this withdrawal of almost all the better class of children caused a complete change at St. George's; the Free School was drafted into the Upper School, and the room just vacated by the Free School was converted into an Infant School.

Throughout it has been found necessary to keep up at least a nominal distinction between the superior children and their poorer companions at St. George's. At present very few of the former grade attend and this state of things has its advantages and disadvantages. It has removed every vestige of that want of sympathy which was the bane of charity. Now the spirit of the school is, if it may be so expressed, truly Catholic. In another point of view, as regards the better class of children's payment of school fees, their prolonged stay at school, their more regular attendance and consequent progress, particularly in the more advanced classes, the school may appear less satisfactory than in former years, when the higher classes consisted exclusively of respectable children who could and did attend regularly. Our poor children now as heretofore are withdrawn from school so very young that we can scarcely expect one out of over 50 or 60 who pass in the 6th standard will be able to attend so as to reach the 4th<sup>1</sup> or 5th standard before they finally leave school."<sup>1</sup>

There can be little doubt that the absence of assimilation in this case was due to social rather than racial or religious reasons.

<sup>1</sup>St. George's School Day Book, op.cit., 26 October 1866.

The additional problems of irregular attendance and consequent poor examination performance haunted those in charge of St. George's schools throughout the period, but was particularly acute after 1862 with the introduction of payment by results. The government grant was especially vital for schools like St. George's, catering almost exclusively for the very poor, whose children depended on the charity of the nuns, not only for their free teaching, the provision of all school equipment such as slates, pencils, chalks, books, copybooks, materials for needlework, and even the window blinds, infants' desks and installation of the heating boiler, but also in many cases for their food and clothing. Poverty in the congregation, far from diminishing throughout the period, remained at a very high level. As will be seen below, little settlement took place in the Irish community, whose numbers were maintained by a continuing flow of impoverished refugees from Irish evictions and other repercussions of the Great Famine. This poverty was particularly acute in the winter months, when, as the Herald reported in 1851, poorer children were fed in the school cellar. Eighteen years' later Sister Christiana provided evidence that little or no improvement had taken place in the condition of the Walmgate/Hungate community. She described the population of the Mission of St. George as consisting:

"exclusively of the poorest of the poor ... In the winter months the congregation is reduced to the lowest ebb of misery and starvation with their consequent fevers. Deaths from want of food have occurred daily during the past few months."<sup>1</sup>

Thirty years' later Rowntree selected the inhabitants of this area to illustrate the conditions of a population living in primary

<sup>1</sup>St. George's School Day Book, ibid, March 1869. Six months' later (26th October) she noted: "The Hon. Mary Stourton to provide dinners for the poor children whose parents are unable to supply the meal to their hungry little ones."

poverty. He described it as "the poorest large district in the city" - containing 69.3% of the population living in primary or secondary poverty, as opposed to 27.8% for the city as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

The high proportion of agricultural labourers amongst the Irish community in this district and their heavy unemployment during the winter months was a major cause of their acute poverty throughout the period. The seasonal nature of their employment also affected school attendance. In July 1866 Sister Christiana wrote in the Day Book that attendance was "gradually diminishing in consequence of the season," and in October 1870:

"It is greatly to be regretted that many of the most promising children are detained at home in charge of their younger brothers and sisters in the absence of their parents who are still employed in the fields."<sup>2</sup>

Almost a year later she complained again of the disruption caused to the school by the agricultural employment of the Irish.

"The great majority of the children who were sent out to work in the fields in July and August have not yet returned to school, and probably will not do so for a fortnight or more as the weather is particularly mild for this season of the year. All this, as usual, will be very detrimental to the result of the examination."<sup>3</sup>

Agricultural labouring, however, was not the only cause of poor attendance, though it, and the fact that many children were detained at home "discharging household duties in the absence of their parents who are out at work" was the major reason for absenteeism. In July 1866, when Sister Christiana observed in the Day Book that not more

<sup>1</sup>Rowntree, op. cit., p.199.

<sup>2</sup>St. George's School Day Book, op. cit., 31 July 1866 and 28 October 1870.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., 30 October 1871.

than half the pupils were attending school "even moderately well"  
a creche was opened in Rosemary Lane near Walmgate, for children:

"too young to attend the boys' and girls' infant school  
... any child however young who is able to walk may be  
sent to the Rosemary School. The (Rev.) Manager's object  
... is to enable the older brothers and sisters who are  
detained, at home in charge of them to go to their own  
school."<sup>1</sup>

This progressive step, however, did not fully achieve its object for  
there were other reasons for absenteeism, such as employment in the  
Match Factory in the district, work in "temporary service", the  
generally poor health of the children and the fact that the co-operation  
of the parents was not always forthcoming. Fair days and York Races  
also played havoc with school attendance since they presented  
opportunities for hawking and begging. The nuns tried to counter  
these attractions with tea and buns, but these and other treats for  
good attendance, such as an annual outing by river for a picnic at  
Nun Monkton, sweets and holy pictures were of little use without the  
assistance of the parents, who often had to be coerced into sending  
their children to school.<sup>2</sup> In 1866 Sister Christianan wrote:

"Children above nine years' old who attend school daily  
are exceptional cases, for the great majority, the  
remainder of their school life consists of odd days or  
half days spent in school, whenever they have the will or  
the leisure to come, and it is obvious what little profit  
can be derived from such irregular attendance ... The  
Reverend Manager's earnestness in seeking the absentees in  
their homes and in endeavouring to secure the co-operation  
of the parents has been unceasing."

and that:

Many more children could come to school, if their  
parents would take the trouble of requiring them to do so.  
From the extreme poverty of the great majority of the

<sup>1</sup>St. George's Day School Book, op.cit., 1 July 1866.

<sup>2</sup>passim.

parents and from the gross negligence of a large number of these poor people, it is feared that very few of the children will remain sufficiently long at school to admit of their passing even in the 4th standard ... Many parents consider their children have "got sufficient schooling" when they have mastered the rudiments of reading and writing and made their first communion."<sup>1</sup>

.....

So far it has been seen that throughout the period the bulk of the Irish continued to live separately from the host community, to a great extent worked separately, attended different churches and sent their children to different schools. In an age of few social amenities, especially for the poor, little opportunity for leisure time integration took place between two groups so obviously divided in other ways. As we have seen in the Chapter on Crime, drink played an important part in working-class life. Even in this activity, however, the Irish seem to have kept largely to themselves, the police reports indicating very clearly that several of the many public and beer houses in the Walmgate area were frequented almost exclusively by the immigrants. Their only other recorded amusement, "Pitch and toss" was also limited to the immigrant community, non-Irish offenders rarely being reported. In addition, the increasing burden the Irish community placed upon Poor Law expenditure, their disproportionate and much emphasized contribution to crime, and their overcrowded and insanitary living conditions helped to maintain an unfavourable impression held by a population already prejudiced against them. Even had there been no other factor at work, these circumstances alone would no doubt have ensured a low degree of assimilation in the period. There was, however, another important reason why the Irish failed to be absorbed into the larger community in York.

<sup>1</sup>St. George's School Day Book, op. cit., 31 July 1866.

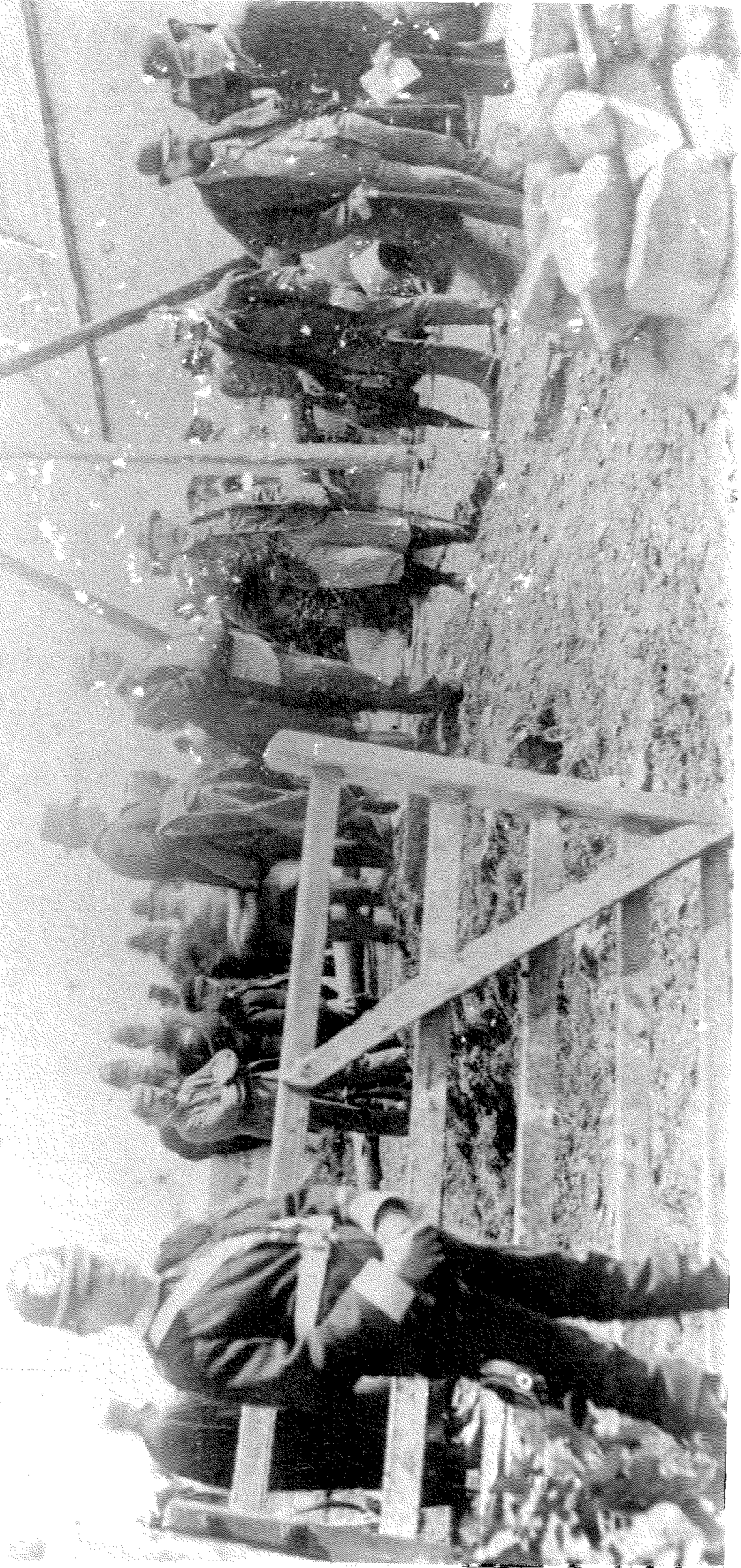
### Geographical Mobility.

The following analysis of the Irish population at each successive census shows that in fact, the major reason for a lack of assimilation on their part was their geographical mobility, and that few of the Irish remained in the city long enough to be absorbed, whatever the circumstances of their stay. A high and sustained turnover of the immigrants throughout the period meant that not only were those Irish who left the city obviously not adapting to life in York, but that the hostility of the host community was constantly being recharged by fresh arrivals from a country still suffering the effects of famine, poverty and disease. Further, those immigrants who remained, far from gradually losing their "Irishness" were having it continually reinforced by successive waves of new arrivals from the old country,<sup>1</sup> many of whom were the resentful victims of the large-scale evictions taking place in Ireland throughout the period.<sup>2</sup>

In order to determine the extent of geographical mobility, an analysis was made of all individuals in the Irish community who remained in the city long enough to appear in two or more successive censuses. The results of this analysis show that at each census after 1841 the Irish community in the city, though expanding, contained few individuals who had been there longer than the previous decade. Conversely, at each census, the majority of Irish persons appeared for the first time, indicating that little long-term settlement was taking place. To take this further, the number who remained for more than

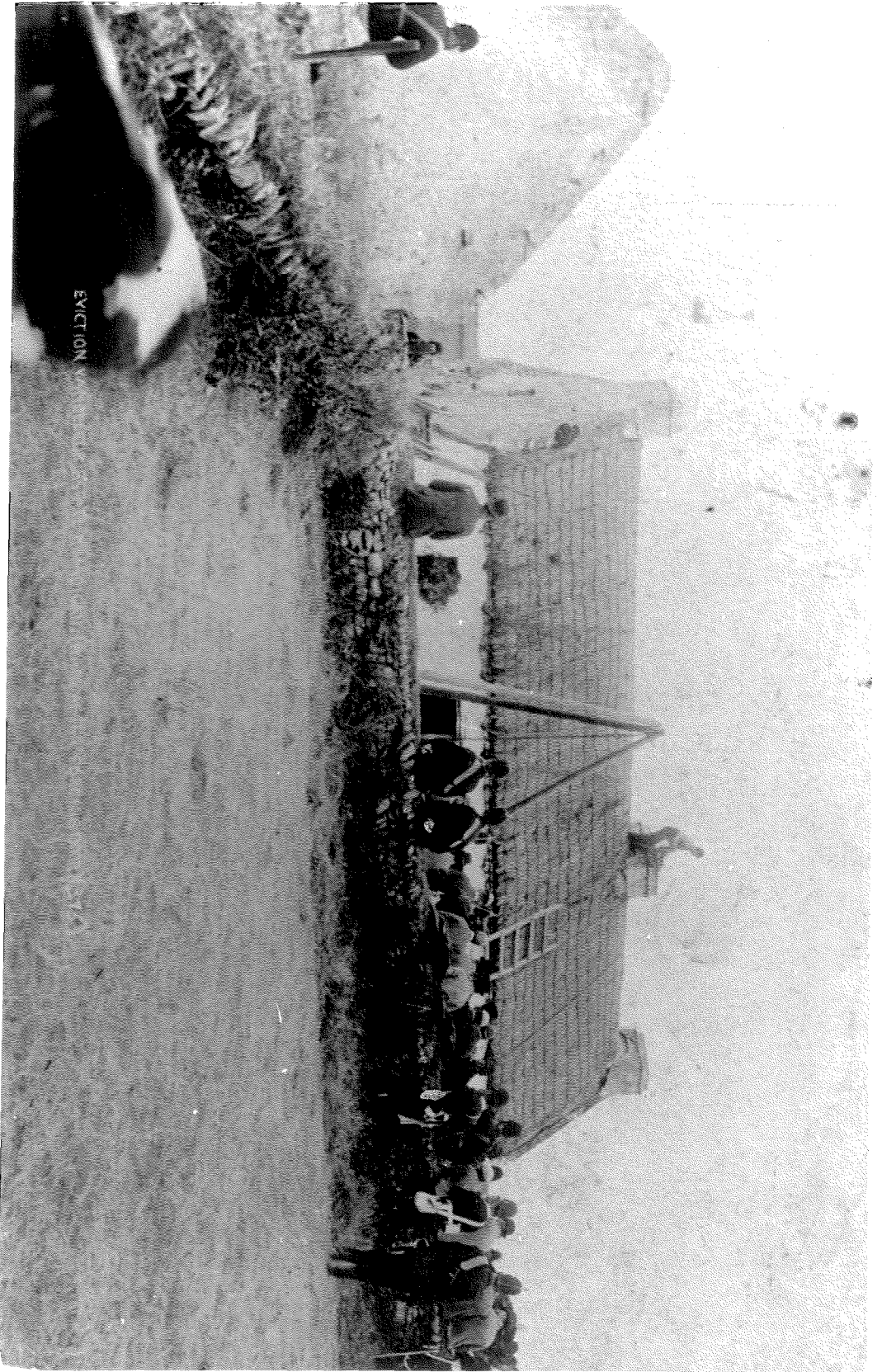
<sup>1</sup>See page 400.

<sup>2</sup>See over.



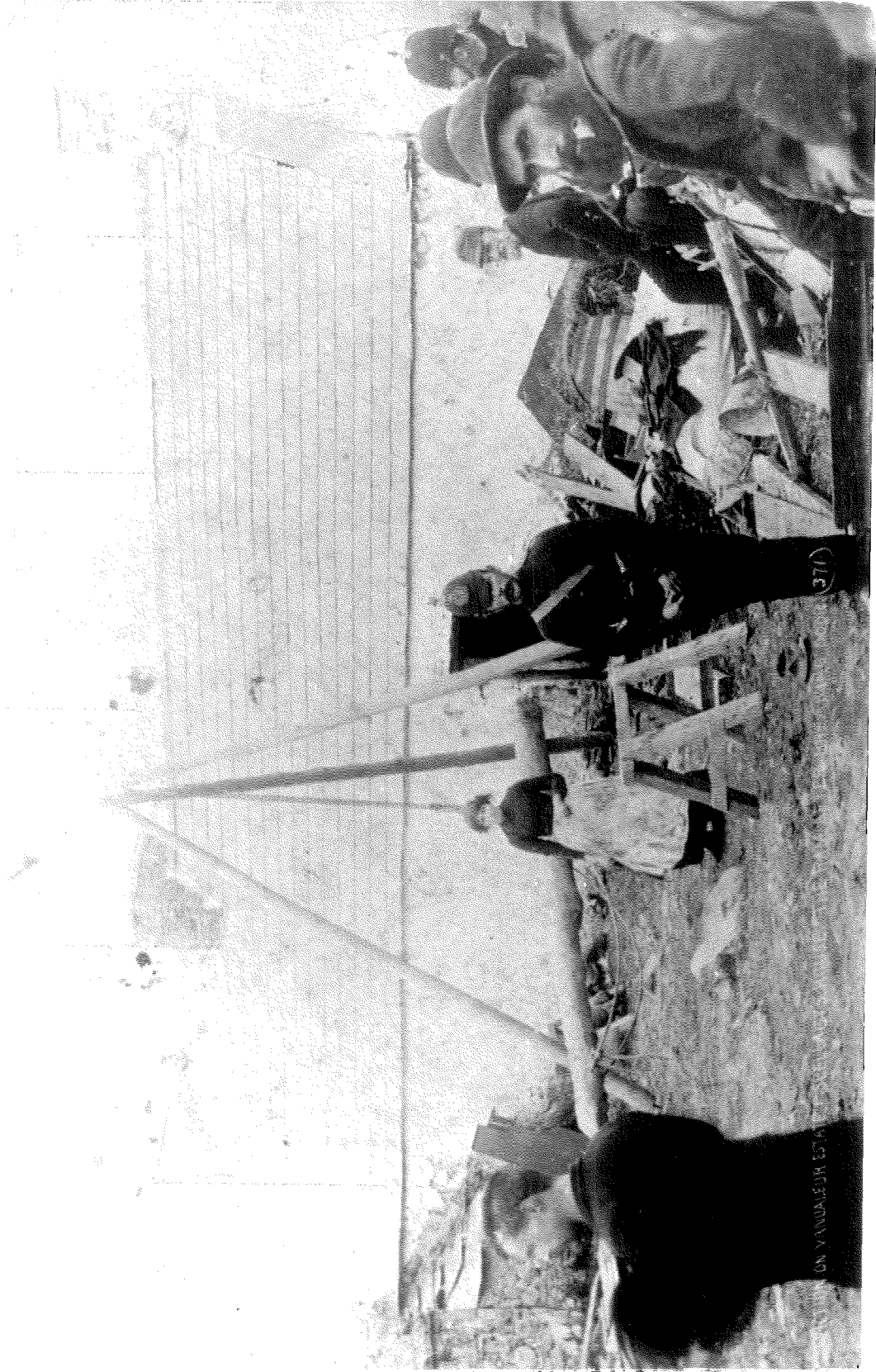
(31)

Evictions on the Vandeleur Estate, County Clare.  
Large scale evictions such as these, photographed for James Hack Tuke in the late 1870's, continued throughout the post-famine period and contributed much to the continuing flow of emigration. Above, the battering ram on M. Cleary's farm.



(32) Another eviction on the Vandeleur Estate, P. Madigan's farm after the door had been forced open. The success of these evictions was ensured by the presence of both the police and troops.





(33) A further Vandeleur eviction - P. Spelleg's house, with the battering ram after breaking in the door. "Goodbye gentlemen", said an armed English landlord as he watched Luke's party move off, "You're the only people here who can travel without fear of being shot." (See page 113)

two censuses were even fewer, so that by 1871 only one of the 781 persons in the pre-Famine community was present in the city, and of all those 2,618 recorded in 1851, a mere 113 remained after an interval of only ten years, and 102 by 1871.<sup>1</sup> The figures presented in Table 71 were arrived at in the following way. From an alphabetical listing of all 10,027 names and associated details of all individuals in the Irish community over the four censuses, those appearing more than once were extracted and categorized according to the number of censuses in which they occurred. Next, for each census year those survivors from the previous census were deducted from the total Irish community at that time, in order to determine the number who had arrived within the previous ten years. To those surviving from the previous census were then added the number of their children born in the intervening decade, who, though appearing on the census for the first time, cannot be classed with those newly arrived as the result of migration. The numbers of these children at each census appear in the Table in brackets.

Table 71

Members of the Irish Community Remaining in York  
For More Than One Census.

<u>From</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1871</u>
1841	69 (+13)	23 (+14)	1 (+4)
1851	-	113 (+47)	102 (+55)
1861	-	-	458 (+237)
Total	<u>69</u>	<u>136</u>	<u>561</u>

<sup>1</sup>Obviously this would, in part, be the result of mortality. However, this would hardly have accounted for the large scale disappearance of entire families.

Having deducted from the total Irish population at each census the above numbers surviving from previous censal years, together with their children of less than ten years of age, the number remaining consists of relatively newly arrived immigrants. In 1851 the number of these was 2,536 (96.9% of the total Irish population in the city) in 1861 the number was 3051 (93.9%) and in 1871 it was 2,496 (73.8%).

The above evidence shows very clearly the transient nature of York's Irish population, which was practically replaced at each census. It would seem that once uprooted, many of the victims of the Great Famine spent the rest of their lives in search of a place of settlement, and it would be misleading, therefore, to talk of their absorption into the larger community in York in the period, since few of them remained in the city for even ten years.<sup>1</sup>

Of those who did stay however, the evidence so far considered suggests that few, even of these, really became assimilated. Furthermore, evidence from other sources demonstrates that the majority of immigrants who remained in the city for any length of time were constantly on the move, and though confined to limited areas were repeatedly shifting from one address to another. Thus for them, as for the Irish population in general, it could be said that there was a high degree of geographical mobility.

<sup>1</sup>The lack of stability in the Irish population continued to the end of the period. Writing in December 1872 Sister Christiana observed:  
"Another great cause of the decrease in attendance this winter is the high price of provisions, etc., which has caused many families either to emigrate or remove to manufacturing towns where their children can receive daily wages and half-time school."  
St. George's School Day Book, op. cit., 1 December 1872.

### Occupational Mobility.

Further analysis reveals that even for this minority group there was little intra or inter-generational mobility of occupations.

Taking the 27 occupied males who remained in York from the 1851 to the 1871 census, only two can be said to have improved their occupational status. These were two labourers, one of whom, 28 year old Michael Myers was living in Walmgate in 1851 with his wife Mary, aged 30, his three young children and nine lodgers. With the exception of the three year old child John, who had been born in Morpeth, Northumberland, and the two younger children, born in York, the entire household originated from Mayo. Apart from one 15 year old servant all the lodgers, including one female, were labourers like their landlord. Ten years' later, Michael Myers, widower, had lost his two York-born children but now had three others apart from 13 year old John listed with him. He was no longer a labourer but had become a publican, and had improved his status sufficiently to employ an Irish-born servant. He and his family were now the sole occupiers of a house in Blyth's Yard Walmgate. By 1871 he had remarried, his second wife Jane being a 46 year old Yorkshire woman. He was now the landlord of the "Brewers Arms" public house, Walmgate, having advanced considerably in the 20 year period.

The only other occupied male who in any way improved his status was 20 year old Michael Luby, labourer, an immigrant from Sligo.<sup>1</sup> In 1851 he was living with his Hull-born wife Elizabeth Ann, a charwoman aged 16, at his mother-in-law's house in Lawrence Street (outside Walmgate Bar) which contained two other non-Irish lodgers.

<sup>1</sup>Between 1851 and 1871 Michael Luby increased his age by 25 years.

By 1861 he combined his occupation as labourer with that of general dealer, and he now lived with his wife and three children in Butcher Yard. Ten years' later he was recorded as being a general dealer only, and had moved to a house in Walmgate which he occupied with his growing family and four lodgers, one of whom was an Irish hawkker. It is interesting that these two individuals who as labourers had occupied Class V in 1851 but moved into Class II by 1871, were both married to non-Irish women.<sup>1</sup>

Two other individuals changed their occupations but not their social class in the period. One, a recruiting sergeant in 1851 became a railway clerk and a railway policeman in the two succeeding censuses; and the other returned from employment as a policeman in 1861 to his original occupation of beerhouse keeper at the end of the period. The remaining 23, 17 of whom were various types of labourers (including agricultural) made no change whatsoever in their occupations.

In considering assimilation it is important not only to examine an individual's occupational status at various points of time, but also to look at that of his children, to ascertain to what extent inter-generational mobility of occupation took place.<sup>2</sup> Of the above

<sup>1</sup>The validity of including Michael Luby in a Class embracing Chief Constables, Station Masters, Veterinary Surgeons and Professors of Music may well be questioned. However this is the classification employed by the Registrar General and followed by W. A. Armstrong in Wrigley (ed.) Nineteenth Century Society, pp.215-223. In spite of his dubious claims to such an elevation, however, it is clear that Mr. Luby had raised his social status since 1851, and his removal from Butcher Yard cannot be regarded as anything other than an improvement.

<sup>2</sup>Though limited by the unavailability of census information after 1871, one is of course aware that a proper analysis of inter-generational mobility would require a comparison of the occupations of father and son over the whole of their working lives.

mentioned 27 occupied males remaining in York from 1851 to 1871, 21 were the fathers of a total of 36 employed sons. Since most of these were either too young to have been occupied in 1861, or having been so, had moved away by 1871, for only two of them is information available at more than one census. One, the son of a shoemaker, improved his status from railway cleaner in 1861 to engine driver in 1871. The other, whose father was the recruiting sergeant already mentioned, changed from plumber to painter in the ten year period. However, the majority of sons, whatever they may have subsequently become, began their working lives in the same occupations as their fathers. Thus the eight sons of non-labouring fathers either entered the same occupations or took jobs of a similar status; and of the 28 sons whose fathers were labourers, eight became apprentices and semi-skilled workers and the other 20 followed their fathers' occupations.

This can be illustrated from the history of the Roun family.<sup>1</sup> In 1851 39 year old Michael Roun, labourer, together with his wife Mary aged 29, also a labourer, his son Hugh, aged two, born in York, and his father Patrick, aged 77 and also a labourer, lived with their 13 lodgers at number 16 Britannia Yard, which has been used as a Case Study in Chapter V. From this it will be seen that the 17 occupants shared a back-to-back cottage containing only two rooms, each of which was approximately 12 feet square. The lodgers were split into at least six families, and apart from two unoccupied wives and an infant, all of them, including six women, were labourers and all 13 were born in Ireland.<sup>2</sup> The enumerator for this parish did not

<sup>1</sup>Spelled variously at each census, Roun, Rowan or Ruane.

<sup>2</sup>In 1852 and 1854 Michael Rouan was charged with having too many lodgers. Gazette and Herald, 13 October 1852 and 21 January 1854.

list county of birth for Irish-born respondents, but it was recorded in 1861 that Michael Roun, his wife and his father were born in County Mayo. By that time the family had moved to the neighbouring parish of St. Lawrence, and lived in a small working-class terrace, St. Lawrence Row. They now had an additional son, and had reduced their number of lodgers to two. These, like Michael Rowan and his 84 year old father were both labourers, but Mary was now returned simply as "wife". By 1871 Hugh and John Ruane had also become labourers, an occupation still pursued by their father. The family still lived in Lawrence Row, though the grandfather was no longer present, presumably having died. There were two new Irish-born lodgers, a labourer and a slater, the latter (Austin "Battle") being a member of the notorious Battle family. It is clear from the above that little occupational mobility had taken place in this family, three generations of whom had been employed solely as unspecified labourers.

Allowing for the fact that because the immigrants did not settle the numbers involved in the above analysis are necessarily small, it is nevertheless apparent that the degree of both intra and inter-generational mobility of occupations was low, and that even those of the Irish community who remained in the city did not significantly improve their status during the period.

### Mobility of Household Status.

A further indication of assimilation and social mobility is the extent to which people changed their household status. As was shown in Chapter VI, the proportion of individuals in the Irish community in York who were lodgers, fell between 1851 and 1871 from 25.8% to 4.5%. However, given the high rate of turnover of the Irish population already discussed, this reduction is not the result of those immigrants who were lodgers in 1851 subsequently improving their status and becoming householders, since few of them remained in the city long enough to have been recorded as having done so. Rather it is the result of later waves of immigrants increasingly taking up residence in York as householders instead of lodgers, even though many families still found it necessary to occupy houses jointly. The reduction in the number of lodgers, therefore, is not an indication of individuals' social mobility but suggests instead that successive and largely distinct Irish communities at each census were, compared with their predecessors, enjoying an improvement in this limited respect. However, of the 19 survivors in 1861 of the 872 Irish individuals who were lodgers in the previous census, seven were now heads of households and the remaining twelve were the members of their families. All, therefore, had changed their household status.

Christopher Crump (aged 50 in 1851) and his daughter Maria (aged 18) are examples of those 19 who, having been lodgers in 1851 had graduated to householders by the next census. When first enumerated they were the lodgers of Irishman Henry Ormsby and his family at No. 5 St. Margaret's Court (Butcher Yard) Walmgate. In 1861, having been joined by his wife Jane, from Ireland, his two other Irish-born daughters Bessie and Sally and an apparently illegitimate infant grandson, born in York, the Crump family, still



living in Butcher Yard, were now the sole occupants of the house in which they lived. Bessie and Sally (19 and 16 years old respectively) were both agricultural labourers like their father, but their sister Maria, who had had no occupation at the previous census, was no longer present. By 1871 the Crumps had moved to Kelly's Yard, Walmgate. Christopher, having apparently aged only ten years since 1851, was now a widower living with his 12 year old grandson and another of his daughters, Sarah, aged 19, a domestic servant, born in York.<sup>1</sup> He had remained an agricultural labourer throughout the period.

The history of Patrick and Catherine Henigan, aged 40 and 30 years respectively in 1851, provides another illustration of lodgers who improved their household status. These, together with their two children Anthony and Mary, were at that time the lodgers of Anthony Mellody in Long Close Lane. In all, 21 individuals (six Irish families) lived in the house which was one of those described two years earlier by the overseers of the poor as having between them only two privies for about 140 persons. It was stated that

"the inside of the houses was nearly as bad as the privies. From 25 to 30 of the Irish lived in each house, which contained only two rooms."<sup>2</sup>

All the occupied adults in the house with the exception of one charwoman, were agricultural labourers. Later in the year, Catherine Henigan, of the same address, confined and destitute in the absence of her husband, made application for Poor Relief for herself, her two children and two infants.<sup>3</sup> By 1861 the Henigans, still living in Long Close

<sup>1</sup>For some reason Sarah was not listed on the 1861 census. However her age and birthplace indicate that Christopher Crump and his eldest daughter were joined by the rest of the family immediately after the taking of the 1851 census.

<sup>2</sup>See Locational Case Study No. 2, page 168.

<sup>3</sup>Application and Report Book, 1851.

Lane had improved their circumstances and were now householders with two lodgers. Patrick was still an agricultural labourer, and had been joined in the occupation not only by his two eldest children but also by Catherine his wife. The two babies listed in the Poor Law Records ten years' earlier were not present, no doubt having died, but there were two additional children, Patrick aged six and Catherine aged one. In 1871, still an agricultural labourer and still present in Long Close Lane, Patrick Henigan, widower, his son Patrick - also an agricultural labourer - and his daughter Catherine were the sole occupants of their house.

Like the Crumps, this family's history provides an illustration of unchanging occupational status, since at no time throughout the period were either Henigan or his wife and children employed as other than agricultural workers. Further, those of his children too young to be employed did not attend schools, even in 1871. In spite of occupational immobility, however, some improvement in their condition obviously occurred between the time when as lodgers, they occupied with 17 others, a two roomed house, and their becoming the sole occupants of the house in which they lived. They were still haunted by poverty however. In 1871, because of sickness, 16 year old Patrick was one of the many applicants for Poor Relief.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Application and Report Book, 1871.

## Conclusion.

A further and final indication of the lack of the Irish community's integration is its almost total absence from involvement in the political life of the city in the period. Given all the relevant factors discussed above, and in particular that concerning the rapid turnover of the immigrants, many of whom were illiterate, this is hardly surprising, especially since the very poor, even amongst the non-Irish in the city, had little political significance. Where Irish political activity was recorded, however, far from indicating assimilation it suggests completely the reverse, the immigrants concerned being involved not with the political affairs of the city but rather with secret societies whose aim was to create an independent Ireland. The extent of Irish involvement in such societies in York - as elsewhere - is of course difficult to determine because of their clandestine nature, nevertheless their existence was well-known, and instrumental no doubt, in increasing hostility and resentment on both sides. The following incidents involving Ribbonism and Fenianism illustrate this point.

In November 1852, following the assault on an Irishman by several of his fellow countrymen, it was alleged that men were kept in the pay of the York Ribbon Club for the purpose of "hammering" individuals who refused to become members;<sup>1</sup> and in March 1856 Irishman Patrick Joyce of Long Close Lane was intimidated by John Padden, John Brannan, John Dolan, Martin Neavesey, John Lofthouse, Thomas Holmes and James and Michael Calpin, who as members of a Ribbon Club, kicked in his door and "threatened to do him some injury

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 13 November 1852.

unless he consented to become one of them." Though five of the prisoners were convicted only of wilful damage, the magistrate stated that he should consider whether they ought not to be prosecuted and punished for conspiracy.<sup>1</sup>

In November 1867 James Brannan and Michael Rohan were charged with suspected Fenian intimidation and with having assaulted John Battle because he refused to join their association. Committed for trial at Sessions in the following January they each received one year's imprisonment, and another Fenian, James Flannaghan, was sentenced to five years' penal servitude for his part in the affair. At the trial Battle - like his brother Anthony, an unpopular man with his fellow countrymen - was accused by relatives of the defendants of being "an informer" and warned that he should "suffer for it very soon" - which he apparently did.<sup>2</sup> By 1870 a public house in Navigation Road (probably the Lord Nelson) was the meeting place of the Fenian Club and as such was probably one of those frequented almost exclusively by the Irish.<sup>3</sup> Various other references to York Ribbon Societies or Fenianism occur in the period, especially in the late 1860's.<sup>4</sup>

It is impossible to establish how widespread was the support given either to Ribbonism or Fenianism, or to know how deeply committed members were, but inevitably the existence in York of secret societies whose professed aim was the overthrow (if necessary by violence) of English rule in Ireland must have created doubts

<sup>1</sup>Gazette, 8 March 1856.

<sup>2</sup>Gazette, 9 November 1867 and 25 January and 13 June 1868: For incidents involving the Brannan, Flannaghans and Battles, see Locational Case Study on Long Close Lane.

<sup>3</sup>Gazette, 28 May 1870.

<sup>4</sup>See for example, Gazette, 6 April and 26 October 1867 and 14 March 1868.

about the "loyalty" of the whole Irish population in the city.

.....

It has been shown that the post-Famine Irish community in York encountered from its unpropitious beginnings prejudice, humiliation and hostility. The vast majority of the immigrants did not stay long enough to settle, but even those who did can hardly be said to have successfully integrated or to have significantly improved their situation. It is apparent that throughout the period they remained largely distinct from the non-Irish population, the very lowest ranks of whom were encouraged to think of themselves as superior to the new arrivals. Isolated from other classes by their poverty, the Irish congregated in the worst, most squalid, insanitary and overcrowded slums in the city, aggravating already appalling conditions and giving rise to further condemnation. Any integration which did take place must inevitably have been with other slum dwellers, from whom they could hardly have acquired the social graces of cleanliness, sobriety and thrift which would have endeared them to Victorian "society". Alien in race, religion and culture and more often than not, ill-equipped to deal with urban life or work, they created problems for the authorities in the form of increased Poor Law expenditure and disorderly sometimes violent behaviour, the latter at least, being much publicised and exaggerated. To a greater extent, even than the very poor, they can be said to have been outside the society in which they lived.

The development of Fenianism in the city - or at least the attention paid to it by the newspapers - came late in the period and as such its subsequent effects on attitudes towards the Irish are outside the scope of this study. However, in the light of the

national publicity given to Fenian activities and the consequent revival of extreme anti-Irish hostility throughout the country, it is unlikely that those in authority in York, already disposed to prejudice and now with an additional reason for alarm within their midst, would have fallen behind recorded national sentiment; or that the Irish community in the city, however politically indifferent or inactive the majority of its wretched members might have been, encountered anything other than increased resentment and hostility with every attempt made by their countrymen to set Ireland free.

The immigrants left no records of their own, but the evidence from all the sources used in this study indicates the quality of their early experience in the city.

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